

Self-Advocacy

Scope

Self-advocacy is essential to success in college where disability services will only be provided to those who identify themselves and request reasonable accommodations, also referred to as academic adjustments and auxiliary aids. During college the responsibility for success falls on the student. This section begins the process of accepting this responsibility with the goal of students understanding their learning strengths, disability, and related accommodations.

Students will:

- **Identify their learning style and related learning strategies.**
Activity 1 provides an opportunity for students to begin evaluating how they learn using a learning style assessment. Students are asked to think about how they learn best.
- **Gain an understanding of their disability and how it impacts learning.**
Activities 2 and 3 ask students to delve into understanding their disabilities with the help of a professional and a trusted and knowledgeable adult. Depending on their level of personal insight, type of disability, and the way the disability assessment report is written, students may need differing levels of support.
- **Identify appropriate accommodations for their disability.**
Activity 4 introduces the concept of instructional accommodation, the objective of future advocacy.
- **Learn about the relationship between the documentation of their disability and accommodations.**
Activity 5 asks the student to identify and try using one accommodation they learned about in *Activity 4* and that is supported by documentation of their disability
- **Learn and practice self-advocacy in school.**
Activities 6 and 7 ease students into a leadership role in their IEP meetings, where they discuss and plan for appropriate accommodations.

Rationale

Self-determination skill for students with disabilities has been the focus of extensive research and development in the 1990's. Field and Hoffman (1994) conceptualized self-determination as a process that includes:

- knowing yourself,
- valuing yourself,
- planning to reach goals,
- acting upon those plans, and
- learning from the experience.

This simple model provides the framework for developing a specific type of self-determination skill, self-advocacy. The theme of these *Self-advocacy Activities* is self-knowledge and developing a sense of self-worth, the first two stages of the Field and Hoffman model. From this knowledge, subsequent activities take students into planning and action. Knowledge and insights gained from these *Activities* are used throughout the remaining *Activities*.

Unlike high school, colleges have no special education teachers to make arrangements for students. They must take the leading role in getting service. To successfully assume this new responsibility, students need to know themselves and be willing to talk about their needs. These first 9 *Activities* help students develop and practice the essential skills of self-advocacy.

Self-Advocacy

Learning to advocate effectively takes time! -- We recommend starting these *Activities* when students first ponder the possibility of college, usually the 9th grade. Why not as a senior, when the need is immediate and more relevant? To answer that, put yourself in their senior shoes for a moment. Imagine that you are 18 and you will be starting college. You read at half the speed of your classmates and have difficulty taking notes rapidly. In order to get support, you must:

- Meet with a stranger and prove you have a disability.
- Talk about how the disability limits you in learning.
- Know which accommodations effectively mitigate the limitation.
- Request those accommodations and be willing to discuss alternatives.
- Work out the logistics of the agreed upon accommodations.

Does it seem daunting to you? It is daunting for many students with disabilities!

Many students simply don't identify themselves. In eight interviews with disability service coordinators in Washington State, all identified students' failure to disclose disability and request accommodations as a major problem.

By starting early to develop an accurate awareness of learning preferences and the disability related limitations, students will develop the competence and confidence to make their needs known. This takes time and practice. Your support and encouragement is essential. Think of these *Activities* as the start of a four-year process where students meet with you and your colleagues to discuss how they learn and how they can be reasonably accommodated. In time and with practice they will become skilled.

Getting Started

Getting Started with your School

Encouraging self-advocacy in your students may be a challenging concept for your colleagues. Your fellow teachers may resist when students first start requesting accommodations. Initial self-advocacy attempts may sound unreasonable. Creating an awareness of why students need to develop these skills will be helpful. You may want to request time at an all-staff meeting to share your plan. If teachers and counselors know the reason for new student behavior, they will be better prepared to assist them. Using counselors and career center staff may be difficult for some students. Encourage these relationships early in the students' high school career. Recognize that students with disabilities may need more support than counselors have time to give. Discuss how you can work together to meet this need.

Getting Started with your Community

Look to the community for assistance. Bring in outside experts to help raise student awareness. Students may find the voice of a college student with a disability more credible than yours. A disability services coordinator from a local college can share information with the students in an objective way. Hearing from these outside experts can be a powerful impetus to undertake these new responsibilities.

