

# Self-Directed IEP:

## *Bridging Values of Diverse Cultures and Secondary Education*

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This article describes the relationships among the *Self-Directed IEP*, cultural values, self-determination, and transition. Educators must move toward understanding collectivist values to provide appropriate opportunities to succeed within an individualistic school culture for culturally and linguistically diverse students with Individualized Education Programs and their families. The *Self-Directed IEP* process is a tool for culture sharing, which has been identified as a best practice for meeting the needs, preferences, and interests of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families. School districts may use the *Self-Directed IEP* process to bridge the chasm between the individualistic values of schools and collectivist values of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families to facilitate culturally appropriate transitions to adulthood.

By the year 2040, estimates suggest that more than half the K through 12 school population will consist of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Leake & Stodden, 2002; Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke, & Vasquez, 1999). CLD students come from families with traditions and values outside the mainstream culture who often do not speak English as their primary language. Current special education transition programming may not address two poor postschool outcomes for CLD students with disabilities. Recent studies indicate disproportionate unemployment rates and minimal enrollment in postsecondary education for CLD students with disabilities who recently left high school as compared to their peers with and without disabilities (CEC Today, 2001; Greene & Nefsky, 1999; Wagner, Cameto, & Newman, 2003; Wagner, Cadwallader, et al., 2003; Warger & Burnette, 2000). These findings, combined with projected increases in the CLD student population, necessitate structuring transition services to address the specific needs of CLD students. Continuing to approach transition and self-determination instruction without respect for cultural differences in secondary schools will not prepare CLD students with disabilities for employment or a self-determined quality of life after high school (Callicott, 2003; Geenan, Powers, & Vasquez-Lopez, 2001; Greene, 1996; Harry, Allen, & McLaughlin, 1995).

Relationships among culture, transition programs, self-determination instruction, and the Individualized

Education Program (IEP) process influence postschool outcomes for CLD students (Leake, Black, & Roberts, 2004; Trainor, 2002). In this article, we examine these relationships in four sections. First, we provide a brief introduction to the relationships among self-determination constructs, individualist and collectivist cultural values, and school transition practices. Second, we look at self-determination, the *Self-Directed IEP* (Martin, Marshall, Maxson, & Jerman, 1996) process, and culture. Third, we explore differences among culture, self-determination, and transition. Finally, we discuss how self-determination practices can provide opportunities for CLD students with IEPs to practice individualism while maintaining their bonds with their native cultures.

### SELF-DETERMINATION CONSTRUCTS, CULTURAL VALUES, AND SECONDARY TRANSITION

The values and behaviors we examine are not intended to present cultures as homogeneous. Heterogeneity within cultural groups makes identifying a definitive behavior of any culture impossible, and we are not attempting to stereotype or collapse individuals into commonalities. Viewing cultural values through a prism of beginning points rather than end points, however, can assist in a comparative discussion of cultural values (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001) and suggest how these values relate to

transitions in the IEP process at the secondary school level. Jezewski and Sotnik defined *culture* as “a system of learned and shared standards for perceiving, interpreting, and behaving in interactions with others and with the environment” (p. 3). Students learn and share their culture through values, behaviors, social interactions, and family. We consider culture sharing to be an exchange of values among diverse peoples that results in new and blended practices that promote student and family involvement in the secondary school IEP transition-planning processes.

### *Individualist and Collectivist Values*

Leake et al. (in press) indicated that a barrier preventing CLD students from successfully engaging in education is the contrast between what has been called the individualistic values of mainstream White culture and the collectivist values characteristic of many other cultures. By pairing self-determination constructs with corresponding individualistic and collectivist cultural values, we can see how cultural differences serve as barriers in transition planning for CLD students with disabilities.

**Self-Awareness.** Many secondary special education teachers with an individualistic orientation expect students to learn about their disabilities and present that information at their IEP meetings. In collectivist cultures, however, the family often defines individual identity, and the students form their identities within the family group, irrespective of disability (Harry, 2002).

