A Website to Support the Development of Self-Advocacy Skills in High-school-aged Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia

by

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A Graduate Applied Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Faculty of Education

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Vancouver Island University

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We accept this Graduate Applied Project as conforming to the required standard.

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Abstract

Many students have underdeveloped self-advocacy skills and struggle to advocate for the supports they need in schools. This can lead to underachievement in schools, feelings of frustration, and struggles in post-secondary studies and employment. Self-advocacy skills are crucial, and research has demonstrated that students with well-developed self-advocacy skills achieve more successful outcomes in life. A website called Self-Advocacy in High School (www.selfadvocacyhighschool.ca) was designed to support the development of self-advocacy skills in high-school-aged students with learning disabilities in British Columbia. This website includes lessons, classroom activities, and interventions for students with learning disabilities to support their self-advocacy skill development. The lessons incorporate Universal Design for Learning principles and include two strategies to support Indigenous ways of learning. The Self-Advocacy in High School website (www.selfadvocacyhighschool.ca) also hosts modules for self-advocacy development which students can work through independently with the guidance of educators. The website features an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ which students can use to advocate in the classroom and encourages all students to develop a ‘digital transition portfolio’ to prepare for the transition from high school to post-secondary education and employment.

Self-Advocacy in High School

www.selfadvocacyhighschool.ca

If the hyperlink above does not work, copies of the website can be found in appendices.
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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude for all the work that my advisor, Michael Todd-Hammond has put into supporting this project and me throughout the process. His feedback was instrumental in fully developing this website, and his encouragement and inquisitiveness made this project far better than I could have possibly ever imagined.

I would also like to thank my first VIU instructor, Wendy Simms, for her valuable guidance and encouragement in helping me to develop the initial ideas for this project.

I am grateful to Marilyn Caldwell for reviewing my project. It was an honor to have her provide me with feedback on my project. Her thoughtful reflection and insight have provided me with direction in further developing this resource and sharing this work with others.

Finally, I would like to thank Heather Lafreniere, who supported me in developing the ideas for this project and spent countless hours discussing self-advocacy. I am very appreciative of all her efforts that went into editing the project.
Dedication

This project is dedicated to my family, who has been incredibly supportive during my studies.
Chapter 1

Introduction

It is the ability to speak up for themselves and initiate needed supports, and not the minimization of a particular disability, that will be essential skills they’ll need later in life. (Van der Klift and Kunc, 2017, p.8)

My Introduction to the Importance of Self-Advocacy in Special Education

When I attended my first Special Education professional conference in the early 2000’s in Vancouver, British Columbia, I signed up for a session with two speakers who were advocates from the disability rights community: Emma Van der Klift and Norman Kunc. Both prefer to think of themselves as modern day story-tellers and I was very moved by their stories.

Kunc, a father and educational consultant, has cerebral palsy and initially attended a school for children with disabilities, until he was able to ‘argue’ his way into a neighborhood school. At the conference, he recounted stories of his experiences, including his participation in speech and physical therapy. One therapist designed a program that focused on Kunc painstakingly and frustratingly learning to do and undo shirt buttons. Kunc spent many hours being forced to learn this skill and later in life, questioned its importance. He used his experience with this therapy as a metaphor for better understanding how to view and support individuals with disabilities. Kunc argued that the skill he needed most was not the ability to do up his own shirt, but the skill to advocate for assistance with doing it up. Self-advocacy was therefore a crucial skill for those with disabilities to develop in order to lead more independent and
meaningful lives. It was in this presentation that I realized the importance of self-advocacy in special education and the seeds for this project on self-advocacy were sewn.

As an educator in British Columbia, I left that conference inspired and knowing that I needed to learn more about teaching self-advocacy skills to my students. When I began my graduate studies at Vancouver Island University and was asked to begin thinking about a research topic, I knew immediately that I wanted to learn more about best practices in developing self-advocacy skills in high school students with learning disabilities. As I was beginning this project, I was lucky to be given an opportunity at the last minute to attend an Inclusion Outreach conference on April 26, 2018. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the keynote speakers were Van der Klift and Kunc. As I was moving full speed into this project, it was inspiring and reinvigorating to hear Kunc speak about inclusion and self-advocacy. It was reassuring to hear Kunc (2018) vehemently argue that “The most important skill I ever had was to initiate the support I needed.” My project had real purpose and significance.

**Self-Advocacy Development in the Context of the British Columbian Education System**

In British Columbia, all students with learning disabilities are entitled to have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). An IEP is developed on an annual basis to address a student’s learning needs and describes the aspects of the educational program which are individualized for the student. It includes specific and measurable goals for the student, details of the educational program which have been adapted or modified, and the support services or strategies required to implement the plan (BC Ministry of Education, 2009). IEPs are created in consultation with school staff, parents and/or care-givers, and when possible, the student who is identified with a learning disability. It is the goal of most special educators to have students involved in the IEP process, especially as they mature and enter middle school and/or high school. Students can be
meaningful participants in the creation of their IEP, and should be aware of the goals in their plans. I find that students who are more aware of their goals are more likely to engage with the supports or interventions that are being provided and to achieve these goals. Those who do not participate in the development of their IEP are less aware of the supports and accommodations that they can access. Hence, they are less likely to be able to advocate for the supports they need.

It is often hoped that students can become advocates for the accommodations and supports that are outlined in their IEPs, but there is evidence to suggest that self-advocacy development has not been a key focus in IEPs (Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer and Eddy, 2005). Prater, Redman, Anderson and Gibb (2014) define self-advocacy as “the ability to speak up and ask for what you need” (p.299). Significant consideration should be given to identifying specific goals for self-advocacy development in an IEP, and it cannot be assumed that students will develop these skills without explicitly highlighting them. From my perspective as a special education teacher, the absence of IEP goals on self-advocacy is likely due to the pressures teachers face, inadequate training, and a lack of resources. Special education teachers often organize and prioritize their support and time for what is needed in the moment. It is often the case that resource teachers have to spend so much time and energy supporting high school students in passing their academic courses or managing their behaviour, that they have little time to develop other kinds of goals or implement interventions to support skills that students will need in the future such as self-advocacy.

Teacher education programs often emphasize the remediation of academic skills and currently promote Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to accommodate diversity, but rarely focus on the skills needed to help students understand and manage a disability. Abernathy and Taylor (2009), using a mixed methods study, suggest that what “may be missing from teacher
preparation is the development of communication skills to thoughtfully and professionally teach children about their disabilities” (p.121). The results of their study indicated that teachers often speak in jargon and euphemisms to students about their disabilities and fail to implement self-determination activities appropriately. Abernathy and Taylor (2009) further argue that “Traditional coursework seems to surround helping others identify and understand a child’s disability, but less attention is focused on developing pre-service teacher skills in communicating to students about an identified disability and developing a student specific plan for teaching the child about the identified disability” (p. 132).

I have attended two large and renowned post-secondary institutions in British Columbia and never received any training on self-advocacy or self-determination interventions in any of the general education or special education courses that I have taken. Because teachers lack training in this area, they are likely not developing IEP goals around self-advocacy because they may not know how to define it nor teach to it. Consequently, few teachers are exposed to the resources they need such as curriculum and interventions around self-advocacy development. Additionally, there has also been a shift in educational policy that teachers take more responsibility for the learning and support of students with special needs in inclusive settings. Teachers often differentiate or unilaterally implement accommodations for students, but an unintended consequence of this shift is that they may not be working with students to help them develop the skills to advocate for themselves. In fact, many may not know how to define self-advocacy in a way to develop instructional strategies or supports. This has shaped my plan for this research project as there is a need for the development of a resource that can provide educators with best practices about how to support the development of self-advocacy skills in high school students with learning disabilities.
Many definitions of self-advocacy have been proposed in research over the years. Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer and Eddy (2005) raised concerns that educators may not be developing self-advocacy goals because there is confusion about how to define the concept, so they undertook a literature review to better define it for future educators and researchers. After reviewing the literature until 2003 and collecting 25 different definitions of self-advocacy, they developed a conceptual framework to support the development of instructional strategies and research in self-advocacy development. In their framework, Test et al. (2005) define self-advocacy as a construct of four multiple components: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership (see Figure 1.1). These four constructs can serve as the framework for self-advocacy goals in a student’s IEP, as well as for accompanying strategies and interventions which can support self-advocacy development.

Figure 1.1. Self-advocacy framework. Self-advocacy is composed of four constructs (Adapted from Test et al., 2005).

Extending upon the work of Test et al. (2005), Prater et al. (2014) argue that “to be effective self-advocates in the general education classroom, students with disabilities need an understanding of (a) their strengths and needs, (b) what accommodations are necessary and
available for them to be successful, and (c) the skills for asking for those accommodations” (p. 299). Students need structured opportunities and interventions to learn what accommodations they should be requesting and using. Additionally, students with learning disabilities will need training and practice in communicating with school staff and requesting accommodations. This is critical for students who live in British Columbia and will assist in preparing them for post-secondary education and employment. As young adults in the post-secondary education system, students with learning disabilities will need the skills to advocate for accommodations and supports. Due to privacy laws and the structuring of post-secondary education in British Columbia, IEPs and student files are not transferred from secondary schools to post-secondary institutions. Students with disabilities must be prepared to disclose their disability and take ownership in sharing information and documentation about their learning disability when transitioning to a college, university, or trade school. They must play a much greater role in the establishment of supports throughout their studies. Students with learning disabilities also need to be prepared to be able to explain their learning disability and its impact to employers who may not be knowledgeable about disabilities. Having the skills to advocate can assist young adults with disabilities to ensure that supports are in place for them to succeed in employment.

I plan on researching interventions which support the development of self-advocacy skills in the high school setting and those which support students’ transition into post-secondary studies and employment. It is my goal to research the problem of self-advocacy skill underdevelopment and to learn more about the activities and resources which can best serve educators and students in British Columbia, Canada.
Statement of the Problem

Researchers have identified underdeveloped self-advocacy skills as a problem in schools (Lopez, 2017; Baker & Scanlon, 2016; Prater et al., 2015; Test et al., 2005). High school students with learning disabilities are not requesting the accommodations and supports they are entitled to in the secondary classroom and consequently, this is impacting their learning, achievement, and personal growth. Furthermore, they are not appropriately developing the self-advocacy skills they need by graduation and this is impacting their experiences of success in post-secondary school and employment (Test et al., 2005; Black, 2010; Garrison-Wade, 2012). Given the importance of self-advocacy skills for post-secondary studies, employment, and personal development, it is imperative that instruction and interventions in self-advocacy skills be developed in high school (or earlier).

I have worked with many high school students with learning disabilities as a special educator in the Sea to Sky School District in British Columbia, and I concur with these researchers that there is a significant problem. I always include students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in meetings, so that they are made aware of the supports they can access at the high school level. However, they rarely advocate for the accommodations that they need. They appear reliant on classroom teachers and resource teachers like myself to provide these accommodations, and when they are not provided, seldom speak up or request them. They often attempt their assignments and tests without accommodations, and ultimately, underperform. For example, I worked with a very bright and personable student who accesses text to speech technology to support a severe reading disability. He is very proficient with this technology and relies on it to write tests. Without the support, he struggles to access text. On a day that I was absent, he wrote a major Social Studies test without any reading support or extra time and
performed poorly. When I inquired about why he did not request additional time or an
opportunity to use technology, he just shrugged his shoulders and indicated that he did not want
to ask. In my personal practice, I am observing too many high school students who are failing to
advocate for the supports they need. It is my hope that they can be more aware of the supports
they should be accessing, understand the importance of these supports, and be able to request
them from their classroom teachers, who are often caring and considerate, but busy and trying to
manage complex classrooms and meet the needs of many learners.

Additionally, I am working with many students who are graduating from high school and
will likely struggle with advocating for supports at the post-secondary level. I worked with a
young man with an IEP who was experiencing great success in school and who was in the
process of being admitted to a large university. An IEP meeting was scheduled to discuss the
importance of self-advocacy skills with him and his family, the supports he would need and
benefit from in university, and the process for accessing supports at the post-secondary level.
This discussion framed some of his IEP goals for the year around advocacy, and everyone at the
meeting agreed that we would start off with a simple action of self-advocacy. He would pick up a
revised copy of his IEP (based on the meeting) and add it to a folder with documentation that he
would need to apply for services in post-secondary studies. After giving him a number of
reminders, he never came to pick up his IEP and I had to deliver it to his parents. If a young
person with a learning disability will not even pick up his IEP, what chance is there that he will
self-advocate at a larger institution with staff he does not know? This student is also very
organized and experiencing success. What are the odds that a student with much poorer
organizational skills and who struggles will advocate when needed as an adult?
My experiences teaching students with underdeveloped self-advocacy skills and motivation deficits in the Sea to Sky School District in British Columbia appear to align with the experiences of researchers in various parts of North America (Lopez, 2017; Baker & Scanlon, 2016; Prater et al., 2015). The problem of self-advocacy underdevelopment impacts the achievement of students in high school and their opportunities for success in future activities. This problem is summarized in Table 1.1 (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Problem of Self-Advocacy Underdevelopment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Many high school students are not advocating for the accommodations they need to be successful in school, and this is impacting their achievement and marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Many high school students are overly-reliant on educators and parents to provide supports. They believe it is the domain of others and do not have a sense of agency or control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Many high school students are leaving high school without the self-advocacy skills to disclose their disability in post-secondary studies and advocate for supports from instructors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Many high school students do not have the self-advocacy skills to disclose their disability to employers, explain their disability, and advocate for supports in the workplace.</td>
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*Table 1.1. The Problem of Self-Advocacy Underdevelopment.* There are four problems.

Further professional development amongst teachers and better resources are needed to address the problem of underdeveloped self-advocacy skills, so that students can achieve greater independence and success in school and life beyond school. This is motivating me to design a resource that can support self-advocacy development in the context of British Columbia and its new curriculum.

Additionally, many of the students who teachers support in British Columbia are Aboriginal learners. In 2016/17, the proportion of self-identified Aboriginal learners was 11.1% for the province and 12.1% for the Sea to Sky School District (BC Ministry of Education, 2017). When addressing self-advocacy skill development, an effort is going to need to be made to incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning to develop self-advocacy skills in
Indigenous learners, a group which has been historically marginalized by former educational policies and practices. A desire to better meet the needs of Indigenous learners should be reflected in resources about self-advocacy development and attempts will be made to support Indigenous learners in my project. This could be an important area for future research and will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The term, “Aboriginal,” includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and “this term came into popular usage in Canadian contexts after 1982, when Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution defined the term as such” (University of British Columbia First Nations and Indigenous Studies, n.d). It is the term currently used by the British Columbia Ministry of Education. However, it should be noted that “many individuals, groups, organizations, universities and governments — both nationally and globally — … have chosen to use the term Indigenous” (CBC News, 2016). The term, “Indigenous,” has become more widely used and is “often chosen by Indigenous people — as opposed to designated by someone else” (CBC News, 2016). The term, “Indigenous,” encompasses many Aboriginal groups and is “used to refer broadly to peoples of long settlement and connection to specific lands who have been adversely affected by incursions by industrial economies, displacement, and settlement of their traditional territories by others” (University of British Columbia First Nations and Indigenous Studies, n.d). The Federal government currently uses the term, “Indigenous” and there are indications that the Provincial government will soon be following suit. Because the term, “Indigenous,” appears to be preferred by Indigenous peoples, it will be used throughout this thesis and the project. However, because the term, “Aboriginal” is still employed by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, there are instances when it will be used when referring to their policies, resources, or statistics.
Justification for Self-Advocacy Interventions in Adolescence

Self-advocacy is a crucial skill for all students to develop, and research suggests that it should be taught in schools. Roberts, Ju and Zhang (2014) note that studies link self-advocacy with high school completion rates, as well as with achieving successful outcomes later in life. Test, Mazzotti, Mustian, Fowler, Kortering, and Kohler (2009) completed a review of secondary transition literature and identified “16 evidence-based predictors of postschool outcomes” (p.160). They identified self-advocacy/self-determination development as a predictor “of improved outcomes for both post-school education and employment” (p.178).

Unfortunately, Test et al. (2005) suggest that many students with disabilities are leaving high school without these critical skills. This deficiency in self-advocacy skills is negatively impacting young adults in post-secondary education and employment. Many students are not entering post-secondary studies with the self-advocacy skills to seek and access accommodations (Garrison-Wade, 2012). To receive academic accommodations, students must not only report their learning disability to colleges; they must also submit documentation and be able to communicate with faculty and staff about the accommodations they need. In a study of 110 students with learning disabilities, Cawthon & Cole (2010) found that only 43% of participants contacted their Office of Students with Disabilities and only 31% of students met with school officials in order to receive accommodations. In regard to communicating learning needs with their instructors, only 25% of the students provided their instructors with accommodation letters. A deficit in self-advocacy skills may make it more challenging for a student with a learning disability to transition from high school to post secondary studies and succeed academically. Harrisson, Nichols, and Larochette (2008) wanted to evaluate the quality of disability documentation that was provided to Canadian post-secondary institutions by students across
Canada. After reviewing the documentation provided by 247 students, they found that only half provided documentation of a psychological report, which is necessary for students with learning disabilities to receive accommodations in most Canadian post-secondary institutions. The remainder provided no documentation or school-based documents. While the researchers used this data to recommend changes to the way students are assessed in Ontario, one wonders if a lack of self-advocacy skills was a key factor in the high number of incomplete submissions.

Black (2010) argues that students need to develop self-advocacy strategies before they transition out of school into the workplace. Employees must be able to self-advocate by explaining the specifics of their disability, and the accommodations which will assist them in the workplace. Research demonstrates that well developed self-advocacy skills will assist an adolescent in future studies and employment.

Fiedler & Danneker (2007) argue that self-advocacy is a key component of self-determination, and “structured, appropriate opportunities for these students to practice these skills” (p.2) are needed. They further argue that this will support healthy psychological development. Research supports the notion that self-advocacy interventions be used in schools to assist students with disabilities in bridging the gap with their peers (Roberts et al., 2014). Therefore, self-advocacy development should be a key focus of any student’s IEP in British Columbia.

This research reflects my personal experience as an educator in a secondary setting. I am observing that too many students are graduating without the self-advocacy skills they need to succeed in post-secondary studies and employment. It is for these reasons that I have been motivated to create a resource which can help students with learning disabilities to bridge the gap that exists with their peers and further develop their self-advocacy skills. This research supports
the need for the development of resources that can provide guidance to educators on how to better assist students with learning disabilities to develop self-advocacy skills for success in high school, post-secondary studies, and employment. Underdeveloped self-advocacy skills, if not remediated and addressed by educators, may pose significant problems to young people.

I have aspired to create a resource which can provide educators with information, research, and evidence-based resources to support the development of self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities. To the best of my knowledge, no other resource exists for educators in British Columbia and it is my hope to create a website which is reputable, authoritative, and recognizable as a comprehensive resource for professionals and educators in British Columbia. Educators in British Columbia are well-trained in the delivery of instruction in academic areas, but the development of soft skills is often not part of teacher training programs. Most educators intuitively know the importance of self-advocacy skills but may not know how to define it nor how to support its development with instruction and intervention. It is the goal of my project to provide educators in British Columbia with a comprehensive set of tools and resources for self-advocacy development, which are engaging to students and can be realistically implemented in the context of the public education system.

**Description and Purpose of the Master’s Project**

This Master of Education project is designed to address the problem of underdeveloped self-advocacy skills amongst high school students with learning disabilities by providing teachers with resources and lessons to develop self-advocacy skills. It focuses on supporting students in British Columbia and integrates strategies to support Indigenous learners. The framework of Test et al. (2005) has been used and adapted to create a website, *Self-Advocacy in*
High School (www.selfadvocacyhighschool.ca), which provides resources to help high school students with learning disabilities further develop the self advocacy skills they need to succeed in school and life. It offers specific lesson plans in self-advocacy which are framed around developing a knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication skills, and leadership skills. The lessons incorporate Universal Design for Learning principles and include two strategies to support Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

The website also features a tool which can facilitate conversations between students and teachers around accommodations and supports. A customizable and downloadable ‘Accommodations Student Card’ is offered which can be used to advocate for accommodations in the high school classroom and support dialogue between students with IEPs and classroom teachers. The aim of this website, Self-Advocacy in High School, is to provide teachers with strategies, activities, and resources for developing self-advocacy skills in their students with learning disabilities (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Self-Advocacy in High School Homepage. This website can be accessed at www.selfadvocacyhighschool.ca (Lafreniere, 2019).
Students who participate in the lessons and activities on the website are better prepared for the daily work of advocating for the accommodations and supports needed to be successful in the high school setting in British Columbia. The development of these skills is essential to their success in post-secondary studies and employment. Many of the lessons, interventions, and communication tools are designed to meet the goal of providing students with self-advocacy skills to succeed in high school and life after graduation. There is a significant focus on supporting students with their transitions into post-secondary education and employment.

**Project Goals**

There are five main goals of this website. It is designed to:

1. Provide educators in British Columbia with information and research on the importance of self-advocacy skill development and the needs of students with learning disabilities.

2. Offer a clear, concise, research-based definition of self-advocacy that can be used to support instruction and intervention.

3. Suggest a number of teacher-led lesson plans, activities, and resources to support high-school-aged students with learning disabilities to further develop their self-advocacy skills. These will be research based, connected to British Columbian educational policies, and include two strategies to support Indigenous learners.

4. Share a communication tool to better facilitate communication between teachers and students surrounding accommodations and supports.
5. Encourage teachers and students to work together to create a digital portfolio to assist students with self-advocacy in post-secondary studies and employment after graduation.

**Guiding Questions for the Website Development and Implementation**

There are five key questions which have guided the development of the website. These guiding questions are summarized in Table 1.2.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How can a website be designed to support teachers in British Columbia with developing self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities? Can it be designed with access points for teachers and students? How can it be designed to also meet the needs of Indigenous learners?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How can a communication tool such as the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ be designed and used to develop students’ self-advocacy skills and facilitate dialogue between students and teachers about accommodations and supports?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How can the lessons and activities be designed so that teachers can realistically integrate them into the busyness of school days?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>How can privacy and confidentiality about a student’s learning disability be respected in lessons on self-advocacy when teachers often only have time to support lessons with small or large groups? Are there some aspects of teaching self-advocacy to students with learning disabilities that might have to be done on a 1:1 basis?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>How can the site be designed so that educators can easily access the resources quickly and efficiently? How can interactivity between educators and student users be fostered?</td>
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*Table 1.2. Project Guiding Questions. There are five sets of guiding questions for this project.*

**Importance of guiding questions.**

The first set of guiding questions is very important. This project will explore how a website can be designed to support teachers in British Columbia with developing self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities. Websites can be an effective way for sharing lessons, activities, and interventions with other teachers and may be very effective for disseminating
resources related to self-advocacy instruction. It will be interesting to determine if a website on self-advocacy instruction can effectively meet the needs of teachers, who likely do not have access to many resources on this topic. Webpages also allow for the inclusion of all kinds of media and different kinds of interactivity, so it will also be valuable to explore if the medium of a webpage can lead to improved engagement and outcomes in self-advocacy. It is also important to determine if the site can be designed with access points for teachers and students. A website is likely to gain more attention and be better used if it can meet the needs of a wider audience. More importantly, it will be interesting to explore if the site can host both lessons for teachers, and modules for students (to allow via independent study). It is key to try and design student modules for two reasons. First, there might be students who want to be proactive and improve their self-advocacy skills and may not have the opportunity to receive self-advocacy instruction from a teacher. Second, there are many teachers who are extremely busy and may not have the time or resources to administer lessons on self-advocacy instruction. They may appreciate having the option to provide their students with modules which can be accessed with minimal teacher guidance. It will be important to determine to what extent a website can be used to improve the self-advocacy skills of students with independent study and if a website can be designed to improve the self-advocacy skills of Indigenous learners. This is an important element of the project as it is imperative for educators in British Columbia to attempt to better support Indigenous learners and incorporate Indigenous perspectives in their curriculum. There are cultural dimensions to this project’s design in its attempts to better support Indigenous learners which are important and require much further exploration and research.

The second set of questions begins with an inquiry into whether an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ can be designed and used to develop self-advocacy skills
in students with learning disabilities. It is vital to explore how tools such as an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ can be used by students to advocate for supports, as students often do not have access to their IEPs or lists of accommodations. A communication tool may help them to inform others and advocate. Also, many students with learning disabilities can struggle with communication, so determining if this card can better facilitate dialogue between students and teachers about accommodations is essential.

The third set of questions explore whether the lessons, activities and resources for self-advocacy development can be realistically implemented by teachers in the British Columbian public school system. There is no point developing costly, long, individualized interventions for teachers who are very busy, have large case loads, and are supporting complex classrooms. It is important to explore if this website can feature evidence-based lessons and interventions which can be administered relatively quickly to small groups of students.

The fourth set of questions is key to explore. If the site is going to provide lessons and activities for small groups, it will be important to find ways to respect the privacy and confidentiality of students. It is also crucial to determine if there is research to support the idea of administering self-advocacy interventions to groups. There may be certain aspects of these interventions that can only be administered 1:1 to respect privacy or best meet a student’s learning needs.

The final set of questions focus on accessibility and interactivity. It is essential to explore whether the website can be set up to be easily navigable and to provide teachers with resources that can be quickly viewed and implemented. Educators will be more likely to use the resources if this is the case. Furthermore, webpages allow for various
opportunities for interactivity. Educators can potentially use a website to discuss best practices on self-advocacy instruction with other teachers or connect with their students in their classrooms and provide instruction. They can also use online environments to foster interactions between students with assignments or forums. It will be interesting to explore the extent to which this website can foster interactivity amongst various kinds of users. It is incredibly important to explore these questions about accessibility and interactivity.

**Chapter Summary and Thesis Overview**

In summary, many students with learning disabilities have underdeveloped self-advocacy skills and this is presenting a problem in schools (Lopez, 2017; Baker & Scanlon, 2016; Prater et al., 2015; Test et al., 2005). They are underachieving in their current studies and may struggle in post-secondary education and employment without well-developed self-advocacy skills. Many educators in British Columbia may not have the professional knowledge or skillset to support students with further developing self-advocacy skills. Resources such as the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website, which are designed to meet the specific needs of educators and students in British Columbia, are needed.

Chapter 2 will review the research on self-advocacy skills and students with learning disabilities that is informing this project. It will describe the conceptual framework of self-advocacy that is being used to design the resources on the website and review past research on interventions in self-advocacy skill development. Chapter 3 will describe how research has impacted the development of the resources on the website, and then discuss its overall design and features in detail. In the final chapter, a reflection will be provided which identifies the limitations of this project, and what has been learned in its design and implementation. Chapter 4
will also discuss the contributions and opportunities presented by this research project. Future recommendations and hopes for the website’s impact will also be discussed.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Generally, students with higher self-determined behaviors achieve better in school, have more positive adult outcomes, and have stronger goal setting and self-assessment behaviors. (Campbell-Whatley, 2008, p.137)

Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 presents a literature review which explores and summarizes some of the key research around self-advocacy development in high-school-aged students with learning disabilities. It begins by briefly reviewing Test et al.’s (2005) conceptual framework which provides much of the theoretical underpinning and structure for the organization of the Self-Advocacy in High School website and its related lessons and activities. A number of key studies will be reviewed in order to determine which interventions have been the most effective in self-advocacy development and assisting high school students in developing the skills to appropriately request accommodations. Some of the most effective activities and strategies have been incorporated into the Self-Advocacy in High School website. Additionally, this chapter will explore some of the literature surrounding digital interventions in self-advocacy skill development, and why this project’s form, a website, is justified in its design. This chapter will also examine the research on self-advocacy interventions for Indigenous learners to determine what strategies might be effective. Key findings in the research on self-advocacy will be synthesized, which are the grounding for this project’s design.

A Conceptual Framework for Self-Advocacy Development

Although the terms self-determination and self-advocacy are sometimes used interchangeably, Mishna, Muskat, Farnia, & Wiener (2011) argue that self-advocacy is generally
considered as a key component of self-determination. In order to aid in the development of curriculum for self-determination, Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer (1998) define self-determination as “a combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior” (p.2). Cross, Cooke, Wood, and Test (1999) define it as “the ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (p.46). Self-advocacy is a specific component of this ability and can be defined as the skills that an individual possesses “to speak up or defend a cause or a person” (Wehmeyer et al., 1998, p.20). Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson and Gibb’s (2014) define self-advocacy when working with students as the ability “to speak up and ask for what you need” (p.299). While this has been the definition used to guide this project, it should be noted that this is just one of many definitions of self-advocacy that have been proposed in educational research. Test et al. (2005) were concerned that the lack of one consistent definition may have impacted teachers’ knowledge about how to teach self-advocacy skills. Their aim was to review the various definitions and components of self-advocacy and design a framework to guide planning for the instruction and assessment of self-advocacy skills.

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005) explored the chronology of self-advocacy definitions up to 2003 in order to create a definition which could be used to effectively guide instruction and assessment of self-advocacy skills. Their framework involves four distinct areas for self-advocacy development: (a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) leadership, and (d) communication. Test et al. (2005) argue that for individuals to learn to self-advocate, they must develop and improve their ‘knowledge of self” and be more aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Individuals must know themselves before they can tell others what they need. They further found that individuals also must gain a ‘knowledge of rights’ and explicitly
learn about the rights they are entitled to in their community, workplace, and/or educational setting in regard to their learning disability before they can advocate effectively. Individuals must also further their ‘communication’ skills to be able to request accommodations and supports. They must be able to effectively communicate their knowledge of self and rights, and this may include the use of negotiation, assertiveness, and problem solving (Test et al., 2005).

The last component for self-advocacy, ‘leadership’, is the skill that enables individuals to advocate for both self and others. It is not required to advocate for oneself but is often a natural progression in the development of self-advocacy skills in many people. This theoretical framework can be used to create and structure specific IEP goals as well as guide planning in instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

**Causes of Self-Advocacy Skill Deficits and Barriers to Advocacy**

Studies suggest that students with disabilities might not be entering post-secondary education or the work world with the self-advocacy skills to seek accommodations and supports (Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Garrison-Wade, 2012). High school is therefore a crucial time to develop these self-advocacy skills, and researchers have sought to discover why high school students with learning disabilities appear to be lagging in these skills. Prater, Redman Anderson & Gibb (2014) argue that general education teachers are often responsible for providing students with disabilities with access to the curriculum; they often select and implement accommodations for students, and consequently, many students do not have opportunities to learn to self-advocate. In their research, they discovered that their high-school-aged participants reported that their teachers were responsible for their accommodations, and that many of them were not able to appropriately request accommodations. Stuntzner and Harley (2015) also argue that well-intentioned family members and professionals may do too much for students, and inadvertently
take away opportunities for self-advocacy development. Baker and Scanlon (2016), using a focus group methodology with ten high-school-aged students, found that many students were ‘poorly informed’ about the accommodations that they could access and that most “agreed that accommodation provision should be the domain of teachers” (p.100). They did not seem to have a sense of agency or control over how they learned.

Lopez (2016) also argues that high school students with learning disabilities have become too overly dependent on well-intentioned teachers and parents. In turn, this overdependence prevents them from developing the self-advocacy skills they need to speak up for accommodations in high school and the post-secondary world. Therefore, students need to fully understand how their disabilities impact their learning and how to advocate for the appropriately needed accommodations. Lopez (2016) argues that secondary educators need to “prepare students to take charge of their learning and lives” (p.13). Many studies, including this one, frame the problem of self-advocacy development as a deficiency in self-advocacy skills (Wood, Kelly, Test & Fowler, 2010; Prater et al., 2014; Lopez, 2016; McGahee, 2017). This is significant because it means that educators can address the problem of self-advocacy underdevelopment with explicit skill-based instruction.

However, Centerrino (2016) argues that there is a limited literature base on the motivations for students with learning disabilities at the high school level to use self-advocacy skills. He argues that self-advocacy is an act based on agency and free will, and that more studies are needed to explore whether the inability to self-advocate is linked to the lack of a skill set, or if students are making decisions to advocate or not advocate for supports. Centerrino (2016) designed a case study, using a constructivism-interpretivism design, to develop an understanding of what motivates students with learning disabilities to engage or disengage with advocacy. His
study included seven high school students with learning disabilities. Centerrino (2016) analyzed semi-structured interviews with the students and used multi case study analysis. The findings suggest that a sense of security was a ‘foundation’ that participants expressed as the motivation behind choosing to self-advocate or not; the fact that they did not request accommodations was not simply related to deficits in the four components identified by Test et al. (2005).