Getting Started with Parents

Parents can be of great help if they understand the impending changes for their child. Informing parents of the changes that lie ahead and enlisting their help in *Post-ITT Guidance Activities* is an important starting point. We recommend that you send a letter to parents explaining the *Activities*. Attach a copy of the *Guidance Activities Introduction for Parents*. Refer them to the Post-ITT Website during the freshman year. This gives them time to understand the postsecondary guidelines and procedures. Many parents believe that special education exists in college in much the same way it does in the high school. Help change this perception early!

Self-Advocacy

Getting Started with Students

When you hear aspirations to careers involving postsecondary education, acknowledge these goals. High school students don't know what the future holds. We all can and should hope for great things. Most of us have had aspirations that were not necessarily based on an understanding of our strengths, talents, or the requirements of our dreams. Post-ITT asks students to research the path they wish to pursue and teachers to be a guide along this path.

Help students get started during their freshman grade year by making them feel comfortable and introducing them to counseling and career center staff. Students need to feel safe exploring and sharing information about themselves and their disabilities. Set ground rules regarding confidentiality, especially if these *Activities* will be done in a group. For those unwilling or uncomfortable discussing their disabilities in a group, offer the option of working on the *Activities* privately. While developing Post-ITT, we discovered that many students were not using the pre-college resources available in their schools. Either they were not in the classes where the information was delivered or the roles of "who was doing what" with students were not clearly defined. Help students use all the school's services, especially the counseling and career center offices.

Supplemental Resources

Post-ITT provides just nine basic *Activities* related to becoming a self-advocate. Other curricula focus only on self-determination. The following resources are recommended to teachers who wish to undertake more comprehensive instruction.

Internet

Center on Self-Determination

<http://cdrc.ohsu.edu/self-determination>

The Center on Self-determination run by the Oregon Institute on Disability and Development and the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center at the Oregon Health and Science University is committed to promoting self-determination of people with and without disabilities.

LD Online

http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/postsecondary/requesting_accommodations.html

Article "Requesting Academic Accommodations" discusses the importance of disclosure and self-advocacy along with encountered resistance in the academic community.

Self-Determination and Transition Projects, College of Education, Wayne State University

<http://www.coe.wayne.edu/Grants/STEPS>

This site contains information regarding current and past projects on self-determination along with Resources and Links.

Self-Determination Synthesis Project

<http://www.uncc.edu/sdsp>

The Self-Determination Synthesis Project, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, conducted review and synthesis of knowledge base and test practices, related to self-determination. Contains lesson plans, list of related articles, and project updates.

Curriculum

Steps to Self-Determination, a Curriculum to Help Adolescents Learn to Achieve Their Goals, Sharon Field and Alan Hoffman

Self-Advocacy

Field and Hoffman have developed a sixteen session curriculum designed to help adolescents become self-determined. As noted above, they employ a model that progressively helps students know and value themselves, make plans, act upon those plans and experience the outcomes of their considered actions, learn from those experiences and cycle back through the model with the benefit of these new insights. The curriculum includes detailed instructions for teachers and useful black line masters. *Steps to Self-Determination* is available through ProEd. See *References* for a complete bibliographic citation.

A Practical Guide for Teaching Self-Determination, Sharon Field, James Martin, Robert Miller, Michael Ward, and Michael Wehmeyer

Developed by the Division on Career Development and Transition, A Division of The Council for Exceptional Children; this is a guide to practices that promote self-determination. A longitudinal approach to self determination is taken. The guide addresses legislative and research foundations, terminology, assessment, the relationship with transition along with methods and materials for instruction. See *References* for full a bibliographic citation.

Self-Determination for Youth with Disabilities, a Family Education Curriculum, Institute on Community Integration (UAP), College of Education, University of Minnesota

The Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota developed this curriculum to be used to help families of youth with disabilities develop and implement effective “futures plans” that will result in the outcome of self-determined adults. It consists of fifteen modules and assumes the involvement of student families including the student. It is available from the Institute on Community Integration (UAP) at the University of Minnesota. See *References* for a full bibliographic citation.

The Self-Advocacy Strategy for Education and Transition Planning, Preparing Students to Advocate at Education and Transition Conferences, Anthony K. Van Reusen, Candace S. Bos, Jean B. Schumaker, and Donald D. Deshler

This workbook focuses on increasing motivation by teaching students how to make effective learning and developmental decisions and to advocate for themselves. Following the Introduction, which explains how to teach students as they learn the self-advocacy strategy, the book contains instructional methods, evaluation guidelines, instructional materials, career and transition planning resources, and question guides. See *References* for a full bibliographic citation.

