

Lesson 6: Developing Leadership Skills in Self-Advocacy (OPTIONAL)

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, students need a knowledge of self, a knowledge of rights, and the communication skills to advocate. They also identify leadership as an important aspect of self-advocacy. Leadership is the ability to advocate on behalf of others and is often a progression of self-advocacy development. **In this optional lesson**, interested students will be invited to participate to further develop their leadership skills.

This lesson has two parts. First, motivated students will develop an understanding of the difference between essential accommodations and universal supports, and be encouraged to consider their abilities to advocate for other students in the classroom. Second, keen students will develop a school project which addresses an accessibility issue in the school or community. They can work with any other interested peers in the school that they wish. This project is inspired by the University of British Columbia's PLAN 515: Qualitative Methods & Research Design (UBC, 2018). UBC offers PLAN 515 to improve campus

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accessibility, and to encourage students to undertake research projects related to accessibility.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will develop a basic understanding of the difference between an essential accommodation and a universal support.
2. Students will develop a further understanding of the ways they can advocate for others with similar learning needs.
3. Students will develop the skills to advocate for universal supports.
4. Students will complete a project related to accessibility.

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Handout #1: *THANK Cue Cards*
2. Handout #2: *Advocacy for Universal Supports*
3. Handout #2: Accessibility Project

LESSON (60 Minute Lesson and Group 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) Share the following quote by Dr. Seuss: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.” Ask the student(s) to consider what this quote has to do with advocacy and advocating for others.
- 2) Remind students of the processes that they had to go through to be able to receive accommodations. This included extensive testing and many meetings. Ask them if they think there are other students who might benefit from accommodations as well, who may not have had the same opportunities for testing or the development of an IEP.
- 3) Explain how schools are constantly evolving and that many teachers are using differentiation and Universal Design for Learning principles in their classroom. Teachers are trying to be more flexible in the materials that they use and the ways that they assess their students. They are also trying to find better ways to support all of their students. Provide the following definitions:

Accommodations: Changes that can be made that will help you succeed or reach your goals (sometimes called adaptations). They can be used to overcome academic obstacles.

Universal Supports: Supports that are provided to all of the students in a class, rather than a select few.

Explain how many educators believe it is important to provide universal supports for everyone.

4) Introduce the learning intention:

Learning Intention 1: Students will develop the skills to advocate for other students to receive academic supports.

Learning Intention 2: Students will be able to take on an advocacy project in our school and community to improve accessibility.

5) Activity #1: Advocating for Universal Supports- THANK & Role-Playing



Educator's Note: The purpose of this activity is for students to use their personal experiences and successes with accommodations to encourage their teachers to provide more access to supports for others.

- a) Explain to students that as people with learning disabilities, they are in the best position to explain to teachers (and others) what it is like to have a learning disability and how they are impacted in the classroom- especially by supports. If they can explain how accommodations make a difference to their performance, they might be able to persuade their teachers to provide supports to others and perhaps in a universal way. This is a form of self-advocacy.

Provide a copy of Handout #1 and introduce the acronym:

THANK

TH- Thank the teacher for providing you with an accommodation and state your appreciation.

A- Attest to how the **A**ccommodation helped you

N- Nudge the teacher to consider offering it in a universal way

K- Keep advocating!

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- b) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout #2. Model the first role-play as a student. Have students complete the role playing activities.
- c) Discuss with students how they felt about the role-playing activity. Do they think this kind of advocacy will be helpful for others? Is this a strategy they would feel comfortable using? Note that the role-playing uses a question- not a demand- to encourage teachers to think about universal supports. Why would this be the case?

6) Activity #2: Accessibility Project:

- a) Pose the following questions: What are some other ways that you, as a student with a learning disability, can advocate for others with disabilities? Consider the term, 'accessibility' in regards to learning and participation. How can accessibility for everyone be improved in a class? In our school? In our community? In our province?
- b) Provide a copy of Handout #3 and introduce the 'Accessibility Project.' Have students work on the project individually or in groups. Perhaps connect with classroom teachers to see if any of them might give course credit for participation in this project.
- c) Provide student time over the next few weeks to work on this inquiry project. This may include establishing time in school for students and checking in with them regarding their progress.

Extension Activity #1: Advocating for Personalization in School Curriculum

Students have learned the skills to advocate for accommodations and supports. Students can transfer these skills to advocacy for more personalization in learning topics, assignments and curricular resources. Examples of personalization might include students being able to choose their own novel or learning about a specific topic of interest. Students can develop ideas for personalization, role-play requests, and develop further strategies for requesting changes. Students can connect with teachers and school officials about these requests.

Extension Activity #2: Advocating for Improved Representation and Diversity in School Curriculum

Students have learned the skills to advocate for accommodations and supports. Students can transfer these skills to advocacy for greater representation of perspectives and diversity in learning topics, assignments, and curricular resources. Students can develop ways they would like to see the representation of perspectives and diversity improved, role-play requests, and develop further strategies for requesting changes. Students can connect with teachers and school officials about these requests.

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ASSESSMENT:

- 1) Participation in the role-play activities
- 2) Completion of the 'Accessibility Project'