This suggests 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. 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. He states, “this shifts the current model for self-advocacy from a skills-based model to one that requires a sense of security as the foundation for individuals to choose to act; with or without the skill set present” (p. 121). Centerrino (2016) further argues that the framework of Test et al. (2005) be revised and provides the following figure (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1. Security as the foundation for self-advocacy. Feelings of safety and security are the foundation of self-advocacy (Centerrino, 2016, p. 143).
Baker & Scanlon (2016) explored students’ opinions about accommodations and many of their comments also shed light on when they are willing to exercise agency in self-advocacy. Many of the students articulated that they would not tolerate accommodations practices that might make them feel “singled out as “dumb” or “slow” in the ways that have classically diminished students with disabilities” (p.105). This research is significant as it is conceivable that some students may fail to advocate due to their affect or feelings of self-consciousness about their learning disability and the accommodations that can assist them in school; a lack of self-advocacy may not necessarily just be a result of a skill deficiency. The findings of Baker & Scanlon (2016) demonstrate the importance of creating resources which encourage consultation and problem solving with students so that self-advocacy development is not hindered by student perception and frustration. These findings influence the development of many of the resources in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

It appears that there is justification to approach the problem of self-advocacy development with pragmatic ontologies and epistemologies in future studies. Clearly, many students are demonstrating a deficit in skills. Furthermore, students also exercise choice in whether they self-advocate or not, and there could be many reasons that shape these decisions. Centerrino’s conclusion that security and motivation play a role in the act of choosing to self-advocate reflect what I have observed in the schools that I have worked in. The planning of curriculum and interventions in self-advocacy need to support a student’s sense of security and safety. The design of the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website takes this construct into account and offers interventions and strategies which support feelings of safety. This project uses components from both the frameworks of Test et al. (2005) and Centerrino (2016) to guide the design of the website (Figure 2.3).
Researchers from the University of Toronto argue that individual interventions, such as some of the lessons in the *Self-Advocacy in Highschool* website, can be helpful, but that individual interventions are ‘insufficient’ as “they do not address the ecological conditions that influence adjustment” (Mishna, Muskat, Farnia & Wiener, 2011, p.186). Mishna et al., (2011) were able to increase the abilities of middle school students with learning disabilities to advocate for their needs with an intervention which was multi-faceted and based on an ecological conceptual framework. It included a workshop for all teachers, classmates, and parents on learning disabilities, group therapy for participants with learning disabilities which focused on self-advocacy, and consultation with participants’ teachers. It is argued that the focus of interventions to promote student well-being “should extend to such factors as school climate and social integration” (p.187). While the researchers argue that an important feature of the study was the inclusion of the participants’ school context, they note that a limitation of the study is that they cannot determine which of the three components or combination led to the improvement in self-advocacy skills. They also note that a limitation of an ecological-based intervention is very costly, time-consuming, and requires significant personnel involvement.
Future research and interventions should take note of the importance of an ecologically based intervention, but also recognize that they are beyond the scope of an individual teacher to implement.

Garrison-Wade (2012) argues that there are many barriers to a why a student may struggle with self-advocacy development and accessing supports. These barriers could be architectural (ex. access to technology), programmatic (ex. unavailable or inadequate support services), informational (ex. limited knowledge of services and rights), or attitudinal (ex. negative attitudes among teachers towards students with disabilities), and they can impact a student’s motivation to self-advocate. The Self-Advocacy in High School website encourages teachers to reflect upon these four barriers when planning curriculum and interventions for the development of these skills. It is framed around the central idea that self-advocacy is both a skillset and an act. Activities and strategies will frame self-advocacy underdevelopment as a skill deficit and will also be designed to identify and take into consideration the motivations behind students’ self-advocacy actions.

**Effective Interventions and Activities for Self-Advocacy Skill Development**

Research indicates that many students with learning disabilities have underdeveloped self-advocacy skills, and struggle to request and access the accommodations they need (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Garrison-Wade, 2012; Lopez, 2016). A significant amount of research has explored the impact of self-advocacy interventions on the abilities of college students with learning disabilities to advocate for accommodations (Garrison-Wade, 2012; Zeng, Song, & Hord, 2018). There appears to be a limited number of empirical studies exploring the targeting of interventions towards high school students with learning disabilities (Lopez, 2016).
However, two studies are noted in the literature as pioneering this work. First, Durlak, Rose, and Bursuck (1994) developed one of the first empirical studies using high-school-aged students with learning disabilities. They evaluated the effects of teaching seven self-awareness and self-advocacy skills necessary for success in postsecondary education. Using small groups and explicit instruction, the study’s intervention further developed the participants’ abilities to acquire, maintain, and generalize self-awareness and self-advocacy skills.

Second, Wood, Kelly, Test & Fowler (2010) studied four high school seniors with learning disabilities and compared the effects of audio supported text with direct instruction on the participants’ knowledge of “their rights, responsibilities, and accommodations in post-secondary education” (p. 115). Using a simultaneous treatments design, participants engaged in lessons with explicit instruction or audio supported text. The researchers found that the explicit instruction produced higher scores and improved the self-advocacy skills over the audio supported text. This study demonstrated that explicit instructional support can better assist high school students in improving their self-advocacy skills, and most importantly, that self-advocacy instruction should be integrated into courses or guidance at the high school level. Their findings justify the use of self-advocacy interventions, such as the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

A number of recent studies and dissertations have been exploring the effects of self-advocacy interventions on high school students with learning disabilities and their abilities to request accommodations. Lopez (2016) and Prater, Redman Anderson & Gibb (2014) have further contributed to the literature on effective interventions, and some of their findings and suggested activities have been incorporated in the design of the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.
Lopez (2016) examined “the effects of a self-advocacy intervention on the ability of five high school students with high incidence disabilities to request academic accommodations in a high school general education course” (p.1). This study replicated a previous study by Walker and Test (2011) that was used with college students. It differed from the latter by using high school students with disabilities (five participants with high incidence disabilities) as opposed to college students and included disability awareness lessons based on role play and explicit instruction. The lessons were based on a modified version of the Self-Advocacy and Conflict Resolution training program: a curriculum designed for American college-aged students, which consists of two modules. In the Self-Advocacy module, students receive information about academic barriers, accommodations, and civil rights, and in the Conflict Resolution module, students receive training in skills for self-assertion, self-advocacy, and conflict resolution. This program was adapted for high school students and resulted in students acquiring the skills to request academic accommodations. These students then generalized those skills to a high school education course. This study further justifies the use of explicit instruction and targeted interventions in self-advocacy instruction. Some of the instructional ideas and materials used in the lessons will be highlighted for teachers on the Self-Advocacy in High School website. For example, Lopez’s (2016) study effectively used an IEP at a glance to support students in furthering their ‘knowledge of self.’

Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson, and Gibb (2014) also researched the effectiveness of instruction in self-advocacy skills amongst four high school students. The researchers created four self-advocacy lessons, which included the teaching of a specific skill, teacher modelling, and student practice/role play. These lessons were taught to three classes of high school students with learning disabilities within a special education class. Using observations, researchers
studied four of these students within the general classroom to evaluate the effectiveness of the training. A checklist of self-advocacy and communication skills, which was taught to students, was used to structure the observations and gather data. Also, a questionnaire was given to the students and their classroom teachers after the training to determine the value of the training, and its impact on the student’s self-advocacy abilities. The results demonstrated that the four participants made significant gains in their self-advocacy skills. All of the students advocated for the appropriate accommodations after participating in the lessons and training. The participants were able to request accommodations with greater frequency and accuracy.

Prater et al. (2014) demonstrated that an intervention in self-advocacy could be delivered in a small group setting, and this is a key finding to be extended in self-advocacy instruction for teachers in British Columbia. Teachers have many students to support, and a self-advocacy intervention is more likely to be implemented in a small group setting, rather than a 1:1 setting given the resources and time constraints in the system.

Prater et al. (2014) used instructional methodologies such as direct instruction and role play. They were weaved into the lessons on self-advocacy development and were a key component in having students develop and practice the skills of advocacy (and requesting accommodations and supports). McGahee (2017) also used role-play in a recent study of a self-advocacy intervention, which was designed to support students in requesting accommodations. Role-play was used in a single-subject design study and the results indicated that students improved their performance in requesting accommodations and were able to generalize the skills of requesting accommodations. It is clear that role-play is an evidence-based strategy for self-advocacy instruction (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Prater et al., 2014; McGahee, 2017). In conclusion, the research demonstrates that interventions can be very effective in supporting self-
advocacy skill development in high school students with learning disabilities. The use of teacher-modelling, direct instruction, and role-play in the development of self-advocacy skills, should be a key feature of self-advocacy instruction and the lessons in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

**Digital Interventions and their Influence on Self-Advocacy Development**

Only a small number of researchers have explored the impact of digital technologies as interventions in self-advocacy development, but research on the uses of digital applications appears promising. Lancaster, Schumaker & Deshler (2002) created a study using assistive technology to foster self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities. They found that students who used a digital program required less instructional time from the teacher, and that the digital intervention was just as effective as the teacher-led self-advocacy program. Kotzer & Margalit (2007) used an electronic self-advocacy intervention to measure perceptions of confidence among students with learning disabilities. They argue that the difficulties in self-advocacy development are “attributed to the students’ feelings of incompetence emerging from their personal history of repetitive failures” (p. 444). Three hundred and seventy-four adolescents with learning disabilities participated in a program called *The Road To Myself*. It consisted of two parts: classroom activities and virtual discussions amongst students and counsellors. The curriculum promoted self-awareness, explored the meaning of learning disabilities, identified coping and self-advocacy strategies, and included self-advocacy activities. The researchers found that the intervention enhanced perceptions of competence.

Lancaster et al. (2002) and Kotzer & Margalit (2007) demonstrate in their studies that there are roles for digital technology to play in self-advocacy interventions. Given that digital technologies might be as effective as teacher led programs, and can enhance feelings of
competence and confidence, this project should offer activities to students which are web-based. Kotzer & Margalit state, “technology can serve as an important supportive tool in empowering such students with LD and must be further examined” (p. 455). These findings justify the development of digital resources in self-advocacy instruction and the creation of a website for this project.

**Self-Advocacy Interventions for Indigenous Learners in the High School Setting**

Searches performed on ERIC and the VIU library website in February of 2019 did not locate any specific research on the impact of self-advocacy interventions on the abilities of Indigenous students to request accommodations. Lopez (2016) notes in a recent literature review of self-advocacy instruction and accommodation use that “no studies were identified that specifically focused on teaching high school students with disabilities from culturally diverse backgrounds” (p. 53). Goolsby-Richardson (2016) designed a qualitative study of 20 Indigenous high school students in Arizona and found that family relationships, and mentorship by school personnel and peers, along with self-advocacy played a role in student success. The researcher did not indicate if a specific program or instructional method was used to support self-advocacy development, but does note that self-advocacy played a role in successful outcomes.

To learn more about best practices for supporting Indigenous students with self-advocacy instruction, I consulted Susan Leslie, District Principal of Indigenous Education in School District #48 in British Columbia, Canada, on February 14, 2019. Leslie has a B.Ed. degree in Indigenous Studies and Special Education and a M.Ed. in Educational Leadership and is an administrator in a school district which has the highest Indigenous graduation rates in the province. Indigenous students in the Sea to Sky school district “had a graduation rate of 86.1 per cent in the 2016-17 school year — up from 35 per cent in 2009” (Humphries, 2018, para 2). The
2018 six-year completion rate for Indigenous students was 95% (S. Leslie, personal communication, February 14, 2019). I inquired about how to best develop a self-advocacy resource which could meet the needs of Indigenous students, based on her perspective and experience. This included a discussion about whether it would be beneficial to invite trusted local Indigenous contacts into the classroom to speak to self-advocacy development, whether local knowledge could be used to support self-advocacy development, and if there are specific ways of Indigenous knowing and learning that might be best incorporated into a resource on self-advocacy development.

In our conversation, Leslie (February 14, 2019) argued that from her perspective, two strategies could be integrated in any lesson and intervention to support Indigenous learners. First, Leslie (February 14, 2019) suggested that educators could acknowledge territory in their self-advocacy lessons. Leslie (n.d.) has published a protocol about how educators in School District #48 can acknowledge territory; the document, Our Territories, can be found on School District #48’s Aboriginal Education website. This protocol suggests that educators acknowledge the territory of the First Nation where learning is taking place and use the local language to describe the Indigenous group’s name.

Leslie (February 14, 2019) believes that the acknowledgement of territory can best take place during a circle that begins each lesson. She believes a circle process can better establish a sense of belonging, security, and connection with all learners (S. Leslie, personal communication, February 14, 2019). The "circle process" is a practice common among many Indigenous cultures and can be used to support healthy dialogue (Barret, 2019). Leslie has stated in a media interview that circles are “a wonderful way of giving choice, voice and opportunity to every student in the class and to support students connecting with each other and building
stronger relationships" (Barret, 2019, para 9). Leslie believes that a circle process "empowers student engagement and keeps kids coming to school" (Barret, 2019, para 9). In our conversation, Leslie (February 14, 2019) re-affirmed her belief that using a circle would build connection and engagement in Indigenous learners, and hence lead to improved outcomes for Indigenous learners in classroom lessons and interventions. The incorporation of these two culturally relevant strategies, when administering self-advocacy lessons, will likely lead to greater participation and engagement. Leslie (February 14, 2019), who has collaborated and worked with many Indigenous communities, believes that circles will ultimately help all students, including Indigenous ones.

It should be noted that some circle processes, which are being used in schools, have been co-constructed by schools and local Indigenous groups. For example, School District #48 teachers have partnered with WellAhead and co-constructed a “circle process” with Indigenous partners, knowledge keepers, and teachers (Leslie, 2017). School District #48 convened its community partner groups to collaborate on which research-based strategies could be implemented systematically in classrooms to improve social-emotional learning. The community selected the “circle process” as it honoured Indigenous perspectives, provides voice and builds connectedness (Scott & Dunkin, 2017). WellAhead (2019) worked with educators to develop a “circle practice protocol” which resulted in a concise one-page document. The protocol includes two core guidelines: “listen while others have the talking piece” and “what is said in Circle stays in Circle.” Well-Ahead (2019) notes that circle use “went from three teachers in three schools to 41 teachers at four schools” as the circle process was developed and evolved with input from educators. In its Year 1 report, WellAhead (2019) states that School District #48 “students reported feeling comfortable sharing, feeling heard, and understanding their classmates better
through participating in Circle” (Well-Ahead, 2017, slide 17). Scott & Dunkin (2017), employees of School District #48 who wrote an article for a local media outlet, note that students reported “feeling a sense of belonging, developing confidence, building social skills and feeling connected to peers and adults” (para 9). Information on research design and data was not included in either of these two reports.

Many Indigenous communities “have long understood the circle as a space of equality, connectedness, empowerment, and dignity” (High, 2019, p.532). Research into circle processes and restorative practices in schools is beginning to demonstrate that these practices can support belonging and connection. Some of these studies confirm what educational leaders like Leslie (2019) are arguing. Teachers have been anecdotally reporting for years that circle processes and restorative processes have been used successfully to develop social skills, improve connection, and support social-emotional learning. High (2017) observed a School District in Illinois which implemented 10-week sharing circle programs and notes “that even incremental, one-practice-at-a-time approach to restorative practices can have a meaningful impact on students and teachers alike” (p.532). High (2017) describes an interview with a teacher where the educator notes that there has been significant improvements in the classroom climate.

Gregory, Clawson, Davis and Gerewitz (2016) studied 29 high school classrooms to investigate if restorative practices can transform teacher-student relationships. The researchers used hierarchical linear modeling and regression analyses which showed that teachers who used more restorative practices, including proactive circles, had more positive relationships with their diverse students. Proactive circles were defined as a strategy where teachers used structured group discussion and meaningful exchanges while everyone sits in a circle. Part of the rationale for the design of this study is that restorative practices (RP) appear to be a promising intervention
for high schools and that there is a need for “further systematic examination to understand its full potential at the high school level” (p.326). Gregory et al. (2016) conclude that the results “suggest that greater RP implementation levels were associated with better teacher-student relationships as measured by student perceived teacher respect and teacher use of exclusionary discipline” (p.342).

Research supports Leslie’s beliefs (February 14, 2019) about the importance of connections and belonging for Indigenous students. Using a case study research design, Stelmach, Kovach, and Steeves (2017) asked 75 Indigenous high school students, from six different schools, in Saskatchewan what teachers did or did not do that made them want to go to school. The researchers used a qualitative case study to ask Indigenous high school students about the aspects of instructional practice that help and hinder their learning. The study included Indigenous principles and employed an Indigenous theoretical perspective in its analysis. The researchers found that “relational instincts and capacities were the most influential in school engagement for this group of Aboriginal students” (Stelmach et al., 2017, p.1). A key finding was that students described effective teachers as having an empathetic responsiveness to them. The participants believed that these teachers took the time to get to know them, and were supportive, responsive, and caring. Indigenous students were more likely to trust their teachers and build connections if teachers displayed this kind of disposition and were responsive to the full context of the student’s life, which included a sensibility of the student’s Indigenous culture. Although a circle process is not identified by these researchers as a tool to support relationship building, a circle process, as suggested by Leslie (February 14, 2019), can support the building of connection and trust between educators and Indigenous students.
Raham (2010) argues that best practices suggest that teachers working with Aboriginal students should be “warm and caring, hold high expectations, and possess a wide repertoire of instructional strategies and explicit knowledge of culturally appropriate approaches” (p. 6). The acknowledgement of territory by educators and use of a circle are culturally appropriate approaches, which build belonging and allow educators to acknowledge an understanding of Indigenous perspectives. The co-construction of processes and strategies with educators and Indigenous communities, as highlighted by the development of the ‘circle processes’ in School District #48, will likely lead to best practices in self-advocacy development for Indigenous learners.

**Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, research indicates that self-advocacy skills are underdeveloped in students with learning disabilities in high schools and many have a self-advocacy skill deficit (Lopez, 2016; Baker & Scanlon, 2016; Prater et al., 2015; Test et al., 2005). Researchers have also demonstrated that students may also be struggling with self-advocacy development due to concerns about security (Centerrino, 2016; Baker & Scanlon, 2016). Students may not advocate if they do not feel safe to do so, or if advocacy and support plans cause embarrassment or feelings of inadequacy. Ultimately, the research demonstrates that high school students with learning disabilities are not requesting the accommodations and supports they are entitled to in the secondary classroom, and consequently this is impacting their learning, achievement, and experiences of success in post-secondary school or employment (Test et al., 2005; Test et al., 2009; Black, 2010; Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Garrison-Wade, 2012; Daly-Cano et al., 2015).

Prater et al (2015) and Centerrino (2016) successfully used the framework of Test et al., (2005) within their studies and further resources on self-advocacy development should consider
using the framework of Test et. al (2005) to support self-advocacy development. It is often cited by researchers in the field and in literature reviews as an important development in the understanding of self-advocacy.

Many researchers have successfully used interventions to further develop self-advocacy skills (Lopez, 2017; Prater et al, 2015, Mishna et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2010; Campbell-Whatley, 2008). Role-play, direct instruction, and teacher modelling were key instructional strategies that were effectively used to support self-advocacy development in many studies and should be utilized in future self-advocacy interventions (McGahee, 2017; Lopez, 2016; Prater et al., 2014, Campbell-Whatley, 2008). The use of digital resources has also been successful in further developing self-advocacy skills (Kotzer & Margalit, 2007; Lancaster et al., 2002). Given that technology has advanced so much since the date of these two studies, there appears to be much promise for the use of digital technology in fostering self-advocacy in students and further research should take note of the opportunity.

Many of these key research findings have influenced the development of the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website. It uses the framework of Test et al., (2005) and its resources are careful to consider students’ feelings of safety and security. Many of the lessons and interventions are based on the studies that have had successful results. Role-play, direct instruction, and teacher modelling is integrated in many of the activities and the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website attempts to take advantage of the interactivity and multimedia format of a webpage.

I was unable to locate any research about developing self-advocacy skills with Indigenous students regarding accommodation requests. An interview with a leading educator in the province on Indigenous education was held to learn more. A key finding was that if self-
advocacy instruction was to be designed for Indigenous learners that culturally relevant strategies such as the use of circle and acknowledgement of territory, be used as beginning steps in resource development (S. Leslie, personal communication, February 14, 2019). Both strategies would assist Indigenous students in feeling a greater sense of belonging and connectedness with learning. Research is beginning to show that the use of circles and other restorative practices, are associated with better teacher-student relationships (Gregory et al., 2016). Educational research also suggests that educational strategies that foster connection and belonging are effective for Indigenous students (Stelmach et al., 2017). Further research and collaboration are needed with Indigenous peoples to develop best practices in self-advocacy instruction and education.

Projects such as the *Self-Advocacy in School* website are of vital importance in informing teachers about the issue of self-advocacy underdevelopment and how to develop instruction based on research and best practices. It will aim to support teachers with self-advocacy curriculum and resources. The research suggests that students with learning disabilities will benefit from interventions for self-advocacy skill development and will experience better outcomes in school and life beyond school (Test et al., 2009; Ju & Zhang, 2014). Without intervention and support, too many students with learning disabilities will continue to struggle. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website aims to address the research-proven problem of self-advocacy skill underdevelopment.

The next chapter will further explore how research has influenced the design of the website. The organizational structure of the website will be explained, and the content and resources will be summarized. Hyperlinks will be included to support the reader in easily navigating the website while reading this chapter.
Chapter 3

Considerations for Implementation of Project

We believe that meeting the challenge of enhancing student’s self-advocacy skills will require that educators understand self-advocacy and recognize its significance in obtaining successful outcomes for students with disabilities once they leave the P-12 school system. Special educators also need a clear understanding of curricula and instructional strategies that they can use to effectively promote the development of self-advocacy skills in their students. (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007, p.1)

Chapter Overview

This chapter will begin by providing a brief overview of this project, the Self-Advocacy in High School website. It will continue by discussing the impact of research on the development of the website and its related resources. The website’s organization and navigation menu will be reviewed, and its related resources, including instructional videos, lessons, student modules and communication tools, will be discussed in detail. This chapter will conclude with a brief summary of this project’s goals and aims to improve the quality of self-advocacy instruction in British Columbia. If promoted properly to educators, this website can establish itself as a respected and authoritative resource on the development of self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities and ultimately improve the quality of their lives.

Project Overview

The Self-Advocacy in High School website (www.selfadvocacyhighschool.ca) aims to support educators in British Columbia with resources for supporting the development of self-
advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities. This site includes an evidence-based rationale for teaching self-advocacy skills, and many teacher-led lesson plans, activities, and resources to support high-school-aged students with learning disabilities to further develop their self-advocacy skills. These lessons and resources are theoretically grounded in the self-advocacy framework identified by Test et al. (2005). Many of the resources focus on developing one or more of the following constructs: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership. Centerrino (2016) has identified that feelings of security and motivation can influence how students choose to self-advocate. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website highlights a communication tool which can assist students in feeling safer and more confident when communicating with their teachers. This communication tool is designed to develop self-advocacy skills and support a system of communication in a school. The theoretical underpinnings of self-advocacy development, as developed in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website, are summarized in Figure 3.1.

*Figure 3.1. Communication tools assist in expressing the key constructs. Communication tools support the expression of the key constructs.*

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website uses the framework to structure its teacher-led lessons, student-centered activities, and assessment. Research into successful studies has had a
significant impact on how these resources have been designed; evidence-based activities and instructional methodologies which have been proven to support self-advocacy development are included throughout the website.

**The Influence of Research on the Design of the Website**

Research has shaped the scope and sequence of interventions, the themes and content of the lessons, and the instructional strategies which are suggested to teachers. Great effort and care have been taken into designing activities which are developmentally appropriate for teenagers who learn in the British Columbia public school system and based on interventions which have been proven successful in self-advocacy skill acquisition.

**Scope and Sequence of Lessons**

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has a sequence of five lessons (and one optional lesson) to support self-advocacy development. Prater et al. (2014) successfully taught specific self-advocacy skills in four lessons and Lopez (2016) had success with self-advocacy development in seven lessons. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has selected five lessons as this appears to be an appropriate number based on successful studies, and probably can be realistically administered in the British Columbian system given the current allocation of special education teacher time.

Research suggests that lessons and activities can be delivered individually and to small groups. Lopez (2016) incorporated seven skills lessons into an intervention for individual students while Wood et al. (2010) also designed a successful intervention for college students which was administered individually. Prater et al. (2014) demonstrated that self-advocacy interventions can be delivered to students in small groups within a resource room. Campbell-Whatley (2008) and Mishna et al. (2011) also successfully administered instruction in self-
advocacy skills to small groups. Therefore, this website’s five core lessons (and one optional lesson) can be administered to individuals or small groups. General and special education teachers in public schools do not have a significant amount of time and resources to devote to lengthy individual interventions for students with learning disabilities, so it is important to develop ones that could be administered to groups. Additionally, it should be noted that many students like to work and learn co-operatively with others.

Many special education teachers in British Columbia have large case loads in the public education system. They may not have the time or ability to step away from the complex classrooms they are supporting to administer the lesson activities to individuals or groups. Therefore, student modules are available on the website that students can work on independently with minimal teacher support. Students can work through the module activities online with set check-in points to meet with a teacher. These check-in points are not time-consuming for teachers and can be administered within their busy days. It should be noted that if administrators do not allow teachers to use their resource time for self-advocacy lesson delivery or express concern about respecting privacy amidst group administration, these modules serve as a crucial alternative which can be used to support self-advocacy development.

Finally, it should be noted that the themes and content selected for each lesson on the Self-Advocacy in High School website was inspired by the ones used in successful studies. The lessons and activities of Prater et al. (2014), Campbell-Whatley (2008), Lopez (2017), and Hart & Brehm (2013) proved successful at improving self-advocacy skills and appeared both engaging and meaningful to teenagers. Much of their work is adapted to meet the needs of students in British Columbia. It should be noted that the website’s lessons use key definitions
from Prater et al. (2014) which are shared with students. These definitions are notable and useful because they are clear, concise, and easily remembered.

**Lesson Design and Activities for High Schoolers in British Columbia**

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will suggest strategies and activities which are age appropriate, effective, and suitable for high school students in British Columbia. Its lessons for example, will only have a small number of targeted goals for students to achieve. This has been shaped by my personal experience and research. In a number of effective studies, many of the strategies that have been used to support students with requesting accommodations appear overly complicated for high schoolers, even if they supported positive gains (Lopez, 2016; McGahee, 2017). Lopez (2016) used a multiple probe design to evaluate the impact of the Self Advocacy and Conflict Resolution training program (SACR). While students successfully ‘acquired and generalized’ new self-advocacy skills, Lopez (2016) recognizes that a weakness of the study was the intervention’s complexity. Students were expected to identify and learn 14 target behaviors and students found this was overwhelming. The researcher suggests that future studies take this feedback into account when designing interventions. Similarly, McGahee (2017) expected students to assume 17 target behaviours in seven sessions, while Durlak et al. (1994) identified seven self-advocacy skills to teach in their study. Students with learning disabilities often have challenges with executive functioning skills and it is worth considering that presenting too many skills might be overwhelming to students with learning disabilities. Therefore, the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website is cautious when presenting skill sequences, strategies, and activities, and ensures they are not overwhelming in design for high schoolers. For example, communicating a request for an accommodation is broken down into
three steps. Students should identify themselves as a student with an IEP, request an accommodation, and explain how the support helps them.

Lessons and activities will also be designed with consideration for the developmental needs of secondary students in relation to their ability to focus and attend to interventions and classroom activities. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will promote and provide teacher-led activities that can be administered in a short period of time (45-60 minutes). Many students with learning disabilities will appreciate interventions that can be administered in shorter periods of time and are not overly lengthy.

**Inclusion of Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies for Students with Learning Disabilities**

Researchers have demonstrated that certain instructional strategies and methodologies have been effective for students with learning disabilities. These include the use of role-playing, direct instruction, and teacher modelling. The use of acronyms, visual supports, and digital technology have also been particularly effective in studies. Many of these strategies are included in activities in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

Role-play is a key instructional strategy that has been effectively used to support the development of self-advocacy (Lopez, 2016; Prater et al., 2014; Mishna et al., 2011; Campbell-Whatley, 2008). McGahee (2017) found that the participants in a self-advocacy intervention increased their performance of requesting accommodations in role-play situations, and that they were able to generalize this skill post-intervention. Prater et al (2014) effectively used suggested and student-generated role-play situations in every lesson to improve self-advocacy skills; both teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions were used to role-play appropriate and inappropriate reactions to problems. Direct instruction and scripted activities have also been
effectively employed in studies (McGahee, 2017; Lopez, 2016; Prater et al., 2014; Campbell-Whatley, 2008). Campbell-Whatley (2008) and McGahee used scripted lessons in their group interventions; Prater et al. used teacher modelling and explicitly taught a specific goal in each lesson and used scripted role play situations. Their script format influences the design of some of the scripts in activities on the website. Many of the lessons and activities on the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website incorporate direct instruction, teacher modelling, and role-play.

Studies have also demonstrated that acronyms can be effectively used to support self-advocacy skill instruction (Lopez, 2016; Prater et al., 2014). Prater et al. (2014) found that acronyms could be successful tools in self-advocacy interventions and used the acronym, FESTA (see below), successfully in their study. It can be broken down as follows:

- **F**-face the teacher
- **E**- Eye contact should be maintained
- **S**- State the accommodation request and why it is needed
- **T**- Thank the teacher
- **A**-Use the accommodation

It should be noted that this particular acronym is not used in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website, as the best acronyms are easily remembered and relevant. The term, FESTA, on its own, is rather meaningless and may be difficult to remember for students with learning disabilities. The acronym that is used in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website is I-ASK, which is simpler, more memorable, and meaningful. It stands for:

- **I**- Identify yourself as a student with an IEP
- **A**– Ask for an Accommodation
- **S**– State how this Strategy helps you
**K-** Keep advocating when needed!

Acronyms are extensively included in the interventions on the website. Many studies successfully used visual supports in their lessons and interventions (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Prater et al., 2014; Lopez, 2016). These researchers often created effective visuals, check-lists, and documents for successful use in their interventions, and the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will incorporate these kinds of visual supports in its interventions. For example, Lopez (2016) collaborated with students to create a binder with three sections, including a chart of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as an IEP-at-a-glance. This IEP-at-a-glance would have been a useful tool for students in developing self-awareness and knowledge of rights. Prater et al. (2014) used visual supports to teach the aforementioned acronym, FESTA with posters in the classroom. Visuals can effectively support individuals with disabilities, and the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website encourages their use. However, the lessons and activities on the website go one step further with the use of visuals than many interventions, where students often only access the visuals in the instructional setting. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will encourage students to use the visual supports they receive in lessons when advocating in the classroom. Students may be able to better generalize their self-advocacy skills if allowed to write acronyms written on a cue card or bring an IEP at a glance. Students are encouraged to do this with the I-ASK acronym and use the visual as a prompt prior to communicating with their teacher.

Visual supports and communication tools can be a significant support to students with disabilities who can find oral communication challenging and intimidating at times. While students will develop their verbal skills by advocating for accommodations through role play, some students will need an extra layer of support when advocating. Communication tools, such
an ‘IEP at a Glance’ and an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ will likely assist many students when trying to find their voice. They can refer to a visual support and not feel so dependent on their language skills. This website offers fillable versions of the latter and makes it available for download. Additionally, students may feel more empowered and confident to communicate with their teachers by having an official school document, such as an ‘IEP at a Glance’ or an ‘Accommodations Student Card’. Centerinno (2016) argues that students may not advocate for accommodations if they lack a sense of safety and fear conflict with school staff. Having an official document may alleviate any concerns a student might have about their requests turning into a negotiation or having to convince their teachers. In turn, they might feel more confident, and further develop their self-advocacy skills.

Some of the visual supports on the Self-Advocacy in High School website, such as an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ or an IEP at a glance can be used to support students and create a school-wide system to support self-advocacy development. Mishna et al. (2011) argue that the school environment can support or inhibit student growth. Individually focused interventions are insufficient and do not “address the ecological conditions that influence adjustment” (p. 186). They argue that, in order to support change in schools, an intervention must influence teachers’ attitudes. If a school adopted a system where some of the documents provided on this website were used as ‘communication tools’ school wide, teachers would be more likely to remember to support students, and a culture around teacher-student discussions about accommodations might be established and grow. For example, students can be encouraged to bring their IEP at a glance or ‘Accommodations Student Card’ to discuss with their teachers after-school and this can lead to conversations about supports which may not have happened.
Research also supports the use of digital technologies in self-advocacy instruction (Lancaster et al., 2002; Kotzer & Margalit). The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website contains teacher-led lessons and student modules which can be delivered digitally. The modules allow for independent study under the direction of a teacher and are rich in video content and images related to self-advocacy. Multimedia tools can enhance student motivation and participation in learning (Black, 2010), so the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website attempts to take advantage of various kinds of multimedia tools and the options to embed different kinds of media. Many students in British Columbia are immersed in social media programs and the multimedia nature of the *Self-Advocacy in High School* modules are much more appealing and motivating than a workbook. The website uses some of the media platforms that students enjoy exploring and takes advantage of its medium to include all sorts of engaging media. The modules provide students with opportunities to work through material in a self-paced fashion. Lancaster et al. (2002) have demonstrated that digital interventions might be more effective to administer in terms of time. It is especially promising if these modules can be successful in improving self-advocacy skills with minimal teacher time, as many teachers have large classrooms and case-loads in British Columbia. Studies and literature about digital interventions suggest that a website such as *Self-Advocacy in High School* will be engaging to high school students and effective in developing life-long self-advocacy skills.

