

Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development:

Guidelines for Lesson Administration

These activities can be administered in a variety of classroom settings and will support the development of self-advocacy skills in all students. While approaching self-advocacy skills from a UDL perspective cannot substitute for some of the evidence based special education interventions needed for students with learning disabilities, classroom activities built upon UDL principles can complement them.

Qualifications for Lesson Administration

These lessons be administered by any classroom educator to foster self-advocacy skills in all of their students. It is recommended that they read some of the summaries on self-advocacy research on this site.

Background Knowledge of Students Required Prior to Lesson Administration

Students will bring a diverse set of skills and experiences to these lesson activities.

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. These lesson ideas build on this framework and connect to British Columbia's new educational curriculum. Self-advocacy instruction can and should be incorporated into the curriculum for all BC students. The BC Ministry of Education (2018) has proposed that a number of core competencies be developed in students. Self-advocacy is a component of self-determination in the 'Personal Awareness and Responsibility' competencies. In regards to assessment of this competency, the Ministry suggests that students be able to articulate that "I can advocate for myself and my ideas" (BC Ministry of Education, 2018, Self-Determination section, para 2). It should be noted as well that in the newly established Career Life Connections course, the BC Ministry of Education (2018) highlights the importance of learning self-advocacy strategies, which are defined as the ability "to communicate personal strengths, preferences, views, values, and interests with confidence" (Learning Standards section). A number of learning activities are proposed that can be used to support the acquisition of self-advocacy strategies in the classroom with all learners.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will further develop their self-advocacy strategies.

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MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Technology with Internet access and accessibility features

ACTIVITIES:

1) Self-Advocacy Skills in Literary, Historical, and Present Day Figures (English, Social Studies, Science, Math, Career Life Education, Career Life Connections, Art, Drama)

- a) Introduce students to the BC Ministry of Education’s definition of self-advocacy as well as the framework of self-advocacy as constructed by Test et al. (2018).
- b) Provide a reading, text, or video with a person who has demonstrated self-advocacy skills. This can include a fictional character, a person in the news, an historical rights activist, or a scientist/mathematician who has had to advocate for their work. Have students reflect on that figure’s self-advocacy skills and complete the following graphic organizer:

Self-Advocacy Skills	Figure’s Name: _____
What is this figure’s strengths and weaknesses?	
What are this figure’s rights and/or responsibilities?	
What communication styles or strategies did this figure use in advocating for themselves?	
If this figure took on a leadership role, explain how the figure lead?	

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- c) Explore other examples of figures, but provide a pause in learning at specific junctures or moments when these figures have to choose to self-advocate. Have students work in groups to consider the various self-advocacy strategies that these figures **could or should** employ. Encourage students to create an argument about what kinds of self-advocacy strategies that this figure should use. Have them complete the following graphic organizer below and to share their responses:

Self-Advocacy Skills	Figure's Name: _____
What are this figure's strengths and weaknesses?	
What are this figure's rights and/or responsibilities?	
What communication styles or strategies should this figure use in advocating for themselves?	
Should this figure take on a leadership role, and if so, explain how they should lead?	

- d) Consider having students role play these situations to demonstrate the self-advocacy strategies that should be used. Conclude by having the class reflect on which strategies would be most effective.

2) Developing A Self-Advocacy Skills Growth Plan (English, Social Studies, Career Life Education, Career Life Connections, Physical and Health Education)

- a) Introduce students to the BC Ministry of Education’s definition of self-advocacy as well as the framework of self-advocacy as constructed by Test et al. (2018).
- b) Have students use a graphic organizer to develop a plan for developing their personal advocacy skills. The assignment will require students to reflect on their personal abilities and create a plan which aims to improve their strengths and weaknesses, knowledge of rights, and communication skills. Have students consider all areas of their life when creating their plan: school, work, sports/hobbies/activities, passions, community, family, and relationships. You may wish to introduce the concept of SMART goals.

Questions to Consider	Self-Advocacy Skills Growth Plan
What are your areas are strengths and how can you build on those strengths and improve them? What are your areas of weakness and how do you resolve to improve these areas?	
Are there rights and responsibilities that you need to learn more about at school, work, future endeavors (college) or other areas? How do you plan to learn more?	
What areas of communication are strengths? Are there areas of communication where you need to improve? Explain how.	
In what areas of your life can you take a leadership role? Explain how.	

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- c) Conclude with a discussion: How can we improve ourselves through self-advocacy?

