

The Arc@School's

# SELF-DETERMINATION TOOLBOX

Educator Toolkit





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Arc@School's Self-Determination Project is derived from the materials created by the I'm Determined project. The I'm Determined project, a state directed project funded by the Virginia Department of Education, focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities, to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining the silent passenger.

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*\*Spanish versions of all parent and student-facing printable documents are included in the program*

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# INTRODUCTION

## Teaching Self-Determination: 3 Phases

### 1. LEARN

Educators and students will learn what self-determination is, why it is important, and what it means to exercise self-determination. Educators and students will work together to establish routines that can help a person exercise their self-determination. Educators will prepare family and other allies by providing materials that explain self-determination and identify simple tactics that will encourage students to exercise their self-determination.

### 2. PREPARE

Educators will work with students to complete various assessments and activities that help the student identify their wants, needs, strengths, interests, and preferences.

**Helpful tool:** Assessment Toolkit Attachment

### 3. LEAD

Together, educators and students will establish a plan of action for the student to follow to build on their self-determination skills and reach their goals.

**Helpful tool:** Student-Led IEP Power Point Attachment

Throughout the self-determination process, educators should make any necessary adjustments to the way that information and activities are presented to ensure student comprehension. Examples and suggestions are included in this toolkit. Additionally, the Student Toolkit is used across all three phases.



## PHASE 1:

# LEARN

## What is self-determination?

Self-determination refers to the right to direct your own life. Self-determination doesn't mean a person always makes decisions without any support, but it does mean the person directs decisions that impact their quality of life, whether they make their own decisions—with or without support—or someone makes decision for them. When exercising self-determination, it is important to:

- Know and believe in yourself
- Know what you want your future to be and how to make plans to achieve this future
- Know what supports you need to take control of your life

Self-determination is important for *everyone*, but especially students with disabilities.



# Why is teaching self-determination so important?

According to a short article published by [The College of William and Mary \(2008\)](#), “[s]elf-determination skills are important for everyone. Children who are self-determined are able to:

- Appreciate their strengths and acknowledge their limitations
- Set demanding, yet realistic goals for themselves
- Create plans to achieve their goals
- Make appropriate choices and decisions
- Accept responsibility for their choices and decisions
- Develop problem-solving skills
- Assert themselves when necessary
- Advocate for themselves
- Achieve their goals”

In addition, studies show that the benefits of self-determination for people with disabilities can have lasting impact, including:

- Better physical and mental health
- Able to recognize and resist abuse
- Better self-esteem
- Higher life expectancy
- Higher income

## CORE COMPONENTS OF SELF-DETERMINATION

- ✓ **Choice-making:** the skill of making a choice between two known options
- ✓ **Decision-making:** the skill of choosing among more than two known options
- ✓ **Problem-solving:** the skill used when a solution is not readily known; decision-making and choice-making are part of the process
- ✓ **Goal-setting & attainment:** the skill of determining what you want and how you are going to accomplish what you want (setting the goal, planning for implementation, and measuring success)
- ✓ **Self-regulation:** the process of monitoring one’s own actions (skills include self-observation, self-evaluation, and self-reinforcement)
- ✓ **Self-instruction:** skills that assist the student in using their own verbal prompts for solving problems
- ✓ **Self-advocacy:** skills necessary to be able to speak up or defend a cause or person
- ✓ **Internal locus of control:** the belief that one has control over outcomes that are important to life
- ✓ **Self-efficacy:** the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce a given outcome
- ✓ **Efficacy expectations:** the belief that if a specific behavior is performed, it will lead to anticipated outcomes
- ✓ **Self-awareness and self-knowledge:** the skills of knowing one’s own strengths, weaknesses, abilities, and limitation AND knowing how to use these unique attributions to beneficially influence one’s own life