**Decision Making and Self-Advocacy.** In an individualistic transition system, secondary special education teachers often expect students to actively self-advocate, make decisions, and perhaps lead their own IEP meeting. In collectivist cultures, students often defer leadership and active participation to a family spokesperson as a matter of respect (Greene & Nefsky, 1999).

**Independent Performance.** In an individualistic transition system, teachers expect students to develop postschool visions and goals based solely on the students' preferences and interests. In collectivist cultures, students often develop postschool visions and goals on the basis of the needs and values of the family and community (Luft, 2005).

**Adjustment.** Goals, objectives, and strategies to support postschool visions of the student may need to be

adjusted on the basis of individual situations. Adjustments also may need to be made to the time allotted for the IEP meeting. In an individualistic culture, time is a schedule-oriented process. For example, the teacher may schedule an IEP meeting from 8:00 to 8:45 a.m. The meeting would end at the scheduled time, whether or not the IEP process was complete, with minimal attention to decision making and personal satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting. In a collectivist culture, time is process-oriented. The IEP meeting will begin at the scheduled time and when the student and his or her family are comfortable. The meeting will end after the student, family, and the IEP team have made the necessary decisions and the student and his or her family are satisfied with the IEP meeting, without time constraints (Greene, 1996).

### *Cultural Discontinuity*

CLD research supports assertions of contrasting values between cultures. Geenan et al. (2001) found cultural discontinuity between school and home environments. For example, CLD parents acknowledged the importance of providing students opportunities to address such transition goals as obtaining postsecondary education, but they placed more emphasis on teaching the values of the native culture at home than on focusing on other transition issues. Anderson et al. (1998) discussed how CLD families believe their primary purpose is to pass on cultural values to their youth. Such evidence of parental efforts to preserve the native culture supports the recommendations of Harry, Rueda, and Kalyanpur (1999), who suggested that educators develop dialogues with CLD families to “compare our differing beliefs and work towards collaboration . . . rather than setting goals derived from a set of values that may be alien to the people we serve” (p. 125). Exchanging cultural values between individualist schools in an individualist culture and students and families from collectivist cultures as part of self-determination and transition instruction requires a tool to serve as the bridge between cultures.

## THE SELF-DIRECTED IEP

The *Self-Directed IEP* is a method for students to practice self-determination skills and participate more directly in the IEP meeting. Self-determination concepts are essential components of transition practices (Field & Hoffman, 2002). Self-determination consists of a set of

skills that enable individuals to engage in opportunities and make adjustments to attain desired goals. Self-determined individuals, in alignment with individualism, know what they want and how to get it. From an awareness of personal needs, self-determined individuals doggedly pursue them. This involves asserting an individual's presence, making his or her own needs known, evaluating progress toward meeting goals, adjusting performance, and creating unique approaches to solve problems (Martin & Marshall, 1995, p. 147).

Embedded in this definition are constructs integral to values of individualism. Self-determination values, such as self-awareness, decision making, self-advocacy, independent performance, and adjustment, are embedded in the IEP process but require a process for cultivation.

By establishing relationships among these values, the *Self-Directed IEP* (Martin et al., 1996) can become a method for educators and CLD students and their families to share their cultures. The initial step in this cultural exchange establishes the validity of the *Self-Directed IEP*, as supported by empirical research, to help students practice values of individualism. Several studies provide evidence that the *Self-Directed IEP* enables students to engage in their IEP meetings. Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, and Wood (2001) noted that students improved their abilities to lead the meeting, report skills and limits, identify options, and set goals. Snyder (2002) found that students increased behaviors in IEP leadership steps, such as making introductions, reviewing past goals, discussing future goals, and closing the IEP meeting. Snyder and Shapiro (1997) found that the *Self-Directed IEP* was an effective intervention to increase student self-perceptions and self-efficacy and that the students approved of the *Self-Directed IEP*. Furthermore, in a recent study, Martin et al. (2005) found that students significantly increased their participation in their IEP meetings through 10 of the 12 *Self-Directed IEP* leadership steps.

