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Self-Determination in Relation to Self-Advocacy in Physical Education and Health Education

Kristi Roth, Cathy MacDonald, and Lars Kristén

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Describe the three components of self-determination.
- Identify classroom applications of the principles of self-determination.
- Link the Universal Design for Learning framework to self-determination.
- Describe the relationship between self-determination and self-advocacy.

KEY TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Relatedness</td>
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<td>Competence</td>
<td>Self-advocacy</td>
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<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Self-determination</td>
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<td>Self-efficacy</td>
<td>Universal Design for Learning</td>
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SCENARIO 1

Choua

Choua is a ninth-grade student who is transitioning to high school. She is working with her IEP team to establish her Individual Transition Plan. In addition to her future goals for work, Choua is given a survey to help determine what she wants to do to stay physically active after high school. The survey includes most of the activities and sports she has done in her physical education classes thus far. She has struggled to enjoy many of those activities. However, Choua tells the IEP team that what she really wants to learn is adventure racing, a multidisciplinary team sport involving navigation of a wilderness course. She has a friend who enjoys adventure racing, and she thinks she will like it too. Recognizing the importance for Choua to self-
As is illustrated in the preceding case study, students who are taught to advocate for themselves learn to have a voice and be in control of their own wants and needs. **Self-advocacy and self-determination** include the abilities to select personal goals, plan steps toward goals, make choices, and self-monitor and self-evaluate one's behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Teachers play an important role in supporting and teaching students to use the skills associated with self-determination. In physical education, teachers support the development of self-determination by providing choices and encouraging goal setting in and outside lessons (Doll et al., 1996) as well as opportunities for taking initiative and providing constructive feedback and rationales for their actions (Mageau & Vallierand, 2003). With appropriate supports, accommodations, and opportunities for feedback from staff, students, including those with a disability, develop enhanced self-determination.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of self-determination theory and demonstrate how educators apply the theory in the classroom. We provide specific ideas as to how to implement associated strategies in physical education. In addition, we introduce the **Universal Design for Learning** framework and demonstrate how it is useful to foster self-determination in students. Finally, we describe the relationship between self-determination and self-advocacy.

**Self-Determination**

Self-advocacy is a key component of self-determination, as described in Chapter 1. Understanding the conceptual framework of self-determination is key to application of self-advocacy within health and physical education. Self-determination is the act of students directing their own lives as they desire without the influence or dictates of others. Goal setting, decision-making, problem solving, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy are all skills required to achieve self-determination (Wehmeyer et al., 1998). Self-determination theory includes the psychological needs of **competence, autonomy, and relatedness** and is a key theory of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). If students feel like they have the skills they need to complete a task, feel that they are engaged in activities that they initiate or have a voice in, and feel that they are connected to others, they are more likely to do the task. Self-determination is directly tied to self-regulated behaviors and motivation, including those related to health and wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

**Types of Motivation**

Ryan and Deci (2000) identify three types of motivation that are related to self-determination theory (Figure 3.1). These include amotivation, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation. A student who is amotivated is unwilling or lacks drive to engage in activity. This lack of motivation is caused by a variety of external or internal factors. The student may not have interest in the activity (Ryan, 1995), they may not feel like they have the skills to do the activity (Banduras, 1996), or they may feel that the activity may not result in a positive outcome. Amotivated students may engage in activity only to avoid guilt or shame or to avoid punishment, which results in minimal effort and a lack of persistence. Extrinsic motivators are tangible or intangible and include school rules, grades, social pressure, assessments, and teacher behaviors, rewards, praise, or encouragement (Dent et al., 1999). Students may respond positively to extrinsic motivators. However, similar to amotivated students, their engagement does not persist. They may engage in the activity because they have to, subsequently perform at a minimal level, and allow their participation to wane when the extrinsic motivator is removed (San et al., 2017). When students are intrinsically motivated, they engage in the activity because it is inherently interesting, pleasurable, or satisfying for them to do so. Intrinsic motivation may also be referred to as autonomous motivation. Individuals who are intrinsically or autonomously motivated are more likely to engage and persist in exercise-related activities (Tobetixi et al., 2012).

**Competence**

Individuals are autonomously motivated when the goals of the activity reflect their personal interests and values (Koestner et al., 2008). Autonomously motivated individuals are therefore more likely to be effective in self-regulation of behavior. Teachers create an autonomy-supportive classroom by providing students with choices and allowing options for personalization (Shen et al., 2000). Standard 3 of the SHAPE America (2013) National Standards for Physical Education states: "The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness and contains a grade level outcome for students to participate several times a week in a self-selected lifetime activity outside of the school day" (53.H.6.L1). Creating opportunities for students to self-identify their own needs and engage in activities that address those needs empowers learners and facilitates motivation. Kristen et al. (2020) found that when students were asked to use and provide feedback on a new piece of modified equipment for physical education, students with disabilities who were previously not engaged in class joined the class to discuss and help with the equipment. By letting students know that their opinions on the equipment were valued and by asking them to work together to provide feedback, student motivation increased. Classrooms where physical educators provide more rationale for activities and enhance student choice within activities result in an increase in the frequency with which students engage in physical activity during their free time (Charitapanit et al., 2000). A few strategies that support student autonomy in health and physical education are found in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.1 Motivations Related to the Self-Determination Theory**

Amotivation

Extrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation

**Figure 3.2 Strategies to Support Student Autonomy**

- Explain the benefits of activities.
- Incorporate the use of choice.
- Intrinsic and extrinsic activites.