## How can students with disabilities be more self-determined?

Aligned activities to core components for students

CORE COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
Choice-Making Decision-Making	<p><b>Allow students to make basic choices/decisions, such as:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who to sit next to at lunch, art, music, etc.</li> <li>• What to eat for lunch or a snack</li> <li>• Which of two activities to participate in</li> </ul>
Problem-Solving	<p><b>Discuss with the students:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to resolve an argument with a schoolmate</li> <li>• What to do when there is homework to do, but friends are asking them to hang out</li> <li>• How to deal with unhappiness</li> </ul>
Goal-Setting Goal-Attainment	<p><b>Model these behaviors by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posting a daily schedule or classroom “to-dos” and checking them off as they are completed</li> <li>• Listing on a calendar the steps you will follow to reach a classroom goal, such as a classroom fundraiser or food drive</li> <li>• Involving the students when planning a classroom activity or event</li> </ul>
Independence	<p><b>Provide students with:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities and time for independent work and socialization</li> <li>• Instruction in how to help within the classroom and the opportunity to do so without help</li> <li>• Time to complete work independently, even if they make errors</li> </ul>
Self-Observation Self-Evaluation Self-Reinforcement	<p><b>Teach students to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for help before they get too confused or frustrated</li> <li>• Discuss the positive and negative consequences of their actions</li> <li>• Participate in activities to promote their self-worth</li> </ul>
Self-Advocacy Leadership	<p><b>Assist students to model these behaviors by:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ordering and paying for their own lunch</li> <li>• Organizing a recreational activity for a small group or the class</li> <li>• Running for a student organization office</li> </ul>
Self-Awareness Self-Knowledge	<p><b>Teach students to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify their interests and strengths</li> <li>• Explain their disability and how they learn best</li> <li>• Recognize the challenges their disability presents</li> </ul>



## PHASE 2:

# PREPARE

### Pointers on Getting Started

#### Focus on the child and not the disability:

- Acknowledge that each student has their own unique characteristics.
- Recognize that the student is more like their peers than different.
- Use person-first language and language the student will understand.

#### Provide feedback for the student:

- Praise progress and effort as well as results.
- Give honest and specific compliments.
- Provide corrective criticism when warranted.
- Know that by talking to the student you are modeling skills they will need to be self-determined.

#### Be knowledgeable about the student’s strengths, talents, gifts, interests, and learning differences:

- Discuss their strengths, gifts, interests, and learning differences with them. You could have a small group or classroom discussion where students with disabilities openly discuss this with each other, if appropriate.

#### Educate, do not excuse:

- Discuss role models.
- Stress coping and learning strategies.
- Students with disabilities are often unmotivated due to feelings of failure, frustration, and false labels (crazy, lazy, dumb).



## MEASURING AND TRACKING PROGRESS

Simple assessment tools will help educators and students gauge their current level of understanding of self-determination and opportunities for growth. The Assessment Packet included in the program contains short surveys and evaluations for educators and students. Educators should determine how and when to utilize these tools throughout the self-determination exploration process, but recommendations are included below. Student assessments can be completed independently or with assistance or accommodations, depending on the student's needs.

### Assessments for Teachers

<b>Self-Determination Schoolwide Needs Assessment</b>	<p>Educators and administrators should consider using this holistic needs assessment to gauge what they are and are not doing to currently encourage student self-determination. This tool can be periodically revisited to measure progress. This is a great way to gather baseline information and then measure schoolwide growth over a period of time. This assessment can be completed before beginning the program and then revisited annually, thereafter.</p>
<b>Educator Exit Survey</b>	<p>This assessment can be used to analyze how educators feel about each student's self-determination knowledge gains. It can also assist with planning on target skills to learn for future IEP meetings. This should be completed following the annual IEP meeting.</p>

### Assessments for Students

<b>Self-Determination Self-Assessment</b>	<p>This self-assessment helps students and educators rate student's skills that help drive self-determination. This self-assessment can be revisited to measure progress. This assessment can be completed before beginning the program and then revisited quarterly, bi-annually or annually, thereafter.</p>
<b>Student Rubric for IEP Participation</b>	<p>This rubric specifically targets IEP participation skills so that student knowledge and skill growth can be tracked across skill levels. This assessment can be completed before beginning the program and then revisited after each IEP meeting.</p>
<b>Student Exit Survey</b>	<p>This assessment can be used to analyze how each student feels about the growth of their self-determination skills. It can also assist with planning for future IEP meetings. This should be completed following the annual IEP meeting.</p>

## GETTING STARTED ACTIVITY

The Getting Started Activity is a great introductory exercise to begin brainstorming some of the basic topics that the student will dive into more deeply in the lead exercises.