Perhaps as interesting as the positive results of the *Self-Directed IEP* upon student involvement in the IEP meeting are findings of students who receive no instruction in the *Self-Directed IEP*. Martin et al. (in press) observed 109 secondary-level IEP meetings and found that students who did not receive instruction in how to become actively involved in their IEP meetings did not engage in many IEP meeting activities. Table 1 depicts the percentages of students who practiced the *Self-Directed IEP* steps without instruction in the *Self-Directed IEP* (Martin et al., 2005). Students engaged in seven of the

**TABLE 1**  
*Percentage of Students Who Engaged in Leadership Steps*

Step	Teacher-directed IEP meetings (%)	Self-directed IEP intervention (%)
1. Introduce self	0.02	70.0*
2. Introduce IEP team members	0.02	76.7*
3. State purpose of the meeting	0.02	70.0*
4. Review past goals and progress	0.55	53.3*
5. Ask for feedback	0.04	22.0
6. Ask questions if don't understand	18.20	35.0*
7. Deal with differences in opinion	14.50	16.7
8. State needed support	8.00	25.0*
9. Express interests	61.80	71.7
10. Express skills and limits	9.10	43.1
11. Express options and goals	23.60	53.3*
12. Close meeting by thanking everyone	0.00	14.3*

*Note.* From Martin, J. E., Van Dycke, J. L., Christensen, W. R., Greene, B. A., Gardner, J. E., & Lovett, D. L. (2005). Unpublished manuscript, University of Oklahoma. IEP = Individualized Education Program.

\*Statistically significant difference between Year 2 control and intervention groups at .05 level.

steps less than 10% of the time. Students expressed their skills and limits 9% of the time, and they stated their options and goals 23% of the time. These findings strongly support the assertion that students must learn these skills to participate actively in their IEP meetings. The Martin et al. (in press) study, like most special education IEP research, included little information about CLD students and their families. The IEP process provides opportunities for students to learn and practice self-determination skills and to participate as enfranchised team members (Field, Hoffman, & Posch, 1997; Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998; Kohler,

1996; Martin & Marshall, 1995). Martin et al. (in press) found that, without preparation, students only spoke 3% of the time at their meetings and the special education teachers dominated the proceedings. Their research verified that students' disenfranchisement from the IEP process remains high 10 years after Ysseldyke, Thurlow, and Bruininks (1992) claimed that school districts were rushing to meet transition requirements. Secondary educators need to understand that students will participate more in their IEP meetings when they perceive that the gains are valuable and achievable (Mithaug, Mithaug, Agran, Martin, & Wehmeyer, 2003) and when they know what to do at their meetings.

Opportunities generated by the *Self-Directed IEP* to engage in and practice values of individualism (Test et al., 2004) allow this method to become a potential bridge between the individualistic school culture and the collectivist culture of many CLD families and students. Figure 1 illustrates how the *Self-Directed IEP* can mitigate relationships between cultural values and the self-determination transition constructs in the IEP process so that students can engage in individualist behaviors while maintaining cultural integrity with collectivist roots. Figure 1 suggests that educators and CLD students and families can develop positive bicultural identities through culture sharing. Culture sharing involves students' moving toward individualism while internalizing values of their native culture. Conversely, educators need to understand values of collectivism and be sensitive to how members of collectivist cultures view transition issues before engaging in the *Self-Directed IEP* with CLD students.

Using the *Self-Directed IEP* to provide opportunities for culture sharing involves applying skills and values at the IEP meeting. To do this, special educators must avoid presenting the education system as attempting to "civilize" cultural groups, promote a hidden individualistic curriculum, or serve as a change agent without reinforcing traditional cultural values (Spindler, 1997; Van Horn, 2000; Yazzie, 2000). The *Self-Directed IEP* process can offer opportunities to practice values of individualism by allowing "parents and community members . . . to be interviewed about their understandings of what is culturally appropriate . . . [and where] communities come together to design, implement and support such [efforts in education]" (Yazzie, p. 18). The *Self-Directed IEP* provides educators and CLD students and their families opportunities to share cultural values of individualism while preserving bonds with their native culture.