Furthermore, researchers argue that digital tools can be used to support self-advocacy development and transitions to adulthood (Black, 2010). The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website is justified in promoting the use of digital portfolios in preparation for post-secondary and post-school employment. Black (2010) argues that “digital portfolios offer a technology strategy to support the development of self-advocacy skills for students with high-incidence
disabilities as they transition through their secondary education” (p.118). Students will be encouraged to create a basic digital portfolio which includes lists of commonly used accommodations, as well as copies of IEPs and assessments. These digital portfolios will assist students in communicating with Disability and Accessibility services if taking post-secondary studies or advocating for accommodations and supports from future employers.

Therefore, the use of direct instruction, teacher-modelling, role-playing, acronyms, visual supports, and digital technology have been featured in the design of this project. It builds on successful interventions and lessons that are evidence-based. Many of the lessons feature explicit instruction in self-advocacy skills and teacher-modelling is built into the introduction of most activities. Role-playing is used extensively in learning to communicate requests, problem-solving and developing leadership skills. Acronyms are used with students to support the acquisition of communication skills, which are essential to advocacy. There are three key sets of acronyms that are introduced to students, including one to support them with accommodations requests (I-ASK), another to assist with conflict resolution (ALT+CM+Leave), and a final one to help develop leadership skills (THANK). When learning to request accommodations, students are encouraged to use visual supports such as an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ or an IEP summary when connecting with educators, to provide support to those who may struggle with communication. Students are even provided with cue cards of key acronyms that they can use as visual reminders of the steps they need to take with advocacy. All lesson materials are presented digitally to improve motivation, appeal to different learning styles, and allow for the use of assistive technology.
Website Overview

The organization, scope, and specific features of the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will be explored in further detail below.

Website Audience

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website aims to support students with learning disabilities and educators in British Columbia, Canada. Its home page welcomes both user groups. Educators are provided with a brief description of the site’s features and a hyperlink which directs them to ‘Educator’s Corner,’ a section of the site which contains research-based strategies and activities that teachers can use to assist students in the development of self-advocacy skills. Students are also welcomed on this page, and informed that the site can support them with taking greater control over their education and life. A hyperlink is provided which directs them to ‘Student’s Corner, a section of the site which contains student-centered online activities and videos to support their self-advocacy skill development. Figure 3.2 provides a partial screen capture of the site’s welcome message on the homepage. It also showcases the website’s top menu.

Website Organization and Navigation Menu

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has five key sections which are listed on its navigation menu, as shown in Figure 3.2:

1. Educator’s Corner
2. Student’s Corner
3. Collaborate and Contribute
4. References and Resources
5. Contact
Figure 3.2. Website navigation menu. The Self-Advocacy in High School website will welcome educators and students. It contains five key menu items with drop-down menus.

**Educator’s corner.**

The first menu item listed on the navigation menu is ‘Educator’s Corner’. ‘Educator’s Corner’ aims to provide teachers with a rationale for self-advocacy instruction and the pedagogical knowledge for designing effective instruction. Evidence-based resources, including lesson plans and activities, are made available for download from this section of the site. Figure 3.3 contains a screen-capture of the drop-down menu linked to ‘Educator’s Corner.’ It includes the following pages:

1. Welcome to Educator’s Corner
2. Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction
3. Getting Started Video
4. Self-Advocacy Lessons
5. IEP Goals for Self-Advocacy Development
6. Digital Transition Portfolios
7. Accommodations Student Card
8. Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development
Welcome to educator’s corner and a rationale for self-advocacy instruction.

The ‘Welcome to Educator’s Corner’ page provides a brief description of the features of the Self-Advocacy in High School website. Hyperlinks are included to direct educators to specific features or resources. All pages in ‘Educator’s Corner’ are linked sequentially with hyperlinks, so viewers are able to move easily to the next page. The ‘Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction’ includes three evidence-based reasons as to why teachers should focus on developing self-advocacy skills in their students; it is presented early in the browsing experience so that educators truly understand its importance. It is posited that educators will be more likely to spend time viewing the site’s resources and be more likely to use them if they understand the value of self-advocacy instruction.

Getting started video.

To take advantage of the medium of a website, it is important to include video content. The ‘Getting Started Video’ section includes a five-minute video called the Self-Advocacy Instruction Guide (Lafreniere, 2018). Using animation, the video highlights the importance of...
self-advocacy instruction and the problem of self-advocacy underdevelopment. It introduces the framework of self-advocacy skill development suggested by Test et al. (2005) which can be used to support instruction, and which serves as the foundation of the resources on the site. While much of this information is also included in text form at various points on the site, this concise video is engaging and serves as an alternative means of learning about self-advocacy instruction. After the site is published, this video will also be uploaded to a YouTube channel associated with the site, and which promotes the Self-Advocacy in High School website. It is hoped the video will be shared by educators and that others may learn about the website’s existence via this platform.

Lessons.

One of the strengths of the site is the ‘Self-Advocacy Lessons’ section. Figure 3.4 illustrates the way that the six key lessons can be accessed on the site.

![Figure 3.4. Self-Advocacy Lessons](image)

The Self-Advocacy in High School website has 6 lessons on self-advocacy instruction.
These lessons are based on a framework adapted by Test et al. (2005) and Centerrino (2016).

There are six key lessons:

1. Developing Knowledge of Self
2. Understanding Accommodations
3. Developing Knowledge of Rights
4. Developing Communication Skills
5. Motivation and Security
6. Developing Leadership Skills

The activities in these lesson plans are research based and specifically designed to support students in British Columbia, Canada. This is a particularly unique feature of this website. Fiedler and Danniker (2007) detailed six key websites for self-advocacy in their writing on self-advocacy instruction and all six were designed for American students. Consequently, they refer to American law and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); Canadian students need to learn about Ministry of Education policies and the BC Human Rights Code. There appears to be a void in self-advocacy websites for students from British Columbia, who need an understanding of their rights in the context of provincial policies and Canadian law.

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website aims to fill that void and ensure that teachers and students can access relevant information and resources that better meet the needs of students in British Columbia. However, it should be noted that many of the lessons and activities can be easily adapted to meet the needs of teachers and students in other areas around the world.

The lessons are arranged sequentially and include suggestions for incorporating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and strategies to support Indigenous learners. Many Canadian educators, in the spirit of reconciliation and with the aim to better support Indigenous
students, are endeavoring to include strategies and activities which incorporate the knowledge and perspective of Indigenous Peoples in their curriculum. The lessons encourage educators to acknowledge territory in all lessons and to use a circle process to foster belonging and connection. While attempts have been made in these lessons to include some strategies to support Indigenous learners, further dialogue and collaboration is needed with Indigenous peoples and communities about how self-advocacy instruction can best be designed for Indigenous learners. Further collaboration and research are needed with Indigenous community members and students about developing best practices for self-advocacy development in schools. This dialogue and research may identify concerns and complexities with self-advocacy development for Indigenous learners, who are learning in structures which have been historically used for assimilation. However, if efforts are made to conduct research in ways where Indigenous community knowledge is valued, imbued, and utilized in the process, it should lead to the development of best practices for Indigenous students.

These lessons are designed to be administered as a special education intervention for individuals or small groups of learners with learning disabilities. They are not designed for use in the general classroom with all learners, and further discussion of this rationale will be discussed later in the chapter. Educators have the option of choosing whether to administer the lessons individually or in small groups. The website encourages teachers to ensure that participating students and their parents/guardians provide consent for participation and that educators pay careful consideration to protecting privacy and respecting individual confidentiality. The lessons are designed so that any activities which refer to confidential and specific aspects of a student’s assessment or IEP are not discussed in a group structure. Students submit responses that may deal with matters of confidence in writing to the lead teacher and hence maintain confidentiality.
Specific instructions on confidentiality and lesson administration are located at the beginning of every downloadable lesson.

These six evidence-based lessons are designed to be administered in 45-minute chunks and are summarized in Table 3.1 (see Appendix 2 for all lesson materials).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Name</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 1: Developing Knowledge of Self</strong></td>
<td>Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer &amp; 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. This initial lesson will introduce the concept of self-advocacy and focus on assisting students with learning disabilities to further develop their understanding of their strengths and needs. Without this knowledge of self, students cannot be successful self-advocates. In this lesson, students will explore their strengths and weaknesses. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills (Phillips, 1990; Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson &amp; Gibb, 2014; Summers, White, Zhang &amp; Gordon, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 2: Understanding Accommodations</strong></td>
<td>This second lesson will have students further understand what accommodations they can or should access based on what they have learned about their personal strengths and weaknesses. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills (Hart &amp; Brehm, 2013; Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson &amp; Gibb, 2014; Summers, White, Zhang &amp; Gordon, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 3: Developing Knowledge of Rights</strong></td>
<td>This third lesson introduces students to the rights they are entitled to as a student with a learning disability in British Columbia. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills, but much of the research has been based in the United States and consequently focuses on American law and policy (Phillips, 1990; Summers, White, Zhang &amp; Gordon, 2014). This lesson will focus on the rights of students in British Columbia, Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lesson 4: Developing Communication Skills</strong></td>
<td>This lesson focuses on developing the communication skills to request accommodations and supports. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills and have incorporated role play as a means of improving communication skills (Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Hart &amp; Brehm, 2013; Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson &amp; Gibb, 2014; Summers, White, Zhang &amp; Gordon, 2014). This lesson builds on the work of Prater et al. (2014), who used acronyms to teach students to request accommodations and introduces the acronym: I-ASK. It also adds a problem-solving and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
conflict resolution focus when requesting accommodations. Lopez (2017) and Holzberg (2017), using the SACR tool (Self-Advocacy and Conflict Resolution), have demonstrated that conflict resolution skills can support students with improving their self-advocacy skills.

| Lesson 5: Motivation and Security | 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. In this lesson, students will practice their strategies for requesting accommodations and supports. To facilitate a sense of safety and security, students will be provided with an Accommodations Student Card to assist with communication and provide a measure of confidence. An IEP summary can be used in place of an Accommodations Student Card. |

| Lesson 6: Developing Leadership Skills | 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. |

Table 3.1. Self-Advocacy Lessons. The Self-Advocacy in High School website has 6 lessons on self-advocacy instruction.

**IEP goals for self-advocacy development.**

Test et al. (2005) argues that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) should include self-advocacy goals. This website has two resources that can support teachers with the development and assessment of IEP goals. Teachers only have a finite amount of time and many tasks to complete in a school day, so the Self-Advocacy in High School website includes a page called Sample IEP Goals for Self-Advocacy Development. Teachers can easily access the sample IEP goals on this page and use for discussion at IEP meetings. These goals are based on the...
framework of Test et al. (2005) and directly connect to the lessons on the website. If teachers can easily access pre-written IEP goals, they may be more likely to include them in an IEP and hence, more likely to invest time in self-advocacy instruction if it is a key IEP goal. A quick, downloadable pre-test is provided on this page, which can be administered to measure a student’s baseline understanding of self-advocacy prior to administering any of the lessons or activities. The same test can be used as a post-test to measure progress in self-advocacy development and determine to what extent an IEP goal on self-advocacy has been accomplished.

**Digital transition portfolios.**

‘Digital Transition Portfolios’ is a webpage which supports students with the transition into post-secondary studies and employment. It includes a lesson and accompanying video which teaches students how to develop a Digital Transition Portfolio (DTP). A DTP is an electronic portfolio that students can create to collect and showcase documents and artefacts related to their education, including information on their learning disability. Black (2010) argues that the development of a digital portfolio can assist with the development of self-advocacy skills in high school students with learning disabilities. These portfolios can be a tool in assisting young adults in explaining their learning disabilities and the supports that they require to future educators and employers. A number of the portfolio ideas offered by Black (2010) are adapted to meet the needs of high school students in British Columbia and the current technological landscape. Students are encouraged to build a portfolio which includes lists of commonly used accommodations, copies of IEPs, and relevant assessments, in anticipation that these documents will be needed in the future when applying for services at a post-secondary institution or advocating for accommodations and supports from future employers. When developing a ‘digital transition portfolio,’ it is important to be mindful of privacy and thoughtful about the way
different technology or software can be used to create the portfolio. The website will evolve over time and soon provide guidelines about managing privacy, such as using encryption software on a portable memory drive or warning users about some of the risks in using cloud technology. The website will require regular updating as technologies change and tools evolve to assist students with managing their portfolio and protecting their privacy.

Accommodations student card: a communication system for advocacy.

The Self-Advocacy in High School website provides a customizable and downloadable ‘Accommodations Student Card’ (Figure 3.5). This ‘Accommodations Student Card’ lists some key accommodations that students with learning disabilities are entitled to use in the classroom based on their IEPs. This card can be used by students to advocate for the accommodations that they need and used by educators to set up a communication system in a school which fosters the development of self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities.

Figure 3.5. Accommodations Student Card. This card has drop down menus and is customizable (Lafreniere, 2019).
Centerrino (2016) notes that feelings of safety and security are key factors in students choosing to advocate in a classroom. Centerrino (2016) notes that the students in his study may not have advocated for the supports they needed, even when having sufficient self-advocacy skills, if they feared conflict with their teachers. If schools allow students to use this ‘Accommodations Student Card’, students may feel more confident advocating for accommodations with an official school document. Some students also struggle with verbal communication and need a visual support; this card can serve as that support. Additionally, students who practice advocacy with this card will also be preparing themselves for post-secondary studies, where it is often a common practice to communicate one’s learning needs with an accommodations letter listing key accommodations.

The website encourages teachers to create a system in their school whereby all students can use this tool to communicate with their general classroom teachers. Mishna, Muskat, Farnia & Wiener (2011) developed a self-advocacy intervention for middle school students with learning disabilities which was based on an ecological framework. Their intervention was three-tiered, and focussed not only on the participants, but supporting the knowledge and skillset of teachers, parents, and fellow students in the school environment. The researchers found that the participants reported an increased “ability to advocate for themselves” (p.185) because of this ecological approach. A communication system based on this card can be developed within an ecological framework.

IEPs are often developed or shared with teachers, and this becomes the de facto means of communication about accommodations in many schools. Teachers in turn become solely responsible for implementing them and sometimes, problems can arise. For example, teachers can forget to provide an accommodation in a busy classroom or assume that a student is
performing fine without them. A communication system can support advocacy development in youths and address some of these ecological and system-based problems which impact the provision of accommodations. A communication system based on an ‘Accommodations Student Card’ encourages interaction between teachers and students as they use the card to discuss accommodations and supports. The provision of accommodations becomes a shared responsibility. The implementation of the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ system in a school can also provide a forum for Special Education teachers to review the impact of learning disabilities on students, as well as the kinds of accommodations and universally designed supports that can be implemented in a classroom to support struggling learners. It is envisioned that this simple system can further support the development of self-advocacy skills. The website includes instructions for students and teachers about how to use the card and set up this system. They are located on the following page: Accommodations Student Card: A Communication System for Advocacy.

Students can be encouraged to use the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ in one of two ways. They can carry the card on them in a wallet or purse or download the card to a mobile device. They can also take a picture of the printed card with their mobile devices if they struggle with organization and require quick access to the document.

*Classroom activities for self-advocacy development.*

Many researchers in education are advocating for Universal Design for Learning and Response to Intervention structures to be implemented in schools (Demersky Allan & Goddard, 2010; Katz, 2013). While the lessons on this site are specifically targeted for students with learning disabilities as a special education intervention, best practice would suggest that classroom teachers use regular classroom instruction and structures to work towards a specific
learning goal before referring students for additional services and interventions. Self-advocacy instruction can be used in the classroom for all learners, and complement the interventions needed for students with learning disabilities. Self-advocacy instruction should be incorporated into the classroom for all students as it is part of the new curriculum in British Columbia for Grades 10-12. The BC Ministry of Education (2018) has proposed that core competencies be developed in students, including self-determination. Self-advocacy is a component of self-determination and is listed in the ‘Personal Awareness and Responsibility’ competencies. The Ministry suggests that students be able to “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).

This website features a webpage called ‘Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development’ which connect to British Columbia’s new educational curriculum and uses the framework and of Test et al. (2005). Many of the learning activities can be used by classroom teachers to support the acquisition of self-advocacy strategies in different classroom settings, including English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Career Life Education, Art, and Science. It is hoped that these activities will be utilized by classroom teachers to support all learners and complement the self-advocacy interventions on the Self-Advocacy in High School website.

**Student’s corner.**

The navigation menu also features a page called ‘Student’s Corner.’ For busy teachers, or parents who would like their child to learn more about self-advocacy, this section provides
multimedia-based modules for students to work through independently to develop their self-advocacy skills. These modules appeal to students’ sense of control and attempt to motivate students to learn more about self-advocacy by convincing them that self-advocacy skills will allow them to take greater control over their learning and life. ‘Student’s Corner’ somewhat mirrors the teacher delivered lessons in ‘Educator’s Corner’ in structure, but provides student-centered activities which can be completed with minimal teacher support, as opposed to the teacher-led activities in ‘Educator’s Corner’ which require much more teacher time and energy. This part of the site is written in student friendly language which is more straight forward and less academic. The modules are broken up into learning tasks, and each task has an assessment point where students are encouraged to check in with a teacher or parent to demonstrate their learning or self-advocacy skills.

There are four components to ‘Student’s Corner’ which are listed in Figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6. Student’s corner. This part of the website has four key components that students can work through independently, with the guided and intermittent support of an educator or parent.
These four components include:

1. **How do I get Started?**
2. **Self-advocacy Learning Modules**
3. **Preparing for Life After High School Learning Modules**
4. **Student Feedback on Learning Modules**

**How do I get started.**

The first section, ‘**How do I get started?**’, introduces students to the concept of self-advocacy and its importance. It also explains how the student modules are set up and how they can work through the site. The website purposefully includes videos that use youth voices in order to improve a young viewer’s connection to the material. The modules begin with an inspiring TEDx talk by Edwards (2014). Edwards (2014) delivers a powerful presentation on self-advocacy that is engaging and inspiring to viewers. It is the first video students see and hopefully motivates viewers to grasp the role that well-developed self-advocacy skills can play in transforming lives. Students are encouraged to continue their learning by working through the ‘Self-Advocacy Learning Modules’ and there are hyperlinks to direct them through the material.

**Self-advocacy learning modules.**

There are three ‘**Self-Advocacy Learning Modules**’ for students to work through and each are broken down into manageable tasks for students to complete (Figure 3.7). Students are motivated by social media, and a key component of social media is the integration of video and images. The **Self-Advocacy in High School** website uses a lot of video content, infographics, and images to deliver instruction to students in its modules. They are based on Test et al.’s framework (2005) and have students learn more about themselves, their rights, and effective communication. They are called “**Module 1: Learning About Yourself,**” ‘**Module 2: Know Your”**
Rights,’ and ‘Module 3: Communication.’ Some of the evidence-based activities from the teacher-delivered lessons in ‘Educator’s Corner’ are interspersed in the modules. Students are explicitly asked to check in with an educator or parent after completing some of these activities to demonstrate their learning and receive feedback on their self-advocacy skill development. Most of the videos used in the learning modules are produced by Canadian sources. Figure 3.7 demonstrates how students can easily access the three learning modules via the main navigation menu (see below).

![Self-Advocacy in High School](image)

*Figure 3.7. Self-advocacy learning modules. There are three modules which can be accessed by students to learn more about developing self-advocacy.*

**Preparing for life after high school learning modules.**

‘Preparing for Life after High School’ is a module is designed for students who are getting closer to graduation and need to be developing self-advocacy skills for the transition to post-secondary studies or employment. The module begins with a young college student explaining the importance of self-advocacy (Garrity, 2016). As in the teacher developed lessons, students are encouraged to develop a ‘digital transition portfolio.’
**Student feedback on modules.**

A final section called ‘Student Feedback on Modules’ has been included in ‘Student’s Corner’ where students can submit their feedback on these modules to the website designer. Student feedback is crucial in the development of educational resources and if further time allowed for it, students would have been more involved in the creation of the learning modules. On the *Self-Advocacy in High School* site, students are encouraged to share their feedback and make suggestions for improvement to the content on the website. There is an easy-to-access comment form which can be used by students to deliver feedback directly to site administrators. The website is designed so that these learning modules will constantly be evolving and improving with student feedback on the modules.

**Collaborate and contribute.**

The navigation menu also includes a menu item called ‘Collaborate and Contribute.’ This key section is designed to foster interactivity amongst educators and allow for the sharing of resources on self-advocacy. Visitors can contact the site administrator through a comment form and share their lesson activities, ideas, and resources. These will be posted in a sub-section called ‘Submitted Lessons and Ideas’ for other educators to read and download. Each submitted resource will be given its own page with comment section, so that visiting educators can collaborate on further developing each resource. It should be noted that submitted resources will need to meet certain standards and be approved by a site administrator before being published.

Some thought was given to including a forum for educators in this section to allow for further discussion and interactivity. If there are users who are regularly engaging with others about the resources on the website, a forum could be added to help foster a community of like-
minded educators. I will monitor teacher use of the website and the frequency of interactivity in the comment sections to determine if this may be an element to include in the future.

**Resources and references.**

The final menu item on the navigation menu is ‘Resources and References.’ This section of the site includes links to key resources and a list of the website’s references. In the ‘Resources’ page, educators can find links to important sites which are referenced in the lessons and activities. Additionally, some of the downloadable resources can also be accessed from this page. In the ‘References’ page, there is a list of all of the academic articles and research that has shaped this website. Educators can learn more about self-advocacy by using this reference list as a guide. The references also ensure that credit is given for the ideas, images, videos, and resources that are referenced or used on the site.

**Website Guidelines for Educators**

A project such as the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website, which does not collect research data and is considered a creative practice by Vancouver Island University. However, this project addresses a topic in special education, learning disabilities, which is governed by rules, policies, and laws (especially regarding privacy and confidentiality). Educators should approach these lessons with careful consideration, especially if delivered to groups. Therefore, a ‘Lesson Administration Guide’ is included to advise educators to be proactive in attaining consent, protect students from harm, and respect confidentiality and privacy as much as possible. Lesson administrators are encouraged to seek support and approval from school and district administrators before delivering the lessons to ensure that all interventions conform to school district and Ministry policies.
Voluntary consent and withdrawal guidelines

Each lesson is prefaced with guidelines for lesson administration. First, educators are encouraged to seek consent from each student and their respective parents/guardians for participation. This is especially crucial if a school is going to administer the self-advocacy lessons to a group. While the scope and sequence of the lessons is designed to minimize the sharing of personal details about a student’s past assessments or IEP, participation in group activities indicates to other participants that a student has an IEP. Students and families should be aware of this when signing a consent form. Consent forms should also include the goals of the activities, details about the scope of the program, length of the activities, and clearly describe if the activities will be delivered in an individual or small group setting. Group settings should not be discounted simply to protect privacy. Mishna et al. (2011) used a group treatment as part of a self-advocacy intervention. Students with learning disabilities had opportunities to work together in developing self-advocacy skills. Mishna et al. (2011) argue that groups offer a peer group for any students who feel alienated or marginalized, and that groups can support the development of social competence and a reduction in anxiety. Group treatment can increase self-esteem, social skills, and verbal expression as well (Mishna et al., 2011). Providing the lessons to a group allows students with learning disabilities the opportunity to discuss their challenges with peers and perhaps feel less isolated. It can also assist with reducing the stigmatization that is sometimes felt about having a learning disability, as participants in the lessons can see that others are also impacted.

Educators should ensure that participants are well informed that their participation in lessons is optional and that they can withdraw at any time. High school students should not be forced to participate; they are old enough to determine what is in their best interest. Some of the
lessons delve into territory that may be perceived as private, personal, and perhaps even emotional. Students should be provided to withdraw from any lessons if they feel uncomfortable or are unwilling.

**Protection from risk and harm**

Careful consideration should be given to the selection of participants and their preparation before participating in the teacher-led lessons. The students who are selected should be aware of their learning disabilities and emotionally accepting of this diagnosis before offering them an opportunity to participate in the learning activities. These activities will not go well if a student has just learned of his or her diagnosis and is feeling overwhelmed by this realization or is particularly sensitive or unaccepting of the diagnosis. The lessons specifically suggest that lesson administrators meet with all students before the lessons to review their psychoeducational assessments prior to participation in the lessons. This will ensure that all students are well-aware of why they are participating in the intervention. It also provides teaching opportunities to ensure that students have a solid understanding of what a learning disability is, how a learning disability specifically impacts their education, and what kinds of accommodations are suggested to support their learning. This pre-work respects an individual’s privacy and ensures that these kinds of conversations and discussions are not held in front of a group.

School processes should be developed to provide a student who participates in these activities with access to a school counsellor or school psychologist if needed. While these lessons are not likely to cause concern for senior students, some of the topics in the lesson may trigger anxiety or emotions, and there should be a process identified for having students connect with support if needed.
The qualifications of the lesson administrator are an important factor to consider. It is highly recommended that the educator delivering the program have a firm understanding of special education policies, privacy laws, and learning disabilities or deliver it with the support of a resource teacher, special education teacher, counsellor, or school psychologist. It takes knowledge and skill to be able to demystify some of the stigmas and sensitivities around what it means to have a learning disability, as well as best practices in instruction and support for those with learning disabilities. It also takes skills and knowledge to ensure that the lessons are delivered in ways that respect a student’s privacy as much as possible when group instruction is being used.

**Privacy and confidentiality guidelines**

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will not collect personal information or allow for the storage of student responses. Students are encouraged to submit responses to a lesson administrator or a supporting adult when participating in many of the teacher-led activities or student modules. As noted earlier, careful consideration should be given to whether these activities are administered in an individual or group setting as these activities refer to the participants as having IEPs. Privacy and confidentiality can be much more easily managed when educators work solely with individuals. However, small group settings for some of the activities in the self-advocacy website can be effective for learning, support, and collaboration. Each lesson’s preamble makes it clear that it is the lesson administrator’s responsibility to ensure that the lessons work with current educational policies and privacy laws.

If using the lessons with a group, participants and their families should be well informed prior to participation that activities include discussions with others about learning disabilities and IEPs. Careful consideration should be given to establishing confidentiality in the group setting.
and creating boundaries about what kinds of information can or cannot be shared. For the most part, lesson activities are designed in a very general manner and students are never asked to share confidential details about their learning disability or IEP with others. When any activities or assessments require students to consider specific parts of their own IEP or assessment, they are designed so that responses are shared only with the lesson administrator, and not the group.

For example, in Lesson 1 when students are asked to consider their strengths and stretches, they submit their reflection to the teacher directly and do not share them with the group. In fact, the lesson makes note of the importance of this step for maintaining confidentiality. In Lesson 2 students are asked to reflect on the kinds of accommodations that could help them in a lesson they participated in recently and consider their IEP. Students do not share these responses with the group and only present their reflection to their teacher. When students use role-play in developing communication skills, the students use scripted lessons and never have to refer to their IEP or accommodations. The only time they need to refer to their IEP is when practicing an accommodation request from a current classroom teacher. However, it should be noted that students can choose general accommodations such as ‘extra time’ and do not need to select an accommodation which might highlight a personal detail about their learning disability.

**Website Rationale**

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has been published with WordPress and can be accessed on computers and mobile devices. It is registered with a Canadian domain name to attract Canadian educators to the site, includes built-in social sharing features to allow educators to share content, and is search engine optimized. It is hoped that educators will share content on
the site with each other and that its easily-remembered name will be mentioned in conversations about self-advocacy with other educators.

There are many reasons why a website was selected, as opposed to a book or a journal. Websites are an effective means for reaching large numbers of educators and disseminating information about this power project quickly. They can be freely accessed by anyone with access to the web at any time. It is hoped that first and foremost, the site can support educators in self-advocacy instruction and understanding the importance of self-advocacy development. Fiedler & Danneker (2007) argue that even though there is a significant need for self-advocacy training for students with disabilities and that many research studies have shown the efficacy of such training, there appears to be a research to practice gap. Karvonen, Test, Wood Browder & Algozzone (2004) have identified several barriers to teaching self-advocacy skills. These include inadequate teacher training, lack of teacher authority, and increasing demands on teacher time which result in insufficient instructional time for self-advocacy instruction. Given that there is a lack of training (which I have experienced), a project such as the Self-Advocacy in High School website will be a way to provide information and research on self-advocacy instruction and interventions to support teachers in their professional learning. With greater knowledge, it is anticipated that teachers will begin to implement self-advocacy training in their classrooms.

A webpage was also selected because it can easily host many resources and lessons. With increasing demands on teacher time, teachers will welcome these ready-to use evidence-based lessons, activities, and interventions. Teachers can quickly access and use the resources on this site without any cost, and do not have to ‘reinvent the wheel’ and invest time they do not have in developing their own resources. If teachers are too busy to implement some of the teacher led activities, they can encourage their students to work through the student modules. The self-
advocacy website was selected to support many students across the province with activities that allow them to work independently and with little teacher support.

A website was also selected to support students and teachers because online environments can be engaging and effective in education. Black (2010) argues that online digital environments are motivating and “specific technology interventions offer another method to provide students with disabilities more opportunities to practice self-advocacy skills” (p.119). Websites allow users to have a multi-media experience, and the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website takes advantage of the medium by providing educators with access to text, images, and video. This improves the appeal and engagement of the site to viewers, but also supports the needs of different learners.

Websites also allow for interactivity, and the comments fields are activated on the site so that users can interact with one another about the resources. They can also be quickly updated and evolve. My goal in developing this project is to create something dynamic that can continue to support teachers in the future. It is envisioned that if the site becomes well-viewed and used that it will continue to be updated.

Another important consideration for the design of this digital resource was the audience: students with learning disabilities. Digital resources can be easily paired with text to speech software and other accessibility features which many students with learning disabilities need to access text. This was a motivating factor in the selection of the medium for this project. It should be noted that one of the most important factors in the website’s design is its philosophical underpinnings as a project grounded in the philosophy of Special Education.

There are limitations with developing a digital resource. A website can easily go unnoticed in cyberspace. All resources, including digital ones, need promotion, so their
audiences are aware of their existence. Without the leveraging of social media and putting in the hard-work to share this resource with fellow educators, this resource may be under-used. The limitations of developing a website will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

**Opportunities and Challenges with Integrating Special Education Philosophy**

**Into the Design of the Website**

This website framed self-advocacy development through a special education lens. In an era of universal design for learning (UDL), one may ask why it is important to locate self-advocacy instruction in the context of special education, and why not simply design a website that teaches self-advocacy skills to all learners in the general education classroom? In fact, the website has some of these classroom activities for all learners. Why design a website for students with learning disabilities when it can be designed to assist all students? While it cannot be denied that instruction in self-advocacy for all learners is important, there are many reasons to ensure that targeted special education interventions for self-advocacy be further developed, created, and implemented with students with disabilities. First, many of the interventions that have proven to be successful are not necessarily easily integrated in the classroom. In seeking to update Test et al.’s (2005) review of self-advocacy literature, Roberts et al. (2014) reviewed empirical studies on self-advocacy from 2004-2012 and noted that students with disabilities have experienced gains when explicitly taught self-advocacy skills with direct instruction, published curricula, and writing strategies. Involvement in IEP and transition planning meetings have also been successful interventions (Roberts et al., 2014). Clearly, these self-advocacy interventions cannot all be easily implemented in the classroom. Additionally, students with learning disabilities require additional explicit support to develop these skills, whereas their peers are able to learn
these skills quickly and often in other ways and situations aside from direct instruction and interventions.

Second, if students are to develop their self-advocacy skills and need to develop a greater understanding of their learning profile and their rights, as indicated by Test et al. (2005), they will need to understand the results of confidential assessments and discuss what a learning disability is and how it can impact an individual in a very personal way. Students will likely need an intensive individualized or small group intervention which respects their privacy and can focus on generating a richer understanding of self. As well, it is clear that students should develop their knowledge of laws and policies surrounding disability rights. This cannot simply be done in the general classroom, as it is not relevant to most learners.