**Figure 3.3 Strategies to Support Student Competence**

- Scaffold learning.
- Ask students to recognize what they performed well.
- Present content in multiple formats with content in learning.
Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the extent that students feel connected to others, feel cared for and care for others, and feel like they are a valued member of a community. Establishment of supportive and positive relationships builds trust and confidence. These traits are necessary for students to feel safe enough to self-advocate. Health and physical education teachers foster relatedness by designing activities and procedures that foster collaboration and support (Figure 3.4). Integration of cooperative learning and multicultural activities are examples of how a curriculum fosters relatedness. It is also imperative that culturally sensitive learning environments are cultivated to foster inclusivity. Standard 4 of the National Standards for K–12 Physical Education states that the physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others. The grade-level outcomes throughout this standard include a focus on working with others and aims to cultivate students who utilize one another for problem-solving and support. Students gain connections with one another when they share common experiences and tackle challenges together.

Table 3.1 In-Class Application of Self-Determination Needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Determination Needs</th>
<th>Classroom Strategies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>When starting a unit, show students the learning outcomes for the unit and allow them to select three activities from a list to engage in and demonstrate mastery in that unit.</td>
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<td>Have a &quot;Modification Station&quot; in an area of the classroom or gym where students go to select a piece of equipment to make an activity easier or harder. Examples include balloons, beach balls, large racquets, knobby balls, scooters, and foxtails.</td>
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<td>Create &quot;Personal Progress Boards&quot; for students where they track their progress on grade-level outcomes posted on a bulletin board. They move their name card up as they master more outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Use stations that have varied levels of difficulty and allow students to move freely among the stations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Have students share with a peer at the end of class one skill they mastered or improved on that day in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up game play with scaffolded challenges. For example, during volleyball, have a 2 x 2 ft volleyball area with a balloon, a volleyball court with a lowered net and a beach ball, and a standard volleyball game area. Students rotate between areas based on mastery of skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>Utilize a &quot;Support Squad&quot; where the goal of middle game play or an activity, students gather with their squad to determine who needs more or less challenge and generate ideas for adapting the activity to meet their squads needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assign &quot;Accountability Partners&quot; who go when the teacher calls &quot;Challenge Check.&quot; The partners discuss their goal for the day and share ideas for being more successful. They also share what they saw each other doing well that day and what they could improve on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Self-Determination and Universal Design for Learning

Utilization of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework to help meet the autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs of students is an effective approach to foster self-determination. The UDL guidelines provide users with means for fostering equity through integration of multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. The UDL framework provides checkpoints that move through three levels of accomplishment: access, build, and internalize (Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST], 2018).

- In the access level, the checkpoints emphasize methods for developing effort and persistence and fostering communication and expression. This aligns with the self-determination principles of autonomy and relatedness.
- In the internalize level, the checkpoints emphasize methods to empower learners to self-regulate, plan, and focus. This aligns with autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

By integrating the UDL framework into their instruction, teachers provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression and allow students to have pathways to learning that promote self-determination (Lieberman et al., 2020). See Figure 3.5 for a framework that shows how UDL and self-determination align and are applied to activities in the health or physical education setting (Roth, 2021). We believe that it is imperative that educators design a culture of UDL practices that is initiated among students rather than always designed and led by the physical or health educator. By creating a reliance on adults to create equitable practices, we disempower students to be inclusive when adults are not there to...
interconnected with self-determination, as we shared in Chapter 1. Self-advocacy, along with goal setting, decision-making, problem solving, and self-efficacy, allows students to live as independent, self-directed members of their community. Students in a health education class and engaged in a unit on planning lifetime healthful living activities demonstrate self-advocacy in a variety of ways. For example, they completely planning worksheets that are framed around Standard 8 of the National Health Education Standards. "Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health" (Joint Committee on National Health Education Standards, 2007). Within these worksheets, students rank order by preference a list of lifetime healthful living activities such as yoga, weightlifting, baseball, archery, healthy cooking, and hiking. Students are also allowed to write in their own preferred activities if they are not listed. Students then set goals for integrating their top three activities into their weekly practice. By allowing students choice in activities and the freedom to design their own goals, students are demonstrating skills in self-determination. By creating a system of practice where students include activities that are not on a predetermined list, allowing them the opportunity to self-reflect on their personal desires, navigate the resources to attain those desires, and communicate their desires for lifetime activity; students are demonstrating skills in self-advocacy.