### *Contrasting Values and Transition-Focused Education*

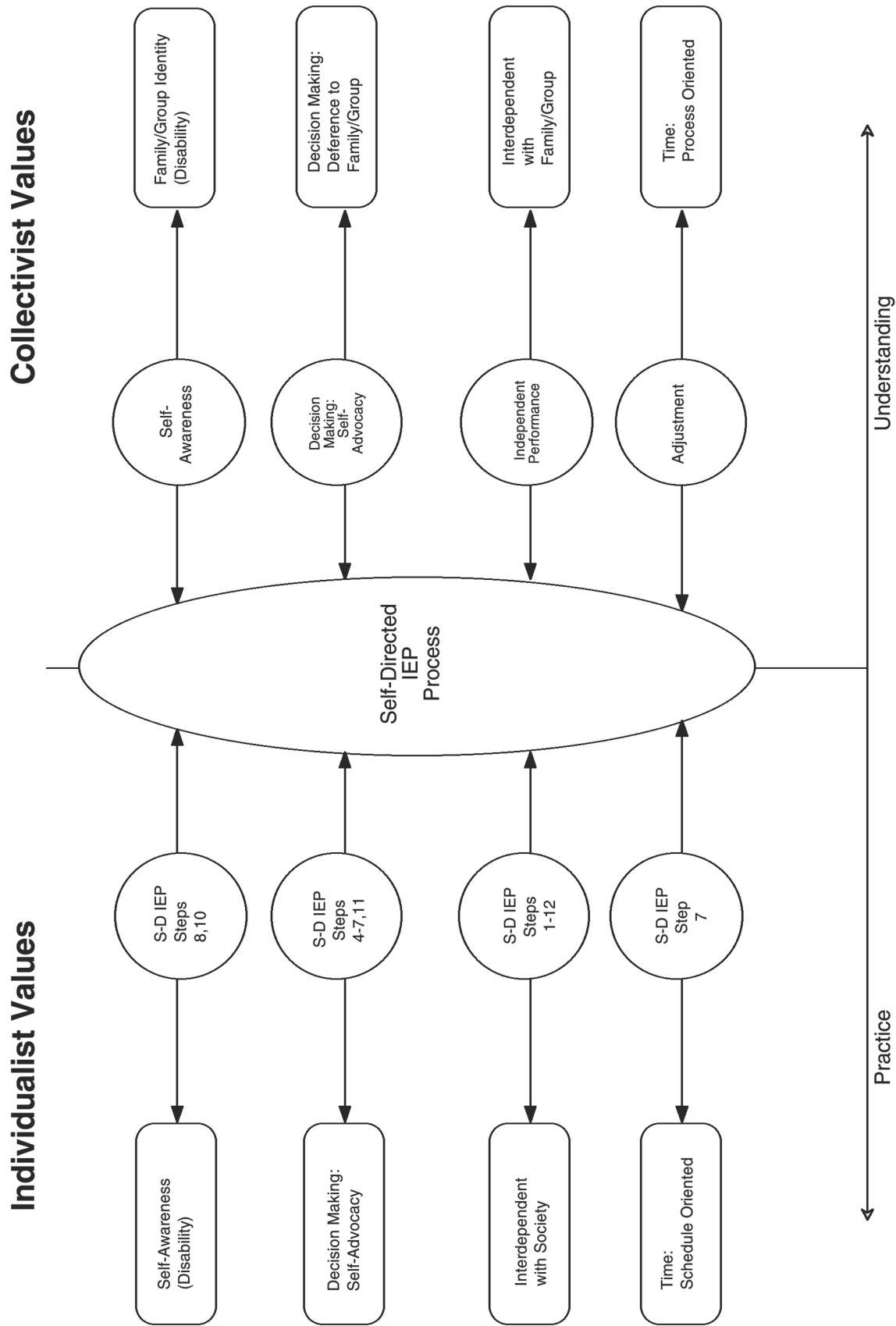
The transition practices included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 follow the individualist cultural tradition (Leake & Stodden, 2002). Many CLD students from a collectivist family background may not understand or value the behaviors associated with individualist transition expectations.

