

# Teacher Guide

## College and Career Competency: *Self-Awareness*

---

### Definition:

Self-awareness is the capacity to become the object of one's own attention (Duval & Wicklund, 1972, as cited in Morin, 2011). Self-awareness can involve self-reflection (positive curiosity about self) or self-rumination (anxious attention paid to self); the former is associated with positive consequences, the latter with negative consequences (Morin, 2002). Self-awareness is also defined as a "self-perceptive state emerging from self-observation" (Cassidy, 2011, p. 992). It includes understanding one's own strengths, limitations, preferences, and interests.

### Essential Components for Students:

1. Engage in self-assessment, self-observation, and reflection (on your experiences) and be open to input of others.
2. Apply your understanding of your strengths, interests, and challenges.

### Research:

- During adolescence there are considerable changes to self-concept, driven by rapid changes to the adolescent's interpersonal environment and new social roles that are taken on (Sebastian, Burnett, & Blakemore, 2008).
  - The adolescent's self-concept is formed by thinking directly about reactions to past events and experience (direct appraisal) and by thinking about how he/she is perceived by others (reflected appraisal) (Sebastian et al., 2008).
  - Positive social feedback that supports a positive self-concept becomes increasingly important in adolescence; conversely, negative social experiences contribute to a negative self-concept that can lead to affective disorders like depression (Sebastian et al., 2008).
- Having a sense of self is important for development in three ways: 1) it helps the child develop a personal narrative that gives meaning to activities and experiences; 2) it allows the child to set goals consistent with self-image and guides behavioral choices; and 3) it can be a powerful motivator for future behavior (Jacobs, Bleeker, & Constantino, 2003).
- Adolescents may feel distress and confusion as a result of growing self-awareness of different (and seemingly opposite) characteristics (Jacobs et al., 2003).
  - Teachers and others who work with adolescents need to recognize that the moodiness that accompanies the search for "the real me" is typical, but should also be watchful that it not become prolonged and intense and lead to depression (Jacobs et al., 2003).
- Research conducted with Swedish adolescents (Ybrandt, 2008) concluded that it was important to promote positive self-concept because it was the most important factor for adjustment and mental health, especially for girls. The study also found that negative self-concept was associated with a higher risk of problem behaviors.
- Self-awareness leads to self-evaluation (i.e., monitoring progress on one's plan and reflecting on the overall result of plan), which is important to **self-regulation** (Morin, 2011).

- Research shows three main sources of self-awareness: (a) the social world, (b) the physical world, and (c) the self (including the brain) (Morin, 2011).
- Researchers distinguish between private and public self-awareness (Govern & Marsch, 2001). Private self-awareness involves thinking about the self. Public self-awareness involves thinking about oneself as seen by others.
- Self-awareness by students can apply in the context of career interest and job seeking; as they gain a better understanding of their interests and skills, adolescents are better able to understand the opportunities that are available (Grote, Trusty, Chae, & Bakley, 2014).
  - Students with disabilities that exited school with high career awareness skills were more likely to be engaged in post-school employment or education (Benz, Yovanoff, & Doren, 1997).
- Self-awareness is part of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), which provides an important foundation for better adjustment and academic performance for students (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).
- Self-determination is defined as “a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior” (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998). One characteristic of self-determined individuals is self-awareness, which is: (a) awareness of personal preferences, strengths, and weaknesses, and (b) the ability to differentiate between wants and needs (Field et al., 1998). Students with disabilities who leave school more self-determined than peers are twice as likely to be employed a year after graduation (Field et al., 1998; Wehmeyer, 2002).

## Assessments:

Most self-report measures are designed to support the development of self-awareness. While specific tools measure whether a person is generally self-aware, a large range of tools inform a person’s self-awareness related to specific constructs (e.g., career interest inventories, learning styles inventories, self-determination scales, academic interest scales, recreation inventories).

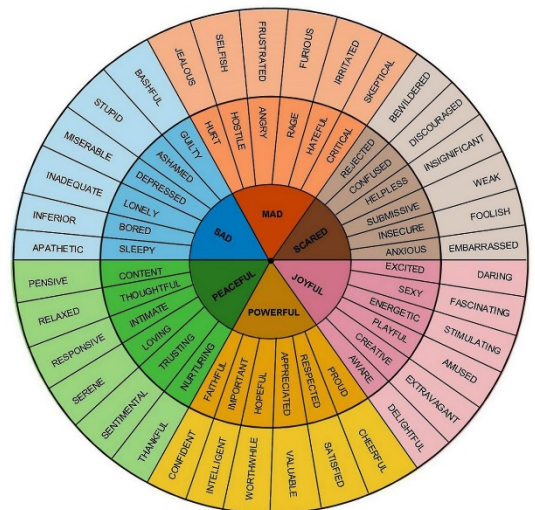
- The *Self-Consciousness Scale* (SCS) (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975, as cited in Morin, 2011) is a 23-item questionnaire that asks respondents how much various statements apply to them, such as “I’m always trying to figure myself out.” The scale is available at <http://www.midss.org/content/self-consciousness-scale-scs-r> (Scheier & Carver, 2013).
- The *Self-Reflection/Self-Rumination Questionnaire* (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999a, as cited in Morin, 2011) is a 24-item questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale for questions like “Sometimes it is hard for me to shut off thoughts about myself.” The questionnaire (Trapnell & Campbell, 1999b) is available at <http://www.paultrapnell.com/measure/RRQ.doc>.
- The book *Informal Assessments for Transition Planning-2* (Gaumer Erickson, Clark, & Patton, 2013) provides an array of assessments that support students to develop self-awareness in working, learning, and living domains. Ordering information is provided at <http://www.proedinc.com/customer/productView.aspx?ID=5169>.
- Kuder assessments include the *Kuder Career Interests Assessment* (Kuder, 2015a), which supports youth in exploring career interests; the *Kuder Skills Confidence Assessment* (Kuder, 2015b), which asks youth to rate tasks and activities according to their level of confidence in performing the tasks; and the *Kuder Work Values Assessment* (Kuder, 2015c), which considers the characteristics of a workplace or type of work. The results from each assessment are matched with professions. Many states have adopted and renamed the Kuder assessment