Become Your Own Expert! Self Advocacy Curriculum for Individuals with Learning Disabilities, Winnell Carpenter

This is a seven unit curriculum designed for students with learning disabilities that addresses: self-awareness, understanding learning modalities, learning styles, accommodations, practice, rehearsal, and role play, becoming the expert and assessing progress. The individual lessons are detailed and the curriculum comes with a student manual. Training is available from the author. More information can be obtained from Cognitive Learning Consultants, Winnell D. Carpenter, M.A., P.O. Box 202065, Bloomington, MN 55420. See *References* for a full bibliographic citation.

Self-Advocacy

This page was intentionally left blank.

Self-Advocacy

Activity 1

Identify your preferred learning style or preference and related learning strategies.

We all prefer to learn in different ways. It can help to understand your learning preferences and to adjust your approach to studying so that you rely on your learning strengths. Go to the web site <http://www.vark-learn.com>* to complete a questionnaire that will help you identify your learning preference. It will also suggest learning strategies based on that preference that will help you to study in a productive manner.



- Read the Introduction.
- Complete the Questionnaire.

Your scores will be calculated and reported to you immediately. You will have a numerical rating in the following four categories:

- Visual
- Aural
- Read/Write
- Kinesthetic

You will receive a statement of your learning preferences based on your answers. The report will give you links to study skill “Helpsheets”. Read and then print this information before continuing with the activity. If you have a high score in several learning preferences, read and print these as well.



Meet with a teacher or school counselor and discuss your results. Identify study strategies that you think may be helpful and develop a plan to experiment with strategies that are new to you. You may be interested in other learning style/preference questionnaires. Ask your teachers about other resources that are listed in the *Teacher Manual*.

* Copyright Version 4.1 (2002) held by Neil D. Fleming, Christchurch, New Zealand and Charles C. Bonwell, Green Mountain Falls, Colorado 80819 U.S.A.

Self-Advocacy

Activity 1: Exploring Learning Style Preference

Students explore the concepts of learning styles and learning strategies. Students take a web based learning preference survey.

Planning - Speak with the Career Center Specialist or Counselor in your building who may have additional learning style or preference inventories. Review a variety of learning style inventories; consider the appropriateness for the students. Complete and score one or more learning style inventories on yourself.

Warm Up Activity - Introduce the concept of learning styles by talking about the different ways people learn. Students go through self-discovery during this activity. Consider using yourself as an example to start the activity. Talk about your results. Share how you learn best as well as what makes learning hard for you. In addition to introducing the activity, you set the climate for the class or group by showing that you are able to candidly share your strengths as well as limitations. You may increase their comfort through this modeling.

Supplemental Resources

Academic Assistance and Resource Center at Stephen F. Austin State University

<http://libweb.sfasu.edu/aarc/stures/learning.htm>

The *Academic Assistance and Resource Center* at Stephen F. Austin State University lists a variety of learning style inventories along with explanations of each style.

Continuous Learning

<http://learnnet.gc.ca/continuu/english.contrlrn.htm>

This site contains a short course which was developed for adults interested in learning more about the learning process that takes place throughout life. A learning style inventory is included.

LD Pride Online

<http://www.ldpride.net/>

LD Pride Online, The Vancouver Island Invisible Disability Association Website was developed as an interactive community resource for adults with hidden disabilities. A learning style assessment is available at this site.

The Center for New Discoveries in Learning

<http://www.howtolearn.com>

The Center for New Discoveries in Learning provides information, learning strategies and resources to support children's success in school. A free personal learning style assessment is included.

The Thoughtful Education Press

<http://www.silverstrong.com>

This publisher provides a sample on line learning style assessment.

Evaluating Progress

- Does the student recognize the concept that people learn in different ways?
- Is the student able to articulate specific ways that he/she prefers to learn? Give examples?
- Can the student describe in detail strategies that enhance learning based on a preferred learning style?
- Has the student used those strategies and is he/she able to describe with what effect?

Self-Advocacy

- Is the student open to trying new strategies?

Find opportunities over time to revisit the subject of learning style preferences. Look for ways to point out the usefulness of the insights gained from this lesson when considering appropriate accommodations in future lessons. Question the validity of the results. Are they consistent with what you observe and what the student experiences? Consider using more than one learning style survey.