### *Self-Awareness of Disability and Support Needs*

**Individualist Culture.** Self-awareness of disability and supports, included in the *Self-Directed IEP* as Steps 8 and 10 (see Figure 1), exemplify individualist values. Kohler (1996) considered students' ability to discuss their disability and identify school and postschool supports as a best transition practice. Wehmeyer's (1999) functional model of self-determination strengthens this best practice strategy by concluding that individuals should exhibit autonomy and capacity in decision making and be given opportunities to identify their service providers without undue influence.

**Collectivist Culture.** Many CLD families, except for those dealing with low-incidence disabilities, often do not agree with the identification or labeling of disabilities that schools use (Greene & Nefsky, 1999; Warger, 2001). Disability awareness often is not an issue for students with high-incidence disabilities because of the "broader parameters of normalcy held by parents" (Harry, 2002, p. 134).

Transition specialists may assume, in the family's eyes, the role of a service provider as students begin the transition from school to adult life. CLD families and students may view service providers as "home-wreckers" who want to disrupt the family unit (Anderson et al., 1998). Reyes-Blanes, Correa, and Bailey (1999) suggested that CLD families often do not pursue support from service providers due to a lack of confidence in the agencies that developed from a devaluing and disrespect of the families' culture. In some instances, when the families received assistance but the service providers did not perform as promised, the families abandoned the service providers and relied on their extended family and neighbors (Geenan, Powers, Vasquez-Lopez, & Bersani, 2003). Harry et al. (1999) encouraged educators working with CLD families to value the families' cultural norms for a deeper engagement of the student and family in the individualistic education process.



**FIGURE 1.** Bridging the chasm between diverse cultures and education for students with disabilities.



### *Decision Making and Self-Advocacy*

**Individualist Culture.** Self-determination constructs of decision making and self-advocacy relate to *Self-Directed IEP* Steps 4 through 7 and 11 (see Figure 1), including reviewing past goals and progress, seeking feedback and clarification, dealing with differences in opinion, and expressing options and goals. These transition concepts favor individualistic, mainstream cultural values that emphasize internal locus of control (Geenan et al., 2003). The current self-determination movement emphasizes opportunities to teach these skills to students with an IEP (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Field et al., 1997; Martin & Marshall, 1995; Wehmeyer, 1992; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug, & Martin, 2000).

**Collectivist Culture.** Collectivist values of decision making and self-advocacy entwine personal goals with the needs and desires of the family. To encroach on family decision making and advocacy without consulting family elders puts students at risk of disrupting family cohesiveness, harmony, and continuity (Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001; Luft, 2005; Van Horn, 2000). Wehmeyer (2002) recognized this when he stated that a “focus on self-determination is not a license to exclude parents and family from decision-making and educational planning” (p. 4).

Lynch and Stein (1987) described how some CLD parents deferred to the school and its programs with respect and “teacher knows best” attitudes. Students practicing values of deference in acquiescing to their parents’ values and internalizing beliefs that teachers deserve respect and know best become twice removed from decision-making and self-advocacy processes. Providing opportunities for CLD students to practice values of individualism at school creates a cultural discontinuity. Van Horn (2000) describes *cultural discontinuity* as a situation in which the expected values in the school system differ from the values of the family and student. Cultural discontinuity may contribute to CLD students appearing unsuccessful in school environments (Van Horn, 2000).

### *Independent Performance*

**Individualist Culture.** Independent performance aligns with Steps 1 through 12 of the *Self-Directed IEP* (see Figure 1). Independent performance emphasizes independent living as a transition outcome. The IDEA

Amendments of 1997 and IDEA 2004 consider independent living as a special education outcome and independence is considered a measure of postschool success (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 1999; Schalock, Holl, Elliott, & Ross, 1992; Sitlington & Frank, 1994; Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Park, 2003; Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003). Using living arrangements as a postschool outcome measure is ill conceived, and the IDEA Amendments of 1997 and IDEA 2004 do not define independent living as living separately from one’s family or on one’s own (Wright, 2004). The value of living separately from the family after leaving high school depends on culture-specific values (Geenan et al., 2001).

