

SDMNY GOES BACK TO SCHOOL— AND CELEBRATES AN SDMA SIGNING

We have been blessed to have a productive and rewarding relationship with the Cooke School since almost the beginning of our project 6 years ago. One important component has been our ability to design and pilot a 10-week “decision-making curriculum” for students who may not want to sign-up for a full SDMNY facilitation, but who could benefit from working on understanding what goes into decision-making and developing some decision-making skills.

The larger goal of this pilot has been to develop a well-designed and tested curriculum that both public and private schools could offer as part of their mandated transition planning, and we are well on our way. SDMNY Associate Director Joan Cornachio and SDMNY Faculty Associate Gina Riley have been refining the curriculum they developed and presented in the Fall of 2021 and Spring 2022, and are just finishing up the lesson plans, learning objectives and materials for the third, and hopefully final iteration. Cooke staff will evaluate it, and then hopefully disseminate through the Cooke Institute. For SDMNY school starts October 17, and Joan and Gina are really excited that, this time, they’ll be offering the class in person!

But this week we also celebrated an unplanned benefit from the pilot. One of the students who participated in the Spring was so taken with what he learned that he asked to sign-up for the “formal” SDMNY facilitation process, and on Wednesday he signed his SDMA with Gina as his facilitator.



Top: Ian's dad, Facilitator Gina
Bottom: Ian's mom, Ian, and Ian's brother

Ian is a 20-year-old Cooke “Transitions” student who lives in the Bronx, loves riding ferries, and hopes to intern with the NYC Parks Department this Fall. His Mom, who is also a supporter, says

“I really appreciated the opportunity for there to be something formal where I can support Ian but not take away his rights. Guardianship felt so extreme when I knew he was able to make good decisions as long as he had the information and occasional help understanding it.”

As facilitator, Gina says

[Ian] was so engaged in the [curriculum] program. He was the person who would help his peers; and raise their confidence about being decision-makers themselves. When he decided to join the facilitation process after the program ended to complete his SDMA, we were thrilled! Ian was a dream Decision-Maker!

And, at the conclusion of the ceremony, everyone agreed that

“Supported Decision-Making is important because it recognizes that the Decision-Maker is an individual with their own thoughts, feelings, and opinions and it empowers them to live their lives the way choose.”

CONGRATULATIONS TO IAN, HIS SUPPORTERS AND GINA, AND THANKS TO THE COOKE SCHOOL!