Self-Advocacy

This page intentionally left blank

Self-Advocacy

Activity 2

Learn about your disability and how it affects your learning in the classroom.

Vocabulary

- disability services
- academic accommodation
- documentation
- self-advocate

Understanding your disability and how it impacts your learning will help you be a successful college student. When you request services from an office of disability services, you will have to describe your disability and what your needs are in the classroom. This is called self-advocacy. One way to understand your disability and how it affects your learning is by reviewing the professional documentation of your disability. This documentation may be provided by a medical doctor or through testing done by a school psychologist.



Make an appointment with your doctor if you have medical reports describing your disability, or with the school psychologist if testing related to your disability was conducted at school. At the time you schedule this appointment, let the doctor or school psychologist know that you would like to review the documentation of your disability at this meeting. You may also want to invite a parent or family member. It might be a good idea to send these professionals a letter that explains that you want to discuss your disability and its impact on your learning in school. See the sample letter in Activity 2 worksheet on the Post-ITT Website.*

At the meeting, have a discussion about your disability and ask the following important questions:

- What is my disability? Please describe it in terms I can understand.
- In what specific ways does it affect how I learn?
- What are my learning strengths? (How do I learn best?)
- Which academic accommodations are supported by my documentation?
- What was the date of the last diagnosis of my disability?

Be sure to take notes during this discussion and do not leave the meeting until you understand the answers to the above questions. If the language that is used during this meeting is confusing, ASK to have it explained in terms you will understand. Take a copy of these questions with you as a reminder. A sample outline of questions is provided on the Post-ITT Website (Activity 2 worksheet).



After the meeting, organize your notes into an outline or paragraph. Include the answers to the above questions.



Review the information with your special education teacher or family member.

Self-Advocacy

Activity 2: Meeting with Disability Diagnostician

Students talk with a diagnosing professional to learn about their disability and how it affects learning.

Planning - This may be a challenging activity for the student as well as the professional. Consider smoothing the way for the student by contacting the professional to explain the purpose of the activity. Your school psychologist will want to be consulted in advance to develop a schedule that works for his/her schedule if you are working with a group of students.

Do not simply photocopy a diagnostic report and share it with the student. This activity should only be done with a qualified diagnostician and the consent of the student's parent. Check with your district's guidelines regarding sharing this information with a student under 18 years old.

Worksheet - *Activity 2* includes two worksheets, *Sample Letter* and *Interview Questions*. Both are intended to be guides for students to use.

Warm Up Activity - Meeting with a professional, especially a doctor, can be an intimidating experience. Acknowledge to students that they are being asked to do this adult activity because as young adults they need this information. Assure them that they can handle the meeting. Share that what they learn is likely to confirm what they may have thought about themselves. They will probably discover new information about themselves if they listen carefully. Urge them to ask questions to clarify. Consider inviting a speaker who can talk about disabilities in general terms to help ease students into their interview. Consider role playing the interview with another teacher or an older student who is comfortable discussing his/her disability.

Evaluating Progress

- Is the student willing to disclose that he/she has a disability?
- Can the student state a diagnostic label?
- Can the student discuss how the disability limits or interferes with learning? How specific can he/she be?
- Can the student see a relationship between limitations and learning preferences? That is, if learning is hard for me this way, I can still learn using this other way!
- Can the student describe the relationship between the documented disability, the resulting functional limitations, and accommodations that reasonably could be expected to provide access to learning opportunities?
- What level of confidence does the student have in discussing this information?

Self-Advocacy

Activity 3

Increase your understanding of your disability and how it affects your learning in the classroom.

Vocabulary: Disability services

Understanding your disability and how it impacts your learning will help you be a successful college student. When you request assistance from disability services, you may have to describe your disability and what your needs are in the classroom.



Use the Internet to find out information about your disability. You may begin by visiting the Post-ITT Website. Once you are on the Post-ITT home page, select *Resources*. There are several websites that may be of help to you.

Use a search engine to find at least one other resource that gives information on your disability. Yahoo.com, Excite.com, Google.com, and Altavista.com are commonly used search engines.



Develop a “fact sheet” on your disability. List at least ten facts.



Discuss what you have learned with your special education teacher, school guidance counselor, or family member.