**Collectivist Culture.** It behooves special educators to understand that individuals from different cultures may have different visions of successful transition outcomes. CLD students should not be defined as successful or unsuccessful on the basis of living alone or within a family or group setting or having a paying job. Many CLD families and students define independent performance as interdependence with the family and cultural group (Geenan et al., 2001; Harry et al., 1999). Education must not subscribe to a monolithic stance in which all individuals must meet the same quality of life requisites (Harry et al., 1999). Geenan et al. (2003) highlighted a successful transition to interdependence in which parents encouraged “Rosa to do as much for herself as possible, like being able to take care of herself, learn to cook and clean and help . . . around the house, but she will stay with us . . . we will always stay a family” (p. 34). Independent living and other transition goals warrant sustained informed discussions between IEP team members and students at transition meetings.

### *Adjustment*

**Individualist Culture.** Step 7 in the *Self-Directed IEP* (see Figure 1) focuses on having the student, with input from the IEP team, make adjustments to his or her goals, objectives, strategies, and support in accordance with results of academic and employment experiences during the IEP year. The practice of adjustment requires flexible IEP meetings that allow students to build a unified plan with the school staff and family members. To do this, students and their families deserve unfettered time

to communicate what they want and can do in relation to transition goals (Martin, Oliphint, & Weisenstein, 1994). Discussing a plan, actions, and evaluation of performance relating to IEP goals demonstrates the student's decision-making capacities and provides the IEP team with a true picture of the student's needs, preferences, and interests (Martin et al., 1994). The *Self-Directed IEP* process thrives more in an environment that fosters students engaging in collaborative decision making of transition goals without time limits on the discussion.

Different types of IEP meetings, by nature, require different time allowances. An annual IEP meeting should be shorter than an IEP meeting transitioning a student from high school to postschool activities (Greene & Nefsky, 1999). Martin et al. (in press), however, found no significant differences in the length of meetings for six IEP formats: (a) stand-alone, (b) back-to-back, (c) review of middle school, (d) transition from middle school to high school, (e) review of high school, and (f) transition from high school to postschool. Additionally, Martin et al. found that the length of IEP meetings was predetermined by schedule-oriented time constraints (e.g., back-to-back meetings, meetings before first period, number of people attending meeting). IEP meetings following a schedule orientation may result in a lack of attention to parent and student needs, preferences, and interests. This leads to what Smith (1990) identified as an impersonal administrative paper shuffle focused on completing the form, which is contradictory to collectivist values.

**Collectivist Culture.** Collectivist cultures value personal involvement and stress completing tasks rather than abiding preset schedules (Greene, 1996). Educators negatively affect the relationship between CLD families and local education agencies when they don't consider the process orientation of the collectivist culture. Although no specific research on high school IEP meetings with CLD families and students is available, related research by Harry et al. (1995) of early childhood transition IEP meetings found that IEP meetings lasted 20 to 30 minutes for families who were not proactive. Furthermore, if the family did have questions relating to IEP provisions, teachers were not available after the meeting to continue discussions. This disregard of the process-oriented values of CLD families requires a recognition of the importance of and allowance for opportunities for CLD families and students to have meaningful involvement in school transition processes.

## IMPLEMENTING THE SELF-DIRECTED IEP

The *Self-Directed IEP* process creates opportunities for cultural sharing between CLD families and educators to address instruction of self-determination skills for CLD students in secondary education. CLD families serve as the gatekeeper between their students and the educators providing instruction in individualist values. Cultural sharing means that CLD families and students will move toward practicing individualism while special education teachers and other school personnel move toward the collectivist view of the CLD family to understand their values, beliefs, priorities, and visions (Harry et al., 1999; Callicott, 2003), with both groups maintaining bonds to their native cultures (see Figure 1). By moving toward and understanding the values of collectivist families, special educators can encourage, embrace, honor, and respect the diversity of cultural values (Anderson et al., 1998).