Third, many students with disabilities are lagging in their self-advocacy skills due to the way structures of support are designed. Roberts et al. (2014) argue that self-advocacy skills are being underdeveloped in high school students with learning disabilities because of the way supports are often structured in schools. They posit the following, “parents and service providers often provide the students with greater levels of supports than they do for students without disabilities. Consequently, the opportunities to learn self-advocacy frequently are lacking in both school and community settings” (p.217). Students with disabilities are too often overly dependent on well intentioned resource teachers, and classroom teachers. This prevents them from fully developing the self-advocacy skills that they will need in life. Lopez (2016) states that “this overdependence on others may prevent these students from developing the self advocacy skills that will enable them to speak up for themselves and acquire needed supports and services” (p.12) This overdependence further justifies the need for extra skill instruction and a careful
examination of the balance that exists between providing services and the opportunities to self-advocate.

Finally, research suggests that all students, including ones with disabilities, are not receiving the amount of instruction in self-advocacy that they need in the classroom. At the elementary level, Cho, Wehmeyer, and Kinston (2011) have identified barriers in schools that have prevented these skills from being further incorporated into instruction in the general classroom and special education settings. Teachers identified three barriers: insufficient time, students having more urgent needs in other areas, and a lack of training and knowledge (Cho et al., 2011). Special educators and individuals with learning disabilities cannot rely on a one-size fit all curricular approach, and the likelihood of any curriculum on self-advocacy being integrated into the departmental structures of high school is not likely. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website successfully addresses all three barriers. In order to address the barrier of time, teachers are offered ready-to-use, engaging evidence-based lessons and activities that they do not have to spend time creating. In order to address the fact that students often have other pressing needs in regard to their schooling, the lessons and activities are designed to be implemented in a shorter time period than many previous interventions for self-advocacy, so that their more urgent needs can continue to be met. Finally, the site will impart knowledge to teachers about how self-advocacy skills can best be taught.

It is for these reasons that interventions in self-advocacy skills, including the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website, must be developed within a special education context. Cook & Schirmer (2003) argue that targeted and intensive special education interventions are critical. They state, “whereas learners without disabilities will likely succeed without these instructional techniques, learners with disabilities will likely fail without them” (p.203). Using a special
education lens and philosophy, this website can successfully be used to support students with learning disabilities to become better advocates for the accommodations and supports they need to reach their potential and perform at their best.

For students who are not engaged with technology, find some of the instructional strategies unappealing, or do not want to miss out on classes to participate in an intervention, it is recommended that teachers work with students during the IEP process to identify alternate ways to develop self-advocacy skills. Special education teachers can work with students in an IEP meeting to teach several key self-advocacy skills and then develop more personalized strategies for development and practice. For students who struggle with technology, an individualized strategy might be to have an Educational Assistant print out some of the materials and review them with a student in a resource room. For a student who does not want to miss classes, a personalized strategy might include providing families with the role-playing scripts for them to practice at home. For those students who might struggle behaviourally or encounter such significant anxiety that they cannot engage with the instructional strategies and lessons, it might be more appropriate to develop some resources that relate to self-advocacy in the context of behavioural or anxiety management. For example, lesson activities might prioritize learning to advocate for breaks when feeling anxious or frustrated, before introducing advocacy for accommodations and academic supports.

The Influence of Project Goals on the Implementation of the Website

It is the goal of this project to provide educators with information, research and resources on self-advocacy development in high-school-aged students with learning disabilities I have aimed to include lesson plans, activities and resources, including communication tools and digital transition portfolios, in the Self-Advocacy in High School website.
To meet the goal of sharing this resource with educators, the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website will be open for public viewing in the spring of 2019. WordPress has a feature which allows site administrators to track site views and this feature will be one way of quantifying its success. Permission will also be sought to distribute its link and abstract to teachers in the Sea to Sky School District to support students in this district with self-advocacy development. Additionally, it is common practice for VIU to send the website link out to Faculty members and educators to inform them of the resource and to solicit feedback. Its implementation will be considered successful if teachers use the website as a resource, share it with others, and more importantly, if students become better self-advocates because of participating in the learning activities.

**Chapter Summary**

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has many resources, lessons, and activities which are based on the self-advocacy framework of Test et al. (2005), as well as research about the impact of student perceptions of safety and security on self-advocacy (Centerrino, 2016; Baker & Scanlon, 2016). It uses research-based instructional strategies which have been proven effective in self-advocacy development, including role-play, acronyms, visual supports, communication tools, and digital technology. Designed to meet the needs of both teachers and students, the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has teacher-led lessons and student-centered modules to support self-advocacy development. With a special education lens, the website provides teachers with a research-based definition of self-advocacy which can be used to guide instruction for self-advocacy skills and serves as a comprehensive resource for supporting students to develop the self-advocacy skills needed for high school, post-secondary studies, and employment.
Chapter 4 will identify the strengths and limitations of the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website. It will include a discussion of the project’s guiding questions and evidence-based recommendations for educators about how to improve self-advocacy instruction and interventions for students with learning disabilities in British Columbia. The implications of this project for educators and students in British Columbia are significant and will be reviewed in detail.
Chapter 4

Project Discussion, Reflection and Future Recommendations

Teaching students to self-advocate will take additional time and require more effort on the part of the special education and general education teachers. Nevertheless, such training will greatly benefit students. Teaching students to understand their strengths and needs, to identify which accommodations are necessary for them to be successful, and to appropriately request those accommodations will give students control over their education, and they will assume more responsibility for their education. (Prater et al., 2014, p.304)

Introduction to Project Reflection

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the contributions and strengths of this research project. A reflection will be presented on what I have learned in exploring my guiding questions, reviewing research, and developing the Self-Advocacy in High School website. Its limitations will be reviewed. There appears to be a significant gap in resources for educators on self-advocacy instruction, and I believe that the research-based lessons and activities on this website can make a profound difference in the lives of educators and students in British Columbia. Therefore, recommendations for the use of this website, and future opportunities for its further development, are included in this chapter. At the end of this chapter, I will provide some final thoughts on the implications of this project for special education in British Columbia, the importance of self-advocacy instruction, and my hopes for the website’s resources to empower students with learning disabilities to take further control over their education and lives.
Discussion of the Website’s Contributions and Strengths

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website provides some key contributions to educators and students in British Columbia. It is notable that educators now have a resource, specifically designed to meet the needs of students in British Columbia and aligned with the development of the core competencies in the newly revised provincial curriculum, that highlights the importance of self-advocacy skill development. Educators can familiarize themselves with best practices and learn how to best design their own self-advocacy interventions in a relatively short period of time by watching videos, browsing the site, and accessing its resources. This information is provided to educators without cost.

The contributions of the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ and ‘digital transition portfolio lessons’ are notable. Educators in British Columbia will likely find the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ an easy-to-use intervention which can support self-advocacy development and communication. Implementing systems can be time-consuming and challenging, but this ‘Accommodations Student Card’ can easily serve as a communication system in a school to ensure that students are better supported in their studies. I firmly believe that all students should develop a ‘digital transition portfolio’ as an act of self-advocacy development and to prepare for life after high school. If all teachers in British Columbia encouraged their students to develop these portfolios, students will be better prepared in their transition to adulthood to advocate for the supports they will need to compensate for their disability. It would be valuable for the expression, ‘digital transition portfolio’ to become a key part of the lexicon of special educators in British Columbia and for it to become a best practice and commonly used one in a student’s graduating year.
An understated contribution is the modelling in the teacher-led lessons. Educators who view the lesson design will likely make note of the importance of designing all lessons with the mindset of incorporating UDL principles and including strategies to support Indigenous learners. These are highlighted throughout the lessons to improve their quality, but also to model the belief that all lessons in British Columbia should be designed with these important principles in mind.

Self-determination is a component of one of the core competencies: Personal Awareness and Responsibility. The resources on the Ministry’s site thus far are limited and simply provide illustrations of self-determination in action. There is not any specific information on how to define it for students or provide instructional support for the acquisition of self-determination skills. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website contains many classroom activities for self-advocacy skills which will be very useful to all educators in developing self-determination in their students. It has been created in a key moment in time with the introduction of a new curriculum and can assist educators in British Columbia with how to teach one key aspect of self-determination: self-advocacy.

The student modules for independent study, may end up being one of the most widely used resources on the website. Teachers, who are too busy to administer the teacher-led lessons, can easily direct students to this part of the website. Students can work independently with minimal teacher guidance and develop their self-advocacy skills. Educators should take advantage of this free resource, which utilizes various kinds of modern multimedia to engage students. It also includes videos with youth voices and narrators to make the content more relevant and engaging. The inclusion of video content with youth voices is an achievement in moving self-advocacy interventions further into the 21st century.
Another contribution which might be easily overlooked but is important nonetheless is the list of sample IEP goals. Students are more likely to receive self-advocacy instruction if self-advocacy goals are included in IEPs and discussed during IEP meetings and teachers now have a resource to access. Additionally, these exemplars are written in such a way that they can support educators with designing practical and meaningful interventions. Simply writing that a student will develop self-advocacy skills is rather vague and difficult to measure. The specificity of the sample IEP goals will likely lead to improved support for the development of self-advocacy skills.

An important theme that runs through the lessons which cannot be overlooked, is the collaboration of educators and students in setting up support plans. The voices of students need to be valued. Too often, suggestions about the kinds of accommodations and supports a student needs are made solely by experts or case managers without taking into consideration the expertise and perspective of the student. They are packaged in reports, delivered in feedback sessions, or written into IEPs. They might be even be driven by the current educational philosophy or policy of the day. Kunc & Van der Klift (2017) argue that “working with students to craft innovative accommodations- even when they include working in separate spaces for finite periods of time- empowers them to develop self-understanding and learn to advocate for themselves and initiate the support they need” (p.9). Educators who use the Self-Advocacy in High School website will learn to work alongside students as partners to develop accommodations and support plans. It is likely the most personalized ones that make the biggest difference in experiences of success.

For example, there might be a student with a significant learning disability in written expression who has an upcoming essay. When educators work from a model that values
‘professional expertise’ above all, they might assume that the student needs a scribe, as that is a commonly recommended accommodation. They might make significant efforts to get an educational assistant for this student, only to find that the student does not want the support of an adult. Instead of assuming and relying solely on expertise, educators can work from a model of collaborative support where students are valued as expert collaborators. Teachers could meet with the same student and ask, “How can we come up with a plan to support you with the assignment?” or “What do you think might help you best?” This same student may already be using voice to text software on their phone for texting and suggest using this accommodation to be more independent. The student might have had success in another class making a video and want to ask about making a video in lieu of the essay. The student might suggest that what has worked best in middle school is sitting beside their best friend who can be used to help spell words when needed. By consulting with students and taking the time to work together, educators support the development of self-determination. It further teaches students to be proactive and to develop problem-solving skills, solutions, and plans when faced with obstacles. When teachers work alongside students to support the development of self-advocacy skills, they are empowering their students to further learn to speak up for their personal needs and interests.

Finally, the most important contribution of the intervention is its potential impact on students. Students who further develop their self-advocacy skills with these activities will be able to advocate for further accommodations and supports in school. Students will see improvement in their levels of achievement and marks if they can access the accommodations and supports they need. And if students experience successes with self-advocacy in the school setting, they are likely to see gains in their sense of self-determination and agency. The development of self-advocacy skills in high school will assist students to advocate in all areas of their lives. These
students will have the skills to explain their disabilities and advocate for supports in post-secondary education and employment. For example, young adults who build ‘digital transition portfolios’ and practice self-advocacy in high school will have the skills to advocate for the resources which will allow them to perform at their best in both settings. The abilities to advocate in the workplace will also lead to improved safety for young workers, as advocacy is proven to be a preventative measure in identifying workplace dangers. The resources on the Self-Advocacy in High School website have the potential to transform lives, thus making its implementation quite significant.

**Reflection on Guiding Questions**

This project had five sets of guiding questions (see below) and this chapter offers an opportunity to reflect on the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Set</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How can a website be designed to support teachers in British Columbia with developing self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities? Can it be designed with access points for teachers and students? How can it be designed to also meet the needs of Indigenous learners?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How can a communication tool such as the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ be designed and used to develop students’ self-advocacy skills and facilitate dialogue between students and teachers about accommodations and supports?</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>How can the lessons and activities be designed so that teachers can realistically integrate them into the busyness of school days?</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>How can privacy and confidentiality about a student’s learning disability be respected in lessons on self-advocacy when teachers often only have time to support lessons with small or large groups? Are there some aspects of teaching self-advocacy to students with learning disabilities that might have to be done on a 1:1 basis?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>How can the site be designed so that educators can easily access the resources quickly and efficiently? How can interactivity between educators and student users be fostered?</td>
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*Table 4.1. Project Guiding Questions. There are five sets of guiding questions for this project.*
One of the first guiding questions that I explored was *How can a website be designed to support teachers in developing self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities? Can it be designed with access points for teachers and students?* It became clear to me early in the process that there needed to be two key components to the website if it were truly going to support teachers. First, the website had to provide a rationale for self-advocacy instruction and show teachers how to deliver self-advocacy instruction. Second, the website had to be a resource for busy teachers with lesson plans and activities that could be easily accessed and implemented. The website had to support all levels of self-advocacy instruction, from developing IEP goals to delivering instruction and assessing student progress. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has successfully integrated all these features in the teacher section, ‘Educator’s Corner.’

However, I believe that some of the video content in the student modules could have been better integrated into the teacher-led lesson plans. Teachers who only access the teacher-led materials might miss out on some of the video content in ‘Student’s Corner.’ Despite this limitation, it was a conscious effort to create teacher-led lessons that would not be too heavily reliant on media. Cycles of fashion and technology change so fast that lesson resources using video content which is more than 5 years old can quickly be perceived as ‘outdated,’ especially in the eyes of students. It was my hope in designing the lessons to focus on activities that could remain relevant for as long as possible. However, any successful website and resource needs regular updating and I plan on doing so in order to keep it interesting, relevant, and up to date.

In reflecting on the quality of the lessons and resources that are provided to teachers on this site, I feel strongly that ‘Educator’s Section’ is a fully developed, robust resource. Teachers who access this site have access to evidence-based lessons which can be implemented with students in short periods of time.
In contrast to ‘Educator’s Corner’ which is fully developed, I would argue that the learning modules in ‘Student’s Corner’ are sufficiently developed. They were purposefully designed to be shorter in length to appeal to the needs of learners who may have difficulties with sustaining attention for longer periods of time. I was warned early in the design process by a faculty member that it was overly-ambitious to take on the design of a site for two audiences. At one point, I wanted to abandon this section, but I feel that it was crucially important to incorporate this section into the site. The reality for many overworked teachers with limited resources is that they will not have time to deliver the teacher-led activities, but they might be able to have students work through modules with guided support. I wanted to create a resource on self-advocacy that would reach the widest audience as possible, and this additional section may mean that more students are impacted by this resource and further develop their self-advocacy skills.

Regarding access, the homepage is designed to welcome teachers and students by providing each with an overview of the site features and a rationale to explore them. My advisor challenged me to think about how an audience of students might need different kinds of motivation to access the site and work through the materials. The website has tried to appeal to a sense of control and motivate students. Additionally, it was important to create modules which used engaging video content and images to foster motivation.

While I feel that ‘Educator’s Corner’ is largely complete, plans are in place for the ‘Student’s Corner’ to evolve. As I use it with students, I want to gather their feedback to improve its design. Goolsby-Richardson, highlighting the work of Cushman (2003), notes that “Education has a habit of asking “what is right?” for students without ever listening to students” (p.15). Educators are making improved efforts to consult with students and use their suggestions in
improving resources, educational structures, instruction, and assessment. I intend to improve the resources on the site with student feedback and input.

Motivation is a key aspect of self-advocacy, and the entire site could have been ‘gamified’. Hanghoj, Lieberoth, and Misfeldt (2018) describe how “The spread of gaming has inspired researchers and educators to adopt various forms of game-based learning activities within educational contexts, including analyzing games as texts (Beavis, Dezuanni, & O'Mara, 2017), teaching with games as tools (Squire, 2004), learning through game design processes (Kafai & Resnick, 1996) or using game-like elements to “gamify” educational practices (Sanchez, Young, & Jouneau-Sion, 2017)” (p.776). I explored the use of ‘plug-ins’ for the site and I wondered if collecting badges or points in exchange for completion of the activities might further assist with motivation and tracking individual progress. Ultimately, I concluded that it might not be the most effective motivational tool given the targeted age of the student audience (Grades 10-12). Despite my reservations, there is no doubt that video game use is still quite prevalent among youths in this age group and some element of ‘gamification’ might be a possible aspect to discuss with youths who use the site in the future. ‘Gamification’ may also be a topic for future research into self-advocacy interventions.

Another question which I investigated was How can it (the website) be designed to meet the needs of Indigenous learners? A challenge that I was given by my advisor in the initial stages of the development of my project was to make it relate to a specific population, place, or group. This was part of the rationale for designing the site for educators and students in British Columbia, and the focus was also important if I were to appropriately use the framework of Test et al., (2005). To teach students about their rights, it is necessary to locate the lessons and resources in the context of provincial and Canadian law.
My advisor’s challenge also prompted me to think about the community where I teach, which has many Indigenous learners, a group of students who educators are trying to better support. There are many efforts in my school and around the province, in the context of reconciliation, to better integrate Indigenous ways of learning and knowing in the classroom. A key aspect of the new B.C. curriculum is an emphasis on integrating and embedding Indigenous perspectives into all aspects of teaching and learning. To better support Indigenous learners, the teacher-led lessons on self-advocacy development included two strategies for supporting Indigenous learners. They encouraged educators to acknowledge territory with a circle process and to use that process to build a sense of connection and belonging in the group. I believe that the inclusion of these activities in the lesson plans will help foster a sense of belonging and connectivity for all students, but especially Indigenous students. An improved sense of connection and valuing of Indigenous perspectives will support engagement in the self-advocacy lessons and lead to improved outcomes.

In the Self-Advocacy in High School website, it is acknowledged that the inclusion of culturally relevant strategies in the lessons is simply a step towards greater inclusion of Indigenous learners. Further work and research are needed regarding self-advocacy development and Indigenous learners. Future research can and should explore this topic in collaboration with Indigenous community members to determine how the development of self-determination skills can best be undertaken within the school setting and which strategies or practices might work best for Indigenous learners. Consultation will likely lead to a better understanding of what complexities and challenges exist as well. It needs to be noted that the educational system has been explicitly used for the purposes of assimilation and that teaching self-determination in
schools within this historical context and in the existing institutions of colonialism presents challenges.

Another guiding question that I explored was *How can a communication tool such as the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ be designed and used to develop students’ self-advocacy skills and facilitate dialogue between students and teachers about accommodations and supports?* I believe the card can be very successful as the centrepiece of a communication system for students and teachers to discuss accommodations and supports. The ‘Accommodations Student Card’ is easily accessible on the site, can be quickly filled out via drop down menus, and is customizable to meet the needs of different schools. The instructions on the website about how it can be used in a school to facilitate conversations are quite clear and the system does not require a lot of training on the part of staff members. I have shared this idea with some of my colleagues on staff and they resoundingly feel that it would be easy to implement in our school.

To get student feedback on the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ and system, I have showed this card to several students who I work with. All seem quite positive about possibly using the card in the future. They appreciate the fact that they can take a photo of the card on their mobile phones and have a copy to carry in their wallets. There is a consensus among the students that the card makes them feel more confident about advocating for accommodations. At this time, the card has not been implemented as a system in my school. I am planning on trialling the use of the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ in September of 2019.

Another question investigated was *How can the lessons and activities be designed so that teachers can realistically integrate them into the busyness of school days?* This chapter began with a quote by Prater et al. (2014) about the fact that self-advocacy interventions require extra effort on the part of a teacher to design and implement. It was for this reason that I wanted to
supply sample IEP goals and lesson plans to reduce the work required by educators if they chose to support self-advocacy development in the classroom. The rationale for the teacher-led lesson design was to try and allow for small group instruction, as many educators do not have the time to implement many 1:1 interventions. I attempted to keep the lessons short (45 minutes) and to limit the number of lessons needed for skill development to between 4 and 6 lessons. The student modules were established for teachers who might not have the time and energy to deliver the teacher-led lessons. They allow students to work through some of the activities individually with minimal support and guidance from a teacher.

Much thought and reflection were given to the following questions. *How can privacy and confidentiality about a student’s learning disability be respected in lessons on self-advocacy when teachers often only have time to support lessons in small or large groups? Are there some aspects of teaching self-advocacy to students with learning disabilities that might have to be done on a 1:1 basis?* Privacy and confidentiality are so important, and I was initially very torn about designing the teacher-led lessons for small groups. It would have been much easier to create an intervention that was single subject in design. However, I did not think that this kind of intervention was practicable. I do not have time or resources to deliver a sequence of five lessons individually to all the students on my caseload, and other educators likely face the same pressures. In fact, I am not sure that I would be able to do so for more than one or two students. Therefore, it was imperative that I find ways to respect confidentiality and allow the instruction to be delivered to small groups.

Part of the solution to this problem was to encourage educators to meet individually with students about their assessments and IEPs prior to the lessons and activities. Another solution was designing the activities so that they only dealt with very general accommodations and
students were never forced to disclose their personal accommodations. Finally, if any assessment was used for students to reflect on their IEP or accommodations, those responses were always designed to be shared only with the lesson administrator and never with the group.

Ultimately, students are self-disclosing to other group members that they have an IEP or some learning difficulties, by consenting to participation in a small group intervention. Participation in these lessons is an acknowledgement that one has an IEP. However, I feel strongly that it is very important for students with similar experiences and challenges to meet each other, and to create a support system for each other. Although this is not detailed in the lessons, it is hoped that lesson administrators can create a rapport with students and a group dynamic where students feel supported and not alone in their journey. It is also more likely that students will enjoy the interventions if working with peers and not just a teacher, especially with the role-playing.

In circumstances where families and students have concerns about privacy, they can be encouraged to access the Modules instead. Additionally, if an administrator or educator has concerns about the lessons or the discussions within them, the lessons can be modified and adapted to address those concerns. Too often, the protection of privacy dictates that educators avoid discussions about how others are impacted by learning disabilities. Stigmas develop, and students can feel isolated when they do not get to meet others who face the same challenges. It has been my experience that the most successful students in school are the ones who acknowledge their learning disability, can describe and discuss it with others, and know how to access others for support. There is value in providing this kind of intervention to groups.

A final question that was examined was *How can the site be designed so that educators can easily access the resources quickly and efficiently? How can interactivity between educators...*
and student users be fostered? Much thought was put into the site design, navigation menus, and drop-down menus. The site is clearly organized, and educators can get a quick overview of the location of all the resources in five mouse-clicks. A premium WordPress account was purchased, so that all lessons, videos, and resources can be hosted on the site. The lessons and resources can all be easily located and downloaded quickly.

Interactivity was built into the site at many points. Comments were enabled on all lesson plans so that visiting educators can interact about the lesson materials and resources. An entire section of the site, ‘Contribute and Collaborate,’ was established so that educators can interact and share resources and lesson plans on the site. In the future, this site could serve as a hub for hosting lessons, resources, and activities on self-advocacy development from educators all around the province. Some thought was given to creating an online forum or message board to discuss self-advocacy. After careful deliberation, it was assumed that educators would be more likely to comment on site materials through a comment section, and that there would probably be little appetite to register to a forum or message board solely dedicated to self-advocacy to collaborate. My advisor provided me with a very interesting idea as I was developing the site. He posed the following question, “can you design and build the student modules alongside your students?” While I did not have time to take on this task, I was intrigued by the idea of collaboratively improving the site with my students in the future. Therefore, I created a contact form in ‘Student’s Corner’ where student users could share their feedback with me about the website. I will encourage my students to provide me with their feedback on the student modules and use it to further develop this aspect of the site. I hope that other student users will also provide feedback on their experiences with using the site and suggestions for improvement.
Relationship between self-advocacy skill development and UDL

Throughout my research, the relationship between self-advocacy skill development and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) required reflection. I often wondered throughout the project if I was underestimating the role that UDL might play in resolving issues around the access to and the provision of accommodations, as well as the need for self-advocacy skill instruction in schools. Questions initially emerged when reading about the participants used in a self-advocacy intervention by Prater et al. (2014). The researchers chose to exclude a male participant from their study because his teacher was using UDL in his classroom and providing accommodations to everyone in the classroom. They felt that he “didn’t need them because his general education teacher embedded accommodations within his instruction for all students” (Prater et al., 2014, p.302). I began to question if a self-advocacy intervention was needed and that UDL might be the way forward in supporting students.

Advocating for accommodations might become somewhat unnecessary if classroom all teachers embrace UDL and all students are provided with access to technology (with assistive software and apps). For example, a student may not need to advocate for reading support on a test if all students have access to text-reading software while completing it. This was the logic for excluding the participant and not providing him with the intervention. I worried if I was going down the wrong path in this project, and that maybe there will be far less of a need in the future to access accommodations and supports if they are universally provided. Would it be as important to develop self-advocacy skills for schooling?

The realization I reached was that self-advocacy instruction was still important. It is not likely that supports will be universally provided in all levels of school, training, and employment. As I reflected on the decision to exclude this participant from the study, I wondered
if he might have missed out on an intervention that would assist him in the future. What if he had
a different teacher in the next school year who did not use UDL as much? Would he need those
self-advocacy skills then? What if the technology was unavailable? What about the kinds of
accommodations that students need which may not be addressed by UDL?

It became clear to me that this participant may have had some of his educational needs
met through UDL in the present, but that he was not developing the self-advocacy skills that he
needed for the future. His teacher was supposedly providing accommodations universally, but
there was no guarantee that his future teachers, or post-secondary institutions or employers
would. What would happen if the student went to apply for a driver’s license and needed reading
support? Would he have the skills to request support? Technology and its ubiquity might
eradicate the need for some accommodations and help many students, but there will likely
always be some needs that individuals with learning disabilities have that will require some level
of accommodation or support which cannot be universally provided. It should be noted that even
with the Ministry of Education’s move and encouragement to use UDL, its new literacy and
numeracy assessments are not universally designed, and accommodations are only provided to
some students through a special login page. It is very likely that students will encounter many
situations where they need to request accommodations and supports. The realization I reached
was that my intervention was not simply focussed on requesting accommodations; it was
centered around self-advocacy skills and accommodations requests were just one aspect of it.
The research is clear that students with learning disabilities need the extra experience provided in
the evidence-based interventions that are described on the Self-Advocacy in High School website.

It should be noted that many of the teacher-led lessons provide recommendations for
using UDL principles when delivering the material. The suggestions ensure that the participants,
with a wide range of learning disabilities, can all meaningfully participate with independence and support. All of the resources are provided in a digital format to allow for them to be delivered in a universally designed fashion. There is a place for UDL and self-advocacy skills instruction to complement each other.

**Limitations**

While the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website has many strengths, there are a number of limitations which require further discussion. Some of these limitations are linked to opportunities for further resource development or possible research.

**Other Causes of Self-Advocacy Underdevelopment**

A limitation of this project may be that I have not addressed all of the causes of the problems which I have investigated. I tackled this project with the belief that students with learning disabilities struggle in school because they do not advocate for accommodations and supports due to underdeveloped self-advocacy skills. I identified the problem as a lack of self-advocacy skills and feelings of safety and security in advocacy. However, there could be other reasons why students with learning disabilities are struggling in school and not advocating. These other reasons would justify interventions other than the ones suggested on the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

First and foremost, there might be students who do not acknowledge or recognize that they have a learning disability. This is not addressed by the website, and an educator will not encounter success in developing self-advocacy skills with an individual who does not think that they need support. Second, there might be significant environmental barriers to accessing accommodations which educators do not fully understand in their school. Perhaps schools like mine have accommodations and supports set up in ways that are not as easily accessed as
educators think. These accommodations and supports may be difficult or cumbersome to access, rely too much on others, or cause a student shame and embarrassment in accessing them. Baker & Scanlon (2016) note that students’ sense of “affect and fairness associated with accommodations indicate what practices they will tolerate” (p.105). The participants in their study voiced their concerns about not wanting to appear ‘dumb’ or ‘slow’ in front of their peers when accessing supports. Even though educators are prompted by the website activities to reflect on how students access accommodations and to identify the barriers that exist with students, self-advocacy instruction cannot substitute for the eradication of these barriers. The problem in my school and others might be more related to environmental barriers than a lack of self-advocacy skills. In this regard, the Self-Advocacy in High School website could do a better job in providing more specific ways to provide accommodations without barriers.

Third, there might be students who simply do not see the value in schooling and choose to disengage. This might appear to look like a lack of self-advocacy skills but is rooted in problems of motivation. Perhaps some students who are struggling feel that participation in school activities is defeating, irrelevant, or boring. Schools can also be perceived as tools of oppression and cultural dominance by minority groups. Canadian educators need to look no further than the history of the residential school system with Indigenous peoples to gain an understanding of this point. Students who struggle in school and may appear like they are failing to advocate may be doing so because of a distrust of the system, or a discrepancy between the values of their families and cultures with the hegemonic ones of a school system. Stelmach et al. (2017) provide recommendations on the instructional practices that teachers can use to better support Indigenous students while Preston & Claypool (2013) share key findings on the factors that motivate Indigenous students in high school. Additionally, there may be students who are
impacted by poverty or struggle with mental health challenges. These can impact one’s motivation to advocate.

**Design**

A design limitation is that the website could have emphasized a greater ecological approach to underdeveloped self-advocacy skills. Wrap-around support is often highly effective in supporting students with special education designations. While these kinds of approaches take more resources and time, an emphasis on greater coordination and training in self-advocacy instruction with an entire school community (including parents, classroom teachers, and even classmates) might lead to better gains in self-advocacy development in students with learning disabilities. Mishna et al. (2011) had success with an ecological approach to self-advocacy development but note that they are not able to determine which aspects of their ecological intervention had the most impact. The hesitation that I had in suggesting this kind of intervention was that it could take significantly more resources and time and would be less likely to be implemented. Creating buy-in amongst a team of educators can be much more difficult and require a lot of energy. The interventions on the site rely on a single educator for administration because of this.

While websites provide a great avenue for reaching a large audience and providing accessibility to content, a limitation of any website is that it can fail to be noticed in cyberspace. A site administrator needs to promote and share the content of their site so that an audience takes notice and the site garners traffic. Therefore, further planning, and effort is going to need to be put in using social media tools and networking to inform other educators in British Columbia about the site’s existence and resources.
**Motivation**

Baker & Scanlon (2016) explain that “students who are motivated are more likely to participate in an intervention as well as to appropriately use and benefit from it” (p.93). The website includes some tips for fostering motivation and convincing students of the importance of self-advocacy development. Prater et al. (2014) note that teachers need to motivate students during self-advocacy instruction and provide them with incentives to learn the skills. Prater et al. (2014) suggest demonstrating how accessing accommodations can provide students with more control over their education and improve their grades. This rationale is woven throughout the lessons and resources, but the site could have provided educators with more tips and strategies to motivate students to further develop their self-advocacy skills. For example, Prater et al. (2014) suggest sharing baseline data and discussing improvement with tracking tools. To improve this aspect of the site, it would likely require more research, and perhaps an added section on ways to motivate learners.

**Recommendations and Future Opportunities for Further Project Development**

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website provides some key contributions to the field of special education in the context of British Columbia. Recommendations are included about how to best use the resource and how educators can best support self-advocacy development in BC students based on research. Further opportunities for the development of the resource are also discussed in detail.

**Recommendations for Educators in British Columbia**

Based on the research that I have conducted for this project, I have five recommendations for educators in British Columbia. These are summarized in Table 4.2 (see below).
### Key Recommendations for Educators in British Columbia

1. All new special education teachers should receive better training in self-advocacy instruction in teacher training programs in British Columbia and practicing special education teachers would be advised to further develop their professional knowledge of self-advocacy instruction and become familiar with the resources on the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

2. All classroom teachers in British Columbia should be encouraged to take a 10 minute ‘Self-Advocacy Pro-D Challenge’ with the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website to further develop their knowledge about self-advocacy instruction.

3. All students with learning disabilities in British Columbia should have goals about developing self-advocacy skills written into their IEPs, as suggested on the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

4. All students with learning disabilities in British Columbia should receive self-advocacy training in high school, as described in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website lessons or student modules.

5. In addition to including students with learning disabilities in the IEP process, it should be considered best practice in British Columbia to provide them with an accommodations list or ‘Accommodations Student Card’ on an annual basis to assist with the development of self-advocacy skills.

6. All students with learning disabilities in British Columbia should develop a ‘digital transition portfolio’ prior to graduation, as suggested in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website.

Table 4.2. *Key Recommendations.* There are six recommendations for educators in British Columbia.

First, all new special education teachers should receive better training in self-advocacy instruction in teacher training programs in British Columbia. Given the importance of self-advocacy skill development for students with disabilities, interventions and resources for self-advocacy development should take greater prominence in special education courses. Practicing special education teachers would be advised to further develop their professional knowledge of self-advocacy instruction by becoming familiar with the resources on the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website or in other forms of published curriculum. As the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website is designed to meet the needs of BC educators and students, it is likely that this resource
will prove better than curriculum designed in other parts of the world. Educators who view the website and its resources will be better able to support self-advocacy development in their students with learning disabilities.