Self-Advocacy

Activity 3: Developing a personal disability fact sheet

Using the information gained from the professional, the students research their disability using the Internet and create a ten-item fact sheet.

Planning - Preview Websites your students may use to complete this research. Become familiar with the process of using a search engine to research information on various disabilities. Note the disabilities with readily available information versus the disabilities which may have less information available. Ask yourself which students will need some help? Is the information written in such a way that students will understand it?

If necessary, schedule time in the computer lab.

Supplemental Resources

General Information:

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

<http://www.eric.org/links.html>

ERIC Clearing house on Disabilities and Gifted Education operated by Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) provides links to information on different disabilities.

American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine

<http://www.aacpdm.org/home.html>

The American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine contains information related to cerebral palsy.

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)

<http://www.nichcy.org>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) provides fact sheets on various disabilities.

Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking Technology (DO-IT)

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/>

Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking Technology (DO-IT) serves to increase participation of individuals with disabilities in challenging academic programs and careers. It promotes the use of computer and networking technologies to increase independence, productivity, and participation in education and employment. This site provides information on individual disabilities.

National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR)

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/NIDRR>

The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research provides leadership and support for a comprehensive program of research related to the rehabilitation.

Disability Services at the University of Minnesota

<http://disserv3.stu.umn.edu/index2.html>

Operated by the Disability Services at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, this site indexes other disability Websites.

Self-Advocacy

Asperger Syndrome Coalition

<http://www.asperger.org>

The Asperger Syndrome Coalition of the U.S. is a national nonprofit organization committed to providing the most up-to-date and comprehensive information on Asperger Syndrome and related conditions.

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

<http://www.chadd.org>

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to serving children and adults with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Adding "facts/add_facts01.htm" to the address will provide disability related information

LD Online

<http://www.ldonline.org>

LD online is the leading Website on learning disabilities for parents, teachers and other professionals. This site contains information on Learning Disabilities, along with a free newsletter. It provides links to many related sites.

The Non verbal Learning Disorder Association (NLD line)

<http://www.nldline.com/>

The Nonverbal Learning Disorders Association is dedicated to research, education and advocacy. This site contains information on research, resources, assessments as well as questions and answers about nonverbal learning disorders.

Attention Deficit Disorder

<http://add.miningco.com>

This Website by, Eileen Bailey contains information related to Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder along with networking opportunities.

National Attention Deficit Disability Association

<http://www.add.org/>

National Attention Deficit Disability Association, serving the needs of people with ADD/ADHD since 1989, focuses on issues relating to adults and young adults. The organization is dedicated to education, research, and advocacy with a focus on adults and young adults.

Gallaudet University, Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center

<http://www.gallaudet.edu>

The Clerc Center at Gallaudet University contains information related to all aspects of deafness.

The Low Vision Gateway

<http://www.lowvision.org/>

The Internet Low Vision Society provides a wealth of information related to low vision and blindness.

New York Institute for Special Education, Blindness Resource Center

<http://www.nyise.org/blind.htm>

New York Institute for Special Education, Blindness Resource Center posts information and links to other blindness sites.

Self-Advocacy

National Association for Visually Handicapped (NAVH)

<http://www.navh.org>

National Association for Visually Handicapped (NAVH) is a nonprofit health agency dedicated to providing assistance to people who are visually impaired.

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

<http://www.nfb.org>

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is the nation's largest organization of blind persons. The purpose of the organization is to help blind people achieve self-confidence and self-respect and to act as a vehicle of self-expression.

Evaluating Progress

- Has the student found relevant and accurate information about his/ her disability?
- Can the student apply that information to him/herself?
- At what level of detail can the student discuss the implications for learning?
 - How long will it take me to complete a course of study?
 - How much assistance will I need?
 - What are appropriate and reasonable accommodations?
 - Do my limitations disqualify me for some of the goals that I have set for myself?

Self-Advocacy

Activity 4

Increase your understanding of academic accommodations and how they can help you work around your limitations in school.

Vocabulary

- academic accommodations
- documentation
- otherwise qualified
- self-advocate

You may have learned about accommodations in Activity 2 when you met with a professional to review the documentation of your disability. That review may have included a discussion on the strategies or accommodations that your documentation supports. If you completed Activity 2, review the information on accommodations in your outline or paragraph before you continue.



Use the Glossary to find the definition for “academic accommodation”. Write the definition in your own words.

