The Arc@School's

SELF-DETERMINATION TOOLBOX

Parent Toolkit

Tips to help your child set goals, make decisions, and participate in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

The Arc
@School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Arc @School

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

i'mdetermined!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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

INTRODUCTION

Self-determination allows people to make choices and decisions to improve their quality of life. This toolkit offers steps on how you can support your child to be a more active participant in the choices they make in life, especially through the individualized education plan (IEP). This toolkit will provide guidance on working with your child on the three phases of on self-determination.

Teaching Self-Determination: 3 Phases

1. LEARN
Parents and their child will learn what self-determination is, why it is important, and what it means to exercise self-determination. Parents and their child will work together to establish routines that can help their child exercise their self-determination.

2. PREPARE
Parents will work with their child to complete various activities that help the child identify their wants, needs, strengths, interests, and preferences.

3. LEAD
Together, parents and their child will establish a plan of action to follow to build on their self-determination skills and reach their goals.

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 to 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

CORE COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES
Choice-Making Decision-Making	**Allow your child to make basic choices/decisions, such as:** • What to eat for lunch or a snack • Which of two activities to participate in • Which outfit to wear to school or out to dinner
Problem-Solving	**Discuss with your child:** • How to resolve an argument with a sibling or friend • What to do when there is homework to do, but friends are asking them to hang out • How to deal with unhappiness
Goal-Setting Goal-Attainment	**Model these behaviors by:** • Posting a daily, weekly or monthly "to-dos" schedule and checking them off as they are completed • Listing on a calendar the steps you will follow to reach a goal • Involving them when planning a family or household activity or outing
Independence	**Provide your child:** • Opportunities and time for independent work and socialization • Instruction in how to help around the house and the opportunity to complete chores without help • Time to complete chores independently, even if they make errors
Self-Observation Self-Evaluation Self-Reinforcement	**Teach your child to:** • Ask for help before they get too confused or frustrated • Discuss the positive and negative consequences of their actions • Participate in activities to promote their self-worth
Self-Advocacy Leadership	**Assist your child to model these behaviors by:** • Ordering and paying for their own lunch • Organizing a recreational activity for the family or a small group of friends • Running for a school/community organization office
Self-Awareness Self-Knowledge	**Teach your child to:** • Identify their interests and strengths • When appropriate, explain their disability and how they learn best • Recognize the challenges their disability presents

PHASE 2:
PREPARE

Pointers on Getting Started

Focus on the child and not the disability:

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

Provide feedback:

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

Be knowledgeable about their strengths, talents, gifts, interests, and learning differences:

• Discuss their strengths, gifts, interests, and learning differences with them.

Educate, do not excuse:

• Discuss role models.
• Stress coping and learning strategies.
• People with disabilities are often unmotivated due to feelings of failure, frustration, and false labels (crazy, lazy, dumb).
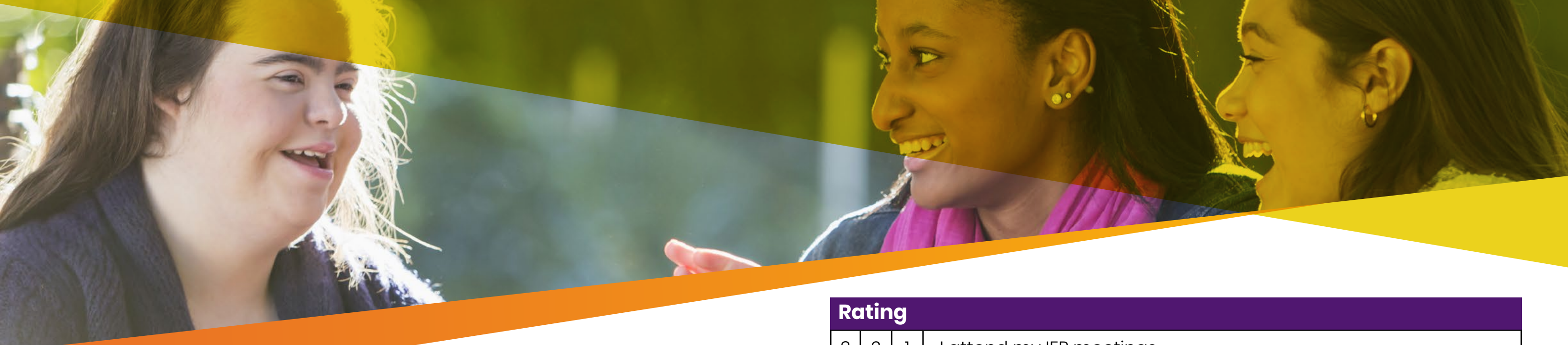
MEASURING AND TRACKING PROGRESS

Simple tools can help you and your child gauge your current level of understanding of self-determination and opportunities for growth. This self-assessment helps your child rate their self-determination skills. Your child can do this assessment every six or 12 months to see if their skills have improved.