Educators must understand how CLD families and students who value interrelationships view the concept of self-determination. Serna and Lau-Smith (1995) developed a self-determination concept similar to Martin and Marshall's (1995) definition. Serna and Lau-Smith's definition, however, includes social competence, acknowledges values of interdependence within the community, and exemplifies values of collectivism. Serna and Lau-Smith view self-determined people as those who have

awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, the ability to set goals and make choices, to be assertive at appropriate times, and to interact with others in a socially competent manner. A self-determined person is able to make independent decisions based on his or her ability to use resources, which includes collaborating and networking with others. The outcome for a self-determined person is the ability to realize his or her own potential, to become a productive member of a community, and to obtain his or her goals without infringing on the rights, responsibilities, and goals of others. (p. 145)

This definition of self-determination provides a framework for how CLD families and students may choose to set and attain transition goals. Values of collectivism respect (a) interdependence with the family and group, (b) a process orientation toward time, (c) deference to the family and group, and (d) a view of disability through the support system of the family. By practicing

self-determination at appropriate times and collaborating and networking with others in a socially competent manner, CLD students can “realize their potential” (Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995, p. 145). This approach reinforces the validity of students’ developing goals individually while considering the views of their families.

Many recommendations can increase the involvement of families and students in self-determination and transition practices (Field & Hoffman, 2002; Jezewski & Sotnik, 2001; Knab, Pleet, & Brito, 2000; Lopez, 2001; Morningstar, Kleinhammer-Tramill, & Lattin, 1999; Warger & Burnette, 2000; Zieghan, 2001). Greene and Nefsky (1999) identified five strategies for inclusive involvement in self-determination and transition:

1. Develop new roles for CLD families;
2. Use family-centered approaches and collaborative techniques when interacting with CLD families and students;
3. Employ effective communication practices with CLD groups;
4. Promote increased knowledge and comfort with school policy, practices, and procedures for CLD families; and
5. Increase IEP team members’ knowledge and sensitivity about multiple dimensions of cultural groups.

Combining the use of these strategies can happen in culture-sharing practices.

Field et al. (1997) recommended transferring decision-making privileges from parent to student in incremental stages. This strategy provides guidance for involving CLD families and students in the *Self-Directed IEP* process. Field et al.’s strategy, when linked with recommendations to work within a family’s ecocultural niche (Harry et al., 1999), suggests that CLD families and students can begin to share cultural values on an incremental basis in the IEP meeting (see Figure 1). Discussions during the IEP meeting create opportunities for educators to engage CLD families and students in culturally appropriate self-determination and transition (Harry et al., 1999). IEP meeting discussions between CLD families and educators following these guidelines create an environment of culture sharing. Callicott (2003) described an exchange of culture as a family wrestles with allowing their son to participate fully in individualist pursuits. For him to move away from the family home and attend a postsecondary institution “took a . . .

year for his family to consent . . . planning in small increments . . . [which] provided the family time to adjust their perceptions . . . [to see the purpose] of learning” (p. 60). Furthermore, the educators needed time to understand the values of the family. Transition service providers using the *Self-Directed IEP* process can promote such bicultural identities for educators, CLD families, and students.

### *Suggestions for Practice*

To implement the *Self-Directed IEP* process, schools will need to develop community transition teams (CTTs). CTTs consist of educators, students, families, and other local and regional stakeholders who work to provide opportunities for students to explore adult experiences in employment and postsecondary education (Blalock & Benz, 1999; Lindsey & Blalock, 1993; Valenzuela, Cayaditto, & Abeyta, 2004). Powers et al. (2001) implemented a program that focused on increasing transition awareness among parents, students, and members of the community. They used a four-stage CTT program:

1. Individual 50-minute biweekly coaching sessions for youth;
2. Monthly community-based workshops for youth, parents, and mentors;
3. Telephone and home visit support for parents and inservice education for transition staff; and
4. Community activities performed by mentors and students.

