

## Lesson 5: Developing Communications Skills and Addressing Motivation and Safety/Security

### Guidelines for Lesson Administration

These lessons can be administered to individuals or small groups of students. If working with groups of students, it is highly recommended that participating students and their parents/guardians provide consent for participation and that there is a detailed description of the lesson contents and what information will be shared amongst participants. If working with groups of students, careful consideration will be needed to protect privacy and respect individual confidentiality as much as possible. It is the lesson administrator's responsibility to ensure that the lesson plan delivery conforms to school district policies and provincial/state/federal laws.

### Qualifications for Lesson Administration

It is recommended that these lessons be administered by an educator who has some training in special education policies, practices, and assessment.



#### Preparation Required Prior to Lesson Administration

Students who participate in this lesson should be aware that they have a learning disability and have a very basic understanding of how their learning disability impacts their learning. It is recommended that an educator reviews the student's IEP and psychoeducational assessment in an individual meeting prior to commencing lesson number one.

### OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer & Eddy (2005) indicate that for students to become successful self-advocates, they need a knowledge of self, a knowledge of rights, and the communication skills to advocate. However, students can have the skills to self-advocate, but may choose not to advocate. Centerrino (2016) argues that there is a choice in exercising self-advocacy skills, and that this choice is often shaped by a student's feelings of safety or belonging. This researcher's findings suggest that a student will self-advocate if they feel safe and supported in doing so but might not if there is a possibility of negative interactions with teachers, parents, or others. In this lesson, students will practice their strategies for requesting accommodations and supports. In order to facilitate a sense of safety and security, students will be provided with an *Accommodations Student Card* in order to assist with communication and provide a measure of confidence. An IEP summary can be used in place of an *Accommodations Student Card*.

**Self-Advocacy in High School Lesson Series:  
A Guide to Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will request an accommodation from one of their classroom teachers.
2. Students will develop an understanding of how school documentation can support feelings of safety and security.
3. Students will demonstrate the I-ASK steps when communicating with a teacher and use an IEP summary or an accommodations student card to support their requests

**MATERIALS NEEDED**

1. *I-ASK Cue Cards*
2. *Accommodations Student Card* or an IEP Summary (the student cards will need to be personalized and completed in advance of each lesson for the students)
3. Hand-out #1: *Requesting Accommodations from Teachers*
4. Gift card or other prize for motivation

**LESSON (30 minutes and Case Manager Check-in's)**



***Incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning:*** When beginning the lesson with a small group, you may wish to acknowledge that you are learning on the traditional territory of the local First Nation through a circle process. The process can also be used to support connection and belonging.

1. Review Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb's (2014) definitions of Self-Advocacy and Accommodations:

**Self-Advocacy:** To speak up and ask for what you need

**Accommodations:** Changes that can be made that will help you succeed or reach your goals

2. Review the I-ASK steps on the *I-ASK Cue Cards* and state that today's goal is to practise 'self-advocacy' and connect with teachers about the accommodations that they need.
3. Share the learning intentions with the class:

*Learning Intention 1: Students will advocate for the accommodations and supports they need in the classroom.*

**4. Activity #1: Requesting Accommodations from Teachers**

- a) Provide a paper copy of the 'accommodations student card' or an IEP summary. Indicate that some students are comfortable requesting supports

**Self-Advocacy in High School Lesson Series:  
A Guide to Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia**

and that others might feel apprehensive at first. The latter group may worry that a teacher will say 'no,' or get angry, or think a student is being unfair. Remind students that they have a right to the accommodations that are listed in their IEP and these 'official school documents' are provided to support their requests for accommodations from teachers.



*Educator's Note: Encourage students to take a photo of their accommodations student card with a personal mobile device or provide an electronic copy for their device. Students may lose their cards. Also remind students that it should be treated as a confidential document. Most importantly, consider the accommodations student card use as training for post-secondary, where students will often receive letters of accommodations which they share with instructors.*

- b) Provide a paper copy of Handout#1. Remind students that in high school, teachers often have many students and may forget to provide an accommodation that is needed and listed in an IEP. It's important to note that teachers want their students to be successful and that students should not hesitate to request the supports listed in an IEP. Read the instructions for Activity #1 aloud.
- c) Model the activity through role play. Explicitly look at the *I-ASK Cue Card* as a visual prompt to remember the steps prior to connecting with the hypothetical teacher. Then, model the request to students as if they are the teacher. Remember to make specific reference to the *Accommodations Student Card* or IEP summary in your request.