3) Identifying Self-Advocacy Skills in Everyday Life (English, Social Studies, Career Life Education, Career Life Connections, Drama)

- a) Introduce students to the BC Ministry of Education’s definition of self-advocacy as well as the framework of self-advocacy as constructed by Test et al. (2018)
- b) In small groups, have students explore situations where self-advocacy strategies are needed and have them suggest ways to advocate. Assign each group a problem situations and have them complete

Problem Situations:

School	Everytime you take a Math test, you run out of time. The teachers collects the math tests as soon as the bell goes to signal the end of class. On your last two tests, you didn’t get a chance to complete the problems on the back page. You know that you will get a better mark if you can have more time. How do you self-advocate?
Work	When you got your job, you indicated to your employer that you can work afternoons and weekends. Your employer is starting to schedule you with afternoon and evening shifts. You are finishing work late and you notice that your grades are slipping because you are tired. This week, your employer has scheduled you for evening shifts on Wednesday and Thursday. You do not want to keep working late. How do you self-advocate?
Social	You are spending time with a group of friends. Everyone starts to talk about some of the controversial topics that are being researched in English class. They start attacking your values on abortion. How do you self-advocate?
Group Work	You are assigned to work on a group project. For the project, your group is to create a digital magazine on a theme. It’s a big project and involves writing, artwork, digital design, computer skills, photography, creativity, and thoughtfulness. Consider your strengths and the role you can best play to support your group. Identify which parts of the project can you best support, and explain how you would self-advocate for that role(s)?
Social Media	Another student attacks you personally on social media with insults and lies. How do you self-advocate?

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Community	Your favourite band is coming to town, but they are not playing an all ages show. They are planning in a 19+ venue. There is an all ages venue in town that is not being used when this concert is scheduled. How would you advocate for yourself and other teens to attend?
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For each problem situation, work with your group to complete the following graphic organizer:

Self-Advocacy Skills Checklist	Situation:
What are my views & values in reference to this situation? Do I have any strengths that can help me communicate my views, or any weaknesses that I need to consider in expressing my views?	
What are my rights and responsibilities in this situation?	
How can I best communicate my perspective and views?	<p>Possible Communication Styles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assertive b) Logical c) Inquisitive d) Emotional e) Direct <p>Possible Communication Mediums:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Individual Discussion b) Informal Meeting c) Formal Meeting d) Letter e) Petition f) Social Media
Optional: How can I take a leadership role in this situation?	

4) Activity: Preparing for Self-Advocacy Skills Needed for Post Secondary Education and Employment (English, Social Studies, Career Life Education, Career Life Connections)

- a) Introduce students to the BC Ministry of Education’s definition of self-advocacy as well as the framework of self-advocacy as constructed by Test et al. (2018).
- b) Have students research their rights and responsibilities in post-secondary education, or as employees in the workplace.
- c) Have students research the kinds of self-advocacy skills they will need.

5) What is your Math Self-Advocacy Plan? (Math, Science)

- a) Introduce students to the BC Ministry of Education’s definition of self-advocacy as well as the framework of self-advocacy as constructed by Test et al. (2018).
- b) Explain that the most important skill for success in any Math course may not be related to factoring, multiplying, or dividing. The most important skill may be self-advocacy and having a plan to seek assistance when you are stuck with a problem, or need help understanding a concept
- c) Ask students if they have a self-advocacy plan for Math.
- d) Have students develop a 4 or 5 step self-advocacy plan for Math with the graphic organizer below, and have them paste it on the cover of their binder. Encourage them to use it when needing help:

Steps in My Mathematics Self Advocacy Plan

Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	
Step 5	

You may use the following suggestions (or others) for developing your plan:

- a) Take inventory of any gaps in knowledge or skills where you are commonly falling down (Example: putting fractions in lowest terms). Make a plan to practice that skill.
- b) Ask a classmate for help.
- c) Ask a friend outside of class to help
- d) Ask a parent for help
- e) Review the examples in the notes or textbook
- f) Regularly check the answer in the back of the book to ensure you are getting the correct answers

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- g) Ask your teacher for help
- h) If available, access tutorial hours from teachers at school or privately
- i) Watch videos on Youtube or Khan Academy about how to solve problems
- j) Use an App. Some can take photos of equations and show the steps of a problem
- k) Try rearranging the equation in its simplest form with simple numbers to ensure you understand the steps
- l) Try to explain it to others. Studies show the best way to learn something is to practice teaching it to others.
- m) Others?

6) Activity: Project- Advocating for your Views and Values (English, Social Studies, Career Life Education, Career Life Connections, Art)

- a) Introduce students to the BC Ministry of Education's definition of self-advocacy as well as the framework of self-advocacy as constructed by Test et al. (2018).
- b) Research an organization which embodies or embraces your views and values (beliefs, convictions, perspectives, and worldviews). It might be a sports, community, advocacy, support, or charitable organization. Create a personal plan to somehow contribute to this organization's goals or activities. This might even include creating a club, chapter, or related activity for our school or local community.

OR

Create an advocacy plan for increasing learning opportunities at our school. This might include a proposal to to learn more about your your values and interests. Consider how these learning opportunities might happen in the existing courses and structures of your school, and proposing the inclusion of new courses and structures.

OR

Create an essay, artwork, or project which advocates for your views and values.