Second, all classroom teachers in British Columbia should be encouraged to take a 10 minute ‘Self-Advocacy Pro-D Challenge’ to further develop their knowledge about self-advocacy instruction. This challenge consists of navigating to the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website in order to watch the five minute video on *Self-Advocacy Instruction* and view the resources for classroom teachers that can be implemented to support self-advocacy instruction for all students. Educators who take this challenge will quickly learn how to define self-advocacy and structure their instruction to support self-advocacy development in their students. The resources on this site are key as educators in BC are required to support ‘Personal Awareness and Responsibility’ in their students, which includes self-determination. The Ministry provides illustrations of self-determination and advocacy in action at schools, but thus far, lacks resources for teachers on how to explicitly provide instruction in self-determination and self-advocacy and develop related activities for the classroom.

Third, all students with learning disabilities in British Columbia should have goals about developing self-advocacy skills written into their IEPs. These goals should be structured based on the self-advocacy framework of Test et al. (2005). Instruction, intervention, and assessment can and should be based on the framework. Students should be included in the development of these goals to ensure that any interventions that are used will not cause feelings of embarrassment, shame, or insult. Plans also need to be workable for students.

Fourth, all students with learning disabilities in British Columbia should receive self-advocacy training in high school, as described in the *Self-Advocacy in High School* website
lessons or student modules. These evidence-based resources will provide students with the opportunities to develop their self-advocacy skills. This should lead to improvements in achievement in their high school classes and provide them with the skills they will need in post-secondary studies and/or employment.

In addition to including students with learning disabilities in the IEP process, it should be considered best practice in British Columbia to provide them with an accommodations list or ‘Accommodations Student Card’ on an annual basis to assist with the development of self-advocacy skills. Students need continuous reminders about the accommodations they can access and support with communication. Additional documentation above and beyond an IEP may also provide them with confidence and a catalyst for practicing self-advocacy with their teachers.

Finally, all students with learning disabilities in British Columbia should have an IEP goal about developing a ‘digital transition portfolio’ and develop a ‘digital transition portfolio’ prior to graduation. At minimum, it should contain an electronic copy of a student’s most recent assessments, IEP, and a list of accessed accommodations and assistive technology. Students can use encryption software on memory sticks if there are concerns about privacy in a digital age.

**Further Opportunities for the Development of the Self-Advocacy in High School Website**

The construction of this website has not been an academic exercise. I selected the project option in my studies to build a powerful resource that I can use in my practice and continue to refine and expand. I have further plans for the website and actions that I plan to take. These plans are summarized in Table 4.3 (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Actions and Further Opportunities for Website Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Revise lessons and modules based on student feedback after implementation and possibly include students as participants in the design of the student modules.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3. Future Actions and Further Opportunities. There are six opportunities for the further development of this resource.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Include links to resources which support students in leading the development of their IEPs and running their IEP meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Develop a sample proposal for school and district administrators, which assists educators in advocating for the allocation of time and resources to self-advocacy interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Further develop resources for the newly established Career Life Exploration and Career Life Connections courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Develop a ‘Parent’s Corner’ with resources for parents to support their children with developing self-advocacy skills.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After implementing the resources for the first time, I would like to revise the lessons and modules based on student feedback and possibly include students as participants in the design of the student modules. This can be done once the student modules have been delivered. A feedback form or set of discussion questions will need to be developed and it might be particularly interesting to task students with re-designing some of the self-advocacy videos themselves—both as a form of assessment and for future discussion. The inclusion of youth voices always makes a resource more powerful and there are opportunities to perhaps make the comment more local and contextually relevant to the students at my school. I also look forward to gathering feedback from any participating Indigenous learners about the resources.

An important aspect of self-advocacy for high school students with learning disabilities is participating meaningfully in the development of their IEP. Fiedler and Danneker (2007) have highlighted the importance of student participation in IEP meetings in developing self-advocacy skills and argue that leadership skills can be developed by leading one’s own IEP meeting. If students were able to work towards leading their IEP meetings, that may be an ultimate end-goal in self-advocacy instruction and assist in the transition to post-secondary studies. Because many resources have already been created for this purpose and the focus of this project was on every
day advocacy, this aspect of self-advocacy was not fully explored. Further revision of the site might include links to existing resources, and perhaps focus on the development of some more innovative resources to support self-advocacy development. The creation of a fillable form for students to design their own IEPs might be an interesting aspect of advocacy to explore.

It might be useful for educators to have a sample proposal letter about the importance of self-advocacy, if needing to advocate to administrators for the allocation of resources and time for self-advocacy instruction or interventions. A sample document, which summarizes current research and best practices, may be helpful for teachers when meeting with school and district administrators. It can inform administration of the importance of implementing some of the interventions on the website and if already written, can save educators time.

A barrier to self-advocacy instruction for teachers has been finding time and a place for its inclusion in the curriculum. A new opportunity exists in the Graduation program with the establishment of the Career Life Exploration and Career Life Connections courses, as these include self-advocacy development in their course descriptions. These courses provide all students in British Columbia with opportunities for self-advocacy development and this website can take a lead role in developing self-advocacy lessons for use in these courses. While some activities have already been designed for these courses and are available on the website, it will be very helpful to educators in British Columbia to have more activities. As mentioned earlier, the Ministry pages have illustrations of self-determination and advocacy in action, but do not appear to have many resources for educators about how to teach these critical skills.

A parent’s section would strengthen this resource and might be something to consider adding in the future. Parents are often seeking out ways to support their children’s development, and resources on supporting their child’s self-advocacy skill development would most likely be
welcome. As noted in Chapter 2, well-intentioned parents can also cause self-advocacy underdevelopment by assisting too much and not providing opportunities to develop self-advocacy skills (Lopez, 2016). A ‘Parent’s Corner’ might be able to provide parents and guardians with knowledge about how to break this cycle, as well as provide them with strategies to teach their children to advocate in their school and community. Daly-Cano, Vaccaro and Newman (2015) argue that parents have a vital role in supporting self-advocacy development and teaching their children to be independent.

When my project went to external review, I was encouraged by my reviewer to consider self-advocacy from the lens of a student in an educational system which is increasingly using project-based learning (PBL). I was asked to consider “What do I need to be successful as a student working through a PBL process?” Students need to have well-developed self-advocacy skills to meet and overcome some of the challenges that can emerge in project-based learning. Educators can integrate self-advocacy instruction into PBL processes by teaching students how to advocate when they are struggling to develop their guiding questions or identify what needs to be learned. Self-advocacy instruction can be very helpful in supporting students to learn how to gather resources or use different mediums to demonstrate their learning. It can also be crucial for students when they encounter difficulties working collaboratively with others, or experience challenges with presenting their projects. Project-based learning is often personalized and allows for the development of individualized projects. While effective at increasing the motivation of students, there are fewer opportunities in PBL for teachers to scaffold learning and to directly lead students to established learning outcomes. There are more opportunities for students to struggle, and the use of evidence-based strategies for self-advocacy instruction such as role-play
and direct instruction can assist students in developing the strategies to advocate during the process of developing and creating projects.

Students can also be encouraged to consider the framework of Test et al. (2005) as they move through the PBL process. They can be asked to consider what strengths and weaknesses they have as they begin a project, and to consider how this informs the kinds of roles they take in a group project. They can also be prompted to reflect on how they might capitalize on their strengths, and if there are areas of weakness they need to shore up or further develop before taking on a specific task or aspect of the project. Students can be encouraged to reflect on the kinds of communication skills they will need to employ if encountering difficulties with task completion or working with other students. Scripted role-play and non-scripted role-play could be very helpful in developing communication skills. A future extension of the Self-Advocacy in High School website will be the development of a guide which shows educators how to integrate this kind of self-advocacy instruction into the PBL process.

The external reviewer also asked me to consider a question from the lens of an educator: “How can classroom teachers incorporate self-advocacy into their planning process?” While there are several suggested classroom activities on the website which model how the framework of Test et al. (2005) can be used to support self-advocacy development in classroom lessons, I began to think about how all educators can plan and structure their learning environments to foster self-advocacy development beyond specific curricular assignments or tasks. Classroom teachers could create and implement a daily or weekly ‘self-advocacy’ check-in. This check-in could use a circle process to encourage collaboration and dialogue, or a journal to encourage reflection and problem-solving. With a check-in, teachers could encourage students to reflect about whether there are any areas of their learning or life where some form of self-advocacy is
needed. Students can be encouraged to identify an area where they need assistance or are encountering challenges, and to consider what kinds of support and resources are needed. They can be prompted to develop solutions and determine the best route of advocacy. A circle or journal could assist teachers in identifying which students need assistance with classwork, the specific areas where scaffolding is needed, and provide students with practice advocating for their specific needs. Additionally, students can write about personal situations where they are experiencing difficulties and brainstorm ways they can advocate. The journal or circle can foster dialogue with a teacher or peers, who can provide feedback, suggestions, and encouragement. They could also be used to celebrate or document successful self-advocacy events. The Self-Advocacy in High School website will include suggestions on how to structure ‘self-advocacy check-ins’ in its next revision.

**Conclusion**

Researchers have identified underdeveloped self-advocacy skills as a problem for students with learning disabilities in high schools (Lopez, 2017; Baker & Scanlon, 2016; Prater et al., 2015; Test et al., 2005). High school students with learning disabilities are not requesting the accommodations and supports they are entitled to in the secondary classroom, and consequently this is impacting their learning, achievement, and experiences of success in post-secondary school or employment (Test et al., 2005; Test et al., 2009; Black, 2010; Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Garrison-Wade, 2012; Daly-Cano et al., 2015). Many researchers have successfully used interventions to further develop self-advocacy skills, and many of the lessons and activities on the website are based on these successful studies (Lopez, 2017; Prater et al, 2015, Mishna et al., 2011; Wood et al., 2010; Campbell-Whatley, 2008). The Self-Advocacy in High School website has been shaped by this research and contains many resources to support self-advocacy
development in students with learning disabilities in British Columbia. This resource has already had a significant impact on my personal practice as an educator and has implications for improving the way educators in British Columbia approach and use self-advocacy instruction with students with learning disabilities.

Implications for Personal Practice

Prior to this research project exploring the problem of self-advocacy development, I felt that I did not have the knowledge nor the skills to teach self-advocacy. However, I knew of its importance and often suggested that students on my case-load have an IEP goal on self-advocacy which was poorly written and difficult to assess. I feel that my abilities in this area have been transformed since completing this project. Already this year, I have used many of the sample IEP goals for students in my caseload. I have found that my IEPs are more robust and meaningful, and that I can connect them to meaningful action and interventions to support self-advocacy growth. A small number of my Grade 12 students, who are planning on pursuing post-secondary studies, are now working on developing Digital Transition Portfolios. I am confident that my knowledge about the transition to post-secondary studies is much improved. I have parents in meetings taking reams of notes and using some of the resources that I have printed off my site. I am particularly looking forward to launching the use of the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ in September of 2019 in my school and using more of the lessons and resources on the site.

Implications for Special Education and Teaching in British Columbia

The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website is a powerful resource for educators in British Columbia. It can impact and improve the professional knowledge of educators as it addresses a significant research-to-practice gap in self-advocacy development. The *Self-Advocacy in High School* website provides educators with valuable information on how to provide self-advocacy
instruction with evidence-based resources which can be implemented easily. The website is specifically designed to meet the needs of educators and students in British Columbia., unlike most self-advocacy resources which have been designed for American students and educators and are grounded in American laws and policies.

Research is clear that self-advocacy development is critically important for students with learning disabilities. If educators embrace the resources on this website, they will be able to make a profound difference in the lives of young people. Students will be better able to speak up for their needs and interests in all areas of their lives, and they will be much more likely to experience success in high school, post-secondary studies, and employment. The resources on the Self-Advocacy in High School website can empower students with learning disabilities to learn the importance of self-advocacy.

Maya Angelou once shared an important piece of wisdom with the Huffington Post in 2012. Angelou stated, “I have learned a long time ago the wisest thing I can do is be on my own side, be an advocate for myself and others like me” (Anderson, 2012). If students with learning disabilities can be instilled with this wisdom, they will be able to make a difference for themselves and their communities. Students with disabilities can advocate for greater inclusion and better supports in their education, careers, and community. Rick Hansen, Canadian Paralympian, activist, and founder of the Rick Hansen Foundation argues that everyone has a role in building a more inclusive and accessible country. He has stated that “We need every citizen to believe that they are champions and difference makers, with a responsibility to play small or large roles in making Canada and the world a better place” (Fox, n.d.). Students who develop strong self-advocacy skills will be well prepared to make these kinds of contributions and actively contribute as engaged citizens.
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Key Terms

**Accommodations**: “Changes in the format, response mode, setting, or scheduling that will enable a student with one or more disabilities to complete the general curriculum” (Overton, 2012, p.151). The British Columbia Ministry of Education defines accommodations as occurring when teachers differentiate instruction, assessment, and materials in order to create a flexible learning environment (BC Ministry of Education, 2009). Some common accommodations include, but are not limited to:

- Audio tapes or electronic texts,
- Access to a computer for written assignments
- Alternatives to written assignments to demonstrate knowledge and understanding
- Extended time to complete assignments or tests
- Use of computer software which provides text to speech/speech to text capabilities
- Access to notes

**Individual Education Plan (IEP)**: An IEP is a document that describes an educational program that has been developed for a student with an identified special education need. It includes goals for the student, details of the educational program which have been adapted or modified, and the support services or strategies required to implement the program. (BC Ministry of Education, 2009)


Learning disabilities refers to a number of disorders that may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average
abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual disabilities. Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing, phonological processing, visual spatial processing, processing speed, memory and attention, and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision making). Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- Oral language (e.g., listening, speaking, understanding)
- Reading (e.g., decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension)
- Written language (e.g., spelling and written expression)
- Mathematics (e.g., computation, problem solving) (p.47)

**Self-Advocacy:** The skills that an individual possesses “to speak up and ask for what you need” (Prater et al., 2014, p.299). Self-advocacy is a critical skill to develop in schools to assist with academic success and transition from high school to adulthood.
Appendix A

Screen Captures of the *Self-Advocacy in High School Website*

Welcome Educators and Students!

Welcome to Self-Advocacy in High School - a site designed to support educators with self-advocacy instruction and students with self-advocacy development. We believe that the ability to self-advocate is key to experiencing success in school and life. Norman Kunc, a prominent speaker on disability rights and inclusion, has spent countless hours receiving supports for his disability and learning many compensatory strategies. Upon reflecting on the most important skill he ever learned, he stated:

> “THE MOST IMPORTANT SKILL I EVER HAD WAS TO INITIATE THE SUPPORT I NEEDED.”

NORMAN KUNC
STORYTELLER & DISABILITY RIGHTS ADVOCATE

Are you an educator looking for resources on how to support the development of self-advocacy skills in high school aged students who have learning disabilities? Here, you can find special education interventions, lesson plans, classroom activities, and learning modules for independent study. Ensure you learn more about our ‘Assessments Student Card’ and ‘Digital Transition Portfolios’. Many of the resources are designed to meet the needs of educators in British Columbia, Canada. However, they can be adapted to meet the needs of learners in other areas of the world.

**Educators: Get Started Here**

Are you a student looking to take greater control over your education and life? This site is designed to help students find their voice and speak up for what they need. School can be difficult at times, but there are many strategies that you can use to succeed. This site can provide you with some of those strategies. If your teacher has directed you here, or if you are curious to learn more about self-advocacy, we have some resources to help you take greater control over your schooling and life.

**Students: Get Started Here**

This site is proudly built to meet the needs of educators and students in British Columbia, Canada.
Welcome Educators and Students!

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Students: Get Started Here

This site is proudly built to meet the needs of educators and students in British Columbia, Canada.
Welcome To Educator’s Corner

Welcome to Self-Advocacy in High School: a resource for supporting the development of self-advocacy skills in high school aged students who have learning disabilities. This website provides resources for educators and students about developing self-advocacy skills. The following pages explain some of the features of this site.

There are many resources to support educators with self-advocacy instruction for students with learning disabilities.

1. Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction: Read this section first to get a sense of why self-advocacy skills are so important for students with disabilities.

2. Getting Started: Learn more about how to define self-advocacy and how to approach instruction in self-advocacy skills.

3. Self-Advocacy Lessons: Check out the six research-based lessons which can be used to support students with learning disabilities to further develop their self-advocacy skills. Please ensure you have read the Lesson Administration Guide prior to administering any lessons.

4. IEP Goals for Self-Advocacy Development: Please feel welcome to use these sample IEP Goals on this site when developing IEP plans. They are linked to activities and assessment on this site.

5. Digital Transition Portfolios: Preparing for Life after High School: In preparing for life after graduation, students should consider developing a digital transition portfolio early. Check out this lesson to learn more about how DTPs can be used to develop advocacy skills and prepare for post-secondary education and employment.

6. Accommodations: Student-Centered Communication System for Advocacy: This site provides educators and students with a downloadable and customizable student card that can be used to develop advocacy skills and a communication system in your school. Make sure you explore this communication tool.

7. Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development: While the self-advocacy lessons are designed to be administered to individuals or small groups, there are many classroom activities that teachers can use to complement these interventions and develop self-advocacy skills in all students. Classroom teachers should use these kinds of activities.

8. Self-Advocacy Learning Modules: For busy teachers, this site provides multimedia-based modules for students to work through independently in order to develop their self-advocacy skills.

9. References and Resources: Please read through the research which has inspired and informed the resources on this site. A number of important resources are also highlighted.

Continue to Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction
Welcome To Educator’s Corner

Welcome to Self-Advocacy in High School- a resource for supporting the development of self-advocacy skills in high school aged students who have learning disabilities. This website provides resources for educators and students about developing self-advocacy skills. The following video explains some of the features of this site:

There are many resources to support educators with self-advocacy instruction for students with learning disabilities.
1. **Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction**: Read this section first to get a sense of why self-advocacy skills are so important for students with disabilities.

2. **Getting Started**: Learn more about how to define self-advocacy and how to approach instruction in self-advocacy skills.

3. **Self-Advocacy Lessons**: Check out the six research-based lessons which can be used to support students with learning disabilities to further develop their self-advocacy skills. Please ensure you have read the Lesson Administration Guide prior to administering any lessons.

4. **IEP Goals for Self-Advocacy Development**: Please feel welcome to use these sample IEP Goals on this site when developing IEP plans. They are linked to activities and assessment on this site.

5. **Digital Transition Portfolios: Preparing for Life after High School**: In preparing for life after graduation, students should consider developing a Digital Transition Portfolio (DTP). Check out this lesson to learn more about how DTPs can be used to develop advocacy skills and prepare for post-secondary education and employment.

6. **Accommodations Student Card: A Communication System for Advocacy**: This site provides educators and students with a downloadable and customizable ‘student card’ that can be used to develop advocacy skills and a communication system in your school. Make sure you explore this communication tool.

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9. **References and Resources**: Please read through the research which has inspired and informed the resources on this site. A number of important resources are also highlighted.

Continue to **Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction**
Rationale for Self-Advocacy Instruction

Rationale: As an educator, you have probably worked with many students with learning disabilities. Too often, these students go through the paces of school life and fail to advocate for the accommodations and supports they need. They are overly reliant on teachers to provide their supports and in their parents to advocate for them. In the busy world of high school, students often tackle their assignments without accommodations and consequently underachieve.

It is imperative that all adolescents develop self-advocacy skills, but especially for those who have learning disabilities.

Consider the following:

Self-Advocacy skills are linked to improved outcomes.
Roberts, J. and Zhang (2016) find that many studies link self-advocacy skills with high school completion rates, as well as with achieving successful outcomes later in life.

Students with learning disabilities will need strong self-advocacy skills to succeed in post-secondary studies.
Students with learning disabilities need to know their rights as students in a post-secondary institution, be able to disclose their learning disability, and advocate for accommodations from their instructors (Garrison-Wade, 2012).

Students with learning disabilities need to be able to advocate in their workplace.
Black (2010) argues that students need to develop self-advocacy strategies before they transition out of school into the workplace. Employees must be able to self-advocate and can best do so by explaining the specifics of their learning disability and the accommodations which will assist them in the workplace.

Did you know? Many students are not entering post-secondary studies with the self-advocacy skills to seek and access accommodations (Garrison-Wade, 2012). In a study of 110 students with learning disabilities, Cowton & Cole (2010) found that only 42% of participants contacted their Office of Students with Disabilities. Only 31% of students met with school officials in order to receive accommodations. In regards to communicating learning needs with their instructors, only 25% of the students provided their instructors with accommodation letters.

Watch the Getting Started Video

[Link to video]
Getting Started Video

Do you feel like your students lack self-advocacy skills? Have you always wanted to learn more about teaching self-advocacy habits? This document can support you with information, videos, and resources, and it can be used as an introduction to self-advocacy instruction.

A Framework for Self-Advocacy (Developing)

Here are some different definitions of self-advocacy. Mark Knoll (2005) defines self-advocacy as a process that requires the development of traditional social skills and strategies. In their framework, Knoll et al. (2005) define self-advocacy as a process of developing your courage to let others know what is important to you.

This framework is based on research and practice conducted by educators in the field of special education. It is designed to support the development of self-advocacy skills in students. The framework identifies several key components that are essential for developing effective self-advocacy skills.

These components include:

1. Knowledge of Self
2. Knowledge of Rights
3. Communication Skills
4. Leadership

Self-Advocacy is Speaking Up for What You Need and Taking Control of Your Life.

The Four Components of Self-Advocacy

Knowledge of Self

Individuals must know themselves and participate in all aspects of their lives.

Knowledge of Rights

Individuals must know their rights and how these rights can be exercised.

Communication Skills

Individuals must be able to communicate their needs and wants effectively.

Leadership

Individuals must be able to take action to improve their rights and quality of life.

Learn more about self-advocacy lessons.
Getting Started Video

Do you feel like your students lack self-advocacy skills? Have you always wanted to learn more about teaching self-advocacy skills? This site can support you with information, lesson plans, and resources. Get started by watching this video on self-advocacy instruction:

A Framework for Self-Advocacy Development:

There are many different definitions for self-advocacy. Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb (2014) argue that self-advocacy is the ability “to speak up and ask for what you need” (p.99). Many of the lessons on this website include this definition for students.

This website uses a more expansive definition for educators in order to support their instruction and interventions with students. Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer and Eddy (2005) reviewed the literature until 2003 and developed a conceptual framework to support the development of instructional strategies and research in self-advocacy development. In their framework, Test et al. (2005) define self-advocacy as a construct of four components: knowledge of self, knowledge of rights, communication, and leadership.

Test et al. (2005) argue that for individuals to learn to self-advocate, they must develop and improve their ‘knowledge of self’ and be more aware of their strengths, weaknesses, and needs. Individuals must know themselves before they can tell others what they need. They further found that individuals also must gain a ‘knowledge of rights’ and explicitly learn about the rights they are entitled to in their community, workplace, and/or educational setting in regards to their learning disability before they can advocate effectively. Individuals must also further their ‘communication’ skills to be able to request accommodations and supports. They must be able to effectively communicate their knowledge of self and rights, and this may include the use of negotiation, assertiveness, and problem solving (Test et al., 2005). The last component for self-advocacy, ‘leadership’, is the skill that enables individuals to advocate for both self and others. It is not required to advocate for oneself but is often a natural progression in the development of self-advocacy skills in many people.

These four constructs serve as the framework for many of the lessons, resources, and interventions on this website which can support self-advocacy development. They also are used to frame some of the sample measurable self-advocacy goals which can be integrated in a student’s Individual Education Plan (IEP).
Self-advocacy is speaking up for what you need and taking control of your life.

The Four Components of Self-Advocacy

Knowledge of Self
Individuals must know themselves and be able to tell others what they need.

Knowledge of Rights
Individuals must know their rights in their communities and workplaces so they can better advocate.

Communication Skills
Individuals must be able to effectively communicate their needs. They may have to use assertiveness and problem solving.

Leadership
Individuals can speak up for themselves and others by identifying barriers and taking action to remove them.

Learn about our Self-Advocacy Lessons
Self-Advocacy Lessons

Our students need self-advocacy skills to succeed in all areas of their lives.

Lesson Design and Audience: This resource provides lesson plans to support the development of self-advocacy skills in high school students with learning disabilities. Many of the activities in these lesson plans are research-based and specifically designed to support students in British Columbia, Canada. They can be adapted to meet the needs of teachers and students in other areas around the world.

These lessons are arranged sequentially and include suggestions for using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Additionally, each lesson includes two strategies for incorporating indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

An Important Note on the Inclusion of Strategies for Supporting Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning: Many Canadian educators are now recognizing the need to remove bias from their work and to have Inuit Ways of Knowing and perspectives in their curricula. This includes using strategies that better support indigenous learners. While attempts have been made in these lessons to include two culturally relevant instructional strategies, more research and collaboration is needed with indigenous peoples or further develop best practices in self-advocacy instruction and education.

In every lesson, the following strategies are suggested:

Acknowledging Territory: educators can acknowledge that learning is taking place on the territory of local First Nations. An example of territory acknowledgement can be found on the School District 41 website called Our Territory.

Circle Practice: circles are commonly used in many indigenous cultures and can be used to facilitate dialogue and support belonging. Additionally, circles and other participatory practices have been used successfully in schools to develop social skills, improve cohesion, and support social emotional learning. The use of circles can assist Indigenous learners improve their sense of belonging and build connections among all participants. More information on the educational use of circles in education can be found here.

It should be noted that some of the practices have been constructed by schools and social indigenous groups. For example, School District 41 teachers have partnered with Well Ahead and are constructing a "Identity Circles" with indigenous partners, educators, and teachers. Further information on this initiative can be found on the Well Ahead site. Learning Alberta has developed a resource called "Talking Together" which aims to engage first nations, locals, and small perspectives in curricula. It includes a resource called Talking Circles.

How do I begin? Please visit the Lesson Administration Guide (Read First) to access the lessons. Most of the lessons can also be supplemented with interactive videos which can be found in the Self-Advocacy Learning Modules.

Want to share your comments and thoughts on the lessons? Each lesson has a comment section enabled for educators to comment and share ideas. Please feel welcome to comment with the site, comment on the lessons, and share your experiences with using the materials.
Self-Advocacy Lessons

Our students need self-advocacy skills to succeed in all areas of their lives!

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These lessons are arranged sequentially and include suggestions for using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Additionally, each lesson includes two strategies for incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing and learning.

An Important Note on the Inclusion of Strategies for Supporting Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Learning: Many Canadian educators are endeavoring to be more inclusive of First Peoples' knowledge and perspectives in their curriculum. This includes using strategies that better support Indigenous learners. While attempts have been made in these lessons to include two culturally-relevant instructional strategies, more research and collaboration is needed with Indigenous peoples to further develop best practices in self-advocacy instruction and education.
In every lesson, the following strategies are suggested:

**Acknowledging Territory:** Educators can acknowledge that learning is taking place on the territory of a local first nation(s). An example of territory acknowledgement can be found on the School District #48 website called Our Territories. This acknowledgement can be done in a circle process.

**Circle Process:** Circles are commonly used in many Indigenous cultures and can be used to facilitate dialogue and support belonging. Additionally, circles and other proactive restorative practices have been used successfully in schools to develop social skills, improve connection, and support social-emotional learning. The use of circles can assist Indigenous learners improve their sense of belonging and build connections among all participants. More information on the educational use of circles in education can be found here.

It should be noted that some circle processes have been co-constructed by schools and local Indigenous groups. For example, School District #48 teachers have partnered with Well-Ahead and co-constructed a “circle process” with Indigenous partners, knowledge keepers, and teachers. Further information on this initiative can be found on the Well-Ahead site. Learn Alberta has developed a resource called ‘Talking Together,’ which aims to integrate First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives in curriculum. It includes a resource called Talking Circles.

**How do I Begin?** Please visit the Lesson Administration Guide (Read First) to access the lessons. Many of the lessons can also be supplemented with multimedia videos which can be found in the Self-Advocacy: Learning Modules.

**Want to share your comments and thoughts on the lessons?** Each lesson has a comment section enabled for educators to comment and share ideas. Please feel welcome to register with the site, comment on the lessons, and share your experiences with using the materials.
Lesson Administration: The website provides lesson plans to support the development of self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities. Many of the ideas in these lesson plans are research based and specifically designed to support students in British Columbia, Canada.

Lesson Planning: These lessons are designed to be administered as a special education intervention for individuals or small groups of learners with learning disabilities. They are not designed for use in the general classroom with all learners. A special education intervention in self-advocacy instruction is justified for the following reasons:

1. Many of the interventions for self-advocacy instruction that have been successful are not necessarily easily implemented in the classroom. Johnson et al. (2006) reviewed empirical studies on self-advocacy from 1983 to 2012 and found that students with disabilities have experienced gains when mobility, self-awareness, self-advocacy, and peer participation were taught in small group meetings, and through class instruction and role play.

2. Students with learning disabilities require additional support to develop self-advocacy skills. They are unable to learn these skills directly and often in other situations beyond direct instruction and demonstrations.

3. Students need to develop a greater understanding of their learning profile. They need opportunities to discuss the results of cognitive assessments and the effects of learning disabilities in their daily lives. Students need to develop a sense of empowerment and the ability to communicate their needs and rights.

4. Students also require opportunities to learn about their rights in order to develop their self-advocacy skills. Students need to develop an understanding of their rights, such as the right to privacy and the need to respect others.

5. Research suggests that students need to receive enough time and practice in developing self-advocacy skills to be effective. Students often do not have access to enough opportunities to practice these skills in their daily lives. The need to focus on other aspects of instruction and assessment, such as literacy and numeracy, can limit the time available for developing these skills.

Therefore, individuals with learning disabilities cannot rely on a single curriculum or program to meet their learning needs and will benefit from a special education intervention. However, classroom teachers can complement this intervention with classroom activities that support self-advocacy skills for all learners. The website includes some classroom activities which can be used to teach self-advocacy with IEP principles.

Lesson Administration: Educators will need to choose whether to administer these lessons individually or in small groups. It is the educator’s responsibility to ensure that participating students and their parents/guardians provide consent for participation and that there is a balance of disclosure on the consent form. It might be beneficial to share these activities with other educators, particularly those who are interested in promoting self-advocacy and respect individual confidentiality. This is the responsibility of the classroom teacher.

Advantages of Individualized Administration: An advantage to administering the lessons individually is that the lessons may be administered more quickly and may require less time. It is much easier to maintain confidentiality and privacy, and it helps teachers identify information from IEPs and assessments.

Advantages of Small-Group Administration: An advantage to administering the lessons to small groups of students is that educators can reach more students and can accommodate additional needs. Additionally, small groups provide opportunities for educators to develop a supportive and inclusive learning environment. It is more likely that each student will have an opportunity to participate and contribute to the discussion. However, this may require more planning and preparation.

Continued Lesson: Developing Knowledge of Self

Next Lesson:

Back to contents
Lesson Administration Guide (Read First)

Lesson Audience: This website provides lesson plans to support the development of self-advocacy skills in students with learning disabilities. Many of the activities in these lesson plans are research based and specifically designed to support students in British Columbia, Canada.

Lesson Design: These lessons are designed to be administered as a special education intervention for individuals or small groups of learners with learning disabilities. They are not designed for use in the general classroom with all learners. A special education intervention in self-advocacy instruction is justified for the following reasons:

1. Many of the interventions for self-advocacy instruction that have proven to be successful are not necessarily easily integrated in the classroom. Roberts et al. (2014) reviewed empirical studies on self-advocacy from 2004-2012 and noted that students with disabilities have experienced gains when explicitly taught self-advocacy skills while participating in IEP meetings, and through direct instruction and role play.
2. Students with learning disabilities require additional explicit support to develop self-advocacy skills. Their peers are able to learn these skills quickly and often in other situations aside from direct instruction and interventions.
3. Students need to develop a greater understanding of their learning profile (Test et al., 2005). These students need opportunities to discuss the results of confidential assessments and the way learning disabilities can impact an individual. Students need a individualized and/or supportive small group interventions in order to respect their privacy and generate a richer understanding of self.
4. Students also require opportunities to learn about their rights in order to develop their self-advocacy skills (Test et al., 2005). Students need to develop their knowledge of laws and policies surrounding disability rights. This cannot easily be done in the general classroom, as it is not relevant to most learners.
5. Research suggests that students will not receive enough time developing self-advocacy skills in the general classroom. Teachers often do not provide enough opportunities due to demands on their time and feeling the need to focus on other topics or concerns (Cho, Wehmeyer, and Kinston, 2011). It is unlikely that a significant curriculum on self-advocacy skill instruction will be robustly integrated into the departmental structures of high school.
Therefore, individuals with learning disabilities cannot rely on a one-size fits all curricular approach to meet their learning needs and will benefit from a special education intervention. However, classroom educators can complement this intervention with classroom activities on self-advocacy skills for all learners. This website includes some classroom activities which can be used to teach self-advocacy skills with UDL principles.

