



The Think Inclusive Podcast

Season 9, Episode 7

Karrie Shogren & Sheida Raley | What Does Self-Determination Really Mean?

Tim Villegas (00:00):

I'd like to read you a quote from a recent blog post on thinkinclusive.us. It's from a post titled "Self-determination: more than just a set of skills" by Charles Walters. He is a PhD student in special education and coordinates the Carolina life's college access and preparation program at the University of South Carolina. "Self-determination Needs to be seen as something far more than just another educational intervention that we can add into the lives of youth as we see fit. It has to be allowed to permeate everything that we do." I love that. Self-Determination is more than just an educational intervention. And that is the perfect setup for our conversation today with Karrie Shogren and Sheida Raley of the University of Kansas.

Tim Villegas (00:56):

My name is Tim Villegas, and you are listening to the think inclusive podcast presented by MCIE. This podcast exists to build bridges between families, educators, and disability rights advocates to create a shared understanding of inclusive education and what inclusion looks like in the real world. To find out more about who we are and what we do, check us out at thinkinclusive.us or on the socials: Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Also, take our podcast listener survey. Your responses will help us develop a better podcast experience, go to bit.ly/TIPodcastSurvey to submit your responses. That's bit.ly/TIPodcastSurvey to submit your responses. We appreciate it.

Tim Villegas (01:51):

Today on the podcast we discussed the self-determined learning model of instruction, otherwise known as the SDLMI. Our guests, Karrie Shogren and Sheida Raley are both from the Kansas university center on developmental disabilities. We talk about what self-determination really means, what is the SDMI and how is it implemented in inclusive classrooms, and why the SDLMI is really for everyone. Thanks so much for listening. I'm glad you're here. And now our interview with Karrie Shogren and Sheida Raley.

Tim Villegas (02:30):

So today on the think inclusive podcast, I would like to welcome Karrie Shogren and Sheida Raley from the university of Kansas. Karrie and Sheida would you mind introducing yourselves to our listeners?

Karrie Shogren (02:48):

My name is Karrie Shogren. I direct the Kansas university center on developmental disabilities and I'm a professor in the department of special education at the university of Kansas.

Sheida Raley (03:00):

My name is Shaida Raley. I'm an assistant research professor at the Kansas university center on developmental disabilities and assistant professor at the department of special education at the university of Kansas.

Tim Villegas (03:12):

So let's get right into it. What is self-determination?

Sheida Raley (03:16):

So being self determined that doesn't necessarily mean that you don't do things without supports in your life or that you do everything independently. We all utilize supports in different ways, whether they're other people, friends, our family, technology. But being self-determined means that you are in the driver's seat. And you are deciding what are the things that you want in your life? How do you want to make those things happen? What supports do you want to use? And it's all really driven by what the person wants to do. And self determination really came from the self-advocacy movement by self advocates who really wanted to be directing what's happening in their lives and deciding what goals were important to them and how they wanted to work towards their goals. So that's really what self-determination means. It's that a person feels like they have the autonomy and they have the abilities and skills that they need to set and work towards the goals that they identify that are important in their lives.

Karrie Shogren (04:14):

So self-determination really at its heart is all about empowering and enabling people to make things happen in their lives. All people, irregardless of disability, want to make things happen in their lives. It's why we set goals. It's why we go after them. So really self-determination is all about being that agent over your lives. That person that acts or causes things to happen and has the supports around them that really enables them to take the steps that they want to take in their lives.

Tim Villegas (04:49):

So Sheida and Karrie, this doesn't seem just like a special education thing. It seems like it would be something that would be relevant for everyone.

Karrie Shogren (05:01):

Yeah. Self-determination is relevant for everyone. You know, self-determination skills, setting goals, solving problems, they're fundamental to all aspects of the curriculum, be it college and career readiness, academic learning. Self-Determination though received attention in the disability field because people with disabilities are so often marginalized in our existing system because people with disabilities haven't been given the same opportunities to direct their own lives, to direct goals for their learning, to access inclusive environments that give them those opportunities in the same way. So self determination really builds on this idea you know, kind of a disability rights rallying cry of nothing about us without us and became a way to actualize that. And I think you've really seen the evolution of this though in the idea that self-determination, we really initially were focusing on that in transition planning for students with disabilities to empower them to be involved as they moved into adult life. But it continues to be that push for access to inclusive opportunities for equity in our education systems that drive self-determination forward.

