

Self-Determination and Self-Advocacy Skills for Students with Disabilities



May 12, 2026

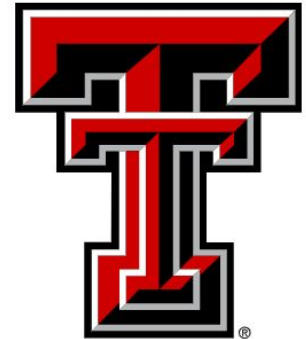
WV Career Collaborative and First2 Network

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Objectives

- Define self-advocacy and self-determination skills.
- Explain the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination skills for students with disabilities.
- Connect self-advocacy and self-determination skills to workplace success.
- Describe strategies that help middle and high school students develop self-advocacy and self-determination skills.

A little about me...



Discussion

- Who are students with disabilities?
- What are the challenges of students with disabilities?

Students with Disabilities

- IEP/504 Plan
- Accommodations/adaptations
- Assistive Technology
- Support systems
- Protected by ADA in the workplace

Challenges:

- Understanding their disability
- Speaking up for support
- Making independent decisions
- Developing confidence

Discussion

What **skills** do students with disabilities need most to be successful after high school?

- In post-secondary education
- In the workplace

Skills to be Successful

- Academic skills
- Life skills
- Decision-making
- Goal-setting
- Planning
- Communication
- Confidence

What is Self-Advocacy?

An ability to communicate and advocate:

- Strengths, needs, interests
- Rights and responsibilities
- Accommodations
- Disability diagnosis and its impact
- Stand up for yourself

What is Self-Determination?

An ability to direct one's own life.

- **Self-awareness** – identify strengths, needs, interests
- **Self-advocacy** – state needs, pursue supports
- **Decision-making** – consider options, set goals, develop a plan
- **Independence** – initiate tasks, complete tasks on time, follow through
- **Self-evaluation** – monitor own performance, determine if goal met
- **Adjustment** – change goals, plan, or support if needed

Discussion:

Why do these skills matter?

Self-advocacy and self-determination are life-long skills.

- Increased independence
- Better transition outcomes
- Improved confidence
- Greater success in post-secondary education and the workplace

Connection to Workplace Success

- Skills should be connected to transition-focused IEP goals and planning.
- Skills should be introduced early and practiced often.
- Skills are needed in the workplace to:
 - Manage schedules and responsibilities
 - Request clarification from a supervisor
 - Ask for accommodations
 - Communicate needs professionally

Support Skill Development

Strategies to support students with disabilities in developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills:

- Transition Seminars
- Student-Led IEP Meetings

Transition Seminars

Purpose:

- Identify strengths and challenges
- Understand disability diagnosis and impact
- Compare middle school, high school, and options after school (post-secondary education, employment, independent living)
- Develop future goals
- Learn to be a self-advocate by communicating goals and needs to others

Student-Led IEP Meetings

Purpose:

- Advanced self-reflection and preparation
- Develops self-advocacy skills
- Promotes self-determination through shared decision-making
- Provides input on transition goals
- Collaborates with IEP team

Key Takeaways

- Self-advocacy and self-determination skills are **essential for students' success**.
- Students need **direct instruction, modeling,** and opportunities to **practice** the skills.
- When students **understand themselves** and can **advocate for their needs**, they are better prepared for success in school, employment, and life.