Self-determination skills help you to know

- yourself
- your goals
- supports you need to reach your goals

Use the following scale to rate the statements below

3 – Almost always or most of the time
2 – Sometimes
1 – Rarely or never

Rating			
3	2	1	I attend my IEP meetings.
3	2	1	At school, my teachers listen to me when I talk about what I want or need.
3	2	1	At home, my parents listen to me when I talk about what I want or need.
3	2	1	I ask for help when I need it.
3	2	1	I know what I need, what I like, and what I enjoy doing.
3	2	1	I tell others what I need, what I like, and what I enjoy doing.
3	2	1	I take care of my things (pets, clothes, toys).
3	2	1	I make friends with others.
3	2	1	I make good choices.
3	2	1	I believe that working hard at school will help me do good in school.

Total rating: _____   Date: _____

GETTING STARTED ACTIVITY

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

Instructions

Simply discuss the questions with your child and prepare responses, which will be used for the foundation for the other activities in the toolkit. This can be done one-on-one with your child or even as a family, where everyone answers these questions.

How to use it

Parents and their child can use a template to type or hand write information or add pictures or objects. It all depends on what works best for your child.

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 getting started on Self-Determination:

Who will help me?

What is my dream?

What is my plan of action?

What is my story?

Who accepts me?

What do I need?

Who am I?

What am I good at?

Who loves me?

PHASE 3:
LEAD

Three Main Tools to Pack in Your Toolbox

When people 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. It's also important for youth with disabilities to learn how to make decisions on their own as they transition to adulthood.

One-Pager
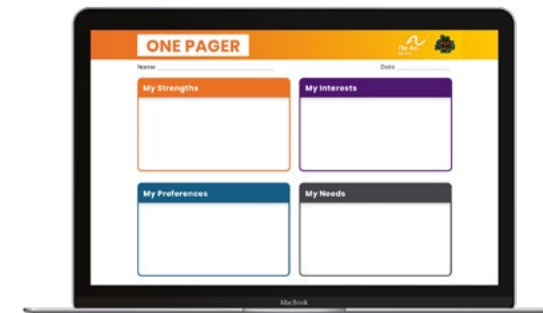
Goal Plan
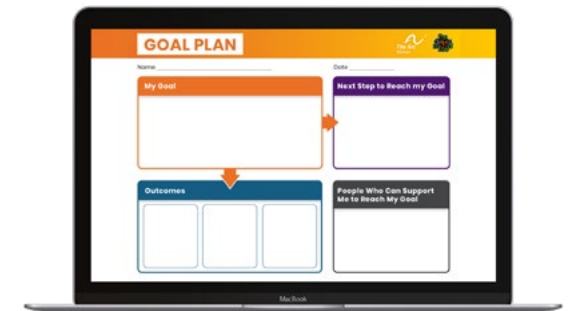
Good Day Plan

ONE-PAGER

The One-Pager is a simple tool to help provide important information about the person. The One-Pager was created as a way to cut though 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 person: My Strengths, My Preferences, My Interests, and My Needs. The person identifies 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 the person 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
People with disabilities can use a template to type or hand write information or add pictures or objects. It all depends on what works best for your child. Use the apps or web tool as well!

ONE-PAGER TEMPLATE:

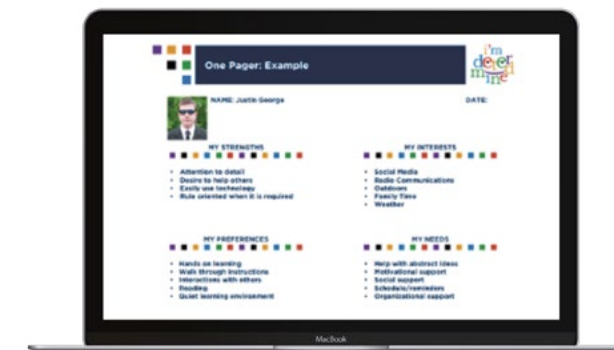One-Pager template: questions to help your child complete the One-Pager