Using the Post-ITT Website, select a college of interest and research accommodations that are available. Some colleges may not post this information. If you do not find the information, call the disability services office.

For most colleges listed, you will find information about accommodations on these web pages. Be aware that you will not be eligible for all of these accommodations. Your disability documentation should indicate which ones you are qualified to receive.

Read the information on these accommodations.



Before you leave this site, make a list of all the accommodations that may help you. Indicate by underlining which accommodations you already use in your high school classes.



Discuss your list of accommodations with a special education teacher, parent, or guidance counselor. Circle the accommodations your documentation supports.

Discuss accommodations that might be beneficial but are not yet supported by documentation.

Self-Advocacy

Activity 4: Researching Accommodations

Students learn about academic accommodations and begin to think about how they might use them.

Planning – Become familiar with the Websites below to help guide students in their research. Visit college Websites. Note that some are not comprehensive while others have added information through Post-ITT. Central Washington University, University of Washington, and Shoreline Community College are examples of colleges with comprehensive information on Post-ITT.

Warm Up Activity - Present the difference between accommodations and modifications. Students need to be able to distinguish between these two concepts because modification of classes will not be an option in college. Explain that a modification fundamentally alters the content of a class and an accommodation is a change in the delivery and assessment but not the content. Point out that in the K-12 system the distinction is often blurred, since both modifications and accommodations are provided.

Consider having students observe a college lecture to see the different types of accommodation techniques students with and without disabilities use.

Supplemental Resources

Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking Technology

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/>

The Disabilities Opportunities Internetworking Technology (DOIT) project provides information on accommodations related to specific disabilities.

Center on Deafness

<http://www.jsu.edu/depart/dss/Nuts&Bolts2000>

This site includes information created for use with Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals transitioning from high school to postsecondary education. This program provides a good overview of the issues related to transition. It also includes links to other resources related to individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

The National Library Services for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS)

<http://www.loc.gov/nls>

Through a network of cooperating libraries NLS administers a free library program of Braille and audio materials.

U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.

<http://www.ed.gov/ocr/docs/auxaids.html>

The Office of Civil Rights link contains an article “Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities, Higher Education’s Obligation Under Section 504 and Title II of the ADD.”

Evaluating Progress

- Does the student grasp the concept of academic accommodation?
- Can the student state accommodations that are appropriate for him/her?
- Can the student identify the accommodations available at one or more colleges of interest?
- Can the student discuss how those accommodations will help him/her gain access to learning?
- Can the student identify accommodations that may be helpful but are not yet fully justified by his/her documentation? Does he/she have an idea about what might be done to get appropriate documentation?

Self-Advocacy

Activity 5

With the help of a teacher or counselor, experience using accommodations that are new to you and that are supported by your documentation.

Prerequisite: Completion of Activity 2 and/or Activity 4.



Review the information on academic accommodations that you have in your outline or paragraph from Activity 2 and the list of accommodations that you developed in Activity 4.

Select one accommodation (supported by your documentation) that you would like to experience in at least one of your high school classes.



Ask your special education teacher or guidance counselor to help you to make arrangements for the accommodation in at least one of your classes.



After you have had opportunities to use this accommodation several times, discuss the following questions/statements with your special education teacher or school guidance counselor.

- Was the accommodation helpful?
- If yes, how did the accommodation help you to work around one or more of your limitations?
- Although you may have done assignments in a different way by using the accommodation, did you learn the same information as the other students in the class?
- What did your teacher need to do to provide this accommodation?
- What did your teacher say about providing this accommodation?
- Identify other classes where this accommodation could be helpful.



Repeat this activity for additional accommodations on your list that are new to you and that are supported by your documentation.

Self-Advocacy

Activity 5: Trying out accommodations with assistance

Working closely with a teacher or counselor, students try using an accommodation in a class.

Planning - Inform the staff of the process, tell them that students are learning to use accommodations and you will be assisting them with their requests. Staff may have questions regarding the process and appropriateness of different accommodations. Emphasize that the purpose of accommodations is to provide access to their curriculum and not an advantage over other students.

Warm up Activity - Begin by reviewing the definition of accommodation, then lead students in a discussion of how their disabilities have been accommodated. Ask about commonly used accommodations in high school. Find out what they are familiar with. Ask the students how they would feel using these accommodations. Recognize that, in high school, just fitting-in is often the student's main goal. Using an accommodation may not fit well with that goal. Discuss how their teacher might feel about the accommodation. An effective self-advocate needs to understand the impact of an accommodation on others as well as on him/herself.