**Lesson Administration:** Educators will need to choose whether to administer these lessons individually or in small groups. It is the educator’s responsibility to ensure that participating students and their parents/guardians provide consent for participation and that there is a detailed description of the lesson content and information that will be shared among participants. If working with groups of students, careful consideration will be needed to protect privacy and respect individual confidentiality. *It is the lesson administrator’s responsibility to ensure that the lesson plan delivery conforms to school district policies and provincial/state/federal laws.*

**Advantages of Individualized Administration:** An advantage to administering the lessons individually is that the lessons may be administered more quickly as they can be personalized. It is much easier to maintain confidentiality and privacy, and to integrate information from IEPs and assessments.

**Advantages of Small Group Administration:** An advantage to administering the lessons to small groups of students is that an educator can reach more students and can save time. Additionally, many researchers in self-advocacy instruction have successfully used small groups for interventions with students in high school (Lopez, 2017; Prater, Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Campbell-Whately, 2008). Mishna, Muska, Farnia & Wiener (2011) successfully used a group approach to develop self-advocacy skills with Canadian students. Mishna et al. (2011) argue that group treatment offers a peer group for youth, fosters social competence, and increases social skills and self-esteem. Working with other youths may reduce the stigma of a learning disability, but educators will have to navigate aspects of confidentiality and privacy while doing so. *Best practice would suggest that educators consult with school administrators to determine if individual or group administration works best for your school and school district.*

Continue to **Lesson 1: Developing Knowledge of Self**
Lesson 1: Developing Knowledge of Self

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. This initial lesson will introduce the concept of self-advocacy and focus on assisting students with learning disabilities to further develop their understanding of their strengths and needs. Without this knowledge of self, students cannot be successful self-advocates.

In this lesson, students will explore their strengths and weaknesses. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills (Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Phillips, 1990; Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014).

Lesson Materials:

1.0. Understanding Self-Advocacy and Developing Knowledge of Self

1.1. Successful People with Learning Disabilities

1.2. Developing Knowledge of Self

Continue to Lesson 2: Understanding Accommodations
Lesson 2: Understanding Accommodations

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. This second lesson will have students further understand what accommodations they can or should access based on what they have learned about their personal strengths and weaknesses. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills (Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Hart & Behm, 2013; Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014).

Lesson Materials:

2.0. Understanding Accommodations and Developing Knowledge of Self

2.1. Common Accommodations

2.2. Recognizing Accommodations

2.3. Accommodations Reflection Sheet

Continue to Lesson 3: Developing Knowledge of Rights
Lesson 3: Developing Knowledge of Rights

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. This third lesson introduces students to the rights they are entitled to as a student with a learning disability in British Columbia. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills, but much of the research has been based in the United States and consequently focuses on American law and policy (Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014 and Phillips, 1990). This lesson will focus on the rights of students in British Columbia, Canada. Students will read Know Your Rights.

Lesson Materials:

3.0_Developing Knowledge of Rights

3.1_Know Your Rights Assignment

Continue to Lesson 4: Developing Communication Skills
Lesson 4: Developing Communication Skills

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Text, 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. This lesson focuses on developing the communication skills to request accommodations and supports. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills and have incorporated role play as a means of improving communication skills (Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Campbell-Whalley, 2008; Hart & Brehm, 2013; Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014). This lesson builds on the work of Prater et al. (2014), who used acronyms to teach students to request accommodations. It also adds a problem-solving and conflict resolution focus when requesting accommodations. Lopez (2017) and Holzberg (2017), using the SACR tool (Self-Advocacy and Conflict Resolution), have demonstrated that conflict resolution skills can support students with improving their self-advocacy skills.

Lesson Materials:

4.0. Developing Communication Skills

4.1. I-ASK Cue Cards

4.2. Accommodations Role-Playing Cards

Continue to Lesson 5: Motivation and Security

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Search for:
Lesson 5: Motivation and Security

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer & Eidy (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. Center for (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.

Lesson Materials:

5.6. Developing Communications Skills in the Context of Motivation and Security

5.1. Requesting Accommodations from Teachers

Accommodations Student Card: A Communication System for Advocacy

Continue to Lesson 6: Developing Leadership Skills
Lesson 6: Developing Leadership Skills

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

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

Lesson Materials:

6.0. Developing Leadership Skills

6.1. THANK Cue Card

6.2. Advocacy for Universal Supports

6.3. Accessibility Project

Continue to Digital Transition Portfolios- Preparing for Life after High School or learn more about IEP Goals for Self-Advocacy Development.
IEP Goals for Self-Advocacy Development

Test et al. (2005) argues that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) should include self-advocacy goals. This website has two resources that can support teachers with the development and measurement of IEP goals.

1) Sample IEP Goals: This document contains sample IEP goals which can be used in planning meetings and IEPs. They relate directly to activities and lessons on this website.

2) Pre-Test and Post-Test: This resource can be used to measure the progress that your students make in developing self-advocacy skills.

Continue to Digital Transition Portfolios - Preparing for Life after High School
Digital Transition Portfolios - Preparing for Life after High School

Black (2010) argues that the development of a digital portfolio can assist with the development of self-advocacy skills in high school students with learning disabilities and to support students in their transition from secondary school to post-secondary studies and employment. Black (2010) further argues that the portfolio can be a tool to assist young adults in explaining their learning disabilities and the supports that they require to future educators and employers. A number of the portfolio ideas offered by Black (2010) will be adapted in a series of activities to meet the needs of high school students in British Columbia and the current technological landscape. A lesson and video are offered here to support educators with teaching students how to develop a Digital Transition Portfolio.

Lesson Materials:

7.0. Digital Transition Portfolios _ Preparation for Life After High School

7.1. Common Services Offered at PSIs

7.2. Digital Transition Portfolio Checklist

7.3. Timeline for Application to PSIs and Employment Services

Learn about the Accommodations Student Card: A Communication System for Advocacy
Accommodations: Student Civic Participation and Communication System for Advocacy

| Activities          | Example
|---------------------|-------------------
| Civic Engagement    | Read, Write, Speak
| Service Learning    | Help, Teach
| Volunteerism        | Donate, Serve
| Leadership          | Lead, Speak
| Collaboration       | Work, Plan
| Advocacy            | Speak, Write
| Public Speaking     | Present, Lead
| Media Advocacy      | Write, Publish

The importance of civic participation cannot be overstated in today's world. By engaging in these activities, students can develop crucial skills and make a positive impact on their communities. Civic engagement involves more than just voting; it includes a wide range of activities that can benefit both individuals and society as a whole.

Incorporating civic participation into the classroom can be a powerful tool for educators. By integrating these activities into lesson plans, teachers can inspire students to become active citizens. For instance, a service learning project can be organized where students volunteer at local charities or senior centers. This not only helps the community but also teaches students the value of giving back.

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Accommodations Student Card: A Communication System for Advocacy

Are your students unaware of the accommodations they should be accessing? Do they struggle with advocating for the accommodations listed in their IEP? If so, the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ could be an effective intervention (see above).

What is an ‘Accommodations Student Card’? An Accommodations Student Card is a communication tool that can support the development of self-advocacy skills. It is simply a student card which details key accommodations that are listed in an IEP. Some of these accommodations include having extra time for tests or access to a scribe. See the above image to get a sense of the accommodations that can be listed.

How do students use the card? Students with IEPs are given a copy of their personalized Accommodations Student Card by a teacher. They are encouraged to use it to communicate with their teachers about their IEP and to advocate for the accommodations they need. The use of an Accommodations Student Card can provide many benefits in the development of self-advocacy skills:

1. It can make students more aware of the accommodations they have a right to be using in the classroom. Often, students are unaware of the accommodations that are written into their IEPs or forget to use them. Additionally, many students do not even have easy access to copies of their IEP. The provision of a card can ensure that students are more knowledgeable about their rights, and this is key to developing advocacy skills.

2. The card can serve as a visual support for students who have communication difficulties. For students who may struggle with oral language, this card can be a valuable tool for supporting their requests and advocating for their needs.

3. The card can provide students with confidence and security when needing to advocate. Some students may be apprehensive or fearful of asking for supports. The card can serve as a form of official school documentation, which can provide a sense of safety and ‘rights’ when needing to make requests of teachers.
Instructions for Students:

1. Students are encouraged to carry the card on them at all times, or take a photograph of it on their mobile device.
2. Students are encouraged to connect with their teachers at the beginning of every year or semester and show them the ‘accommodations student card’ in order to ensure their teachers are aware of their IEP and accommodations.
3. Students are encouraged to use the card to advocate for accommodations as needed with classroom activities, projects, tests, and assignments.

Additional Benefits of Using the ‘Accommodations Student Card’

1. Teachers are very busy and may forget to implement supports. The card allows students to easily communicate their needs and remind teachers of the supports that are needed.
2. The use of the card provides training for post-secondary studies, as many institutions provide students with a letter to communicate accommodations requests to instructors. The use of this card will provide practice of a skill that is needed in a post-secondary institution.
3. By using the card regularly, students will further develop their self-advocacy skills, when connecting with teachers.

How to Set up the Accommodations Card?

[Image showing the Accommodations Card template]

Getting Started: Download the free template of the Accommodations Student Card and save it to your preferred location. It is simple to use.

1. Open the document and enter the appropriate demographic information. If you are unsure what to type in a field, hover over it with your mouse and a label will pop up indicating what information to enter. You can even upload an image of your school logo in the upper left corner.
2. In order to add an accommodation to the card, simply click on the arrow beside each blue field. A drop down menu will open and you can select an accommodation. You may wish to make reference to IEPs or assessments when selecting the accommodations.
3. All of the fields can be customized. If there is an accommodation or support that you would like to add that is not on the list, simply click on the field and begin typing. You are able to add information to the card.
4. When the card is completed, save the card to your preferred location.
5. Print out the card and use the guidelines to cut it. You may wish to laminate it or provide students with a digital copy.
Integrating the ‘Accommodations Student Card’ into a School Wide Communication System:

IEPs are often developed by special education teachers (in consultation with families) and shared with classroom teachers. This document often becomes the sole means of communication about accommodations. Research suggests that schools can benefit from further systems of communication regarding accommodations and supports. The Accommodations Student Card can be a key tool in developing a school-wide system for establishing supports. It can foster more communication between teachers and students and highlight how the provision of supports is a shared responsibility. The use of the card can foster self-advocacy development and serve as a simple backbone of a school-wide communication system about supports. Educators may need some support with the implementation of a system.

How can educators be supported in using the ‘Accommodations Student Card’?

1. Continue to provide regular in-service about the importance of universal design for learning, differentiation, and the provision of accommodations.

2. Ensure that educators have the resources and technology to implement the accommodations in the card.

3. Provide educators with information about the importance of self-advocacy skills and how the card can be used to support self-advocacy. If educators have a solid rationale for the implementation of a new system, they will be more likely to support it.

4. Encourage all educators to include information on the card and provision of accommodations in their course outlines. If all teachers encourage their students to connect with them with the card, it will normalize the support and provide students with a further sense of security in using it.

Are there other communication tools for self-advocacy development?

LD@School Self-Advocacy Pamphlets: Another tool that can be adopted is the self-advocacy pamphlet. Watch the video below for more information:

Learn more about Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development
Self-Advocacy in High School
Lessons and Resources for Supporting Students with Learning Disabilities in British Columbia

Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development

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.

Lesson Materials:

8.0. Classroom Activities for Self-Advocacy Development
How do I get started?

The person standing with arms crossed illustrates self-advocacy.

Some students struggle with learning challenges. If you're one of them, there are steps you can take to make the most of your education. Start by identifying your learning needs. Ask your teachers and school counselors for help. You can also talk to other students who have similar challenges.

Watch the video below to learn more about how to make the most out of your education. It includes tips and strategies for success.

Shedding light on the importance of self-advocacy in the classroom.

To get started with self-advocacy, you can:

1. Identify your learning needs.
2. Seek help from teachers and counselors.
3. Talk to other students with similar challenges.
4. Use online resources and support groups.
5. Practice good communication skills.

Remember, self-advocacy is a skill that can be learned. It takes time and effort, but the benefits are worth it.

Learn more about self-advocacy in the classroom and beyond.

For more information, visit our website or contact your school counselor.
How do I get started?

Are you a student who experiences difficulties at times with learning?

When anyone struggles with learning, it can be frustrating. For some teens, it can feel like they don’t have any control over what they learn or how they learn at school. By working through the learning modules in this site, it is hoped that you will develop some strategies to take control over your learning. We often refer to some of these strategies as self-advocacy. What is self-advocacy? Maybe it’s a mindset or “a choice to take control over your life.”

Watch the video below to learn more about someone who felt like things were out of control, and how she found ways to gain it back.

How do we define self-advocacy for teens?

Self-advocacy is the ability to speak up and ask for what you need. Self-advocacy is very important as it can help you to take control over your life.
To get a sense of why self-advocacy is so important, watch the next video:

Overview of the Learning Modules:

On this website, you can work through three learning modules to assist you in speaking up for yourself. They are designed for students who have struggled with learning and want to perform better in school. All of the modules will help you develop the self-advocacy skills to take more control over your school and life.

Module 1: Learning About Yourself: To be a good self-advocate, you need to have a good understanding of your strengths and needs. Explore the activities in this section to learn more about yourself. You must know what you need and what supports exist before you can ask for it.

Module 2: Know Your Rights: To be a successful self-advocate, you must know what your rights are as a student. Explore the activities in this section to learn more about your rights as a student and the supports you can access to best perform in school. You must know what you are entitled to before you can ask for supports.

Module 3: Communication: To be an effective self-advocate, you need to have confidence and communication skills. Explore the activities in this section to develop your communication skills and learn some strategies for expressing yourself. You must communicate clearly in order to get the supports you need.

The NDC has provided a great graphic below to help you understand the concept of self-advocacy. Check it out:

Explore the Self-Advocacy Learning Modules
Self-Advocacy: Learning Modules

“Empowerment is when you have gained the confidence in yourself to have the light bulb go on in your head. You realize you can take control of your life and you understand that now you have done it.” - Nancy Ward (2012)

There are three modules to work through independently. However there, will be times when the activities will ask you to meet with teachers, friends, and family members.

Module 1: Learning About Yourself: To be a good self-advocate, you need to have a good understanding of your strengths and needs. Explore the activities in this section to learn more about yourself. You must know what you need and supports exist before you can ask for it.

Module 2: Know Your Rights: To be a successful self-advocate, you must know what your rights are as a student. Explore the activities in this section to learn more about your rights as a student and the supports you can access to best perform in school. You must know what you are entitled to before you can ask for supports.

Module 3: Communication: To be an effective self-advocate, you need to have confidence and communication skills. Explore the activities in this section to develop your communication skills and learn some strategies for expressing yourself. You must communicate clearly in order to get the supports you need.
Module 1: Learning About Yourself

“You are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.” —Christopher Robin

“Think about your hero. Do you think of this person as someone with extraordinary abilities who achieved with little effort? How do they find out the truth? Find out the tremendous effort that went into their accomplishments—and admire them more.” —Conrad S. Daven

Module 1: Reflect on the quotes above and consider how they might relate to the concept of self-advocacy: the ability to speak up and ask for what you need. Self-advocacy is important because it helps you take charge of your life and be more independent. The goal of the activities in this module is to learn more about your strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. When you know yourself well, you can advocate for what you need.

Continue to Task 1.1
Task 1.1

Your Disability Doesn’t Define You or What You Can Become

It can be easy to feel discouraged when you are young and struggling with learning or a learning disability. However, everyone has strengths that they can build on. There are so many successful people who have found strategies to compensate for their learning difficulties and disabilities, and have experienced all kinds of success in the world outside of school. You can too!

Watch this video to learn more about some famous people who have struggled with learning and overcome these difficulties:

Task #1: Complete the activity 1.1, Successful People with Learning Disabilities. When you have completed the activity, share what you have learned with your teacher or a parent.

Continue on to Task 1.2
Task 1.2

Watch the next video to learn more about what a learning disability is and why you need to understand how it impacts a person:

Teacher/Parent Connection: This video makes reference to an IEP (Individual Education Plan) and the importance of learning to accommodate and compensate for your difficulties. Your task is to connect with a teacher or your parent to find out if you have an IEP. If you have an IEP, ask for the opportunity to read through it, as well as any assessments that show you have a learning disability. Take the time to read through the documents as they will highlight your strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, note the strategies that are suggested to help you with learning.

Do not hesitate to ask for help from someone with reading and understanding your IEP and assessment. Most teens will need help. By investing the time in this activity, you will gain a better understanding of yourself and what you need to be successful.

Task 2: After reviewing your IEP and connecting with your teachers, spend some time thinking about your strengths and weaknesses. Please also think about your skills (the skills we perform with confidence and without paying much attention). Please complete 1.2, Developing Knowledge of Self.

Tip: You may wish to search for word bank of character traits and resume skills. Many online resume section offer these lists and are excellent resources for these kinds of activities.

Once you have completed this task, spend some time sharing your reflection with a teacher or parent.

Continue to Task 1.3
Task 1.3

Know Your Accommodations

Accommodations are strategies that can help you to succeed in school. They are often changes that can be made to help you succeed and overcome academic obstacles. Watch this video to learn more about accommodations:

Many of the accommodations that you can use are listed in your IEP. Ensure that you have connected with a teacher or parent to learn more about the accommodations that are in your IEP. If there are other accommodations or supports that might help you, ensure that you attend your IEP meetings and request them.

Task #2: Read through the accommodations listed on your IEP and in any assessments. Complete 2.1. Common Accommodations and 2.2. Recognizing Accommodations. These tasks will help you to learn what common accommodations are available to students and get you thinking about when you should be accessing accommodations. Share your responses with a teacher or parent.

Continue to Task 1.4
Task 1.4

Task #4: Reflection: Write a brief summary or create a mind map of what you have learned in this module. Share this with a teacher or a parent.

Conclusion: After this module, you should have a better understanding of your strengths and needs, as well as the accommodations that can help you. It is essential that you advocate for these accommodations.

Motivation: Read this final quote and be inspired to continue on to Module 2: Know Your Rights

"If you don’t go after what you want, you’ll never have it. If you don’t ask, the answer is always no. If you don’t step forward, you’re always in the same place."

- Nora Roberts
Module 2: Know Your Rights

“The disability is not the problem, the accessibility is the problem.” Mohamed Jemi

“Anything that a person with disabilities wants to do, they have a right to do, and that can change the world.” Tayanna McFadden

Module 2: Reflect on the quotes above and how they connect to a person's rights. The purpose of this module is to learn more about the rights of students in British Columbia, Canada. When you have a better understanding of your rights and the law, you can become a better self-advocate.

Continue to Task 2.1
Task 2.1

Get to Know Your Rights as a Student with an IEP

It’s important to know what your rights and responsibilities are as a student with a learning disability. It is also important to know what the responsibilities of others are in regards to helping you succeed in school.

Please read the Know Your Rights Student Booklet. This document is designed for students in British Columbia, Canada. If you are American, you may wish to do some research online and learn more about IDEA.

Test Your Understanding

Complete the following multiple choice assignment: 3.1. Know Your Rights Assignment in order to test your understanding of your rights. See how many correct answers you can get!

When you have completed this task, spend some time sharing your responses with a teacher or parent.

Continue to Task 2.2

Search...
Task 2.2

**Task #2**: Write a brief summary or create a mind map of what you have learned in this module. Share this with a teacher or a parent.

**Conclusion**: After this module, you should have a better understanding of your rights as a student with a learning disability in British Columbia. It is essential that you advocate for your rights.

**Motivation**: Read this final quote and be inspired to continue onto Module 3: Communication

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"I LEARNED A LONG TIME AGO THE WISEST THING I CAN DO IS BE ON MY OWN SIDE, BE AN ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF AND OTHERS LIKE ME."

- Maya Angelou
Module 3: Communication

“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.” - Anthony Robbins

“You get in life what you have the courage to ask for.” - Oprah Winfrey

Module 3: Reflect on the quotes above and how they connect to a person’s communication skills and abilities to advocate. The purpose of this module is to learn more about ways to communicate your personal needs and interests. When you have a better understanding of how to communicate, persuade, negotiate and problem solve, you can become a better self-advocate.

Continue on to Task 3.1
Task 3.1

Developing Communication Skills

If you have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), you have the right to access the accommodations in your IEP. The goal of this module is to learn how to communicate these rights and request accommodations and supports.

In high school, teachers often have many students and may forget to provide an accommodation that is needed. It is 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. When you contact an accommodation from your teacher, remember to give an appropriate time to connect with the teacher. Meeting up prior to meet right after class can be helpful, as it can provide you with privacy and ensure your teacher is not too busy. When requesting accommodations, it is helpful to have a strategy.

IASK: A Strategy for Requesting Supports

IASK is an acronym that can assist you in remembering the steps to request an accommodation. There are four simple steps to communicating your request from a teacher.

1. Identify yourself as a student with an IEP
2. Ask for an Accommodation
3. Brainstorm how this strategy helps you
4. Keep organizing when needed

Tips: Ask your Case Manager or School Special Education teacher for a list of the accommodations that you can access or a copy of your IEP. You might feel more secure having a conversation with your teacher if you can show them an official school document.

Watch this video to learn more about the IASK Strategy.

Task #1: Some students might need practice learning this strategy. Role-playing can be a good way to develop communication skills. Complete role-playing activities 1 and 2 in the Accommodations Role-Playing Cards. Practice the role-playing situations with a friend, classroom, teacher, or parent. Pay particular attention to the way in which the IASK strategy is used in each role-play.

Continue on to Task 3.2

167
Task 3.2

What if a teacher says ‘no’ to a request?

There will be times when an accommodation cannot be simply implemented. Perhaps you need extra time on a test, and the teacher has to leave for a meeting. We suggest using an additional strategy Alt+CM=Leave. This acronym takes its inspiration from the keyboard commands: Alt+Ctrl+Del, which can be used to troubleshoot computer problems. Follow Alt+CM=Leave in situations where there might be a problem or conflict.

Alt+CM=Leave (3 Steps to Resolving Conflict)

Alt- Think of an alternate solution (Find and suggest an alternate solution or choice to meet everyone’s needs. In the example above, would it work for you to have extra time and finish your test in a resource room under the supervision of another teacher?)

CM- Suggest you both meet with your Case Manager if stuck (If an alternate solution cannot be found or if a teacher is refusing to provide an accommodation, avoid conflict escalation and suggest that you meet with your Case Manager to create a plan. It is rare that a teacher will not help, but know that your Case Manager is your advocate and can support you to find a solution).

Leave- Leave the conversation (It’s okay to exit the conversation gracefully and know that you can have your Case Manager or parents support you later).

Task #2: Some students might need practice learning this strategy. Role-playing can be a good way to develop communication skills. Complete role-playing activity #3 in 4.2, Accommodations Role-Playing Cards. Practice the role-playing situations with a friend, classmate, teacher, or parent. Pay particular attention to the way in which the IASK and ALT+CM Leave strategy is used in each role-play.

Continue on to Task 3.3
Task 3.3

Connect with Your Teachers

Task #3: Organize a brief time to meet with one of your teachers to review your IEP in private. Use the meeting as a chance to review the accommodations listed on your accommodations student card or IEP summary. If there is an upcoming activity, assignment, or test, use the opportunity to discuss if an accommodation might help. When meeting with your teacher, remember to use the SADIE and ACHIEVE steps in your discussion.

Tip: Bring a copy of your IEP or list of accommodations to the meeting. Role-play your request with a friend, classmate, teacher, or parent if you feel you need practice.

Communication is a key step in self-advocacy and getting the supports you need. It can take some initial effort and might feel uncomfortable the first time you connect with a teacher. However, it will get easier in subsequent meetings and will prepare you for life after school.

Final Thoughts:

In order to be a successful self-advocate, you need to know who you are and what you need. You need to be aware of your personal rights, and be able to communicate effectively with others about your needs and rights. It might take some problem-solving and assertiveness at times, but your life will be so much better if you can advocate for your personal needs in school and life. Self-advocacy truly is about taking control over your life.

Motivation: Read this final quote and consider learning more about Preparing for Life after High School.

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

- Dr. Seuss

Please consider visiting the page: Student Feedback on Modules. The site developers would like your feedback on making the modules better.
Preparing for Life After High School: Learning Modules

Be inspired! Post-Secondary Education is for ALL Students- including those with learning disabilities.

There are many supports for people with learning disabilities in post-secondary education and employment. A learning disability should not prevent you from attending college or getting a specific job. The key to success in life after high school is knowing yourself and what you need to learn, and advocating for those supports. Watch the video below to see how Lexie Garrity overcomes her learning disability in university and advocates for the supports she needs.

Continue on to CPF Task 1.1
DTP Task 1.1

Accommodations and Supports at Trade Schools, Colleges, and Universities:

While every post-secondary institution has slightly different policies about accommodations and supports, the vast majority of institutions offer supports.

Task #1: Read the following document, Common Services Offered at PSIs, in order to learn more about how most institutions offer supports, as well as the extensive nature of the supports that are offered to students with disabilities.

Advocacy and Disclosure in Post-Secondary Institutions

Students with learning disabilities who plan on attending post-secondary studies have a right to accommodations and supports, just like they had in high school. However, it is the student's responsibility to advocate for these supports by disclosing their disability and applying for accommodations. The onus is on the student to advocate by making an appointment with a Disability Resource Centre or Accessibility Services Department to determine what accommodations can be set up. These institutions will not have access to IEPs or assessments. Students must bring in their documentation for review and advocate for the accommodations that work best. Watch Ben in the following video explain the kinds of advocacy and organizational skills you will need in uni-/university.

Continue on to DTP Task 1.2
DTP Task 1.2

Preparing to Apply for Supports at a Post Secondary Institution:

If you are considering attending a post secondary institution, you should begin thinking about the kinds of documentation you will need to apply for supports. You want to start getting your documentation ready in Grades 11 and 12. You do not want to have to stack this documentation down after high school graduation. It will take 8-10 weeks for a post-secondary institution to process an application with appropriate documentation. Without documentation, this process will take you much longer. Consider developing a Digital Transition Portfolio.

The Digital Transition Portfolio (DTP):

A Digital Transition Portfolio is a digital collection of documents which explain your learning disability and the kinds of supports you have accessed in the past. The development of this portfolio can assist greatly when it comes time to apply for services at a post-secondary level and may also come in handy if needing further supports in a future job.

Task #2: Develop your own Digital Transition Portfolio. Work with your parents, teachers, counselors, and school to collect the documentation that you need. Use Handout 7.2, Digital Transition Portfolio Checklist to assist you with the process. Work with a teacher or parent’s support to create a DTP and consider sharing it at an upcoming meeting or parent/teacher conference.

Continue to DTP Task 1.3
DTP Task 1.3

Applying for Disability or Accessability Services:

Post-secondary institutions can provide all kinds of supports. This video can assist you in registering for support from a Disability or Accessibility Services program at university.

You may be wondering what it looks like to advocate for supports once accepted to a college or university and you have been registered at Disability or Accessibility Services Department. Watch this video to get a sense of the kinds of self-advocacy skills you will need when connecting with an Instructor. This video also gives you a sense of the kinds of self-advocacy skills you should be learning and practicing in high school. This video is produced by a Canadian university, Mount Royal.

Task #3: Write a short journal entry about what you have learned in this section on making the transition from high school to post secondary studies. Share your journal response with a teacher or parent.

Some Final Thoughts

Please know that it is your choice if you would like to disclose your disability to a school or employer in the future. With a completed Digital Transition Portfolio, you can move forward into the world of post-secondary studies with confidence that you can advocate for the supports that you need—when you choose to do so.

Please consider visiting the page Student Feedback on Modules. The site developers would like your feedback on making the modules better.
Student Feedback on Modules

This site is constantly evolving and welcomes any feedback that students can provide about 'Student's Corner' and the learning modules.

Do you have any ideas on how to improve the content on the site?

Do you have any ideas about how to improve interactivity?

Do you have any ideas about how to support students better in developing self-advocacy skills or in their transition to post-secondary studies?

If so, please contact us and share your ideas! It would be great to further develop the site with students.

Name (required)

Email (required)

Website
https://selfadvocacyhighschool.

Comment (required)

Search
Contribute A Lesson or Activity

Are you an educator with a lesson idea on self-advocacy development that you would like to share with other educators? Please read the Criteria for Submitting Resources and contribute to this site by sharing your ideas with the form below. Someone from the Self-Advocacy in High School Admin team will follow up with instructions about how to share your resource on the site.

Name (required)

Email (required)

Website
https://selfadvocacyhighschool.

Comment (required)

Submit

Search ...
Criteria for Submitting Resources

Dear Educator,

We have a few guidelines to follow, so that your resource can be posted on the site.

1. Please ensure that you submit your resource using a PDF format or MS Word document. You must use a 12 point font. If you are including links to videos, please include these hyperlinks in your document.
2. Please ensure that your lesson is focused on self-advocacy or self-determination.
3. Your resource must reflect common professional standards in regards to style, language, and content, and include at minimum, sections on learning outcomes, activities, and assessment.
4. Plagiarism is not acceptable. Please reference any work or ideas that are not yours and use the APA style (6th Edition).
5. Your resource must conform to the terms and conditions of WordPress.
6. If you would like to receive credit for your resource, please include your name in your comment form.

Any submission which includes advertising, inappropriate language, or offensive content will not be posted.

The Self-Advocacy in High School website reserves the right to edit, condense or reject any contribution. Writers whose submissions are accepted for the website will be notified prior to posting.
Submitted Lessons & Activities

The Self-Advocacy in High School website encourages collaboration and the sharing of ideas on how to teach self-advocacy skills.

This page includes lessons and activities on self-advocacy development which have been created by educators and shared on our website. If you would like to share a resource, please visit Contribute A Lesson or Activity. All submitted and approved resources are listed below.

1) Self-Advocacy in the Workplace (submitted by user: HLAFR): This lesson plan provides information for educators on how to support youths with advocating in the classroom. Student generated role-play is used to develop self-advocacy skills to solve problems in the workplace.
Submitted Lesson #1: Self-Advocacy in the Workplace

**Lesson Title:** Self-Advocacy in the Workplace

**Lesson Author:** HLAFR

**Audience:** Grades 10-12

**Courses:** Career Life Education; Career Life Connections; Drama 10-12

**Lesson Summary:** This lesson plan provides information for educators on how to support youths with advocating in the classroom. Student generated role-play is used to develop self-advocacy skills to solve problems in the workplace.

**Resources:** Upload in Progress
Resources

Accommodations Student Card: This card lists key accommodations that a student can access in school and can be used to develop self-advocacy skills. This tool will support communication between students and teachers and is free to download. Simply download the card, save it to your preferred location, and use the drop down menus to list the appropriate accommodations. The card can also be customized as you can type in the fields. When fully completed, simply print the card on card stock and use the guide lines to cut the card to an appropriate size. Download the Accommodations Student Card.

Know Your Rights: This booklet, created by the Learning Disabilities Association of BC and funded by the Law Foundation of BC, can support students in understanding their rights. Download the Know Your Rights-Student Edition.

National Education Association of Disabled Students (NEADS): The National Educational Association of Disabled Students has a mandate “to support full access to education and employment for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities across Canada.” There are many resources which may be of interest to students interested in accessing post-secondary studies. Access the NEADS website.

Transition Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities: The Transition Resource Guide is an excellent resource to help students with disabilities make a successful transition to college or university. Although focused on Ontario, there is a plethora of information on choosing a post-secondary institution, advocacy and disclosure, and accessibility services.

Work BC Employment Services- Back in Motion: Back in Motion is an organization which offers “Customized Employment (CE) services to persons with disabilities... CE provides highly individualized placement services to persons with disabilities, and is designed to assist job Seekers to find and maintain meaningful employment.” Access the Back in Motion site for Customized Employment Services.
References

References: a list of cited academic research, videos, and non-photographic images can be found here.

Photographs: All photographic images on this site are taken from PEXELS and its photographic licenses state that the images shared on its site are free for noncommercial and commercial use. Additionally, attribution is not required. If you own an image that is listed on this site and have concerns about its use, please contact the site administrator.
Appendix B

Self-Advocacy Lessons

Lesson 1: Understanding Self-Advocacy and Developing Knowledge of Self

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/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. This initial lesson will introduce the concept of self-advocacy and focus on assisting students with learning disabilities to further develop their understanding of their strengths and needs. Without this knowledge of self, students cannot be successful self-advocates.

In this lesson, students will explore their strengths and weaknesses. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills (Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Phillips, 1990; Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014).

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will be able to define self-advocacy.
2. Students will develop a further understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.
3. Students will develop the skills to express and communicate their strengths and weaknesses to an adult.