*Educator's Note: Encourage students to check in with one teacher whom they feel most comfortable to discuss the adaptations they need. For students who may need extra support, you or an educational assistant may wish to accompany them to provide reassurance.*

- d) Provide some time for role-playing practice. Remind students to use the I-ASK and Alt+CM+Leave steps and that they can look at the cue card as a prompt to remember those steps prior to meeting with their teacher.
- e) Ask students to connect with their chosen teacher during class time or transition time to review their accommodations and perhaps even request an accommodation. Encourage them to bring their *I-ASK Cue Card* and their *Accommodations Student Card* or IEP summary. Conclude the lesson by letting students know that most teachers want to help their students be successful and will appreciate reminders and requests. Sometimes, the most difficult step is the initiation of support and once that is done, the

**Self-Advocacy in High School Lesson Series:  
A Guide to Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia**

self-advocacy piece often gets easier. Review the task- to meet with one teacher (You may wish to provide teachers with advance knowledge of this request- as well as a copy of the I-ASK *Cue Card*, so that they can provide you and the student with feedback.)

- f) Connect with each student individually during a check in. Review how it went as well as any feedback from the classroom teacher. Questions to review could include: What worked well? What was difficult? What questions or concerns do you still have? Are there still barriers to accessing the accommodation- even if a teacher has agreed to provide a support?
- g) Have students complete Activity #2 and meet with all of their teachers. You may wish to treat it as a scavenger hunt and have some sort of reward or prize for completion.
- h) Connect with each student individually during a check in. Review how it went as well as any feedback from the classroom teacher. Questions to review could include: How did it go? Did it get easier the more that you talked to your teachers? What did you learn? What concerns do you still have?

**Extension Activity #1: Receiving Accommodations My Way- Addressing Embarrassment and Reluctance**

Some students might feel embarrassed and reluctant to access supports; this activity is for them. Baker and Scanlon (2016) found that high school students with learning disabilities often feel uncomfortable with their peers knowing they need help and because of this, may refrain from requesting accommodations. Students worry that others will think they are 'dumb' or 'slow.' The goal of this activity is to support students in creating a detailed plan which addresses any embarrassment (or other obstacles) in regards to receiving accommodations in the classroom.

- a) Students will provide specific input into a plan to structure their accommodations. Using the graphic organizer below, have students write down the classes where they need support, and list the accommodations that will help them. Students should spend some time reflecting on the concerns that they might have about accessing any of the accommodations. Are they embarrassed to receive the accommodation? What strategies can be used to minimize that embarrassment? It may be that other obstacles or barriers, other than embarrassment, are revealed in this activity. Once the student has listed their concerns, work together to create a specific plan about accessing an accommodation that will better meet their needs.

**Self-Advocacy in High School Lesson Series:  
A Guide to Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia**

<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Accommodations</b>	<b>Concerns about Implementation (How and When they are used)</b>	<b>Preferences about Accommodation Use</b>

**Extension Activity #2: Weekly Checklist**

Hart & Brehm (2013) created a sample self-monitoring checklist for elementary students to monitor their progress with self-advocacy skills on a daily basis. This form allows teachers to track progress in self-advocacy, troubleshoot any problems that students encounter, and track the consistency with which accommodations are provided. A self-monitoring checklist could also be taught to high school students and used with them. A simple checklist can be completed at the end of every school week and serve as the basis of weekly meetings. Have your high school students reflect on the level of support they received and needed with this weekly checklist.

<b>English</b>	<b>Social Studies</b>	<b>Math</b>	<b>Science</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.  Example: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.  Example: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.  Example: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.  Example: _____ _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.  Example: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.  Example: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.  Example: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.  Example: _____ _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> I did not use any accommodations this week  Explain why: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I did not use any accommodations this week  Explain why: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I did not use any accommodations this week  Explain why: _____ _____ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I did not use any accommodations this week  Explain why: _____ _____ _____

**Self-Advocacy in High School Lesson Series:  
A Guide to Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia**

**ASSESSMENT**

1. Successful completion of the role-playing activities
2. Communication of something learned about rights in final discussion.