Allow and encourage students to try out their accommodation in a staged environment. Simulate the class structure where they will be using the accommodation. Request that the student focus on how they feel using the accommodation.

Supplemental Resources

Become Your Own Expert, Self Advocacy Curriculum for Individuals with Learning Disabilities

Winnelle D. Carpenter has developed a seven unit curriculum specifically for students with learning disabilities. Units four and five provide an expanded set of lessons on advocating for accommodations. See *References* for a full bibliographic citation.

Evaluating Progress

- Can the student identify whether or not an accommodation was helpful and if so, how it was helpful?
- Can the student see the relationship between the accommodation and the functional limitation that he/she experiences?
- Can the student discuss how the accommodations allowed him/her to learn the class content, albeit in a different manner?
- Can the student discuss the impact of providing the accommodations on his/her teacher? That is, can the student state what the teacher needed to do and to what extent this was reasonable.
- Can the student generalize what he/she has learned about accommodations to other classes?

Self-Advocacy

Activity 6

Prepare yourself to participate in your next IEP meeting. Before your next Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meeting*, schedule to meet with a special education teacher. Request s/he bring the report from your last IEP meeting.



At the meeting, discuss the following items with this teacher. Ask questions until you have a clear understanding of each item on the list. Be sure to take notes.

- What is the purpose of the IEP meeting?
- Who will be there?
- What is each person's role at the meeting?
- Review together the report from your last IEP meeting.
- Identify the goals listed on the IEP document and discuss the progress you have made on each goal.
- Practice summarizing your progress on the goals.
- Establish new goals and practice them.
- Discuss appropriate accommodations you will need to be successful in class.



Follow-up this meeting by discussing with a family member your understanding of an IEP meeting. Practice stating:

- The progress you have made on the goals listed in your last IEP
- Your new goals for the upcoming meeting
- The academic accommodations you will need to be successful

*Many students with disabilities don't have an IEP committee. Goal setting is still important. Discuss alternatives to Activities 6 and 7 with your guidance counselor.

Activity 7

Participate in your IEP meeting.

Prerequisite: Completion of Activity 6, which prepares you to participate in your IEP meeting.



Review the following activities with your special education teacher before your next IEP meeting. Decide what you will do at the meeting.

Before the meeting:

- Make a list of the people to invite to your IEP meeting.
- Invite each person on this list.

At the meeting:

- Introduce each person at the meeting.
- Summarize your past goals and accomplishments.
- State your new goals.
- State the appropriate accommodations you will need to be successful in class.
- Ask for ideas and feedback from other members.
- Ask for the support and help that you will need to accomplish your goals.
- Ask questions if you don't understand or would like more information.

After your IEP meeting, draft an action plan that you will follow to accomplish the goals established in the meeting.



Meet with your special education teacher to review and polish your action plan.



Repeat this activity for each IEP meeting.

Self-Advocacy

Activities 6 and 7: Planning and Conducting an IEP Meeting

Students will increase their involvement in the IEP meeting. They will learn about the process, become familiar with their last IEP and take an active role at the next meeting.

Planning - Think about the ideal IEP meeting and the role each participant plays. Consider the age of your students and their self-advocacy skills. Alert parents and others to the role the student will play in the IEP, remind them that the first meeting may not be perfect and that is O.K. The most important outcome is that the students are engaged and increase their participation.

The curriculum listed below will provide structured steps for helping students take a leadership role in their IEP meetings. Consider using these curricula to supplement these *Guidance Activities*. Practice with the students prior to the date for the IEP meeting. Encourage role play even if you are the only other person present with the student.

Warm up Activity - Begin by asking students to tell you what IEP stands for and what an IEP meeting is. Ask how many have attended past IEP meetings. Talk about the importance of an IEP meeting. Ask students if they know the purpose of an IEP, or why it is required. Share with students the potential power of being part of the IEP process. Talk about how their role changes in relation to the IEP as they get older. Explain that under your guidance they will become active participants. Over the next few years they will be taking on more of the responsibility. Point out that this is a great opportunity to gain the skills they will need to advocate for themselves in college and the workplace

Supplemental Resources

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY)
<http://www.nichcy.org>

Technical Assistance Guide: Helping Students Develop their IEP's and *A Student's Guide to the IEP* provide a format for teaching students to run their own IEP meeting. Both publications can be downloaded from the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY) website.

