



SELF-ADVOCACY: Tips for Students, Parents, and Teachers

- ❑ **S**tart early to let son/daughter be as independent as possible. Let them take responsibility and experience consequences (i.e., clothes to wear, what to eat for lunch, save money, schedule for school).
- ❑ **W**ork with the school to identify potential life experiences (i.e., recreation-individual and family, crossing street, using public transportation and performing household duties).
- ❑ **B**e positive about son/daughter's future.
- ❑ **M**aintain a holistic view of son/daughter (i.e., beliefs, interests, views, abilities); keep in mind that he/she is more similar to peers than different.
- ❑ **U**se a strengths-based approach when discussing son/daughter.
- ❑ **B**e aware that you are a role model for your son/daughter.
- ❑ **C**ommunicate with son/daughter and teachers.
- ❑ **D**on't try to be the "boss" of your son/daughter's life. If you always make choices for him/her, they may end up where you want them to be, rather than where they want to be.
- ❑ **L**et son/daughter take risks to become independent.
- ❑ **P**resent son/daughter with options and choices.

- ❑ **A**llow son/daughter to make own choices; accept choices, even if you disagree.

- ❑ **H**elp your son/daughter develop a responsible attitude by giving them responsibilities in the home and community.

- ❑ **R**espect your son/daughter.

- ❑ **B**e involved with son/daughter's life in and outside of school.

- ❑ **E**ncourage your son/daughter to express opinions.

- ❑ **A**llow son/daughter to fail, allow them to experience consequences for decisions.

- ❑ **B**e aware of issues that affect adults with disabilities.

- ❑ **E**xplore options (i.e., transportation, work, where to live, agency supports) continuously with your son/daughter.

- ❑ **B**e aware of the need for your son/daughter to be a self advocate and become as independent as possible.

- ❑ **R**ecognize your son/daughter's strengths and use these strengths to promote self advocacy.

- ❑ **R**ecognize your son/daughter's abilities and successes; see that they are more like other students than different.

- ❑ **S**eek a support system; let people help you.

- ❑ **H**ave your son/daughter attend meetings and conferences; supply them with information.

- ❑ **G**ive your son/daughter the support they need.

- ❑ **P**rovide reinforcement for participation in transition planning.
- ❑ **A**sk the school to provide choice-making opportunities during the school day.
- ❑ **C**ontinue working to improve your son/daughter's ability to make decisions at home and in the community.
- ❑ **T**alk *with* your son/daughter; not *at* him/her.
- ❑ **I**nitiate and encourage volunteer opportunities (i.e., community, church) for son/daughter.
- ❑ **B**e a mentor to other parents.
- ❑ **R**ecognize that self determination is a life-long process and support it.
- ❑ **A**dvocate for services for your son/daughter (i.e., With school boards, school-based decision making councils, legislature, and community groups).
- ❑ **T**ogether with your son/daughter learn about his/her disability.
- ❑ **T**ogether with your son/daughter learn about disability rights.
- ❑ **S**hare successful ideas and strategies with teachers and other parents.
- ❑ **E**ncourage friendships with peers.
- ❑ **B**e sensitive that teachers have many meetings and there may be time constraints.
- ❑ **G**o into a meeting prepared and stay focused.
- ❑ **A**sk for another meeting if all of your issues are not addressed.

STUDENT TIPS

- ❑ **K**now your strengths and limits and how they will/will not affect your life.
- ❑ **R**alize that you are a person with the same worth and importance as any other person.
- ❑ **V**iew the teacher as a facilitator and a connector of resources who will help you reach your goals.
- ❑ **M**aintain a holistic view of yourself (i.e., Beliefs, interests, views, abilities); keep in mind that you are more similar to your peers than different.
- ❑ **Y**ou need to be an active member of your community (i.e., School, church, clubs, organizations, recreation).
- ❑ **S**et your own goals.
- ❑ **U**nderstand that your values effect your life.
- ❑ **R**ecognize and celebrate your successes.
- ❑ **R**alize that mistakes happen, learn from them and go on.
- ❑ **K**now what you can achieve in different areas of your life, (i.e., Work options, recreation, leisure, voluntary, and education).
- ❑ **K**now psychological, academic and aptitude results for self-awareness, decision-making and future planning.
- ❑ **B**e aware of other peoples' impressions of you and your abilities.
- ❑ **R**ecognize that your needs and goals are important.
- ❑ **R**ecognize that other people also have value, needs and goals.

