



## 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**realize 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**realize 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**nforn 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.