Tim Villegas (06:16):

So let's get to what exactly is the SDLMI. The self-determined learning model of instruction.

Sheida Raley (06:24):

The self-determined learning model of instruction is a three phase instructional process. So in the first phase students are really answering the overall question: What is my goal? So what goal do I want to work on? And that might be a goal related to their academic learning and likely related to transition planning it's really like a very flexible model that they can work on a variety of goals. And then in phase two, students are working towards answering the overall question is what is my plan? So what's my action plan to achieve that goal? You know what exactly are the barriers that I anticipate facing? And then how can I use solutions to remove those barriers? What supports can I draw on? And those supports might be technology, people, you know, whatever those things might be.

Sheida Raley (07:16):

And then finally in phase three students are answering the overall question: What have I learned? So they're really reflecting on their goal setting and attainment process and identifying do I need to make adjustments to my goal? Was that the right goal for me? Do I need to make adjustments to my plan? Did I not account for a barrier that came up or was I not able to use the solution, not able to remove that barrier? And really engaging them in self evaluating. So the ultimate goal of the SDLMI is not for students to achieve every single goal that they set. I would say that not many of us achieve every single goal that we set. Think about any goals that you have set in your life, have you achieved every single one? And if you have here an amazing, perfect human, if not, you're probably like the rest of us. So it's more about supporting students to really build those abilities and those skills and attitudes related to self-determination.

Sheida Raley (08:13):

So building their abilities to set goals, to really make plans for their future, to self evaluate and build self-awareness and self knowledge. That's the goal of the SDLMI. So students go through the three phases of the SDLMI in school settings once a semester. So it provides them those iterative opportunities to set goals, work towards them and evaluate. That's the goal, is that they are iteratively building these skills so then once they leave school, they can think about what is my employment goal? What's my post-secondary education goal? What's my relationships or my living goal that I have? And they have those abilities and skills to make those things happen, drawing on supports in the community.

Tim Villegas (08:57):

Do you have any stories of what this looks like in the classroom or how a educator would implement the SDLMI?

Sheida Raley (09:08):

So then some stories of what it looks like in the classroom. So as students are going through these three phases teachers can really support them in working towards a variety of goals. One of the strategies that we do encourage a lot of teachers to use just to get students really interested in the SDLMI and really building those opportunities to share the students' interests and preferences is supporting students to go through the three phases with a goal that's not necessarily related to a content area or academics per se. You know, what's like a goal, that they're interested in. The one story is we had a, unith grade

math teacher who was teaching in an inclusive general education algebra 1 class. And, also she was supporting students to go through the SDLMI, the three phases, with a goal that wasn't related to math.

Sheida Raley (10:03):

So you really empowered students to select the goal that they were interested in and work through the SDLMI. So lo and behold when this ninth grade class, half of the class decided that they wanted to set a goal to be in the NFL. And you know, most of these students were not on the football team. They were not practicing football regularly, but that was the goal that they want to set. And so this teacher, you know, with her SDLMI training and really understanding the purpose of the SDLMI is not to necessarily achieve that goal, but to support students in building those abilities and skills and attitudes. She said, okay, let's go through the process of phases, one, two, and three of setting the goal, creating a plan to become an NFL player, and then evaluating how it went for you to work towards that goal.

Sheida Raley (10:47):

So students went through phase one, and I should say that going through phase one means that they're answering specific questions as they go through it. So what are the things that I already know about being an NFL player? How can I change what I know so I can learn how to be an NFL player and what can I do to make this happen? They go through these, what we call student questions, these really specific questions. So the students went through that process and decided that they want to set a goal to be an NFL player in phase two, they developed an action plan to achieve that goal. So some of them, when they identified barriers, they said, you know, I don't wake up early enough in the morning to practice or go to the weightlifting gym. So I'm going to set an alarm on my phone. So I wake up an hour earlier. So then I can go and like lift weights. And then some students said, I usually don't bring money for lunch or enough money that I would need for like the calorie intake that I need to take at lunch. So I'm going to bring like, you know, a larger lunch with me or plan for that, because I knew it'd be an NFL player needs to take in a lot of calories. So that was part of their plan. And then when they went to phase three, they had implemented their plan. And so a lot of these students were reflecting on like, do, was this the right goal for me? Do I really want to, you know, wake up at four o'clock in the morning to lift weights and do I want to eat like 6,000 calories for every meal?