ONE-PAGER EXAMPLES

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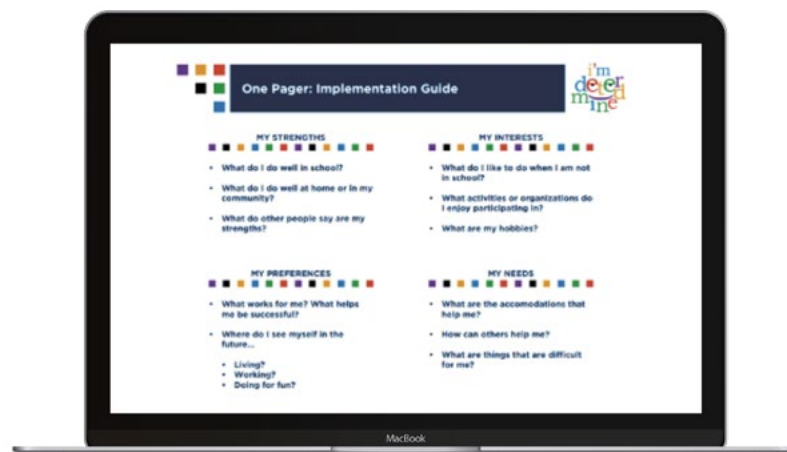
Incorporating objects:

Written text:

Incorporating pictures and symbols:

MY GOOD DAY PLAN

Think about what a good day 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, your child needs to recognize the things they need each day to set themselves up for success.

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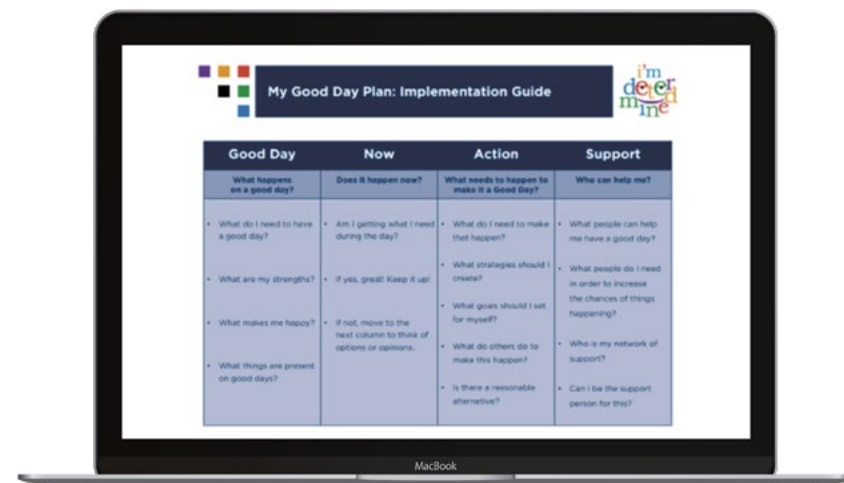
What it is and what it does
The Good Day Plan is a simple tool used to help people identify the factors that play a role in whether or not they have a good day. The Good Day Plan allows parents and their child to view their day from beginning to end and helps them identify a structure/routine that enables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

How to use it
Have your child (with your help) visualize a good day and write down the steps to achieve it. Then, using the apps or following the template, have your child create an action plan to make their good day happen more often.
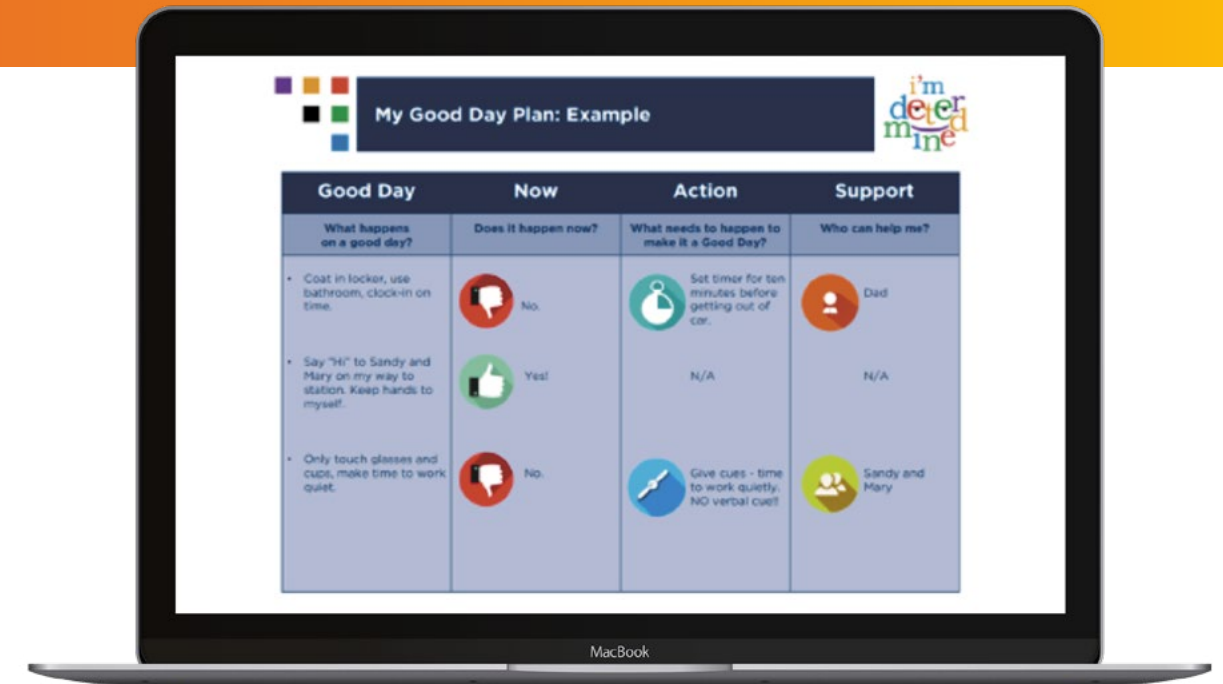
My Good Day Plan template:

Questions to help your child complete the Good Day Plan

MY GOOD DAY PLAN EXAMPLES

Incorporating symbols:

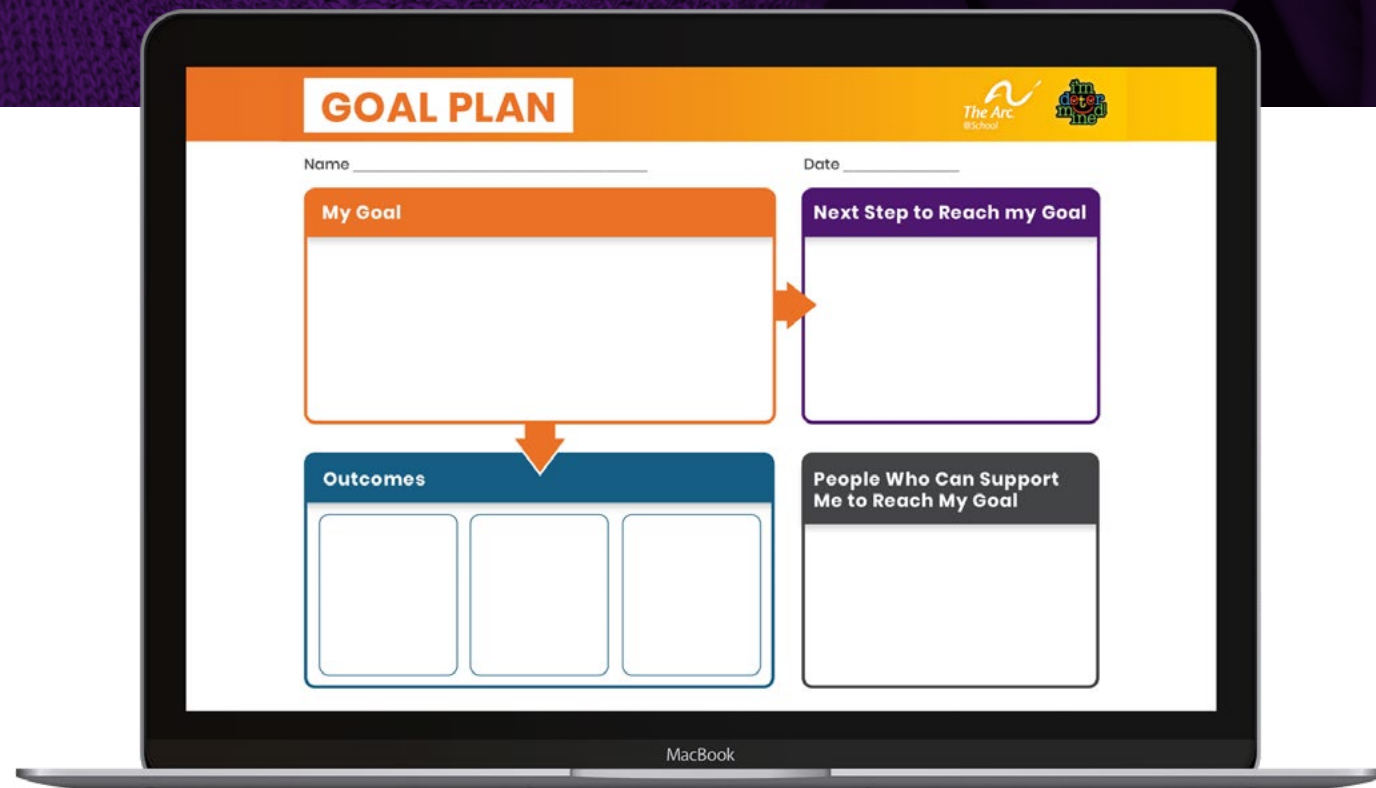## Text:

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 person 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 person 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 people with disabilities 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.

Step-by-step tools that:

- Enable person 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

The Arc.
@School

1825 K Street, NW, Suite 1200
Washington, DC 20006

TheArc.org

(800) 433-5255