### Instructions

Simply discuss the questions with the student and prepare responses, which will be used for the foundation for the other activities in the toolkit. This can be done one-one-one with the student or as a small group if multiple students are working on the toolkit.

### How to use it

Students can use a template to type or hand write information or add pictures or objects. It all depends on what works best for the student as an individual.

### When you need help...

1. Do you ask for help? How do you ask for help?
2. How do you know when you are upset? Do you tell someone when you are upset?
3. Do you tell your parents or teachers what you want and need?
4. Do you know about your disability?
5. Do you help make decisions about your IEP?
6. Do you make choices for yourself? How do you communicate your choices?

### Questions for students when getting started on Self-Determination:

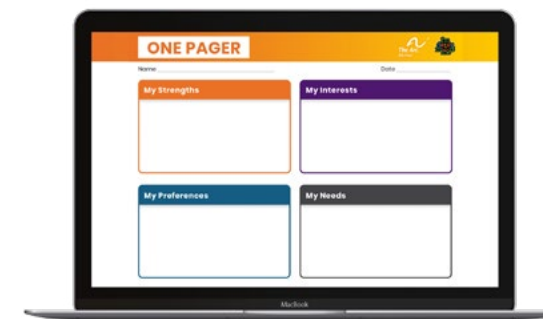


## PHASE 3: LEAD

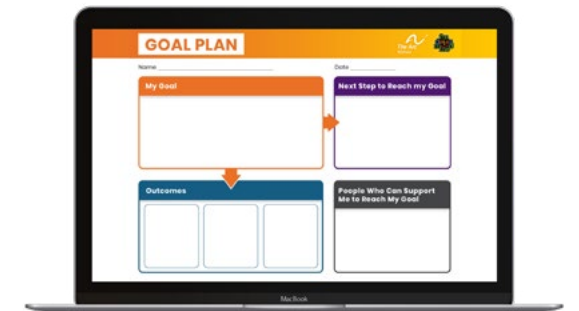
### Three Main Tools to Pack in Your Toolbox

When students with disabilities show they can make things happen and take responsibility for planning and decision-making, it can help change how others view them and encourage others to set higher expectations for them. Having some control over their lives—instead of someone else making decisions for them—helps build self-esteem and self-worth.

### One-Pager



### Goal Plan



### Good Day Plan



# ONE-PAGER

The One-Pager is a simple tool to help provide important information about the student. The One-Pager was created as a way to cut through all of that paper and get at the important stuff quickly and all on one page.

## Instructions

### What it is and what it does

It outlines four categories to help people know the student: My Strengths, My Preferences, My Interests, and My Needs. Students identify these categories (with assistance from parents, teachers, etc.) to introduce themselves to new teachers, employers, case managers, and others in their support system and to clarify their needs and goals based on their strengths and interests.

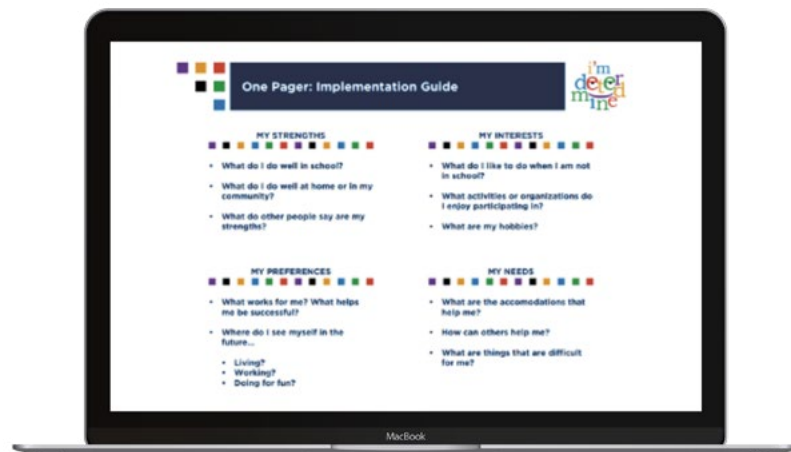
Ask students to think about a time when they really wanted someone to know more about them but they really didn't want to have to take the time and the words to explain it. Ask them to think about their IEP. How long does it take for anyone to look at it and find out the important things about them?