Powers et al. (2001) found increased student empowerment, as well as increased parent and educator awareness of transition. CTTs with this type of agenda can focus on the *Self-Directed IEP* process to promote opportunities for CLD students and their families to engage in transition self-determination.

## FUTURE RESEARCH

Researchers need to develop a design for local, state, and national follow-up studies that reflect CLD values. Many CLD students and families view transition outcomes differently than the mainstream culture of European Americans, especially in the area of independent living. For a better evaluation of CLD transition out-



comes, follow-up studies need to consider the postschool visions, goals, and objectives that the students and families have identified in the IEP. A longitudinal CLD transition follow-up study can be easily implemented through local, state, and national coordinated networks. For example, states that have, or are willing to establish, transition networks could encourage local schools to report CLD follow-up transition data to a centralized transition service coordinator (e.g., state office or university). The information then could be transferred electronically to a national depository (i.e., federal or university) for analysis. This type of follow-up study would offer a better reporting mechanism for effective transition practices and programs, as well as better measurement of transition outcomes for CLD students who are vested in values of collectivism.

A lack of empirical studies focusing on the *Self-Directed IEP* process and its influence on CLD students and their families also drives the need for future research. First, research needs to examine how best to teach secondary CLD students to become engaged in their IEP programs. Second, research needs to focus on how providing instruction in the *Self-Directed IEP* process to CLD families and students affects their participation in IEP meetings. Research should address what occurs before and after instruction in the steps of the *Self-Directed IEP* in pre-IEP discussions among the families, students, and special educators relating to postsecondary education and employment goals. Third, transition research needs to explore the differences in postschool outcomes of CLD students who exhibited high or low levels of participation in the *Self-Directed IEP* process and determine whether students increased, maintained, or decreased their levels of cultural attachment to the native culture on the basis of their participatory level in the *Self-Directed IEP* process. Fourth, more empirical research needs to examine the relationship among socioeconomic factors, self-determination, and involvement in IEP meetings. This will provide an understanding of how transition goals may differ between culturally and socioeconomically diverse groups.

## CONCLUSION

Secondary IEP processes must evolve to reflect the needs of all students. The fact that CLD students are predicted to comprise half the general education population by 2040 (Leake & Stodden, 2002; Sue et al., 1999) serves as a wake-up call to education personnel that the IEP process requires culture sharing between schools and CLD fam-

ilies and students. Schools, typically staffed by European American educators, must provide opportunities for discussions between proponents of individualistic and collectivist cultures. This discourse needs to focus on cultural sharing in which members of the collectivist culture learn to practice values of individualism, and proponents of the individualistic culture practice acknowledging, understanding, and respecting cultural diversity.

A vital outcome of this IEP evolution will be an increase in attention to self-determination by CLD populations. Practicing self-determination will help students achieve their goals while maintaining their native culture and allow them to create a quality of life that blends their needs, preferences, and interests with the needs, preferences, and interests of their family. The *Self-Directed IEP* process must become commonplace in transition practices to provide opportunities for culture sharing between schools and CLD students and their families.

Special education practices must evolve and set the standard in accepting cultural diversity for the institution of education in the United States. No matter how many CLD students enter schools hoping to hone their career and postsecondary transition goals to advance in mainstream society, an education system unwilling to share cultures perpetuates marginalization of culturally diverse populations. Groce, Henson, and Woods (1999) said it best: "Unless programs for individuals with disabilities are designed in a culturally appropriate way, the opportunity to make real and effective change is often lost" (p. 38). Thus, education can no longer function as a judging and condemning weapon that sentences those valuing and practicing the collectivist culture to non-participation in mainstream society without providing opportunities to learn the skills to participate in an individualist system. Teaching CLD students how to become engaged in their IEP meetings in a culturally appropriate manner begins this process.

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