- K**now accommodations and skills needed for success.
- K**now all about your disability.
- K**now about your rights.
- B**e aware of social skills and body language of self and others (i.e., Manners, personal space, gestures, and tone of voice).
- A**sk "what else could I do?" Questions.
- R**ecognize that self-determination is a life-long process.
- K**now how to ask for help (i.e., Who, when and where).
- K**now what options are available to you (i.e., Work, leisure, recreation, volunteer, and education).
- K**now what services are available to you (i.e., Counseling and financial).
- K**now how and when to compromise.
- R**ecognize that long term goals are reached by meeting many short term goals (e.g., A driver's license).
- R**ecognize that you have ideas and skills to offer others, so share them.
- W**ork to find solutions to overcome barriers to reaching your goals.
- S**eek volunteer activities.
- I**dentify your support system (i.e., People you trust, people you depend on to assist you, places you can go to feel safe).

TEACHER STRATEGIES

- T**eacher and/or student role play appropriate and inappropriate advocacy interactions.

- ❑ **P**rovide opportunities to practice self-advocacy and self-determination skills.
- ❑ **H**elp student take the responsibility for monitoring progress on their transition plan.
- ❑ **T**each skills needed to problem solve, in middle school and continuing through the 12th grade.
- ❑ **S**et-up opportunities for student to experience success.
- ❑ **P**romote student awareness of local agencies, schools, and apprenticeships by providing information, field trips and speakers.
- ❑ **S**hare all testing information with the student (e.g., Psychological, educational, behavioral, vocational, speech or language).
- ❑ **A**sk student what works best for him/her.
- ❑ **A**llow student to experience the consequences of his/her decisions.
- ❑ **G**ive student responsibilities; let him/her make choices.
- ❑ **A**ssess learning styles and teach various methods (i.e., Auditory, visual and tactile).
- ❑ **T**each skills that student needs to be a productive, meaningful member of an ITP/IEP meeting:
 - communication
 - making informed choices
 - decision making
 - awareness of options
 - awareness of rights
 - awareness of responsibilities
 - awareness of interaction skills (assertive, passive, aggressive)
- ❑ **S**trive to teach relevant material (i.e., Age-appropriate, real-life skills).
- ❑ **E**ducate parents about need for son/daughter to be self advocates and independent.

- ❑ **T**each student about available accommodations and modifications.
- ❑ **B**e knowledgeable about disability rights and share this information with student.
- ❑ **G**ive student information and teach skills necessary for him/her to be involved in deciding options (i.e., Leisure/recreation -individual and family, residence, work).
- ❑ **P**rovide opportunities to practice or improve decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- ❑ **I**nitiate and encourage volunteer opportunities in the school and community for the student .
- ❑ **P**rovide opportunities for exploration of the life-domains (i.e., Domestic, vocational, community-living and recreation/leisure).
- ❑ **P**rovide multiple opportunities for student to practice accommodations and modifications to know what works.
- ❑ **E**xplain to student what "transition" means, including terminology.
- ❑ **T**each student to think for themselves by giving frequent opportunities to practice.
- ❑ **R**ole play a transition planning meeting.
- ❑ **A**sk a student who has successfully been involved in his/her transition meeting to talk to and/or work with other students.
- ❑ **P**rovide opportunities for student to experience various jobs in the community to help him/her make realistic career decisions.
- ❑ **C**ommunicate at the student's level.
- ❑ **T**each student the terminology used by different education and human service agencies.

TEACHER TIPS

- ❑ **B**elieve and be sold on the benefits of self-advocacy and self-determination for students.
- ❑ **A**dvocate for programs for students (i.e., With school boards, school-based decision making

councils, legislature, community groups).