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
<http://www.cec.sped.org>

Student-Led IEP's; A Guide for Student Involvement, developed by the Council for Exceptional Children and the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration is designed to help teachers plan for and implement student-led IEP's. This guide can be downloaded from the CEC Website through the Resource Catalogue, under the Transition or IEP sections.

NEXT S.T.E.P., Student Transition and Educational Planning, is a curriculum that will teach students to take a leadership role in their own planning efforts. This curriculum is available through Pro-Ed. See *References* for a complete bibliographic citation.

Integrating Transition Planning Into the IEP Process developed by the Division of Career Development and Transition, A Division of The Council for Exceptional Children is a guide to assist with the planning process to achieve a smooth transition to adult life. The authors break down the transition planning process and offer suggestions. See *References* for a complete bibliographic citation.

Evaluating Progress - Be sure to consider student's grade and developmental level when evaluating.

- Does the student state the purpose of the meeting and why various people are involved?
- Does the student state the significance of IEP goals and progress made on those goals?

Self-Advocacy

- Does the student state appropriate new goals?
- Does the student state accommodations that are reasonable to provide access to the general curriculum.

Activity 8

Prepare to be a self-advocate for accommodations in the classroom.

Prerequisite: Completion of Activities 1 – 4 and Activity 8.

In Activities 1-3 you learned about your strengths and limitations. With the help of a teacher you have experienced accommodations and their effects. In the following two activities, you will advocate for your own accommodations.



Write the answers to the following questions and statements. You may want to review information from the activities indicated below.

- What is your disability? Activities 2 & 3
- Describe how your disability affects how you learn. Activities 2 & 3
- Describe how you learn best. Activities 1
- What accommodations are supported by your documentation? Activities 1 & 4

Record answers to these 4 questions on the Activity 8 worksheet which can be found on the Post-ITT Website.

Practice discussing this information with a parent and then with a special education teacher or guidance counselor.

Working with your special education teacher or school guidance counselor, make any necessary changes that will make the information clear, understandable, and reasonable.

Develop a presentation for your teachers and practice sharing this information with your parent, special education teacher, or guidance counselor.

Activity 9

Practice being a self-advocate by requesting accommodations in your classes.



Identify a class in which you will need to use accommodations. Discuss with a special education teacher or counselor which accommodations would help you learn in this class. Keep in mind that in order to receive accommodations, they must be supported by written documentation.

Using the presentation you developed in Activity 8, practice identifying yourself to the teacher of this class. Be sure to include a statement naming your disability, how it affects your ability to learn, how you learn best, and the accommodations you will need to help you learn or demonstrate what you know.

Arrange for a brief meeting with the teacher of the class that you identified. Make your presentation to this teacher and address any questions s/he may have.



Return to a special education teacher and report on your experience. Discuss what went well and what you will do differently the next time you advocate for accommodations.



Repeat this activity for all the classes where you believe accommodations are reasonable and necessary.

Self-Advocacy

Activities 8 and 9: Advocating for accommodation without assistance

Students prepare and practice a statement requesting accommodations. After rehearsing with a special education teacher, they request accommodations in a general education class.

Planning - If you haven't done so yet it is time to alert the general staff to what you are encouraging your students to do. The students may appear demanding until they refine their self advocacy skills. An informed teacher may listen differently to the students' request and give valuable feedback to the student on how they sounded.

Worksheet – *Activity 8* includes a worksheet, *Self Advocacy Speech*. This worksheet is intended help students organize their ideas.

Warm up Activity - The warm up is built into *Activity 8* by having the student practice his/her request with a teacher, counselor or family member. Explain the difference between being demanding and assertive. Model examples for the students.

Evaluating Progress

- Can the student clearly state his/her disability?
- Can the student state how this disability functionally limits his/her ability to learn?
- Can the student clearly describe a preferred learning style?
- Can the student describe reasonable accommodation and discuss how they provide access to learning?
- Can the student describe how providing an accommodation affects the teacher?
- Can the student discuss the relationship between his/her disability documentation and appropriate accommodations?
- Does the student speak with confidence and in a respectful manner when asking for an accommodation?