Sheida Raley (12:08):

And majority of the students decided they did not want to continue working on the goal. They wanted to adjust their goal. And instead, some of them decided that they really just like football as a hobby. And they just really like, you know, were, this was in Kansas. So they really love the Kansas city chiefs. And they just want to be like a professional spectator. Some students decided that they wanted to still be involved in football in some capacity. And one decided that they wanted to explore their next goal is to be what would it take to be a sportscaster? So that was a goal related to transition planning and exploring careers and what qualifications would take to become a sportscaster and what opportunities they work for them to learn more about it. Another student decided that that was just an area of interest and they wanted to explore something else.

Sheida Raley (12:52):

Like what would it take for me to become an engineer? You know, what are some engineering schools, you know, in my area, what classes could I take while I was in high school or maybe shortly after I graduate. So students kind of went through the three phases of the SDLMI in a matter of weeks, you know, but it gave them an opportunity. Some of them, the first opportunity to set a goal for themselves

based on what they were interested in, make a plan, and then really self evaluate. And do that with a group of students, because this was in an inclusive setting. So they were students that were all like a community of goal setters that were setting goals, even if they were working on different goals, creating action plans and then self evaluating and learning from each other throughout the process. So it was really powerful to see all of them go through that and their teacher really not just teach math, but also provide opportunities for them to be self-determined and act in self-determined ways as they are engaging in math class.

Tim Villegas (13:52):

Karrie, did you have anything to add?

Karrie Shogren (13:55):

Just say, so the SDLMI the self-determined learning model of instruction. I want to emphasize, especially for teachers that the SDLMI is a model of instruction. It's not a set curriculum. Instead, it really provides a model or a framework for educators to really think about how you can make this shift to student directed goal setting and problem solving. The SDLMI was first introduced in the early 2000s because there weren't models like this to really enable teachers that have kind of this framework for how do I actually support students to think through what is a goal? What is a goal that's relevant to me? How do I develop an action plan for that goal? How do I evaluate if it worked or didn't work and then identify my next goal? All too often for students with and without disabilities, we haven't provided that structure for how you really think through, well, what goal do I want to be working on? Why do I want to be doing that? How do I really take ownership over this process?

Karrie Shogren (15:06):

And so the SDLMI was really developed to be overlaid on any area. It can be used in academic settings to get students engaged in setting academic goals. You know, it's so exciting sometimes when you walk into classrooms where teachers are using the SDLMI with students that in the past who have been very disengaged with what they're doing in math or science, but all of a sudden they're able to tell you what goals they're working on and why they're doing this and why it matters to their lives. They have that ownership, they feel empowered over what they're doing, and it changes the dynamic. It doesn't change the academic curriculum. It changes how you're engaging students in that process.

Tim Villegas (15:50):

So Sheida and Karrie, I'm really interested in how the SDLMI can fit into multi-tiered systems of support. Can you speak a little bit about that for us?

Sheida Raley (16:00):

Yeah. So I think that it's important to first know the SDLMI is an intervention. It is a way to systematically support and enhance self-determination, but like you said, it absolutely can be integrated within multi-tiered systems of support. So a lot of the work that has recently been done, I mean, I guess I say recently, but I guess it's like five or six years now at this point is really conceptualizing how can we provide self-determination intervention like the self-determined learning model of instruction across tiers of support? So how can we provide it as a universal support for all students as a tier one intervention in an inclusive general education setting? Then for some students with and without disabilities, how can we provide more intensives related to self-determination? So maybe some

students, again with and without disabilities would benefit from more time to really think about what is a goal that I want to work on afterschool.

