**Bibliographic Information:**

Carter, E., Lane, K., Pierson, M., & Stang, K. (2008). Promoting self-determination for transition-age youth: Views of high school general and special educators. *Exceptional Children, 75*(1), 55-70.

*Exceptional Children* is the most respected scholarly journal in special education. It publishes peer reviewed original research on the education and development of toddlers, infants, children and youth with exceptionalities as well as articles on issues in special education.

**Brief Synopsis:**

As legislation has begun to mandate students with disabilities have access to general curriculum, the number of individuals with disabilities attending college has steadily increased. As these changes have been made, increased importance has been placed on equipping students with the self-determination skills necessary for leading a successful adult life. There is a growing concern among special educators that students with disabilities are not receiving necessary self-determination instruction due to the great number of students with disabilities being served in the general education setting. Carter et al. (2008) administered a survey to 340 general and special education teachers that measured the importance of teaching self-determination skills, as well as their actual classroom instruction of self-determination skills. Carter et al. (2008) included seven instructional domains under self-determination including choice making, decision making, goal setting and attainment, problem solving, self-advocacy and leadership skills, self-awareness and self-knowledge, and self-management and self-regulation skills. Results indicated that problem solving was the one domain that both general and special educators believe is important to teach.

A huge concern of promoters of self-determination instruction is the struggle all teachers have regarding insufficient time for teaching required curriculum. Self-determination is often viewed as one more responsibility that teachers do not have time to teach. Carter et al’s. (2008) findings indicated that self-determination is compatible, consistent, and interwoven into general curriculum standards, rather than being an additional subject to teach.

**Impact on me as a professional:**

As a transition specialist, my primary goal is to help individuals with disabilities successfully transition into adult life after school. As a whole, society has viewed individuals with disabilities as non-contributors to society. Our role as teachers, in years past, has been to protect individuals with disabilities from the world. Gradually that role has changed to equipping individuals with disabilities to live in and contribute to the world successfully. I have seen firsthand the benefits individuals experience from applying self-determination skills. It seems impossible for individuals to survive adult life without being able to make decisions, set and attain goals, self-advocate, and self-manage. These skills are essential to adult life.

As previously mentioned, more and more students with disabilities are attending colleges and postsecondary institutions than ever before because they are now in general education classes rather than self-contained classes in high school. With this increase of students, it is remains to be determined if they are adequately prepared for and successfully completing these programs. In the future, postsecondary institutions will begin to see more individuals with disabilities, as well as disabilities that are seemingly unable to pursue such an education (i.e., autism, non-verbal disabilities, etc.).

Self-determination has a significant role in the future of the education of individuals both in high school and beyond. As a key to independence, the success of individuals with disabilities will be greatly affected by whether or not individuals acquire self-determination skills. All teachers, both general and special education, will need to understand and implement components of self-determination to increase educational and life-long success of individuals with disabilities.