system. Additional information is available at <http://www.kuder.com/our-unique-approach/research-based-assessments>.

- The *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessments* (Casey Family Programs, 2009) are online measures, designed for students age 8 to 18 or older. Subscales within the *ASLSA-IV Youth Scale* include: career planning, daily living, housing and money management, **self-care**, social relationships, and work life. The assessments are available in English, Spanish, and French and with versions for youth and caregivers by creating a free account at <http://www.caseylifeskills.org>.

## Instructional Practices:

- After administering assessments to students, facilitate self-awareness by ensuring that students understand their assessment results and can articulate preferences, needs, interests, and strengths to others. Offer opportunities to practice communicating personal information in supportive environments.
- In becoming more self-aware, it can be helpful to connect feelings with actual emotion words. Using an emotion word chart, press students to go beyond using words like “angry” and “mad” to more deep feeling words (e.g., lonely, hopeless, hurt). The example here is from <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/503651459225616386> (Wilcox, 1982). See [www.do2learn.com/organizationtools/EmotionsColorWheel/index.htm](http://www.do2learn.com/organizationtools/EmotionsColorWheel/index.htm) (Do2Learn, 2015) and <http://batonrougecounseling.net/managing-emotions/> (Atkins, 2011) for other examples of emotion charts.
- Mindfulness, which is the inclination to be aware in the moment without judging or thinking about particular outcomes (Napoli, Krech, & Holley, 2005), can lead to enhanced self-awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003).
  - Mindfulness training has been successfully incorporated into elementary and high school classrooms (Napoli et al., 2005). Within the elementary school, the training took the form of 12 bimonthly sessions of 45 minutes held during regular PE classes and conducted by a facilitator who had been trained as a mindfulness training instructor (Napoli et al., 2005). For high school students, two teachers led students in mindfulness meditation for 5-10 minutes at the beginning of each class period. This took place five days per week for five weeks (Napoli et al., 2005).
  - In a 5-week program conducted in a Boston middle school, mindfulness, when used in conjunction with tai chi, successfully reduced stress and led to greater self-awareness (Wall, 2005). Separate groups for boys and girls met for one hour each week to learn tai chi movements and mindfulness-based stress reduction exercises from a group leader. The program could also be led by a teacher or facilitator, but it is important that the leader have a working command of the skills necessary and also practice the skills daily themselves (Wall, 2005).
- While assessments provide valuable information, it is also important to provide opportunities for students to engage in activities that will help support self-awareness. For instance, sampling and reflecting on new experiences (e.g., job shadowing, volunteering, and leisure activities) builds students’ self-awareness related to their interests, skills, and preferences.



- *I'm Determined* (Virginia Department of Education, 2012) provides many lesson plans to support students' development of self-awareness as well as other areas of self-determination (<http://www.imdetermined.org/>). The lesson plans are typically four pages long and include standards of learning, objectives, prerequisites, materials needed, the timeframe, the lesson procedure, evaluation, extending understanding, and student handouts. See an example of a lesson plan for middle school students on self-awareness and self-knowledge: [http://www.imdetermined.org/files\\_resources/212/ms-self-awarenessthisisme\\_copy.pdf](http://www.imdetermined.org/files_resources/212/ms-self-awarenessthisisme_copy.pdf).
- Much literature has focused on evidence-based approaches to teaching self-determination skills to students with and without disabilities. To increase effectiveness of instruction, self-determination components can be taught using student-directed (as opposed to teacher-directed) practices. Some practices are:
  - Help children recognize and apply preferences by providing options for choices. For example, encourage students to make decisions about academic goals, schedules, and other areas that can affect day-to-day activities (Field et al., 1998; Wehmeyer, 2002). Teachers can use role-playing or brainstorming to help students identify choices, and also help students understand the link between the choices made and goals that are set (Wehmeyer, 2002).
  - Provide opportunities to choose among different strategies for a task (Field et al., 1998; Wehmeyer, 2002).
  - Help students realistically assess weaknesses in key skills and determine ways to address those weaknesses (Field et al., 1998; Wehmeyer, 2002). This should be done in a supportive environment where the emphasis is on the students' strengths, but where students are given the opportunity to explore their limitations (Field et al., 1998).