### How to use it

Students can use a template to type or hand write information or add pictures or objects. It all depends on what works best for the student as an individual. Use the apps or web tool!

## ONE-PAGER TEMPLATE:

Questions to help students complete the One-Pager



# ONE-PAGER EXAMPLES

Creating a One-Pager should be unique to the abilities of each student so that it portrays a picture of the student. Not everyone is going to be able to use words to tell others about themselves. For some students, using pictures or objects may be the way to help others understand who they are. When helping a student create a One-Pager, it is important to consider the individual's preferred communication.

## Incorporating objects:



## Written text:



## Incorporating pictures and symbols:





# MY GOOD DAY PLAN

Think about what a good day at school or work looks like for you. Do you need coffee? Do you need to listen to music first thing in the morning or do you need quiet to start your day? Does it happen already? If not, what can YOU do to make it happen? Who can help you out along the way? Just like you, students need to recognize the things they need each day to set themselves up for success.

## INSTRUCTIONS

### What it is and what it does

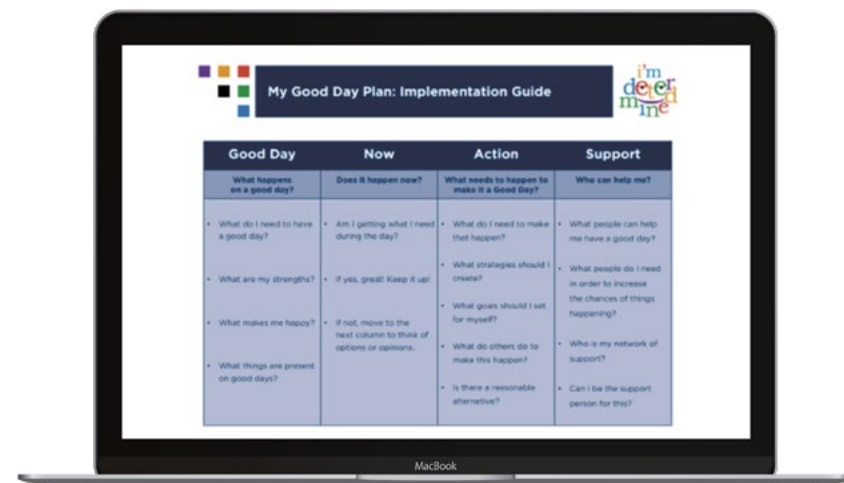
The Good Day Plan is a simple tool used to help students identify the factors that play a role in whether or not they have a good day. The Good Day Plan allows students to view their day from beginning to end and helps them identify a structure/routine that enables them to have a good day.

### How to use it

Have the student (with assistance from a teacher/parent/mentor) visualize a good day and write down the steps to achieve it. Then, using the apps or following the template, have the student create an action plan to make their good day happen more often.