MATERIALS NEEDED
1. Handout #1: Successful People with Learning Disabilities
2. Handout #2: Developing Knowledge of Self
3. Electronic Devices with access to the Internet
4. Online Accessibility Features as needed (Ex. Text to Speech Software)
Lesson Plan (60 minutes)

**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. Introduce the student(s) to Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb’s (2014) definition of Self-Advocacy and its importance:

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

   **Importance of Self-Advocacy:** Self-Advocacy helps you take charge of your life and be more independent.

2. Discuss how every person has strengths and needs. Elaborate on how people must know what they need before they can begin to advocate for it.

3. Share the learning intentions with the class:

   **Learning Intention 1:** Students will research a famous or successful person who compensates for a learning disability and be able to identify and explain this person’s strengths and stretches.

   **Learning Intention 2:** Students will create a list of their own strengths and stretches and be able to communicate them by the end of the lesson.

4. **Activity #1: Successful People with Disabilities in Learning**

   a) Campbell-Whatley (2008) and Phillips (1990) have used lessons where students learn about how disabilities impact others in order to destigmatize the term and develop self-advocacy skills. Highlight that there are many successful people who have found strategies to compensate for their learning difficulties and disabilities, developed their personal strengths, and experienced all kinds of success in the world outside of school. Some examples to share might be Johnny Depp, Albert Einstein, Tom Cruise, Thomas Edison, or Howie Mandel.

   b) Select an individual and share an article about them with students. Using explicit direct instruction, model today’s activity using the graphic organizer below. You may wish to hand out paper copies of the article and read it aloud, or distribute the article electronically and have all students read it online independently with the option of using text to speech apps.

   Highlight the individual’s strengths, weaknesses, and strategies used from the article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Stretches</th>
<th>Strategies Used to Overcome Disability</th>
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Educator’s Note: The goal of this activity is to destigmatize Learning Disabilities and demonstrate that with strategies to compensate for one’s learning disability, success in many aspects of life is very much attainable.

c) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout #1: Successful People with Learning Disabilities and access to an electronic device with Internet access. Review the instructions.

UDL Note: Providing all students with a digital copy to complete will assist those students with learning disabilities who need support with easier access to text to speech programs, word processing, and spell-checking features.

d) If working individually with a student on this lesson, simply have the student share what has been learned. If working with a small group, have students share their findings with each other and practice their communication skills. Highlight the idea that many individuals can compensate for their learning disabilities and find success. Explicitly share this idea with the students. Some researchers have had students consider what a school day was like for one of these famous personalities (Campbell-Whatley, 2008).

5. Activity #2: Knowing Our Strengths and Weaknesses

Educator’s Note: The goal of this activity is to encourage students to think deeper about their personal strengths and weaknesses- with the goal of having students think about ways they can capitalize on their strengths and develop strategies to compensate for their weaknesses.

a) Explain to students that it’s time to think about their strengths and stretches.

b) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout #2: Strengths and Stretches and review the instructions for the activity. You may wish to provide students with a word bank of character traits and skills (many online resume websites offer these lists and are an excellent resource for these kinds of activities). Remind students to consider their IEP and/or psychoeducational assessment when completing the handout.

c) To maintain confidentiality and privacy, have students hand in the graphic organizer.

6) Conclusion: Encourage students to consider what personal strengths they can use to meet the challenges and expectations of school (Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014). Additionally, students can be encouraged to consider how their strengths might be considered gifts and how their strengths might be used outside of the school setting (in regard to family, community, recreation or future careers).

Highlight the idea that students should focus on developing both their strengths and weaknesses, and that everyone develops strategies to compensate for their weaknesses. Connect the lesson’s activities to the definition of self-advocacy shared at the beginning of class: “Now that we have a better understanding of ourselves, we can develop a better understanding of what we need and how to speak up and ask for what we need.”
ASSESSMENT:
1. Successful completion of the graphic organizers
2. Communication of the strengths and weaknesses of a famous/successful person

Extension Activity #1: Empowerment Posters
Using the information researched in Successful People with Disabilities in Learning, encourage students to create informational posters that can be displayed in the classroom to motivate students with disabilities and to destigmatize the diagnosis of a learning disability.

Extension Activity #2: Disabling Environments
Campbell-Whatley (2008) suggests asking students to consider how their disability could affect them differently (or not affect them) at various school, home, community, or work environments. Further discussion could center around the idea that “a strength in one environment could be an area of weakness in another environment” (Campbell-Whatley, 2008) or vice versa. Further discussion could also revolve around the notion that environments can be disabling (Katz, 2013).
**Handout #1: Successful People with Learning Disabilities**

**Directions:** Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. Please remember that weaknesses can be improved and the obstacles that are put in one’s way can often be overcome. Everyone, with their strengths and gifts, can contribute to a creation of a better world. Please research one successful person with a disability or learning weakness who has overcome obstacles and made contributions to our world. Complete the following chart by researching this individuals’ strengths and weaknesses. If you have extra time, research some of the strategies that they used to overcome their disability or learning weakness. You may wish to choose any of the following individuals:

Charles Darwin; Johnny Depp; Thomas Edison; Tom Cruise; Agatha Christie; Albert Einstein; Leonardo Da Vinci; Keira Knightley; Michael Phelps; Daniel Radcliffe; Ed Sheeran; Whoopi Goldberg; Stephen Spielberg; Keanu Reeves; Howie Mandel; Avi; Others?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Strategies Used to Overcome Disability</th>
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**Handout #2: Developing Knowledge of Self**

**Directions:** List your strengths and stretches on this document. Be sure to think about your life inside and outside of school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Stretches</th>
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Lesson 2: Understanding Accommodations and Developing Knowledge of Self

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/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. This second lesson will have students further understand what accommodations they can or should access based on what they have learned about their personal strengths and weaknesses. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills (Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Hart & Brehm, 2013; Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014).

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will be able to define an accommodation.
2. Students will develop a further understanding of which accommodations would benefit them.
3. Students will be able to select the appropriate accommodation that they need to successfully complete a task.

MATERIALS NEEDED
1. Handout #1: Common Accommodations & How They Help
2. Handout #2: Recognizing Accommodations
3. Completed Handout #2 from Lesson 1
4. Electronic Devices with access to the Internet
5. Online Accessibility Features as needed (Ex. Text to Speech Software)
6. Handout #3: Accommodations Reflection Sheet
LESSON: (60 minutes)

**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) definition of Self-Advocacy and its importance:

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

   **Importance of Self-Advocacy:** Self-Advocacy helps you take charge of your life and be more independent

2. Review how every person has strengths and needs. Introduce the idea that once people know their stretches, they can begin to self-advocate for help and support in school in the form of an accommodation. Share Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb’s (2014) definition of an accommodation and their definition of self-advocacy behaviour:

   **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.

   **Self-Advocacy Behavior:** A key component of self-advocacy behavior is recognizing when an accommodation is needed

3. Share the learning intention with the class:

   **Learning Intention:** Students will be able to recognize when an adaptation is needed and how it can help.

4. **Activity #1: Common Accommodations and How They Can Help**

   a) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout #1. Review the list of accommodations that are commonly used by students and have them complete the assignment.

   **UDL Note:** Providing all students with a digital copy to complete will assist those students with learning disabilities who need support with easier access to text to speech programs, word processing, and spell-checking features.

   b) When reviewing the response, prompt students to use the graphic organizer they completed in lesson 1 to consider their stretches and think about which accommodations might assist them in the classroom.

5. **Activity #2: Recognizing Accommodations**

   **Educator’s Note:** The goal of this activity is to learn what specific accommodations have been recommended to students and assist them in recognizing when an accommodation can be accessed.

   a) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout #2: Recognizing Accommodations. Read the instructions for Part A aloud and then model the activity by completing the first row for students. Have students complete Part A and review responses.
b) Direct students to complete Part B of the activity. Remind students that they have accommodations specified in their IEP and psycho-educational assessments. Students should be aware that these accommodations should be provided in all of their classrooms and that they have a right to request them in class.

c) To maintain confidentiality and privacy, have students hand in the graphic organizer.

6. **Conclusion:** To conclude, have students recall the definitions of self-advocacy and accommodations. Remind them that they have certain rights as a student, including accessing accommodations, and that these rights will be reviewed in the next lesson. Students who need more practice can work on Handout #3: *Accommodations Reflection Sheet* at a later time.

**Extension Activity #1: Identifying the Supports I Need**

a) While educational experts often suggest accommodations and supports, students and their families can be overlooked and may be able to provide additional contextual information to the challenges they face, as well as creative solutions. The latter have the most experience thinking laterally and overcoming obstacles. Provide students with the graphic organizer below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacles/Challenges in School</th>
<th>What might help?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

Use the information produced to personalize or add accommodations to a student’s IEP.

**Educator’s Note:** At an educational conference for Inclusion Outreach on April 26th, 2018, Kunz & Van der Klijft (2018) argue that students and families can provide invaluable information and personalized suggestions when creating plans of supports. The researchers suggest asking questions such as: “What can I do to support you?” to generate a more personalized plan. For students who struggle with identifying supports, they suggest providing a menu of options and asking “What would be most helpful?”

**Extension Activity #2: Accommodations Matching Activity**

a) Students who are younger (Grades 7-10) may need more explicit support with understanding accommodations and identifying when and how to use them. When helping students to determine when and where they receive accommodations, Hart & Brehm (2013) suggest that teachers “model and discuss these topics with students in detail” (p.43). Hart & Brehm (2013) suggest that teachers “create activities that require students to match their learning needs, related accommodations, and time/location when the accommodations can be used” (p.43). Have students complete the graphic organizer below. The third column is critical to having students consider the logistics of accessing an accommodation. When and where will the accommodation be used? In a classroom or a resource room? In which subject areas? Where are the resources or technology located? How can they be accessed?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Learning Need</th>
<th>My Accommodation</th>
<th>When and Where I Can Use My Accommodation</th>
</tr>
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Sample Accommodations Matching Activity. From Hart & Brehm (2013, p.44).

**ASSESSMENT**

1. Successful completion of the activities
Handout #1: Common Accommodations and How They Help

**Directions:** Many students have IEPs (probably more than you know) and there are many kinds of accommodations available which can be accessed for classroom assignments and tests. What kinds of stretches or obstacles might each accommodation support?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodations</th>
<th>Addresses the following Stretches or Obstacles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra Time for Assignments and Tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reader, Audiobooks &amp; Text to Speech Apps (Kurzweil, Google Read &amp; Write)</td>
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<td>Spellcheck</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scribe &amp; Speech to Text Apps (Dragon, Google Docs Dictate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduction in Work Volume</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Copies of Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternate Forms of Content (Ex. Choice of Novel or Article)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternate Forms of Assessment (Ex. Verbal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Quiet Space for Assignments and Tests</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Calculator and Formula Sheets</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Breaks</td>
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- Consider your strengths and stretches. Reflect on which accommodations are listed in your IEP and any others that would benefit your learning.
Handout #2: Recognizing Accommodations

Part A:

Directions - Consider the hypothetical student, George, who has a learning disability. George is bright and has strong oral language skills. He is confident speaking and likes to share what he knows by talking with others. George does well in Drama and English. He finds reading long passages challenging due to his learning disability and he has difficulties with spelling. George has a good memory, but weaker processing speed. It takes him a bit more time than others to complete an assignment, but he often gets good marks. List some possible accommodations that George could access for this lesson in the first column (and do not complete the other 3 columns yet).

Class: English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Activities</th>
<th>Possible Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Silent Reading</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Novel)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Quiz (Written)</td>
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<td>3) Copying Notes</td>
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<td>4) Essay-writing</td>
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Part B:

**Directions** - Consider the accommodations that are listed in your IEP. Write down the activities that were completed in one of your classes this week, and then complete the rest of the graphic organizer.

**Class:** _____________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Activities</th>
<th>Possible Accommodations</th>
<th>Did I need one?</th>
<th>Did I request one?</th>
<th>Explain why or why not</th>
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Handout #3: Accommodations Reflection Sheet

Directions - Consider the accommodations that are listed in your IEP. Write down the activities that were completed in one of your classes this week, and then complete the rest of the graphic organizer.

Class: _____________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Activities</th>
<th>Possible Accommodations</th>
<th>Did I need one?</th>
<th>Did I request one?</th>
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Lesson 3: Developing Knowledge of Rights

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/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. This third lesson introduces students to the rights they are entitled to as a student with a learning disability in British Columbia. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills, but much of the research has been based in the United States and consequently focuses on American law and policy (Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014 and Phillips, 1990). This lesson will focus on the rights of students in British Columbia, Canada.

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will be able to define the term ‘IEP’, and explain the roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, parents/guardians, and students in regard to an IEP.
2. Students will have a further understanding of their rights as a student with an IEP in the British Columbia educational system.

MATERIALS NEEDED
1. Learning Disability Association of BC’s booklet: Know Your Rights (paper or electronic copy)
2. Handout #1: Know Your Rights Multiple Choice Assignment
3. Electronic Devices with access to the Internet
4. Online Accessibility Features as needed (Ex. Text to Speech Software)
LESSON (60 minutes)

**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) definition of Self-Advocacy and its importance:

   - **Self-Advocacy:** To speak up and ask for what you need
   - **Importance of Self-Advocacy:** Self-Advocacy helps you take charge of your life and be more independent

2. Introduce students to the concept that every student in British Columbia has rights and responsibilities and that the goal of today’s lesson is to learn more about the rights of a student with an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Explicitly state that the more knowledge they have of their rights as a student, the better they can self-advocate.

3. Share the learning intentions with the student or small group that you are working with:

   - **Learning Intention 1:** Students will be able to explain their rights and responsibilities as a student with an IEP.
   - **Learning Intention 2:** Students will develop a better understanding of how to advocate for the accommodations and supports they need in the classroom.

4. **Activity #1: Know Your Rights.**

   - **a)** Provide a paper copy, electronic copy, or online access to the text: *Know Your Rights* (http://ldasvi.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2015/06/rights_student.pdf). Also provide students with paper or electronic copies of Handout #1: *Know Your Rights Multiple Choice Assignment*.

   - **b)** Read *Know Your Rights* aloud, or have students independently read the text in an electronic format so that accessibility features can be accessed.

   - **c)** Have students complete Handout #1 and review the answers. You may wish to break up the assignment into sections for reading and reviewing of the answers.

   - **Educator’s Note:** Emphasize the points that students with learning disabilities have average to above average intelligence, and that accommodations are related to equity and fairness.

5. **Conclusion:** Have students share something they learned in today’s lesson. Ask students to consider how knowing their rights can assist with self-advocacy. Inform students that their next lesson will focus on how to communicate their rights and what they need to their teachers.

**ASSESSMENT**

1. Successful completion of Handout #1.
2. Communication of something learned about rights in final discussion.
Handout #1: Know Your Rights Multiple Choice Assignment

Directions:
Read the booklet, *Know Your Rights*, published by the Learning Disabilities Association of BC and the Law Foundation of BC. Respond to each question by circling the correct response.

**Read the selection on the Top 5 facts about Learning Disabilities.**

1) What is the prevalence of people with a learning disability?
   a) One in every ten people has a Learning Disability.
   b) One in every twenty people has a Learning Disability.
   c) One in every hundred people has a Learning Disability.

2) Read Fact 1: People with LD are smart. What kind of intelligence does a person have to have in order to have a Learning Disability?
   a) People with LD have below average intelligence.
   b) People with LD have average to above average intelligence.
   c) People with LD have a different kind of intelligence.

3) What is revealed about LD in Fact 2?
   a) There are many kinds of LD.
   b) LD can run in families.
   c) Teachers can assess a Learning Disability.

4) Read Fact 5: There are lots of things that can help LD. According to this section, what are some important things you can do to help yourself?
   a) Understand what your particular LD is, and recognize and use your strengths to help you learn.
   b) Spend more time learning test-taking strategies.
   c) Find out if there is a difference between how you are doing with school tasks and how you should be doing given how smart you are.

**Read the selection on Adaptations and Modifications**

5) What are three adaptations that might assist you or another student?

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

6) Complete the following statements about adaptations:

The above list describes changes in the way things are done, not in what is being taught. These changes level the _____________________________. They do not give you an ____________________________ advantage over the other students. Being on an adapted program does not affect your letter grades.
Read the selection: Your Individual Education Plan (IEP)

7) Why do students with a LD have an IEP?
   a) An IEP helps the school meet your special learning needs. It also helps you plan educational goals for yourself.
   b) An IEP lists your grades in your classes.
   c) An IEP lists the 25 hours of support that you need.

8) “An IEP is developed by one of your teachers who talks to everyone involved in your education at an IEP meeting. You can be involved in the planning process and meeting.” Is this statement true or false?
   a) True
   b) False

9) “If you have special learning needs, the principal of your school will assign one of your teachers to be your case manager. A case manager is in charge of seeing that your IEP is developed and that all your teachers are aware of it. The case manager arranges the meetings where you and your guardians can discuss your IEP. He or she is also the person you should see if you have questions or concerns about your education.” Is this statement true or false?
   a) True
   b) False

10) Who is your Case Manager at the school?

11) Your IEP may contain:
   a) Any adaptations to help you in the classroom such as having your books on tape, having extra time to write tests, or sitting closer to the board, etc.;
   b) any extra help you may need such as counseling services or speech/language therapy, etc.
   c) all of the above.

12) What should you do first if you are not receiving the supports listed in your IEP that you need?
   a) Make sure you or your parents speak to the teacher and make them aware of your IEP.
   b) Contact the principal to make him or her aware of your IEP.
   c) Write a formal letter of complaint to your Case Manager.

13) In an IEP meeting, it’s your education that everyone will be discussing. Your opinions are an important part of this discussion and an IEP meeting is a great opportunity for you to let your teachers know what works well for you and what does not. What should you do if you are not invited to your IEP meeting and want to participate?
   a) Wait for an invitation to the next meeting.
   b) Talk to your guardians or your teachers about including you.
   c) Complain to the Principal.

14) “Your IEP can be changed- even after a meeting.” Is this statement true or false?
   c) True
   d) False
15) What is the first step you should take if something is not being followed in your IEP?
   a) If you find that a teacher isn't following your IEP, you have the right to discuss it with him or her and request that it be followed.
   b) If you find that a teacher isn't following your IEP, discuss it with the principal.
   c) If you find that a teacher isn't following your IEP, consider an appeal.

16) What should you do if something is not being followed in your IEP - even after discussing it with your teachers?
   a) If you find that a teacher isn't following your IEP, request another meeting with the teacher.
   b) If you find that a teacher isn't following your IEP, discuss it with your Case Manager or the principal.
   c) If you find that a teacher isn't following your IEP, consider an appeal.

Read the section: Your rights, roles and responsibilities

17) What is the principal’s role in your IEP?
   a) The person responsible for making sure your IEP is written and followed.
   b) The person responsible for writing your IEP.
   c) The person responsible for following and implementing your IEP in the classroom.

18) What is the teacher’s role in your IEP?
   a) The person responsible for making sure your IEP is written and followed.
   b) The person responsible for writing your IEP.
   c) The person responsible for following and implementing your IEP in the classroom.

19) What is the Case Manager’s role in your IEP?
   d) The person responsible for making sure your IEP is written and followed.
   e) The person responsible for writing your IEP.
   f) The person responsible for following and implementing your IEP in the classroom.

20) Because teachers have many more students in secondary school, things can be more easily overlooked or forgotten. What should you do first if you think a teacher is not following your IEP?
   a) Speak to him or her about it after class or after school.
   b) Contact the principal.
   c) File an appeal.

21) What are your parent’s rights in regard to your IEP?
   a) Attend meetings where your Individual Education Plan is being discussed
   b) Appeal any decision made that significantly affects your health, safety or education.
   c) Receive reports from the school about your attendance, behaviour and your progress.
   d) All of the above.

22) What are your rights as a student?
   a) To receive help in a timely way and in a manner that meets your learning needs
   b) To be treated fairly and to have your concerns heard and acted upon.
   c) To have your school records and IEP kept confidential.
   d) All of the above.

23) If a decision, or the failure to make a decision, about your education significantly affects your health, safety or education, you have the right to have the situation reviewed. What is this called?
   a) Ombudsman
   b) IEP
   c) An appeal.
Read the section: FAQ

24) How can I have a say in what happens to me at school?
   a) You can request opportunities to talk to your teachers and/or guardians about what works best for you and how things should be done.
   b) You can attend the IEP planning meeting to discuss your feelings and ideas.
   c) You can request that an IEP meeting take place to review your concerns.
   d) All of the Above
Lesson 4: Developing Communications Skills

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. This lesson focuses on developing the communication skills to request accommodations and supports. Many researchers and educators have identified this type of lesson as critical to the development of self-advocacy skills and have incorporated role play as a means of improving communication skills (Prater, Smith Redman, Anderson & Gibb, 2014; Campbell-Whatley, 2008; Hart & Brehm, 2013; Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon, 2014). This lesson builds on the work of Prater et al. (2014), who used acronyms to teach students to request accommodations. It also adds a problem-solving and conflict resolution focus when requesting accommodations. Lopez (2017) and Holzberg (2017), using the SACR tool (Self-Advocacy and Conflict Resolution), have demonstrated that conflict resolution skills can support students with improving their self-advocacy skills.

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will be able to define the term accommodation.
2. Students will further develop communication strategies for requesting accommodations and supports.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the I-ASK steps in a role-playing activity.

MATERIALS NEEDED
1. Handout #1: I-ASK Cue Cards
2. Handout #2: Developing Communication Skills Through Role Play
LESSON (60 minutes)

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 how students in British Columbia have the right to access the accommodations in their IEPs. The goal of today’s lesson is to learn how to communicate those rights and request accommodations and supports.

3. Share the learning intentions with the class:

   *Learning Intention 1:* Students will be able to define the I-ASK steps in requesting an accommodation.

   *Learning Intention 2:* Students will practice advocating for the accommodations and supports they need in the classroom through role play.

4. **Activity #1: Steps for Requesting Accommodations**

   a) 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. It is important to review the importance of selecting an appropriate time to connect with a teacher to request an accommodation.

   b) Highlight that it is important to have a strategy for communication. Introduce the I-ASK steps.

   **I-ASK Steps to Requesting Accommodations:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Identify yourself as a student with an IEP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ask for an Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>State how this Strategy helps you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Keep advocating when needed!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   c) Model the request of an accommodation using role-play. Include examples where you follow the I-ASK steps and non-examples, where steps are omitted. Have students highlight the correct and incorrect techniques you are using while making reference to the I-ASK strategy.

   d) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout #2 to students. Have students work through Activities 1 and 2. Provide feedback and corrections as needed.

   e) Introduce students to the idea that there can be many ways that an accommodation can be set up depending on the teacher, classroom, resources, and school. Students and teachers sometimes need to work together to figure out what works best. Provide the visual below for
further discussion and discuss the different ways that accommodations for reading support and extra time on tests can be set up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation in IEP</th>
<th>Different Ways the Accommodation Can Be Set Up in Our School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to Copies of Classroom Notes</td>
<td>1) Teacher provides paper copies  2) Teacher uploads notes to a website for students to print  3) School provides student with photocopier access at the end of class to copy notes  4) School provides an Educational Assistant to take notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Reading Supports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra time for Tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

f) Conclude this discussion by highlighting that when students request an accommodation, they might need to work with the teacher on finding the best way to set it up. There will be times when an accommodation cannot be simply implemented. Introduce a second acronym: Alt + CM + Leave (which takes its inspiration from the keyboard commands: Alt+Ctrl+Del, which are used to troubleshoot computer problems). A new set of steps can be followed in situations where there might be a problem or conflict:

Alt- Find and suggest an alternate solution or choice to meet everyone’s needs.

CM- If solutions cannot be found and students encounter resistance from a teacher for using an accommodation, teach students to suggest to the classroom teacher that they will need to connect with the Case Manager to come up with a better plan. This final step can be followed to avoid conflict escalation and to access the Case Manager’s expertise to create a plan of support.

Leave- Encourage students to exit the conversation politely, knowing that their Case Manager will help them work through this situation.

Alt+CM+Leave (3 Steps to Resolving Conflict)

Alt- Think of an alternate solution  
CM- Suggest you both meet with your Case Manager if stuck  
Leave- Leave the conversation

g) Have students work through the remaining activities on Handout #2. Observe the role-playing and provide appropriate feedback. Encourage further rehearsal if needed.

**Educator’s Note:** In developing self-determination lessons, Campbell-Whatley (2008) has suggested using problem scenarios in self-advocacy and developing problem solving skills— as well as developing strategies for handling anger. This is part of the rationale for Alt+CM+Leave.
5. **Conclusion.** Review the I-ASK steps and let students know that during the next lesson, they will be preparing to communicate with their classroom teachers and practice their self-advocacy skills.

**If Students struggle with the acronyms...** For students who struggle significantly with the acronym, a simpler alternative can be to use two steps: I-ASK and I-EXPLAIN. Encourage students to ask for an accommodation and explain why they need it.

**Extension Activity #1: Developing a Communication Strategy for Different Environments**

a) Summers, White, Zhang & Gordon (2014) created an activity for college students to assist them in learning to identify and select accommodations. The researchers encouraged students to consider the challenges they face with three areas of learning in college: physical spaces, academic expectations, and social/advocacy expectations. This activity can be adapted for high school students. They can think about the challenges that exist in their classrooms and how they can request supports. Use the table below to facilitate the activity.

Class Name: ______________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Classroom/Learning Environment</th>
<th>What challenges does this class have for me?</th>
<th>What accommodations or supports do I need?</th>
<th>What phrases can I use to request these accommodations?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Room location</td>
<td>❑ Desk Comfort</td>
<td>❑ Access to Technology</td>
<td>❑ Windows as distraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Desk Comfort</td>
<td>❑ Furniture Set-up</td>
<td>❑ Access to movement breaks</td>
<td>❑ Other Activities nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Lighting</td>
<td>❑ Noise</td>
<td>❑ Other</td>
<td>❑ Other:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Noise</td>
<td>❑ Access to Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Windows as distraction</td>
<td>❑ Access to movement breaks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Other Activities nearby</td>
<td>❑ Other Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Other:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments and Tasks</th>
<th>What phrases can I use to request these accommodations?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Homework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Assignments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Tests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Math Calculations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Schedule</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Group Activities and Projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Laboratories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Note-taking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Technology</td>
<td>Anxiety about expectations and workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers who distract</td>
<td>Missing Peers who support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group Activities and Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anxiety about being part of a group or with others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ASSESSMENT**

1. Successful completion of the role-playing activities
Handout #1: I-ASK Cue Cards

Version #1: Use this cue card to help you remember the steps for requesting an accommodation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-ASK Steps to Requesting Accommodations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I- Identify yourself as a student with an IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- Ask for an Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S- State how this Strategy helps you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K- Keep advocating when needed!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Version #2: Use this cue card to help you remember the steps for requesting an accommodation if you are using an ‘accommodations student card.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-ASK Steps to Requesting Accommodations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I- Identify yourself as a student with an IEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- Ask for an Accommodation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S- Show your Student Card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K- Keep advocating when needed!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resolving Conflict: If your teacher has some concerns about an accommodation use the following steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alt+CM+Leave (3 Steps to Resolving Conflict)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alt- Think of an alternate solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM- Suggest you both meet with your Case Manager if stuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave- Leave the conversation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout #2: Developing Communication Skills through Role-Play

**Directions:** Work through the role-playing activities with your teacher’s support or a partner. Take turns being the student or the teacher.

**Activity #1: I-ASK Steps with Script**
Practice reading through each role-play situation out loud. Remember to use the I-ASK steps. You can quickly review the I-ASK Cue Cards if needed.

Role-Play 1:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I wanted to remind you that I have an IEP. I am not going to finish my assignment by Friday. Can I please have extra time to finish it? It sometimes takes me a bit longer to organize my ideas and get them on paper.
Teacher: Yes, that would be fine.
Student: Thank-you.

Role-Play 2:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I am having difficulty keeping up with the notes. I have an IEP. Can I please have copies of them? I find it challenging to focus on learning the material and trying to spell the words correctly at the same time.
Teacher: Certainly.
Student: Thank-you.

Role-Play 3:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: Our test is going to have a lot of reading on it. My IEP lists some accommodations for reading. Can I please write the test in the resource room so I can use Kurzweil or Google Read & Write? It will help me get through the test quicker and ensure I don’t misunderstand any of the questions.
Teacher: Yes, that would be fine.
Student: Thank-you.

Role-Play 4:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I am feeling overwhelmed by the number of math questions and it’s taking me too long to get my homework completed. I have an IEP and need extra time to process math questions. Is there a way I can get a reduced homework load? This will help me a lot to get through the work at home.
Teacher: Yes, just complete every second question.
Student: Thank-you.
Activity #2: I-ASK Steps Without Script
Read through each scenario, and then role-play the request for an adaptation. Remember to use the I-ASK steps. You can quickly review the I-ASK Cue Card if needed. Ask your partner if you followed the I-ASK steps afterwards.

Scenario 1:
A teacher assigns you two essays to complete for the weekend. It takes you longer to write essays and your IEP states that an accommodation you can access is a reduced workload. Make a request of your teacher.

Scenario 2:
A teacher is going to give the class a science test on Friday. There will be a lot of reading and you have difficulties with reading. Your IEP states that an accommodation you can access is a reader or text to speech software (Kurzweil or Google Read & Write). Make a request of your teacher.

Scenario 3:
A teacher has assigned a large project for Friday. You are making good progress, but sometimes, you just need more time to complete these big assignments. Your IEP states that an accommodation you can access is extra time. Make a request of your teacher.

Scenario 4:
You have a final exam scheduled in two weeks for Social Studies. You are prepared for the exam but prefer to write the exam in a quieter space so that you are not distracted. Your IEP states that an accommodation that you can access is quiet space for tests and exams. Make a request of your teacher.

Activity #3: I-ASK & Alt+CM+Leave Steps with Script
Read through each script, and role-play the request for an adaptation. This time, the teacher will not respond affirmatively. Remember to use the Alt+CM steps. You can quickly review the I-ASK Cue Cards if needed.

Role-Play 1:
Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I am not going to finish my assignment by Friday. I have an IEP Can I please have extra time to finish it? It takes me longer to get my ideas on paper.
Teacher: I have already given everyone lots of time, so you will need to hand the essay in on Friday like everyone else. I have a deadline for reporting all of our marks for report cards on Monday.
Student: My IEP states that I can have extra time if needed. Is there a way that I can have extra time and you can still meet your deadline? Could I take Saturday to complete the assignment and email it to you Saturday evening?
Teacher: That will work just fine as I won’t be getting to my marking until Sunday.
Student: Thank-you.
Role-Play 2:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. __________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I am going to need more time to finish this English test. Can I please have extra time to finish it?
Teacher: Unfortunately, it’s almost lunch time. I have a meeting and cannot stay.
Student: My IEP states that I can have extra time if needed. Is there a way that I can have extra time and you can still attend your meeting? Could I finish writing the test in the resource room after lunch?
Teacher: That will work for me.
Student: Thank-you.

Role-Play 3:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. __________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I am having difficulty reading my novel. I have an IEP and I am going to need to use Kurzweil or Google Read & Write to help me get through a chapter every evening. Can I please listen to the novel during class time on my phone?
Teacher: I don’t allow phones in my class. You know that’s a rule.
Student: My IEP states that I can access reading support. Is there a way that I can use Kurzweil and Google Read & Write and still respect your no-phones-rule? Could one of us sign out a laptop or tablet for reading period and use this for reading period?
Teacher: I think that is a fair plan.
Student: Great. Thank-you.

Role-Play 4:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. __________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I am struggling with writing the notes in class. I have an IEP which states that I can access class notes. Can I please get copies of them?
Teacher: I expect all my students to write down their own notes. It’s a way to learn the material and I worry you won’t focus if I just give you the notes.
Student: My IEP states that I can have copies of notes because of my difficulties with reading. Is there a way that I can get notes and show you that I am focused and learning? Could you provide me with a copy of the notes, but delete some of the key vocab words or put them on your website for me to print?
Teacher: I don’t know if I will have time to do that.
Student: Okay. I will connect with my Case Manager, Mr./Ms. ____________, to see if we can come up with another plan.

LEAVE
Role-Play 5:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: I wanted to remind you that I have an IEP. Can I please write my test in the resource room? I struggle with focusing during tests and find that I do much better when I write them there.
Teacher: I expect all my students to write their tests with me. That way, I can provide them with help and see how they are doing.
Student: My IEP states that I can have extra time and a quiet space to write tests. Is there a way that I can write somewhere else? Could you let me write in the resource room and maybe I can check in with you every 20 minutes?
Teacher: That might work. I just don’t know if it will work for the teacher in the resource room.
Student: Okay. I will connect with my Case Manager, Mr./Ms. ____________, to see if we can come up with another plan.

LEAVE
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.