Sheida Raley (17:01):

If they've never had an opportunity to be ever be asked, what do you want to do after high school? Or what's a goal that you have, they might need more intensive support to think about those things. So that might be an opportunity to provide more intensive support as a tier two support. And then on top of that, some students might require more individualized support using the SDLMI, or maybe pairing it with another intervention, which could be a tier three support. But I think the important part to emphasize that, and that's true for all interventions within an MTSS framework, is that they build on each other. So all students, including students with and without disability, should be receiving tier one support even if they are receiving two or three tier supports. And I think that we definitely we have seen how self-determination and using the SDLMI can be enhanced as a tier two and tier three support and emerging work in this exciting work that we talk about is really focusing on how can we use it as a tier one universal support, and then put those two things together. So there's really this systematic framework within a school to support all students across the intensity of supports they need to be self-determined.

Karrie Shogren (18:12):

You know, I'll just add. I think that the ultimate goal is to promote and enhance young people's self-determination. To make them be causal agents, to support them to do the things and be setting and going after the goals that are valuable to them, to their families, to their communities. And so the SDLMI is one intervention or one tool that can be used as a part of that. And thinking about embedding it in tiered approaches, we can really think about kind of what are different intensities of promoting and supporting the development of self-determination. So that might be at a tier one level to be doing very quick goal setting instruction sessions, and opportunities, you know, for a few minutes at the beginning of class sessions, so that students are then practicing those skills and carrying forward. Some students might need more practice with really, how do I think through what are those educational supports I need to identify my preferences and interests to build a good self-management strategy.

Karrie Shogren (19:20):

We all know how hard even kind of managing our own time and our own actions is being an adolescent. Sometimes we need some extra supports there. And so really you can continue to identify additional educational supports, additional interventions related to building self-determination skills and abilities that young people need. And so we can really think about the SDLMI. You can deliver more educational supports to better engage students in the process of identifying their goals and building those action plans and of evaluating. And also because the SDLMI isn't intervention, it's a model of instruction, but not a set curriculum. There can be a lot of flexibility in how that's delivered. Think about the different approaches or strategies that anyone might use to go after different goals. You're going to do some of the same things.

Karrie Shogren (20:14):

You might build your action plan, but yet what you need to know about kind of what it's going to look like to take steps forward towards your goal. If that's to get an A in your math class versus if that's to get into the college of your choice versus if that's to exercise every day, that's going to look different. So you can apply this framework, this idea of how do you use the student questions that are part of the model to drive yourself through that process across so many different areas, so you can use it repeatedly. But

the ultimate goal is that we see that enhancement in self-determination and that young people are using these student questions to continue to guide themselves through the process of identifying their goal, identifying their action plan, and then evaluating if they're ready for their next goal, or if they want to revise their action plan. So eventually we really want these to become kind of metacognitive strategies that kids are using to guide themselves through this process with less and less instruction and support, but we can really customize and grow that instruction and support over time to really let students continue to build in those skills and abilities.

Tim Villegas (21:35):

Can you help explain to our audience how the SDLMI is an evidence-based practice?

Sheida Raley (21:42):

Yeah, the SDLMI is an evidence-based practice in transition. So there have been over at this point over 30 research articles that have really demonstrated that when we use the SDLMI for students with and without disabilities, that we see greater academic and transition outcomes. So greater access to general education, greater academic outcomes transition planning outcomes, and greater engagement in their instructional planning and learning, and then also greater post-school outcomes. So we followed those students using the SDLMI, and we've seen that they achieve greater community participation outcomes and employment and post-secondary education outcomes. So that kind of speaks to like the SDLMI as an evidence-based practice in transition. And now it's more about how, what are the different ways that we can use the SDLMI and in different contexts to support students with and without disabilities. So the SDLMI is highly flexible.

Sheida Raley (22:45):

It can overlay on almost any curriculum or area of content. So for example, a lot of work has been done using the SPMI within transition planning context. So supporting students to set and work towards goals that relate to employment or career designing or supporting students to work towards academic and transition goals. There's also been using the SDLMI for, to support students in working towards health-related goals that they have. So I think that the SDLMI is highly flexible and it lends itself well to supporting students and teachers in a variety of contexts. So when you think about like how long do teachers have to be using the SDLMI, you know, the SDLMI can be implemented on a semester by semester basis, but we really do see change in students' self-determination over time. So as they have opportunities and experiences to build those abilities and build with health determination. You know, if we just use the SDLMI for one semester, we might not see, you know, great gains because it takes time for them to really feel empowered, to make those decisions and create action plans and learn from those experiences. But after some of our work that we see greater changes in one year, two years, three years, you know, really looking at that change over time. That's when you really see, you know, students building those abilities and skills to be self-determined and be that causal agent in their lives.

