

# Self-Determination Goals and Checklists

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## Transition to Postsecondary Pathways—

Self Advocacy for Students (version 2)



Autism Programs and Services

Toronto Catholic District School Board



**AUTISM PROGRAMS**  
School Support Program



## Introduction

People with developmental disabilities (DD) have the right to make choices and be supported so they can better advocate for themselves. A broad term, called self determination, includes skills that are important for **everyone** no matter their abilities and what pathway they may take. These skills include self-awareness, self-advocacy, self-management, and choice making. Support is necessary for families, and schools to make sure that all individuals have the chance to learn elements of self determination skills, put them into practice and even include them in educational planning such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and transition plans.

During school years teachers know students' names, understand their learning needs, and how to accommodate them. This will not happen after high school. Settings outside of high school follow the Human Rights Code, not the Education Act. This means that accommodations will not be automatically implemented, and information will not automatically be shared. Relevant information needs to be communicated from the individual themselves in order to receive accommodations.

## About this Document

Self determination can be viewed as something that is “too abstract to teach”, especially to those with DD. This document includes checklists related to aspects of self determination. These lists break down one of five broad categories of self determination into small components so that they can be worked on and possibly included in the alternative curriculum section of the IEP. The 5 categories are;

- ✓ Self-Awareness
- ✓ Active Participation in School Based Meetings
- ✓ Self-Advocacy
- ✓ Choice Making
- ✓ Self-Management/Self-Regulation

For each category there are two checklists to choose from. The first one is for the student with moderate to severe needs (i.e. limited functional communication) and the second one is for the student with mild to moderate needs.

## Using the Checklists:

These checklists can generate ideas and discussion about skills that require development. Lists can be reviewed annually to determine progress and set goals. Teachers may incorporate information from these categories into the alternative curriculum section of the IEP.

Each checklist begins with a goal to develop while in high school (labeled **Alternative Curriculum Goal**) and ends with a goal to strive to achieve upon graduation from high school (labeled **End Goal**). The box labeled **Next Steps** is where to plan for future goals

Follow this legend to complete each checklist:

**Y- Yes I do this, N- No, I have not done this but I need to do this, S- Someone does this for me, N/A- Not applicable.**

## 1. Self-Awareness Skills

Students need to have a sense of self awareness in order to advocate for themselves. Students who possess self-awareness can identify things such as their feelings, interests, learning style and strengths. Some of these can be very abstract, especially for those with DD. Starting with something concrete can lead towards understanding something more complicated. The table below highlights some skills to promote the concept of self awareness.

Does the student...	Y	N	S	N/A
Respond to their name?				
Show preferences between preferred and non preferred items?				
Point to preferred items?				
Indicate hunger?				
Indicate thirst?				
Indicate pain?				
Label body parts?				
Indicate where pain is coming from?				
Label non-interests? (eg. I don't like...)				
Label basic emotions they feel? (eg. sad, happy, etc.)				
Have a way to communicate this information? (visuals, verbal etc.)				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

## Alternative Curriculum Goal: The student will demonstrate self awareness skills.

Does the student...	Y	N	S	N/A
Know their diagnosis? (eg. I have .....)				
Know their strengths? (eg. I'm good at.....)				
Know their challenges? (eg. I need help with....)				
Know their interests? (eg. I like....)				
Know their non-interests? (eg. I don't like...)				
Identify what they are feeling? (eg. I feel sad, happy, etc.)				
Identify the cause/trigger of their emotions? (eg. I feel sad because...)				
Have a way to communicate this information? (visuals, verbal etc.)				

## End Goal: The student will understand and communicate some information about themselves.

### Next Steps:

## 2. Active Participation in School Based Meetings

It may be difficult for someone with DD to fully participate in school based meetings. It may be more appropriate to work towards partial participation. This can include attending the last 5 minutes, or the first five minutes to introduce themselves. Other ways to show involvement can be to use visuals that the student helped create, with photos and lists of interests, goals etc. The table below includes some of the core skills that may help a student to participate in a meeting.