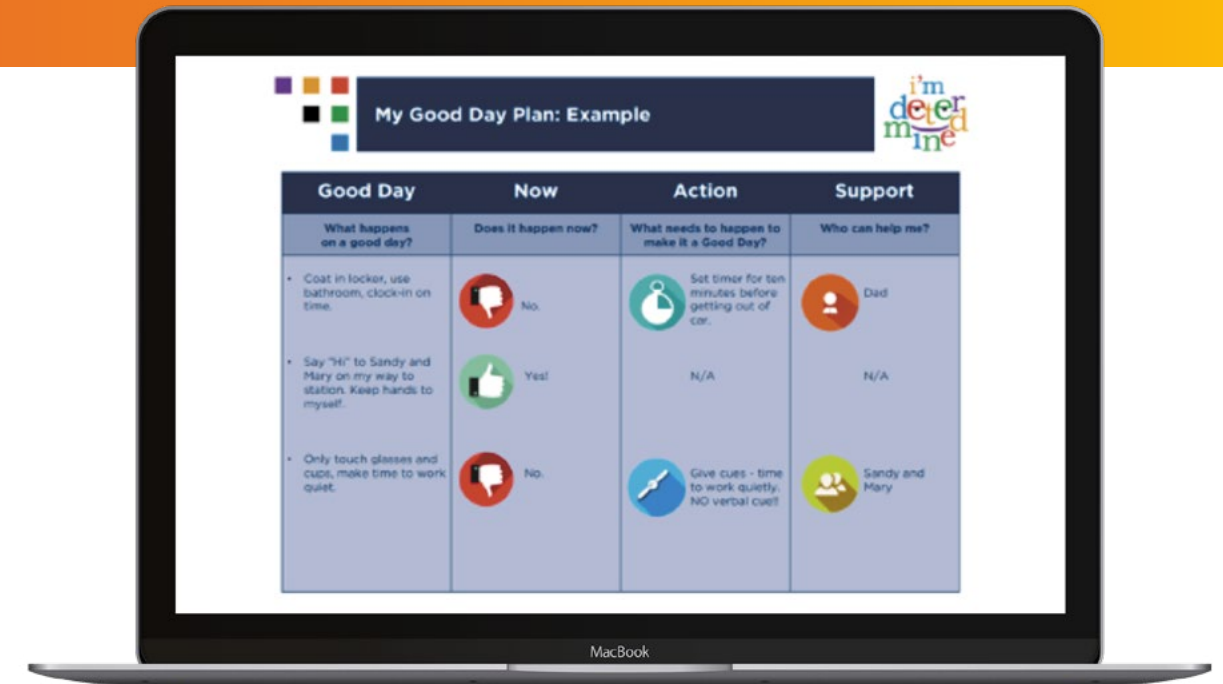
## My Good Day Plan template:

Questions to help students complete the Good Day Plan



# MY GOOD DAY PLAN EXAMPLES

## Incorporating symbols:



## Text:



# GOAL PLAN

## What it is and what it does

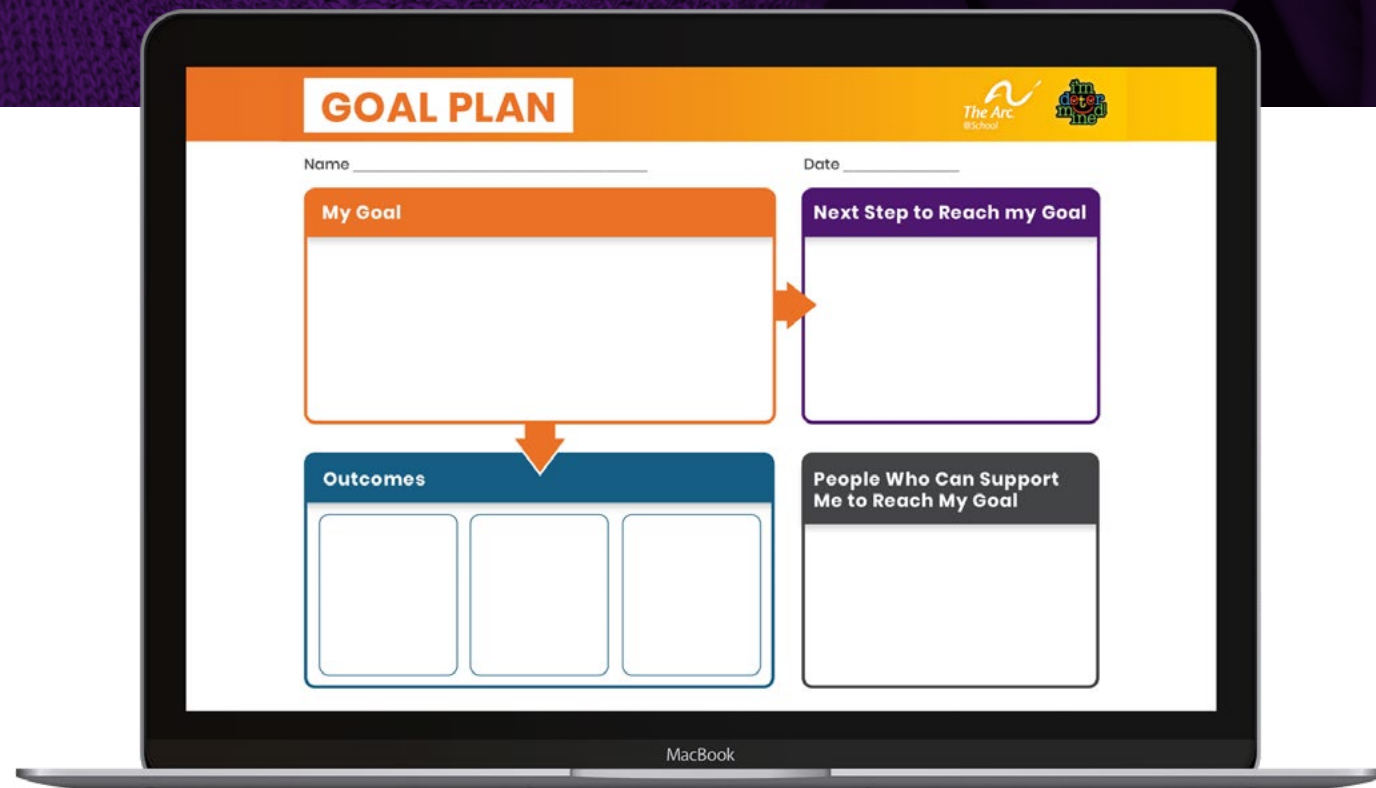
The Goal Plan is a visual representation of the steps needed to accomplish an identified goal. A graphic organizer assists the student in visualizing the goal, the steps needed to accomplish the goal, and possible outcomes resulting from attaining the goal.

A Goal Plan provides a visual representation of defining a goal and breaking the goal into manageable steps needed to achieve the long term results.

## How to use it

The templates may be printed so the student can write, draw, or use pictures to define the goal and steps needed to attain the goal. You can also use the apps or web version!

## Goal Plan Template



# GOAL PLAN EXAMPLES

## Goal Plan using symbols:



## Goal Plan using simple text:





## ONE-PAGER, GOOD DAY PLAN, AND GOAL PLAN FORMATS

Download Printable Documents:

[One pager](#)

[Good Day Plan](#)

[Goal Plan](#)

### App

IMD3 is an all-in-one app that includes the One-Pager, Good Day Plan, and Goal Plan and a teacher dashboard. This app allows students to create self-evaluations, set individual goals, and plan good days. The app combines the functionality of the One-Pager, Goal Plan, and Good Day Plan into one easy to use application; keeping your students entries all in one place.

The IMD3 App was built with teacher management in mind. It requires a teacher to log in, create classes, and add students in order for students to fill out the tools. The IMD3 app is a robust application that also allows that teacher to keep track of the progress students are making on all three of their tools. Lastly, the IMD3 app requires an iPad to use, but does not require Internet connection once the app is downloaded.



### Step-by-step tools that:

- Enable students to communicate and identify their strengths, preferences, interests, and needs.
- Track personal, academic, and career goals over the short-, mid-, and long-term.
- Plan a good day and share it with others using an iPad.

## Web-based tools



**One-Pager online:**  
[Click here](#)

**Good Day Plan online:**  
[Click here](#)

**Goal Plan online:**  
[Click Here](#)



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