

## Domain ③: Student Engagement

All students, including students with significant disabilities, should be treated as persons capable of providing information on their needs, wants, and desires. They should be prepared and supported to be active decision-makers and participants in their home, school, and community as well as in any processes that could shape their future (i.e., IEP Meetings).

True student engagement must begin with an absolute belief and approach that communicates that every person has potential and it is their unique strengths and capabilities that will determine their evolving story - not their limitations. The belief then must turn into meaningful action. Interestingly, there is a difference between “student engagement” and “student involvement.” If you look at the Latin root of the word “involvement,” it is “involvere,” which means to wrap around, cover or envelop; cause to roll. Compare that to the Latin root of the word “engagement,” which is “engare,” and it means to make a formal agreement, to contract with; to pledge; and obligation to do something (Jennings, 2015). As such, student champions need to engage students in the transition planning process so that they are true stakeholders in their future.

Students who are supported to be active decision-makers in their transition from school to adult life will have had opportunities to:

- Develop Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy Skills
- Learn about Disability History
- Foster Disability Pride
- Understand the Role of Special Education Services
- Learn about and Participate in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Meetings
- Learn, Understand, and Advocate for their Protected Rights
- Hone their Communication Skills
- Identify and Connect with Community Resources
- Cultivate Natural Supports

Providing high quality self-advocacy and self-determination training is a predictor of post-school employment (Test et al., 2009). Self-determination (Landmark et al., 2010) includes a number of skills such as:

- Choice-making skills;
- Decision-making skills;
- Problem-solving skills;
- Goal-setting and attainment skills;
- Independence, risk-taking, and safety skills;
- Self-observation, evaluation, and reinforcement skills;
- Self-instruction skills;
- Self-advocacy and leadership skills;
- Internal locus of control;
- Positive attributions of efficacy and outcome expectancy;
- Self-awareness; and
- Self-knowledge