Does the student...	Y	N	S	N/A
Have awareness of others?				
Engage with peer or teacher?				
Respond to greetings?				
Sit in a group for at least 10 minutes?				
Wait for their turn?				
Use expected volume/ tone of voice for the situation?				
Respond to group instruction?				
Follow simple 1 step instructions?				
Attend part of IEP/IPRC meetings?				
Identify a personal goal for the school year/life?				
Identify/state their accomplishments?				
Communicate future plans and goals?				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

Students don't necessarily need to know how to run their own IEP and understand every education policy. However, where appropriate, they should have a role in the IEP meeting. Respectful communication and ensuring they have a visible place in meetings is important for students, even those with DD. This includes using people first language, speaking to them in a way that accounts for their unique communication abilities, and extra time to accommodate the communication and participation needs of each person (eg. use of augmentative and alternative communication methods with easy-to-use formats).

<b>Alternative Curriculum Goal: The student will participate in school based planning meetings.</b>				
Does the student...	Y	N	S	N/A
Attend IEP/IPRC meetings?				
Attend transition planning meetings?				
Have the opportunity to share information in school meetings?				
Communicate their strengths during school based meetings?				
Communicate their challenges during school based meetings?				
Communicate their interests during school based meetings?				
Identify personal goals for the school year/life?				
<b>End Goal: The student will be able to actively participate in school based meetings and communicate future plans and goals.</b>				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

### 3. Self-Advocacy Skills <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-C4RXGSeeU&feature=youtu.be>

Initiating and requesting are important communication skills. They are also necessary skills for self advocacy. For the student with limited skills, a place to start could be working on initiating requests for highly preferred items.

Does the student ...	Y	N	S	N/A
Initiate requests for items? (how?- pointing, gesturing, 1-2 word utterances, visuals etc).				
Initiate requests for actions?				
Protest/say no?				
Recognize when they need help?				
Have a way to communicate that they need help?				
Initiates requests for assistance?				
Know who to go to if they need help? (can they identify adults?)				
Independently seek assistance from the appropriate person?				
Use appropriate personal space for the situation?				
Independently seek assistance at appropriate times?				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

Self-advocacy does not mean “doing it all yourself” without the help of others. Learning self-advocacy skills is a process, and it takes time to acquire these skills.

<b>Alternative Curriculum Goal: The student will begin to develop skills to get needs and wants met within their rights.</b>				
Does the student ...	Y	N	S	N/A
Recognize when they need help?				
Have a way to communicate that they need help?				
Know who to go to if they need help?				
Independently seek assistance from the appropriate person?				
Independently seek assistance at appropriate times?				
<b>End Goal: I will communicate to achieve my wants and needs in my postsecondary pathway.</b>				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

#### 4. Choice Making Skills

There are many opportunities to practice and develop self-advocacy skills throughout the day, an easy way is with choice making. Unfortunately, research shows that people with DD have fewer opportunities to express preferences across their daily lives. Promoting active choice making is a way teachers can address self-determination and independence for students with disabilities. It can be used for those students who seem highly unmotivated, seldom communicate with others and/or do not have the prerequisite skills needed to use a formal communication system: e.g. understanding symbols, and method to select symbols. Making a choice involves identifying and communicating a preference. Some students may not know how to make choices and need targeted, direct instruction in this skill. The following table is a list of items related to choice making that can help the student one day be able to make and communicate choices in new and familiar environments. Some may not express their preferences through conventional means and teachers can use alternative means to assess personal preferences.