Tim Villegas (24:16):

Will you walk us through some of the barriers that people might face when they are trying to implement the SDLMI?

Sheida Raley (24:25):

Yeah. Happy to share some of these. I think probably like the number one thing that I would say is teachers really identifying a time to really figure out how to provide that explicit instruction and how to

set goals, how to make decisions, how to problem solve and go through the SDLMI lessons with students. Because I think that a lot of times teachers are embedding opportunities for students to build self-determination, but maybe not systematically identifying times of the day where they are really focusing on providing some of that explicit instruction. They're just sort of doing it here and there. But I think that we know that doing it here and there and not using an evidence-based practice, doesn't lead to those positive outcomes that we really value and that students and their families value. So I think time is probably the first thing there, but I will say that part of the SDLMI is really supporting teachers in not just providing that explicit instruction, but then embedding it throughout their content.

Sheida Raley (25:35):

So teachers who might say like, okay, so today we're focusing on this student question of the SDLMI and what you're really focusing on is answering the student question of what can I do to learn what I don't know? So what are the things that I can do to move towards my goal, but then really connecting that to the rest of teaching. So then, you know, as the teacher is teaching math or English, connecting them to think about what is this character's role or goal in the story, you know, what are some ways that you can problem solve different ways to solve this, and what are ways that you can identify different pathways towards your goal? So bringing that idea that everybody is self-determined, and we use these abilities at different times in our lives and using examples in their teaching to connect those things to really then like enhance that motivation for students to engage in the learning, because it's connected to something that they're really interested in.

Sheida Raley (26:32):

I think that teachers find those connections over time, and once they can kind of get past that part of identifying like barriers implementation and time, then they really find how it fits in with what they're teaching. So it's more just like kind of putting in the time to learn it and then figure out how that works with what they're doing. I think time, probably the person I would say I think the second one but this, you know, really has been changing. The more that we focus more on inclusive education and equity based education is more related to that self-determination and using interventions to promote self information is for everyone. And all students benefit from that in inclusive settings. So it's not just that we should use the SDLMI, you know, for some students and in some capacities, but really it should be a universal support for all students.

Sheida Raley (27:26):

And there might be more intensive supports for students with and without disabilities that would benefit from that. So really using that tiered approach to providing intervention to promote self-determination. So all students are receiving that as a universal support to set goals and plan for their future, and then providing more intensive support, not just for students with disabilities, but for all students that really would benefit from more supports, more instruction and learning how to set goals and plan for their future using the SDLMI. Those are probably the two that I would say, but I will say that like we've worked with some really amazing general and special education teachers that identify the importance for all students and have worked through how can I really identify this time and work it into this? Because the content that I teach is really important, but if students aren't setting goals and developing plans and self-evaluating to change the things that they want to change in their lives, then none of the content is really going to have that much value if they don't really feel empowered to be self determined, to get the things that they want. So I think there are a lot of teachers that see that, you know, they're not just there to deliver the content. They're really there to support students in being self determined learners throughout high school. And when they're in school and then afterwards.

Tim Villegas (28:44):

Do you have anything to add Karrie about barriers?

Karrie Shogren (28:48):

Yeah, I just add too. I mean, Sheida identified two incredibly important areas. I think building on the buy-in it's also that administrator and the entire school-wide change that's necessary. You know, if we really think about what we know about how to effectively do inclusive education, how to promote self-determination, it is a school-wide movement. It has to be administrator buy-in for teaching, for planning, for the resources to support training and coaching around all of these interventions. So I think that's another important way. I think, you know, the other thing that I would add is this idea of self-determination and of empowering people with disabilities, especially adolescents with disabilities, it's not new, but it is still a cultural shift for a lot of society to really think about adolescents in general, but especially those with disabilities to be directing their lives and really directing that process of moving from school to the adult world and their supports and services.

