

Two new books provide road map for educators, school communities to promote self-determination

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More than a decade of research has shown that when students, especially

those with disabilities, are given ownership and determination of their own education and life goals, they have better educational outcomes. Two new books based upon work at the University of Kansas provide a road map for educators, school communities and families to promote self-determination and use the Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction, or SDLMI.

Karrie Shogren, Ross and Marianna Beach Distinguished Professor of Special Education, has published hundreds of academic journal articles on self-determination. She focuses on supporting students with disabilities to have a voice in determining what they want out of their own education and in life after school as well as giving teachers, families and communities strategies to make this happen.

Supporting practitioners to implement the SDLMI

Shogren is lead author of "The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction: A Practitioner's Guide to Implementation for Special Education" with co-author Sheida Raley, now at the University of Arkansas and former faculty member with KU's Center on Developmental Disabilities. [The book](#) is a user-friendly introduction to SDLMI.

"There hasn't really been a book out there that's an easy-to-understand guide on what the SDLMI is and how it can be used," said Shogren, who is also the director of the KU Center on Developmental Disabilities and senior scientist at the Life Span Institute. "We wrote this book to give educators and others that support students this information along with the chance to hear stories from teachers and students that have used the SDLMI in their schools and communities."

The book is largely focused on special educators and explores how SDLMI can be used in inclusive classrooms, transition planning and in

the community to promote inclusion and full participation in goal setting for all students.

Following an introductory chapter, "A Practitioner's Guide" digs deeper into SDLMI, sharing research on the approach's effectiveness.

The book then has multiple chapters highlighting different ways that the SDLMI can be used in schools and communities, including:

- Delivery in a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework.
- Usage to advance culturally sustaining outcomes.
- Adaptation to support students with complex communication needs.
- Usage in inclusive classes with students with and without disabilities.
- Delivery as effective support during the transition from school to adult life.

"We try to provide a map of ways teachers, schools and communities can use SDLMI," Shogren said. "For example, we talk about how through MTSS, an entire school can use the approach. We also talk about how it can be used in community contexts or even virtually, based on what we learned during the pandemic. It's a snapshot of the many ways people can use it, and we really tried to bring in and elevate stories of people who have used SDLMI and how it impacts their teaching and lives."

The book closes with an exploration of future directions for SDLMI, including how technology may change its delivery. Shogren and colleagues recently won a \$3.8 million grant from the Institute of Education Sciences to test the efficacy of delivering SDLMI via a new method called the Goal Setting Challenge App.

Integrating research into practice

Shogren and co-author Raley have also written "Self-Determination and Causal Agency Theory: Integrating Research into Practice."

The [textbook](#) is an introduction to Causal Agency Theory, a framework developed by Shogren and colleagues to define self-determination and how it can be supported across the life course. It provides a synthesis of current research on promoting and enhancing self-determination and how Causal Agency Theory can guide the development of assessments and interventions like SDLMI.

"This book is a first step to map out the historical, current and ongoing research focused on self-determination and its role in the life of people with and without disabilities," Shogren said.

In addition to defining the theoretical basis for self-determination, the work explores issues relating to the implementation of self-determination and evidence-based practices in a disability context and potential strategies for overcoming barriers to self-determination through research-based approaches and systems change.

In addition to summarizing research on self-determination, the book also covers the new theoretical approach to understanding how to empower people with disabilities to have agency and control in their own lives and education, and how this can be translated to practice.

"It's understanding that each person has self-determination and environments can be structured to be supportive of growth in self-determination," Shogren said. "If people perceive you as not capable, that's going to affect your self-determination in negative ways. We're seeking to change how people with disabilities are seen through partnerships with the disability community to build educational

environments that enable students to be causal agents over their lives."

Provided by University of Kansas

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