

## 2020 VISION

*Provide infrastructure and supports for leaders, teachers, and families to meet the whole child needs of each student and improve student outcomes and school climate resulting in increased quality of life and a workforce ready future.*

### Empowering Our Students

#### Improving Outcomes Through Self-Determination

MICHAEL WEHMEYER, SELF-DETERMINATION EXPERT



Michael L. Wehmeyer, PhD., is a distinguished professor in Special Education and chairperson of the Department of Special Education at the University of Kansas, and director and senior scientist at the Beach Center on Disability, also at the University of Kansas.

Dr. Wehmeyer describes self-determination as “acting as the causal agent in one’s life; that is, making or causing things to happen in one’s life.” His research is centered around giving students a voice in their education and the impact that can have on students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. His research also examines how highlighting student strengths enables them to self-regulate and self-direct learning, which is a practice he said benefits all students. “Multiple studies have shown that evidence-based practices implemented to promote self-determination improve academic and transition goal attainment, enhance student access to and involvement in the general education curriculum, increase the participation of youth with disabilities in educational and transition planning, and improve academic performance.”

Dr. Wehmeyer’s studies reveal promoting self-determined learning impacts graduation rates and help students

exceed goals. “Studies following youth with disabilities after graduation have shown that enhanced self-determination is causally linked to more positive community inclusion and access outcomes and more positive employment outcomes,” he said.

#### Measuring Self-Determination

Dr. Wehmeyer recommends multiple measures of self-determination that include the following:

- [The Self-Determination Inventory](#) - the latest measure of self-determination for youth and young adults with and without identified disabilities called the is freely accessible.
- [Arc’s Self-Determination Scale](#) - a student self-report measure that has been determined to be valid and reliable for students across multiple disability categories. It provides information on student self-determination status.
- [AIR Self-Determination Scale](#) - normed with students with learning disabilities and provides information on opportunity and capacity for self-determination across home and school environments.

#### Motivating Students to Learn: The Role of Teachers

The role of teachers is to participate in schoolwide planning and help students discover their passions. “Teachers teach students to teach themselves; students learn how to set and achieve goals and make plans; teachers emphasize mastery experiences, using assessment to provide supportive feedback and aligning instruction with students’ strengths and abilities,” recommends Dr. Wehmeyer.

It is important for teachers to give students choices and emphasize the path to success and not just the outcome to allow students to take initiative and find value in setting and meeting their goals.

The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction is a resource that guides teachers to teach self-regulation through goal setting.

Visit [www.self-determination.org](http://www.self-determination.org) to learn more.

Self-Determination Community of Practice

Teaching Georgia’s Children to Lead

STRENGTH-BASED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL LEARNING

The Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Student Supports, strives to facilitate a Self-Determination Community of Practice to give teachers the tools to provide support for students transitioning to adulthood. For students with disabilities to transition successfully from school to adulthood, it requires a process that promotes movement to postsecondary environments which include postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.



Effective transition district and school plans should include significant collaboration with outside agencies, community organizations, higher education and families.

Students who have participated in student-led Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have acquired life skills that are helping students to meet and exceed secondary goals. They are graduating with a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs and behavior that is driven by their desire to transition successfully and achieve their goals.

Planning resources are available at GaDOE’s [Transition Tips for Parents](#) or contact your regional [Georgia Learning Resources System](#) (GLRS) or Transition Program Specialist, K. Elise James, at [ejames@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ejames@doe.k12.ga.us).

Self-Determined Student Highlights

Teacher Tools and Resources



Darnell T. Logan , Diego Jones, Khadir Reefer, Cre'shaw Peagler, and Cassandra J. Dobbs

**Cedar Grove High School**

DeKalb County Schools have had a 60% drop in out-of-school suspensions since implementing Check & Connect in 2015. Cedar Grove High School senior, Khadir Reefer, describes his

experience. “Check & Connect made me a better person and a self starter. Without the program I would not be graduating,” said Reefer. To learn more visit, [Check & Connect](#).



Back Row L-R: Josh Williams, Brandon Quinn, Tiffany Strickland  
Front Row L- R: Lindsey Davis, Kaston Fugate, Heidi West, Isaac Traylor, Julian Esparza, Aaron Huff

**South Paulding High School**

South Paulding High School students and staff are one effective, high performing team. The school participated in [Capturing Kids' Hearts](#) to overcome barriers that commonly

impact teacher-student relationships and learning. The program was founded in 1990 by psychotherapist and author, Flip Flippen, to coach and train schools and companies how to build teams and individuals into models of achievement.



**Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA)**

Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency works within schools to provide pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

To find out why employers and jobseekers say the agency is changing lives, visit [GVRA Success Stories](#) or view this [GVRA Frequently Asked Questions](#).

**Newsletter Sign-up**

The Teacher Tools newsletter was designed to support Georgia teachers and help them thrive in the classroom. Please visit: [Teacher Tools](#) to subscribe.

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