

Topic: **Build skills to promote child development and learning and lead to life and school success.**

Palmer, S. B., Summers, J. A., Brotherson, M. J., Erwin, E. J., Maude, S. P., Stroup-Rentier, V.,...Haines, S. J. (2013). Foundations for self-determination in early childhood: An inclusive model for children with disabilities. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 33*(1), 38-47. doi: 10.1177/0271121412445288

Context

Engaging young children with disabilities, their families, and professionals in building a foundation for self-determination behavior early in life may be essential to later school and life success. To do so, adults may need a roadmap or model to help guide the development of systematic interventions and supports for children to acquire the precursor skills needed for developing self-determination later in life.

Purpose of the Article

This position paper provided an introduction to the Early Childhood Foundations Model for Self-Determination and reviewed the three foundational constructs of the model. Additionally, the authors provided a rationale for beginning self-determination behavior early in life and presented how the Foundations Model may be used to guide the development of self-determination behavior through systematic interventions for children with disabilities and family-professional collaboration.

The Early Childhood Foundations Model for Self-Determination

The Foundations Model presented included three proposed critical constructs of self-determination: (a) choice-making and problem solving, (b) self-regulation, and (c) engagement. The development of these constructs has proven valuable in supporting children with disabilities and their families in four ways. First, the Foundations Model encourages significant adults in the child's life to provide practice and guidance in specific skills leading to self-determination. Second, early childhood is a period for children to practice and refine abilities before autonomy is expected. Third, early learning opportunities can be important in

supporting the acquisition of specific self-determination skills within the daily routine. Fourth, earlier introduction to the critical constructs of the Foundations Model may prevent overdependence and low self-efficacy.

Authors further presented a description of and purpose for the critical constructs that form the foundation for later self-determination skills. For example, choice-making and problem solving consist of important aspects, such as autonomy, empowerment, control over one's ability to make choices, understanding consequences, promotion of socially appropriate behavior, and increasing engagement. To promote and foster these skills, adults in early childhood are to provide support through scaffolding to children by assisting them in expressing their needs, wants, and desire in ways that match their abilities. Additionally, choice-making and problem-solving involve specific components found necessary for optimal and intentional development. These include: having a strong culturally aware family-professional partnership and partnerships that promote mutual trust; consisting of coordinated efforts; utilizing effective communication; and, leading to increased sense of competence and confidence among individuals.

Conclusion

Preschool-aged children with disabilities need supports to develop skills that are foundational to the development of self-determination later in life. The Foundations Model provides guidance on how to support the optimal development of three proposed critical constructs that include choice-making and problem solving, self-regulation, and engagement within the context of a culturally responsive family-professional partnership.

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About the ACCEPT Project

The ACCEPT (Advancing Community College Efforts in Paraprofessional Training) Project is a federally-funded cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Education. The focus of this effort is the inclusion of special education content in the coursework and experiences provided within the associate degree program in early childhood education at targeted state-supported community colleges in North Carolina.

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