Self-determination is speaking up for our rights and responsibilities and empowering ourselves to stand up for what we believe in. This means being able to choose where we work, live, and our friends; to educate ourselves and others, to work as a team to obtain common goals; and to develop the skills that enable us to fight for our beliefs, to advocate for our needs, and to obtain the level of independence that we desire. (Self Advocates Becoming Empowered, 1996)

Self-advocacy is an important skill to have as students become self-determined. Self-advocacy involves students speaking up for themselves and having confidence to be their own advocate for what they know they need or want. (Pennell, 2001). Self-advocacy is a community in supporting the school and the connections between health and academic achievement along with evidence-based school policies and practices. The WSCC model places the child at the center, surrounded by five whole child tenets: healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Students who are self-determined are likely to take ownership over their physical activity and health needs by engaging in physical education as well as after-school programs and within the community.

**Conclusion**

Self-determination and self-advocacy are important in the education of students. Goal setting, decision-making, problem solving, self-efficacy, and self-advocacy are all skills required to develop self-determination. Self-determination theory includes the psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness and is a key theory of motivation. Educators use various strategies to meet these needs. For example, students might be given the opportunity to set personal goals and learn to track their progress on grade-level outcomes to develop a sense of autonomy and competence or to engage in cooperative learning activities to develop relatedness. The UDL framework may be implemented to help students meet the autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs and may be an effective approach to foster self-determination. The UDL guidelines provides users with means for fostering equity through integration of multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression (CAST, 2018) and provides checkpoints that move through three levels of accomplishment: access, build, and internalize. By fostering self-determination and self-advocacy, educators help students develop the skills needed to put them in control of their own health and physical activity wants and needs (Lieberman et al., 2020).

**SCENARIO 2**

**Frida and Johan**

Frida and Johan are in seventh grade and participate in a general physical education class. Frida has a hearing impairment, and Johan has an orthopedic impairment and ambulates with a walker. The class is engaged in a dance unit. The PE teacher divides the students into different groups and asks them to try to create a dance. During the group planning, Frida and Johan explain to their groups how the dance can be designed so that they can participate fully. The students collaborate to determine how everyone can be included in the dance and try different steps and rhythms to music. The physical education teacher circulates to each group and guides their discussion on how to plan dance moves that Frida and Johan can engage in successfully. After planning, each group teaches the rest of the class the dance they created. At the end of the instruction, before the class practises the dances, each group checks with Frida and Johan to ensure they can complete the steps of the dance and determine if they need modifications. Frida and Johan share what they need, and the class discusses ideas for ensuring their success. Frida and Johan feel that their opinions are important and that the other students and teachers listen to them. Ultimately, the class selects a ribbon for Johan to use for moves that are difficult for him to perform (slides), and they come up with clear verbal cues for the dance for Frida. As the class worked together to ensure all students' needs were met, they all experienced a sense of relatedness. With the modifications, Frida and Johan were able to feel a sense of competence, and by creating structures where students were determining how to best meet the needs of learning communities, the physical educator was fostering competence. This subsequence empowers all students in the class to self-advocate, which promotes intrinsic motivation and supports self-determination.

---Lars Kråkström, Halmstad University, Sweden

Aligned with National Physical Education Standard: 5.A.M.1.7 Exhibits responsible social behaviors by cooperating with classmates, demonstrating inclusive behaviors, and supporting classmates (SHARE America, 2012).
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Chapter Review Questions

1. What is self-determination and its three components?
2. Identify strategies used to support the application of the three components of self-determination.

References


Infusing Self-Advocacy into Physical Education

Kevin Andrew Richards and Paul M. Wright

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Identify self-advocacy skills that are important for all students.
- Describe the relationship between self-advocacy and social and emotional learning.
- Design instructional activities that prioritize self-advocacy in physical education.

KEY TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship skills</th>
<th>Self-awareness</th>
<th>Self-management</th>
<th>Social awareness</th>
<th>Transfer of learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

SCENARIO 1

Educational Leadership Program

I spent over a decade of my teaching career developing the physical education leadership program at my high school that now includes over 100 students. New leaders typically meet teachers with managerial tasks and/ or provide additional support in our adapted physical education classes. After a year or two, they can take on higher-level responsibilities such as going off-site to help adapt physical education at a school in our district or mentoring to newer members just starting the program. The development of this large and comprehensive leadership program became one of my biggest points of pride. However, as I was nearing retirement, my attention was drawn to a blind spot for myself and the program: David, a student with autism, had worked with leaders in his physical education classes. Being bright, helpful, social, and a good self-advocate, David asked me if he could join the leadership program. I had never consciously decided that students with disabilities could not serve in this program—I had just never occurred to me, slightly hampered but inspired by that realization, I made right adaptations to the training and leadership roles that David required. Although he was placed in teams of leaders with strong peer support, David was fully involved. He gave and received as much as all the other leaders. We now have a more inclusive physical education leadership program, and David's self-advocacy skills helped me continue growing and learning as an educator even up to the final years of my career.

-Pam Range, retired teacher, West Aurora High School, Aurora, Illinois

Aligned with SHAPE America Physical Education Standard 4: The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others (SHAPE America, 2014).