Helping Students Find their Voice: Self-Advocacy Strategies

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Today’s Objectives

• Identify strategies for developing Disability Awareness
• Explore ways to cultivate students talents and interests.
• Discuss effective communication strategies that promote self-advocacy.
• Develop the skills necessary to identify resources and strategies to teach independent living skills
Self-Advocacy: Empowering students to recognize their abilities and ask for assistance when needed without using their limitations as a crutch.
Teaching Disability Awareness and Self Advocacy: Where do we Start?

- Parental Empowerment: High Expectations from Parents = High Expectations from students!
- Familiarize yourself with tools and resources to set those high expectations
  Talk to your children early about their disability.

- Examples of Empowerment:
  - Knowledge of IEP/504 rights
  - Explore future opportunities available to students
  Engage your children on the topic of “Disability Awareness” and Self-Advocacy
Parental Empowerment: Developing High Expectations for Students

Future Opportunities

• Think College:
  • http://www.thinkcollege.net/component/programsdatabase/search?state=MD
• Vocational Rehabilitation Services
• Disability Services offices at colleges and Universities

Tips for Developing Disability Awareness and Advocacy

• Stay Positive: Focus on Strengths and Abilities
• Give your child household responsibilities.
• Encourage Socialization (going out to eat, to a movie, etc.)
Student Empowerment: Disability Awareness

- Begin discussing the child’s Disability Early
- Focus on the child’s strengths
- Look for Success Stories of individuals with disability
- Persurvierence not Pity
Cultivating a Student’s Talents and Interests

- Encourage involvement in the community (Church groups, sports teams, after-school activities)
- Encourage “Start-Finish” policy
- Watch for developing strengths and interests from an early age.
- Involve the student in their IEP and Transition Plan
- Pay close attention to the courses that the student is taking at school.
- NSTTAC Age Appropriate Assessment Tool-Kit
Effective Self-Advocacy: Communication is Key!

Effective Communication Skills:

• Avoid attacking statements (“you always/never”)
• Teach good posture, body language and facial expressions
• There is a difference between being a good advocate vs. being adversarial

Teaching Strategies

• Parents and students create separate lists of goals for the students/Then discuss
• Involve your student in any planning meetings that you may have to prepare for the transition IEP meeting.
• Role play or use social stories to prepare the student for IEP/504 meetings and other situations that may involve advocacy.
Identify barriers to independent living and identify possible solutions and/or ask questions to ensure it is addressed in the IEP.

Ask student what he/she wants out of life.

Having a job is important, but that’s not everything!
Independent Living Skill Resources

• Independent Living Skills Overview:
  • “Plan a Perfect Life” budgeting tool
  • http://www.tnstep.org/resources/transitionServices.aspx

• Think College Island:
  • http://www.thinkcollege.net/think-college-island
Questions:

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