

Self-Advocacy:

The Power of Speaking Up!!!



“Every child deserves an equal opportunity to struggle.” Dr. Mary Slade, professor, Gifted Education

Self-advocacy is the life skill of speaking up for oneself to assure that essential needs are met. In a school setting, it can mean asking for harder spelling words, requesting harder classes, seeking alternative assignments, and finding ways to help others understand your school experience and why you speak up for ***appropriate academic accommodations***.

- Why is self-advocacy necessary in life?
- Why is self-advocacy necessary in school?
- Why is self-advocacy necessary for gifted students?

Essential Elements of Self-Advocacy

Understanding of Self

- Recognizing one’s own strengths & weaknesses
- Knowing when an alternative learning option is needed (and when it’s not)
- Acknowledging one’s personality type and how that may influence the process of self-advocacy [Pleaser, Ego-Centric, Timid, Bold, Responsible, Scattered, Overbearing, Risk-Taker (or not), Flighty, Motivated, etc.]

Understanding the Teacher

- What challenges is the teacher up against?
- Acknowledge teacher’s current or past efforts at making accommodations
- Recognize that the teacher also has strengths & weaknesses
- Be aware of the teacher’s personality type

Understanding the System

- What resources & opportunities are already available?
- Obstacles inherent in the structure
- Loopholes inherent in the structure
- What processes & policies are already in place?
- What is the process for change?

“The fool persuades me with his reasons; the wise man persuades me with my own.”
~ Aristotle ~

Nuts & Bolts

The Four P's

Polite
Private
Proof
Propose



Questions to Ask Yourself

Do you have already-developed healthy strategies to deal with the frustrations that will come with the challenging accommodations for which you are advocating?

Can you manage your emotions and think on your feet?

How will you respond to possible rejection?

Can you accept the offered alternatives with grace, appreciation, & the responsibility to *follow-through*?

Getting Ready

Write it down first

Plan, Practice, and Role-Play ahead of time

Start with small steps

Take a buddy with you if you need

REMEMBER THE 4 P's:

Be Polite, do it in Private, provide Proof, and Propose an alternative.

Responding to Comments: Consider how you will respond to comments such as these - -

“You’re weird.”

“Why are you doing that?”

“Grades aren’t everything.”

“You’re such an overachiever.”

“I need to make sure you don’t miss anything.”

“You’ll get to do that next year.”

“If I let you do that, then all the kids will want to do that.”

Reflection

What was your self-advocacy goal? Why was this important to you?

Do you feel as though you made some progress toward achieving your goal?

What did you learn? How can you use what you learned in the future?

Is there anything you would do differently next time?

“All of us have two educations: one which we receive from others; another, and the most valuable, which we give ourselves.” ~ John Randolph ~