Does the student ...	Y	N	S	N/A
Show preference by pointing, gesturing, pictures, sounds, words?				
Discriminate between preferred items and non-preferred items?				
Choose from an array of preferred and non-preferred items?				
Have an effective way to communicate choices? (pointing, eye gaze, pictures, verbal)				
Have choices around the activities I complete in school?				
Have choices around the order of the activities to be completed?				
Have choices around the materials to use in completing assignments/tasks?				
Have access to things they like when their work is done?				
Have opportunities to choose the peers to work with?				
Have opportunities to make increasingly complex choices?				
Have a choice as to what to eat for lunch/snack?				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

There are many daily opportunities to make choices for eg. **timing of events** – when to get a haircut, **personal choices** – choosing what to wear, **methods of training** – where learning occurs eg: do you want to work at home or at the library?

Choice making is important because it, allows students immediate, tangible control over their environment.

- is one of the earliest forms of active, meaningful communication and is used to establish a common focus of attention
- is used with people who need to develop skills necessary for basic interactions
- is used to develop other skills such as turn taking, eye contact, visual tracking, understanding of cause and effect, etc.

<b>Alternative Curriculum Goal: The student will be able to communicate choices on a regular basis.</b>				
Does the student ...	Y	N	S	N/A
Indicate preferences (academic activities, social activities, free time etc.)?				
Have an effective way to communicate choices? (verbal, pointing, eye gaze)				
Discriminate between preferred items and non-preferred items?				
Choose from an array of preferred and non-preferred items?				
Have choices around the activities I complete in school?				
Have choices around the order of the activities to be completed?				
Have choices around the materials to use in completing assignments/tasks?				
Have access to things they like when their work is done?				
Have opportunities to choose the peers to work with?				
Have opportunities to make increasingly complex choices?				
Have a choice as to what to eat for lunch/snack?				
<b>End Goal: I will make choices in new and familiar environments.</b>				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

## 5. Self-Management/Self-Regulation Skills

*Self-management includes staying in control of emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and express emotions appropriately.* By learning to manage and regulate daily activities and routines, students with DD may achieve more positive outcomes. For some, self regulation may not naturally be learned even with the most familiar routine. The following list addresses some skills that can be worked on to help with this element of self determination.

Does the student?	Y	N	S	N/A
Follow a visual schedule for routines, tasks and to outline the day?				
Can check off when a task is complete?				
Tolerate removal of preferred items?				
Respond to first/then?				
Wait for items or events (lunch, reward, turn)? (delayed gratification)				
Tolerates changes in schedule?				
Uses a visual self regulation tool (5 point scale, square breathing visual, etc.)?				
Label their feelings/emotions appropriately?				
Have prompts to calm them down (visual, auditory, gestural)?				
Have a recognized space to go to take a break?				
Know what causes them to be stressed (noises, tests, peers)?				
Have a way to cope with stress (yoga, visuals, breathing, fidget toy)?				
Recognize when they need to take a break?				
Have breaks incorporated into their daily schedule?				
Have a way to communicate they need a break?				
Follow appropriate behaviour of peers?				
Follow cues from the teacher/students to change behaviour?				
Have something to refer to in order to help regulate their behaviour?				
Know the teachers expectations?				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

As students progress through school and prepare for life in the community, they should turn less to teachers for help with daily routines and become more self-directed. Self-management/self-regulation is an important part of self determination, it involves students monitoring and assessing their own behavior without external control.

Does the student?	Y	N	S	N/A
Label their feelings/emotions appropriately?				
Recognize when their emotions are becoming intense and out of control?				
Have prompts to calm them down (visual, auditory, gestural)?				
Know what causes them to be stressed (noises, tests, peers)?				
Have a way to cope with stress (yoga, visuals, breathing, fidget toy)?				
Recognize when they need to take a break?				
Have opportunities to take breaks when they are required?				
Have a way to communicate they need a break?				
Wait for items or events (lunch, reward, turn)?				
Follow appropriate behaviour of peers?				
Follow cues from the teacher/students to change behaviour?				
Have something to refer to in order to help regulate their behaviour?				
Know the teachers expectations?				
<b>I will regulate my emotions and use positive coping strategies as independently as possible.</b>				
<b>Next Steps:</b>				