## References

- Atkins, T. (2011). Managing emotions. Retrieved from <http://batonrougescounseling.net/managing-emotions/>
- Benz, M.R., Yovanoff, P., & Doren, B. (1997). School-to-work components that predict postschool success for students with and without disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 63(2), 151-165.
- Brown, K.W., & Ryan, R.M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822-848. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.84.4.822
- Cantley, P., Little, K., & Martin, J. (2010). ME! Lessons for teaching self-awareness & self-advocacy. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment. Retrieved from <http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials/me-lessons-for-teaching-self-awareness-and-self-advocacy.html>
- Casey Family Programs. (2009). *Ansell-Casey life skills assessments*. Retrieved from <http://www.caseylifeskills.org/>
- Cassidy, S. (2011). Self-regulated learning in higher education: Identifying key component processes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 36(8), 989-1000. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2010.503269
- Do2Learn. (2015). Emotions color wheel. *Social Skills*. Retrieved from <http://www.do2learn.com/organizationtools/EmotionsColorWheel/index.htm>
- Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., & Schellinger, K.B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405-432. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x

- Duval, S., & Wicklund, R.A. (1972). *A theory of objective self awareness*. New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Fenigstein, A., Scheier, M.F., & Buss, A.H. (1975). Public and private self-consciousness: Assessment and theory. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 43*(4), 522-527. doi: 10.1037/h0076760
- Field, S., Martin, J., Miller, R., Ward, M., & Wehmeyer, M. (1998). *A practical guide for teaching self-determination*. Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children. Retrieved from <http://ERIC.ed.gov>
- Gaumer Erickson, A., Clark, G.M., & Patton, J.R. (2013). *Informal assessments for transition planning-second edition*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Govern, J.M., & Marsch, L.A. (2001). Development and validation of the situational self-awareness scale. *Consciousness and Cognition, 10*(3), 366-378. doi: 10.1006/ccog.2001.0506
- Grote, D., Trusty, J., Chae, M., & Bakley, A. (2014). Career coaching effects on hope, confidence, and maturity: A qualitative and quantitative approach. Adel, IA: Kuder, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.kuder.com/2014/08/power-career-coaching/>
- Jacobs, J.E., Bleeker, M.M., & Constantino, M.J. (2003). The self-system during childhood and adolescence: Development, influences, and implications. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 13*(1), 33-65. doi: 10.1037/1053-0479.13.1.33
- Kuder. (2015a). Kuder career interests assessments. Adel, IA: Kuder, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.kuder.com/our-unique-approach/research-based-assessments/>
- Kuder. (2015b). Kuder skills confidence assessment. Adel, IA: Kuder, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.kuder.com/our-unique-approach/research-based-assessments/>
- Kuder. (2015c). Kuder work values assessment. Adel, IA: Kuder, Inc. Retrieved from <http://www.kuder.com/our-unique-approach/research-based-assessments/>
- Morin, A. (2002). Self-awareness review part 1: Do you “self-reflect” or “self-ruminate”? *Science & Consciousness Review, 1*. Retrieved from <http://cogprints.org/3788/>
- Morin, A. (2011). Self-awareness part 1: Definition, measures, effects, functions, and antecedents. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 5*(10), 807-823. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00387.x
- Napoli, M., Krech, P.R., Holley, L.C. (2005). Mindfulness training for elementary school students: The attention academy. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 21*(1), 99-125. doi: 10.1300/J008v21n01\_05
- Patton, J.R., & Clark, G.M. (2013). *Transition planning inventory-second edition*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.
- Scheier, M.F., & Carver, C.S. (2013). Self-consciousness scale-(SCS-R). Measurement Instrument Database for the Social Science. doi: 10.13072/midss.613
- Sebastian, C., Burnett, S., & Blakemore, S.J. (2008). Development of the self-concept during adolescence. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 12*(11), 441-446. doi: 10.1016/j.tics.2008.07.008
- Trapnell, P.D., & Campbell, J.D. (1999a). Private self-consciousness and the five-factor model of personality: Distinguishing rumination from reflection. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*(2), 284-304. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.76.2.284
- Trapnell, P.D. & Campbell, J.D. (1999b). Reflection-rumination questionnaire. Retrieved from [www.paultrapnell.com/measures](http://www.paultrapnell.com/measures)
- Virginia Department of Education. (2012). Self-awareness and self-knowledge ~ I know what I need. *I'm Determined Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.imdetermined.org/>
- Wall, R.B. (2005). Tai chi and mindfulness-based stress reduction in a Boston public middle school. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care, 19*(4), 230-237. doi: 10.1016/j.pedhc.2005.02.006
- Wilcox, G. (1982). *The Feeling Wheel*. Retrieved from <https://www.thinglink.com/scene/503651459225616386#>
- Wehmeyer, M. (2002). Self-determination and the education of students with disabilities. Arlington, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.
- Ybrandt, H. (2008). The relation between self-concept and social functioning in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence, 31*(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2007.03.004