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 practice ‘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 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 that 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 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 regard 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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th>Accommodations</th>
<th>Concerns about Implementation (How and When they are used)</th>
<th>Preferences about Accommodation Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### English
- I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I did not use any accommodations this week
  
  Explain why:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________

### Social Studies
- I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I did not use any accommodations this week
  
  Explain why:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________

### Math
- I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I did not use any accommodations this week
  
  Explain why:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________

### Science
- I am using the accommodations that my teacher provided this week.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I am using accommodations, but I needed to request them.
  
  Example:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________  
  
- I did not use any accommodations this week
  
  Explain why:  
  __________  
  __________  
  __________
ASSESSMENT
1. Successful completion of the role-playing activities
2. Communication of something learned about rights in final discussion.
Handout #1: Requesting Accommodations from Teachers

Activity #1: Requesting Accommodations from One Teacher

**Directions:** Organize a brief time to meet with one of your teachers to review your IEP in private. Use the meeting as a chance to review the accommodations listed on your accommodations student card or IEP summary. If there is an upcoming activity, assignment, or test, use the opportunity to discuss if an accommodation might help. When meeting with your teacher, remember to use the I-ASK and Alt+CM+Leave steps in your discussion. After meeting to discuss your IEP, have your teacher complete this form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher’s Name</th>
<th>Accommodations Reviewed</th>
<th>I-ASK Steps (Checklist for Teachers)</th>
<th>Teacher Initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                | Yes- this student requested an accommodation or reviewed their accommodations with me | Student identified themself as having an IEP  
Student requested an accommodation or reviewed accommodations  
Student explained why they need the accommodation(s) |                  |

Teacher’s Name

Accommodations Reviewed

I-ASK Steps (Checklist for Teachers)

Teacher Initials
**Activity #2: Requesting Accommodations from all of your Teachers**

**Directions:** Organize a brief time to meet with the rest of your teachers to review your IEP in private. Use the meetings as a chance to review the accommodations listed on your accommodations student card or IEP summary. If there is an upcoming activity, assignment, or test, use the opportunity to discuss if an accommodation might help. When meeting with your teachers, remember to use the I-ASK and Alt+CM steps in your discussion. After meeting to discuss your IEP, have your teacher complete this form.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes- this student requested an accommodation or reviewed their accommodations with me</td>
<td>Student identified themself as having an IEP, Student requested an accommodation or reviewed accommodations, Student explained why they need the accommodation(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student explained why they need the accommodation(s)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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 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
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 Accommodation helped you
N- Nudge the teacher to consider offering it in a universal way
K- Keep advocating!

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 regard 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.
ASSESSMENT:

1) Participation in the role play activities
2) Completion of the ‘Accessibility Project’
Handout #1: THANK Cue Card

**Directions:** Consider using the THANK strategy to advocate for others to receive supports.

**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.

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>K- Keep advocating!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Handout #2: Advocacy for Universal Supports

Directions: Use role-playing to work through the following script with a partner. Take turns being the student or the teacher.

Activity #1: THANK
Practice reading through each role-play situation out loud. Remember to use the THANK steps. You can quickly review the THANK Cue Card if needed.

Role-Play 1:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ___________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: Thank you for providing me with the notes for today’s lesson. It really helps me to focus on learning the material. I don’t have to struggle with keeping up my notes at the same time.
Teacher: You’re welcome.
Student: Have you ever thought about putting your notes on your website? I bet you there are other kids like me who struggle with taking notes. It would really help us if we could download them after class. It would really help the kids who are sick too.
Teacher: I hadn’t thought about this before. Let me think about it.

Role-Play 2:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ___________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: Thank-you for providing me with a computer and spell check for the in-class essay. It really helps me with my spelling.
Teacher: No problem. You can leave any time to work on a computer in the resource room.
Student: Have you ever thought about giving everyone a computer for their essay? I am sure that there are many other students who would benefit from having a spell check.
Teacher: I don’t see why not. I can try and book a laptop cart for our next in-class essay.

Role-Play 3:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ___________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: Thank-you so much for letting me use Kurzweil/Google Read and Write for reading my novel. I appreciate being able to bring in my phone and listen to the audio as I read.
Teacher: Glad to hear that is working out for you.
Student: Do you think it would be helpful if everyone could access their novel on Kurzweil/Google Read and Write? There are a lot of features that might help everyone. It can translate for kids who are learning English and the audio might help a lot of others.
Teacher: I hadn’t thought about using it with everyone. I will consider the request.
Role-Play 4:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: Thanks a lot for the extra time on my Science test. I appreciated having the extra time to really think through my answers. It helps to be able to finish up my test in a resource room with extra time.
Teacher: We can do this for all of your tests.
Student: Have you thought about starting your tests earlier in the period? Rather than checking and reviewing homework, could we begin the test at the beginning of class? I wonder if there are other students who might benefit from the extra time to complete the test.

Role-Play 5:

Student: Excuse me, Mr./Ms. ____________
Teacher: Yes.
Student: That graphic organizer that you gave me to plan out my writing really helped! Thank-you! It helps to plan and organize my thoughts.
Teacher: I am glad it helped. It’s something I always use with a few students who request extra help with their writing.
Student: Do you think it would be helpful for everyone to have this planning page? I think there are lots of students who would find it helpful as a universal support.
Teacher: That’s a good thought. I will hand it out to everyone for our next writing assignment.
Handout #3: The Accessibility Project

**Equity:** Equity has to do with everyone having access to opportunities, regardless of race, abilities, social class, gender, or sexual orientation. Consider the following diagram to further your understanding of the concept.

![Equality Versus Equity](https://services.viu.ca/disability-access-services/accommodation)

*Figure 1. Equality Versus Equity [Image]. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://services.viu.ca/disability-access-services/accommodation](https://services.viu.ca/disability-access-services/accommodation) on 2018-08-27.*

**Guiding Question:** How can accessibility, in regard to learning and/or participation, be improved in our community?

**Project:** Working individually or with other students, develop a project which aims to improve accessibility for learning and participation in our school and town. It might be helpful to begin by considering the barriers that people might face in education, employment, recreation, or society. Using technology, creativity, and a commitment to equity, identify a problem or barrier and pose a solution.

Remember that being inquisitive to improve your awareness and understanding can support you in gaining knowledge. Knowledge can lead to empathy. Empathy can lead to action, advocacy, and change—ultimately creating a more accessible and equitable world for all to participate.

**Consider the Following Settings for Identifying Barriers and Improving Accessibility:**

a) Learning Environment  
b) Working Environment  
c) Community Participation and Relationships  
d) Curriculum  
e) Media Portrayals
f) Technology Access  
g) Physical Spaces and Urban Design

**Assessment/Medium:** Your project may take many forms. It might include a...

a) Workshop  
b) Website  
c) Magazine  
d) Presentation  
e) Advertisement/Awareness Campaign  
f) Petition/Campaign for Change/Improvements/Resources  
g) Learning Resource  
h) Blog  
i) Innovative Product or Design Idea
Lesson 7: Digital Transition Portfolios & Preparation for Post-Secondary Studies and/or Employment

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
Black (2010) argues that the development of a digital portfolio can assist with the development of self-advocacy skills in high school students with learning disabilities and can be used to support students in their transition from secondary school to post-secondary studies and employment. Black (2010) further argues that the portfolio can be a tool to assist young adults in explaining their learning disabilities and the supports that they require to future educators and employers. A number of the portfolio ideas offered by Black (2010) will be adapted to meet the needs of high school students in British Columbia and the technological landscape of 2018.

OBJECTIVES
1. Students will develop a digital portfolio of key documents to assist with their transition from secondary studies to post-secondary studies and/or employment.
2. Students will develop an understanding of how to use the digital portfolio to access services and/or accommodations at the post-secondary level or in future employment.

MATERIALS NEEDED
1. Handout #1: Common Services Offered by Post-Secondary Institutions in BC
2. Handout #2: Digital Transition Portfolio Checklist
3. Handout #3: Timeline for Developing the Digital Transition Portfolio and Application to Post Secondary Institutions and Employment Services
4. Access to digital copies of IEPs, IEP summaries with a list of accommodations, and past psychoeducational assessments
5. Access to technology with internet access
6. Online accessibility features as needed (Ex. Text to Speech Software)
7. Memory stick or other storage device
LESSON (60-minute lesson and ongoing 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) definition of Self-Advocacy:

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

2) Explain that the goal of today’s lesson is to begin thinking about the kinds of self-advocacy skills high school students will need after they graduate. High school students may need to self-advocate in post-secondary studies or their future employment. Review the following three scenarios.

   a) Students with learning disabilities who plan on attending post-secondary studies have a right to accommodations and supports, just like they had in high school. However, it is the student’s responsibility to advocate for these supports by disclosing their disability and applying for accommodations. The onus is on the student to advocate by making an appointment with a Disability Resource Center or Accessibility Services Department to determine what accommodations can be set up. These institutions will not have access to IEPs or assessments. Students must bring in their documentation for review and advocate for the accommodations that work best. To give students a sense of the kinds of services offered at post-secondary institutions in BC, provide a copy of Handout #1. Emphasize the importance of disclosure if students want to access services.

   b) Students with learning disabilities who plan on working after high school may be working with employers who may not fully understand what a learning disability is or how it impacts an employee. While an employee can choose to keep their learning disability confidential and private, there are many instances where young workers need to advocate for supports on the work site and may want to disclose their disability. Some jobs may have testing, reading, or writing requirements and employees with disabilities have rights to advocate for the supports they need.

   c) Some students with learning disabilities may struggle with attaining employment after high school. These young adults may need to advocate for resources to get a job. A good resource is the Back in Motion program at Work BC. Work BC offers customized work placement and skills development programs for individuals who disclose that they have a disability. Some of these programs can even support students with getting a job 6 months prior to high school graduation.

3) Introduce the definition of a digital transition portfolio and the learning intentions for this lesson:

**Digital Transition Portfolio:** a digital collection of documents which explain your learning disability and the kinds of supports you have accessed in the past. The development of this portfolio can assist greatly when it comes time to apply for services at a post-secondary level and may also come in handy if needing further supports in a future job.

**Learning Intention 1:** Students will further develop self-advocacy skills by developing a digital portfolio.
Learning Intention 2: Students will develop an understanding of how to use a digital portfolio to advocate for accommodations and services at a post-secondary institution and in employment.

Learning Intention 3: Students will reflect on privacy and confidentiality and to what extent they are willing to disclose and share their learning disability with others as an adult.

4) Activity #1: Developing a Digital Transition Portfolio:

a) Provide a paper or electronic copy of Handout#2: Digital Transition Portfolio Checklist. Review the DTP and kinds of documents and information that could be included. Ensure that students know that it is their choice to participate in this lesson and develop a DTP. They can opt out. If students have concerns with digital security, they can assemble a paper portfolio.

b) Have students work through the checklist of steps for completion. First, encourage students to consider their audience and purpose for their DTP and begin to consider the content that they are going to need to assemble. Second, have students reflect on the medium they will use for storage in relation to accessibility and security, and consult with their parents as well. Teachers may wish to provide some of the documents in electronic form, or have students work through a process of locating them.

c) Teachers can provide specific instruction on ways to organize the information and content depending on the goals of the student. Teachers may need to explicitly teach students how to create, organize, and name digital folders and files. A diagram of folders could be created to assist students depending on their level of need.

d) Provide students with time to prepare the portfolios. Encourage students to the use the checklist. They might need support with selection, organization, and use of media if creating their DTP for a larger purpose.

e) You may wish to provide students with a submission deadline, so you can review, assess, and provide feedback. Black (2010) suggests presenting the DTP at an upcoming IEP meeting. The checklist or a rubric may be helpful to determine if students have successfully completed the portfolio.

f) Remind students that they are responsible for managing their DTP and safeguarding their privacy. It is also their choice if they want to disclose their disability to a PSI or employer. However, there are privacy rules which govern their disclosure.

5) Conclusion: Review Handout #3 and the timeline for applying for services at a Post-Secondary Institution or with Employment Services. Explicitly explain how the DTP can be used when seeking supports.

Educator’s Note: For students who require significant support with organization, you may wish to seek permission to back up their portfolio on a secure school network as it is being constructed.
Extension Activity #1: Field Trip

a) Plan a field trip to a Disability Resource Centre or Accessibility Services Department and tour a campus. Students can learn about the resources which are offered and how to access them (Phillips, 1990). NEADS (2018) suggests that “one of the best ways students can get a sense of what to expect when beginning a post-secondary program is to talk with people who have first-hand experience in such programs” (High School Transition section, para 1). Students can benefit from meeting advisors, instructors or administrators at a college or university. There might be current or former students who can speak to the transition from high school to postsecondary school. Find out if there are any student groups or clubs which can provide support.

Incorporating Indigenous Perspectives: If a field trip is planned, consider making arrangements for any interested and participating Aboriginal students to also learn about cultural supports which may be available on campus.

Extension Activity #2: Online Resources for Students Who Are Graduating

a) Introduce students to a number of digital resources that may help them upon graduation.

i) The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) has a mandate is to support access to education and employment for post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities across Canada. Explore the website http://www.neads.ca/ and the resources which are offered.

ii) The Adaptech Research Network has “developed a number of resources over the years that may be helpful to members of the community, including an extensive database of free and inexpensive adaptive technology and a set of demonstration videos highlighting the capabilities of some of these tools” (Downloads section, para 1). Explore the website http://www.adaptech.org/en/downloads and the resources offered.

iii) Assistive Technology BC (http://www.at-bc.ca/for-students/) “provides assistive technology resources to make learning and working environments usable for people with disabilities throughout British Columbia” (Our Services section, para 1).

iv) Work BC’s Back in Motion can deliver customized employment services to people with disabilities. Explore the website http://backinmotion.com/employment-services/customized-employment and the services that are offered.

ASSESSMENT

**Handout # 1: Common Services Offered at Post-Secondary Institutions in British Columbia**

**Directions:** Read through the chart below to get a sense of the range of services that Post-Secondary Institutions offer. This chart includes services from 6 PSIs, but it should be noted that many more offer services to students with disabilities. Accessing services is somewhat different than in high school. When attending a PSI, it is your responsibility to disclose your learning disability. Most institutions suggest that you contact their accessibility/disability services departments at acceptance and ensure that you connect with them to set up a plan at least 8-10 weeks prior to your first semester. There are many reasons here to disclose your learning disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capilano University</th>
<th>Douglas College</th>
<th>University of British Columbia</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capilano University (2018) offers many services through its Accessibility Services Department</td>
<td>Douglas College (2018) offers many services through its Centre for Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>UBC (2018) offers many services through its Centre for Accessibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| - Accommodation planning  
  - University orientation  
  - Registration assistance  
  - Instructor notifications  
  - Exam accommodations  
  - Classroom accommodations  
  - Alternative format text  
  - Interpreting services  
  - Assistance in accessing the Canada Student Grant (CSGP-PD)  
  - Assistance in accessing equipment and services through the Canada Student Grant Program (CSGP-SEPD) | - Formal and informal identification of learning strengths and needs  
  - Instructional recommendations based on assessments  
  - Educational support for completing course requirements (tutoring, study skills, exam preparation)  
  - Sign language interpreters  
  - Readers/scribes  
  - Individualized accommodations and adaptations for exams  
  - Note-taking assistance and free NCR paper for lecture notes  
  - Transcriptions of materials to accessible format (Braille/Audio Tape)  
  - Ordering equipment and alternative formats  
  - Consultation and advocacy throughout the campus community  
  - Liaison with community-based disability service agencies  
  - Temporary accessible parking permits  
  - Referral to other college and community services | **Examples of assistance include:**  
  - Academic accommodations  
  - Exam accommodations  
  - Accessibility on Campus  
  
  UBC also offers the following programs and initiatives to make a positive change on campus and the wider community:  
  - Disability awareness workshop  
  - Active Bystander program  
  - Become an Equity Ambassador  
  - Improve campus accessibility through study (Students enrolled in PLAN 515: Qualitative Methods & Research Design undertake research projects related to accessibility) |
<table>
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<th>University of Victoria</th>
<th>Kwantlen Polytechnic University</th>
<th>British Columbia Institute of Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>UVIC (2018) offers many services through its Centre for Accessible Learning</td>
<td>KPU (2018) offers many services through its Accessibility Services Department</td>
<td>BCIT (2018) offers many services through its Accessibility Services Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accommodations examples include:</strong></td>
<td><strong>KPU can help with:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Examples of assistance may include:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Note takers</td>
<td>● Accommodations</td>
<td>● Exam and program accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Sign language interpreters</td>
<td>● Transition from high school</td>
<td>● Note-taking, scribes, readers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Exam writing time extensions</td>
<td>● Applying for disability-related funding</td>
<td>● Peer tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Distraction reduced exam environments</td>
<td>● Getting connected with campus services and supports</td>
<td>● Alternate format textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Classes in accessible locations</td>
<td>● Developing accommodation solutions and designing accessible academic and campus experiences.</td>
<td>● Interpreting or transcribing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Assistive technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Adaptive technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Exam supports</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Funding and grant information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Adaptive technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Learning strategies support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Adaptations to a physical learning environment</td>
<td></td>
<td>● Assist with physical issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Please note that most post-secondary institutions offer services and supports to students with disabilities. There are many more PSIs not listed here that offer support to students with disabilities.
Handout #2: Digital Transition Portfolio Checklist

Directions:
Your task is to create a Digital Transition Portfolio in preparation for beginning postsecondary studies or employment.

What is a ‘Digital Transition Portfolio’? It is an electronic portfolio that you can create to collect and showcase documents and artefacts related to your education. At a minimum, your portfolio needs to provide your next set of instructors or employers with background information on you and your learning needs and style. You may wish to store this digital information on a memory stick or a portable hard drive with encryption. While cloud storage can provide easy access and backup security, be aware that there may be privacy concerns with using these kinds of services.

Who can help me with the ‘Digital Transition Portfolio’? Your parents/guardians, case manager, teachers, and office administration staff can all help to locate information and copies of the documents that you need.

Should the information be in digital or paper form? The goal of this project is to create a digital portfolio. By ensuring all of your documents are scanned and in electronic form, it will be easier to share this information when it comes time, as well as keeping track of it. However, please consider keeping a back-up of paper copies. There are times when an original form is required, and it can happen that a digital storage system fails.

When is the right time to begin assembling my digital transition portfolio? Anytime, but it is highly suggested that you begin assembling the portfolio by the end of your Grade 11 year so that it is ready for when you begin applying for post-secondary studies or employment in Grade 12. This portfolio can also be particularly helpful for accessing Employment Services. Please note that the portfolio should be viewed as an ongoing portfolio that you regularly update and revise.

Questions to Consider as you assemble your Digital Portfolio: Black (2010) suggests that you consider the following three questions as you design your portfolio:

a) Will your portfolio be used for employment or education?
b) Do you want your portfolio to showcase your needs and skills in relation to your IEP, or do you want to further develop it to showcase all of your skills and learning?
c) Do you want this portfolio to serve as a history of personal data related to your learning disability, or do you want to also use it to demonstrate reflection, progress, and growth in your overall education?

Checklist of steps to follow in order to create the Digital Transition Portfolio (DTP) (Adapted from Black, 2010):

- Choose a digital medium for storing your DTP (memory stick, cloud-based storage, school secure network, or personal electronic device)
- Establish the purpose and audience of your DTP
- Collect and select documents, work samples, artifacts, photos, and videos for inclusion in the DTP (a suggested list is provided below)
- Scan your documents or take photos/videos as needed and upload the files
- Create a system of folders to store and organize all of your files. Pay particular attention to naming files correctly and professionally. It may be appropriate to create a presentation with some of the files depending on your purpose and audience
- Prepare to share the portfolio with your Case Manager for feedback. Reflect about the content, organization, and presentation of the information.
- Update your portfolio as necessary, but at least once per year.

## Checklist of Documents, Files, and Artifacts to include in your Digital Transition Portfolio (DTP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Documents/Files/Artifacts for Inclusion</th>
<th>Why it is important?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ❑ Personal Education Number (PEN Number) | Your PEN number can usually be found on your report card or can be provided by the school office. This is your official student number which you will need to share transcripts and educational information with future post-secondary institutions (PSI).  

Note: This is a confidential number that you should keep private. |
| ❑ Recent Report Cards | Keep copies of recent report cards and pay careful consideration to the comments. These comments may serve as evidence of some of the accommodations that you have accessed. |
| ❑ Current Individual Education Plan (IEP) | This document demonstrates that you have a learning disability and should list the key accommodations and services that you receive in school.  

Note: Ensure that your Case Manager has listed the key accommodations that you access on your IEP as PSIs (and possibly employers) may use this list as evidence of supports you have received in the past and likely benefit from in the future. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psycho-Educational Assessment Report and related documentation of eligibility for special education services.</td>
<td>Usually completed by a Registered Psychologist or School Psychologist, a psychoeducational assessment report describes the testing that you have undergone and contains the diagnosis of a learning disability. In order to apply for accommodations, many PSIs will want to have a copy of this report. It is the evidence that you have a learning disability and often lists key accommodations that you should be accessing. Note 1: Pay careful attention to the date when this assessment was last completed if applying for services at a PSI. Some PSIs may require an updated assessment if yours is too old. You will need to check with the PSI where you are applying to determine this. Note 2: If your assessment will be older than five years old by the time you graduate, you and your parents may wish to advocate for an updated assessment from the school. Some PSIs may not consider an older assessment valid and may require an updated assessment of your abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lists of typically used accommodations in school or work experience programs, IEP summaries, or Accommodations Student Cards</td>
<td>Usually designed for teachers, these brief summaries and overviews can often be very helpful for a future instructor or a potential employer to understand your learning disability and the kinds of accommodations that you have accessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Transcripts</td>
<td>Connect with your school counsellor about how to download copies of your transcript.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lists of typically used adaptive technology/software (if applicable).</td>
<td>If there are specific apps/programs or devices/equipment that you use, ensure that these are documented in your DTP. Note 1: Consider contacting the university early to find out what kinds of assistive technology they use for students with learning disabilities. You may find that they use a different text-to-speech app (computer reading program) for tests than you use at your current high school. You may want to purchase and practice using these programs prior to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
enrollment, and certainly do not want to invest in a program that you will not be using.

Note 2: If considering employment, reflect on the ways that assistive technology might assist you in your work day.

- Description on how your learning disability impacts learning in a school or work environment
  
  You will likely be asked to answer this question (in a written application or verbally during an appointment/interview) so it is best to prepare a response which can be used later.

- Description of which accommodations have helped and how they have helped
  
  You will likely be asked to answer this question (in a written application or verbally during an appointment/interview) so it is best to prepare a response which can be used later.

Optional

- Documentation of any other medical conditions by a medical practitioner.
  
  If you require other kinds of services and supports due to any other medical conditions, ensure that you have that documentation in your DTP. You will often need a copy of the medical report or a letter from a medical practitioner.

- Personal Profile
  
  Many PSIs are requesting a personal profile and using it in the application process.

- Cover Letter and Resume (including work and volunteer experience)
  
  Many students create updated cover letters and resumes in school. Take the opportunity to ensure that you have electronic copies for employment searchers.

- Letters of recommendation

- Assignment Samples or Photos of Assignments/Artifacts if applying to a PSI

- Work Samples or documentation/evidence of work skills and employment history

- Relevant Awards, and/or Training Certificates
Handout #3: Timeline for Developing the Digital Transition Portfolio and Application to Post-Secondary Institutions and Employment Services

**Timeline for Applying for Accommodations at a PSI:**
Read the following document to get a sense of the timeline that you will need to follow if you would like to apply for services and supports from a Post-Secondary Institution (PSI). It is the responsibility of the student to contact the appropriate department of the PSI for these services and provide appropriate current and relevant documentation. Many PSIs in British Columbia have different names for the departments that provide supports. Some common names may include Accessibility & Diversity Services or Centre for Students with Disabilities. Note that most PSIs do not provide assessments and that they have their own requirements for eligibility of services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of Graduating Year</th>
<th>To Do:</th>
<th>Points to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| September October        | □ Complete or Update Digital Portfolio  
□ Begin researching application processes for various PSIs | Pay particular attention to each PSI’s application deadlines. It is always beneficial to apply earlier and not wait until the deadline to apply. |
| November December        | □ Applying for admission to PSIs  
□ Make initial contact with the appropriate Accessibility Services or Centre for Students with Disabilities indicating that you are a prospective student. Some departments might indicate that they will not meet with you until you are formally accepted. However, this is a good time to ask a few questions (see notes in next column) | PSIs have different standards and policies regarding how they determine eligibility for services. Consider getting answers early for the following questions:  
1) Is my psychoeducational assessment still valid? Some PSIs use a five-year period for determining validity while others might use a three-year period.  
2) Does the process for applying for services begin with an online application or a scheduled meeting? When do they suggest initiating that process and meeting with an advisor to review an application and documentation? |
| January February March   | □ Upon successful admission, consider making application for services and booking an | There are a number of good reasons to meet or connect once admitted: |
appointment with the appropriate department (ex. Accessibility Services or Centre for Students with Disabilities). In order to access services, you will need to disclose your disability and provide documentation. NEADS (2018) suggest that students “contact the disability office as soon as they receive their acceptance letter”

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1)</td>
<td>This gives you lots of time to learn about the supports and assistive technology that is used in their institution before you begin your studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2)</td>
<td>It can happen that a PSI requires updated assessments or different kinds of assessments that you have not had. By connecting early, you are giving yourself time to address any concerns the PSI may have with your documentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3)</td>
<td>If you are planning on receiving an updated assessment, connect with the PSI to see if they can specify the kinds of assessments they are going to require. They may even provide recommendations of assessors who are knowledgeable of their specific eligibility criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many PSIs state that they need 8-12 weeks to process a request for services. It is important to note that NEADS (2018) recommends that PSIs “encourage students with disabilities to register with disability services even if they do not feel they need accommodations.” By registering for services, you can be empowered to use or decline an accommodation throughout your semester. If you do not advocate for services and find that you need them, it can be very challenging to access them mid semester and have to work through a lengthy eligibility process.
**Timeline for Applying for Employment Services:**
Read the following document to get a sense of the timeline that you will need to follow if you have a disability and are interested in applying for employment services from Work BC. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Back In Motion program at Work BC and provide appropriate documentation. They may be able to support you with securing employment if you do not have a job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month of Graduating Year</th>
<th>To Do:</th>
<th>Points to Consider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| September October November | ☐ Complete or Update Digital Portfolio  
☐ If not employed and if you have a disability, consider connecting with Back In Motion’s Customized Employment Services for people with disabilities. | Contact the office in your community to find out when you can apply for services. Students in their graduating year can sometimes be receiving customized employment supports. |
| December January | ☐ Make application to Back In Motion’s Customized Employment Services for people with disabilities. | Back in Motion may require documentation to determine eligibility for services. Consider sharing your IEP and most recent psychoeducational assessment from your Digital Portfolio. It can assist them in determining eligibility for services and establishing a supportive plan for employment.  
If accepted into the program, consider setting up a meeting with your school Case Manager and Back In Motion Case Manager to coordinate planning. |
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 regard 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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Advocacy Skills</th>
<th>Figure’s Name: ____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are this figure's strengths and weaknesses?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are this figure's rights and/or responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What communication styles or strategies did this figure use in advocating for themselves?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If this figure took on a leadership role, explain how the figure lead?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Advocacy Skills</th>
<th>Figure’s Name: ____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are this figure's strengths and weaknesses?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are this figure's rights and/or responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What communication styles or strategies <strong>should</strong> this figure use in advocating for themselves?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to Consider</th>
<th>Self-Advocacy Skills Growth Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your areas of 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?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What areas of communication are strengths? Are there areas of communication where you need to improve? Explain how.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what areas of your life can you take a leadership role? Explain how.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 situation to consider and complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem Situations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every time you take a Math test, you run out of time. The teacher 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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group Work</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Media</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another student attacks you personally on social media with insults and lies. How do you self-advocate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For each problem situation, work with your group to complete the following graphic organizer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Advocacy Skills Checklist</th>
<th>Situation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are my views &amp; 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?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are my rights and responsibilities in this situation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| How can I best communicate my perspective and views? | Possible Communication Styles:  
   a) Assertive  
   b) Logical  
   c) Inquisitive  
   d) Emotional  
   e) Direct  
Possible Communication Mediums:  
   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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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
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 learn more about 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.
### IEP Self Advocacy Goals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IEP Goals</th>
<th>Materials/Methods</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will review their IEP and most recent psycho-educational assessment with their Case Manager and demonstrate an improved awareness of their learning profile and recommended accommodations.</td>
<td>Pre-Meeting with Student</td>
<td>Interview Observations Lesson Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will further develop their knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td>Lesson 1: Understanding Self-Advocacy and Developing Knowledge of Self</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will demonstrate a greater awareness of the accommodations they can access to compensate for their learning weaknesses.</td>
<td>Lesson 2: Understanding Accommodations and Developing Knowledge of Self</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will recognize when an accommodation is needed with greater accuracy and frequency.</td>
<td>Lesson 2: Understanding Accommodations and Developing Knowledge of Self</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will further develop their understanding of their rights as a student with an IEP and be able to express some of their rights.</td>
<td>Lesson 3: Developing Knowledge of Rights</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will demonstrate an awareness of the FESTA strategy and use it to request accommodations from their classroom teachers with increasing frequency.</td>
<td>Lesson 4: Developing Communication Skills</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will develop the skills to request an accommodation from teachers appropriately, as well as the reason for needing it.</td>
<td>Lesson 4: Developing Communication Skills</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will improve the accuracy and frequency with which they request accommodations from their classroom teachers.</td>
<td>Lesson 5: Developing Communication Skills</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will use a communication tool such as an IEP summary or an accommodations student card to request accommodations with greater frequency.</td>
<td>Lesson 5: Developing Communication Skills</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will identify factors in the school which may be inhibiting them from accessing accommodations and assist in creating a plan of support.</td>
<td>Lesson 5: Developing Communication Skills</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Student Name</em> will create a digital portfolio with copies of their IEPs, assessments, and relevant documentation for potential use with future employers or educational institutions.</td>
<td>Lesson 7: Developing the Digital Transition Portfolio in Preparation for Transitioning from High School to Post-</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Name will be able to explain the process for accessing supports from a disability or accessibility resource center at a post-secondary institution.</td>
<td>Lesson 7: Developing the Digital Transition Portfolio in Preparation for Transitioning from High School to Post-Secondary Studies and/or Employment</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Name will initiate the process of connecting with a disability or accessibility resource center at a post-secondary institution and begin the process of requesting the development of a support plan.</td>
<td>Lesson 7: Developing the Digital Transition Portfolio in Preparation for Transitioning from High School to Post-Secondary Studies and/or Employment</td>
<td>Pre-Post Test Lesson Activities Observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Advocacy Skills Pre-Test/Post-Test

1. What is your name? Click or tap here to enter text.

2. An accommodation is a change that can be made to help you in your studies. An example is extra time on a test. Have you ever discussed the accommodations which are listed in your IEP with a parent or classroom teacher?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
   - [ ] Uncertain

3. Briefly describe two accommodations which are listed in your IEP. If you are uncertain, please write ‘uncertain.’

4. How comfortable do you feel with requesting accommodations?
   - [ ] I feel comfortable requesting accommodations from all of my teachers.
   - [ ] I feel comfortable requesting accommodations from some of my teachers.
   - [ ] I feel uncomfortable requesting accommodations from my teachers.
   - [ ] I do not need any accommodations, so I cannot answer this question.

5. How many times have you requested an accommodation in the past six months?
   - [ ] 0 Times
   - [ ] 1-3 Times
   - [ ] 4-9 Times
   - [ ] 10 or more Times

6. How do you feel about the following statement: *I know what accommodations I can use in the classroom*
   - [ ] Strongly Agree
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Uncertain
   - [ ] Disagree
   - [ ] Strongly Disagree
7. How do you feel about the following statement: *I know how to ask my teacher for accommodations*

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Uncertain  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. How do you feel about the following statement: *I worry that a teacher might get frustrated or angry if I request an accommodation*

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Uncertain  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

9. How do you feel about the following statement: *I often have to leave the classroom to access an accommodation or the technology that I need*

☐ Strongly Agree  ☐ Agree  ☐ Uncertain  ☐ Disagree  ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. Which of the following do you believe to be true?

☐ Teachers choose what accommodations a student can access.
☐ Teachers and students can discuss what accommodations can be used, but the teacher makes the final decision.
☐ Students have a right to use the accommodations listed in their IEPs.
☐ Students can choose what accommodations they can access.
11. Which of the following would help you in becoming more confident in requesting accommodations from your teachers?

- A workshop on my rights as a student with an IEP and how to request accommodations
- A list or card with my accommodations on it
- A meeting with my teachers to identify the accommodations I need to be successful
- Better access to technology so I can access the accommodations I need
- Other (please specify)

12. Describe your experience with requesting accommodations. If you haven't ever requested an accommodation, please explain why.