Karrie Shogren (29:58):

So it's still fundamentally changing that idea that the role of a teacher or, you know, a supporter in a school is not just to tell students what to do or to get them to succeed or achieve this milestone it's to involve them in the process of doing that and really recognizing for students with a range of support needs that that can happen. I think about one project we were doing working statewide, getting teachers to really support young people with intellectual disability to use the SDLMI as they were planning for that transition from school to adult life. And there hadn't been a lot of options or expectations for these students. They were transitioning to outcomes that they weren't involved in defining. And one of the most powerful moments, I think for me, even in terms of kind of seeing how the project played out was a teacher supporting two students to set and talk about their goals for what they wanted to do in the future.

Karrie Shogren (31:00):

And one of the young people said, well, why can't I be an SDLMI facilitator? Like be the teacher that does these activities with other students with disabilities, because I have the lived experience, I know what this looks like. And so it really is continuing to push the boundaries of why can't we set these expectations that young people with disabilities can do absolutely anything that they dream of doing and that we can create the structures and the opportunities in inclusive schools that make that a reality for them as well as for all young people, as they transition to college and careers.

Tim Villegas (31:40):

So there's probably people listening that are saying, this sounds amazing. How can I bring the SLDMI to my school?

Sheida Raley (31:51):

Yeah. And those are the people that we want to talk to. So I would have to say to check out our website first and foremost it's self-determination.org, and read about the SDLMI. You can also freely access the SDLMI teacher's guide, which provides case studies, examples and what the SDLMI looks like all in that guide. So you can download that PDF and just have fun reading on a weekend. And then there's also a contact page on our website and which asks you some information, like, what are you interested in? What exactly are you thinking about, about using it in your school or whatever setting that is, and then

we're super responsive. We'll get back to you, then we can share some information with you, meet with you, figure out exactly what you're looking for and kind of figure out how we can make that happen. So that would be my suggestion. And then we're always we're actively using the SDLMI in our research projects and our work. So if you have an interest in that capacity as well, get in touch with us on our contact page, and we'll also let you know if there's any opportunities to get involved in those things too.

Karrie Shogren (33:07):

Yeah. Sheida provided all of the tools to get in touch with us. So reach out to us all the time. I do want to say though, I think it is important to make clear that to fully implement the SDLMI. So, you know, the phases of the SDLMI, the process with students, we do have a standardized training to really go through these things we're talking about. How do you shift your teaching practices? How do you plan for where to integrate this into your curriculum? Because this really is a matter of planning to make sure that you make the time that you link it to what you're already doing. So we work with you know, districts and schools and states across the country to really find time to offer that professional development for how do you really learn to do the SDLMI to either access or build SDLMI coaches because making that change and navigating how to do this in a school setting can take a while. So we have a pretty robust professional development and coaching program that we're happy to talk to people about and kind of figure out what that looks like in individual settings. But, you know, you can access information about the SDLMI, but the best way to really implement it in the way that it's intended in classrooms is access to those training opportunities and kind of learn those practices to integrate it into practice.

Tim Villegas (34:31):

That will do it for this episode of the think inclusive podcast. Subscribe to the think inclusive podcast via apple podcast, the anchor app, Spotify, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Have a question or comment? Email us your feedback at podcast@thinkinclusive.us. We love to know that you're listening. Thank you to patrons, Veronica E Sonya A, Pamela P, Mark C, Kathy B, and Kathleen T for their continued support of the podcast. When you become a patron, your contribution helps us with the cost of audio production, transcription, and promotion of the think inclusive podcast. And you could even get a shout out like the fine people we just mentioned. Go to patreon.com/thinkinclusivepodcast to become a patron today and get access to all of our unedited interviews, including our conversation with Karrie Shogren and Sheida Raley. Thank you for helping us equip more people to promote and sustain inclusive education. This podcast is a production of MCIE where we envision a society where neighborhood schools welcome all learners and create the foundation for inclusive communities. Learn more at mcie.org. We will be back in a couple of weeks with our interview with Howard Shane, author of the book Unsilenced: a teacher's year of battles, breakthroughs, and life-changing lessons at Belchertown state school. Thanks for your time and attention. Until next time. Remember inclusion always works.

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