- ❑ **R**espect privacy of student by not discussing personal issues in class, lounge, etc.
- ❑ **D**on't generalize from family to family.
- ❑ **L**isten to student and family about their needs and wants for the future.
- ❑ **S**hift your role from controller to facilitator, connector of services and resource allocator.
- ❑ **M**aintain holistic view of student (i.e., beliefs, interests, views, abilities); keep in mind that student is more similar to peers than different.
- ❑ **E**ncourage parents to use a strengths-based approach when discussing son/daughter.
- ❑ **B**e sensitive to the realization that parents have to attend a number of meetings.
- ❑ **S**top being the "boss" of the students' lives. "If I map out your life and you don't stop me, you'll end up where I want you to be, rather than where you want to be."
- ❑ **I**nform student of reasons for being involved; not just that it is the law.
- ❑ **B**e aware of how you have applied self-advocacy skills in your life and share these experiences with your students.
- ❑ **S**hare successful ideas and strategies with other teachers, parents, and agency personnel.
- ❑ **B**e willing to try new strategies, models and activities and share your strategies with others.
- ❑ **B**e aware of available accommodations and modifications for students.
- ❑ **L**et go of your pre-conceived expectations of students.
- ❑ **I**nvolve appropriate staff on development of transition plans and IEP's.
- ❑ **S**hare transition plan and IEP information with appropriate staff.
- ❑ **C**ommit to student's future, not just getting through this school year.
- ❑ **R**ecognize and support self-determination as a life-long process.
- ❑ **K**now what options are available in your community and region.

- ❑ **I**nform students of test results (i.e., Psychological,academic, and aptitude), school and program requirements, as well as accommodation options.
- ❑ **P**arents are the experts on their children; respect their values and views.
- ❑ **R**ealize how important each meeting is to each parent even though you may have numerous meetings that day.
- ❑ **R**ecognize significance of success for students who have known so much failure.
- ❑ **R**espect students and recognize that they are the only permanent members of their transition team.
- ❑ **B**e aware of what is expected (i.e., Competencies) of students at the next level and beyond (i.e., Primary to intermediate to middle to high school and to adult life).

TIPS FOR INCREASING PARENT AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

- ❑ **W**ork collaboratively with family; focus on a team approach and build trust.
- ❑ **B**e non-judgmental; respect differences (i.e., Coping styles, ethnic, socio-economic groups, past experiences with different systems that work or don't).
- ❑ **P**rovide "parent to parent" type activities (i.e., support groups).
- ❑ **U**se appropriate terminology and explain, if necessary, when working with students and their families. Be aware that agencies have different languages (i.e., jargon, terminology).
- ❑ **B**e flexible (i.e., Scheduling meeting dates, locations and times).
- ❑ **H**ave open communication early in the year.
- ❑ **M**ake parents feel important and a valuable member of the planning team.
- ❑ **L**isten to parents' views, desires, and high expectations for their son/daughter.
- ❑ **H**elp parents see need for their participation in high school and give them opportunities to see child succeed.

- ❑ **M**ake personal contacts prior to the meeting as well as a written invitation.
- ❑ **P**rovide information (i.e., About the meeting, transition and options).
- ❑ **B**egin setting stage for parent involvement on transition processes in middle school years.
- ❑ **C**onsider providing transportation to the meeting.
- ❑ **S**tress the importance of transition planning.
- ❑ **A**sk parent for input on whom to invite to the meetings.
- ❑ **C**ommunicate at a level the parent/student understands.
- ❑ **W**hen using acronyms and jargon, be sure to explain what they mean.
- ❑ **G**ive parents a glossary of frequently used terms.
- ❑ **A**sk student and parent to complete a transition survey.
- ❑ **I**nvolve students in conference pre-planning.
- ❑ **E**xplain to the student why transition planning is important to his/her life.
- ❑ **S**how students and parents a video of a positive transition planning meeting that actively involves student in the process.
- ❑ **L**isten - invest time in getting to know student and his/her family.
- ❑ **D**evelop brochures for students and parents regarding their roles and expectations at a transition planning and IEP meeting.
- ❑ **W**elcome the student and parent.
- ❑ **S**upport the parents as their responsibilities change (student becoming more independent - adulthood).
- ❑ **D**evelop rapport with student before the transition planning meeting.
- ❑ **P**rovide incentives for participation (i.e., Food at meetings, flexibility in meeting times and places).

- ❑ **P**rovide secure environment (i.e., Private meeting room, pleasant and not crowded).
- ❑ **B**e aware that you could share your expertise and experiences by co-presenting at conferences/workshops on self-determination and other topics.
- ❑ **E**ncourage volunteer activities.
- ❑ **R**ecognize that self-determination is a life-long process and support it.
- ❑ **H**ave students participate in IEP meetings as early as possible (middle school).
- ❑ **C**onsider a method for student to do self-guided iep when appropriate.
- ❑ **S**uggest a behavior management system to use at home that includes documenting antecedents, behaviors and consequences. Parent can make a true observation of behaviors and make decisions about consistent discipline and expectations.