Self-Advocacy
Shimul Gajjar, Educational Consultant, Transition TN
What is Self-Advocacy?

- Knowing oneself and rights
- Confidence to speak about strengths, preferences, interests, needs and rights
- Important in school, community, and especially workplace
Importance of Self-Advocacy

- "Nothing about me, without me!"
- More success in school, the workplace, and the community
- Much more important in adulthood--most programs and services do not seek out people with disabilities. Some of these programs include VR, Centers for Independent Living, state Intellectual and Developmental Disability Agencies, postsecondary education programs, and mental health agencies.
“Individuals who scored higher on a measure of self-determination than their peers had more positive adult outcomes, such as a higher rate of employment and higher wages 1 year after graduation”

Browder et al., July/August, 2001
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act objective: Preparing students with disabilities to “lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible”
To implement the law, **at a minimum** schools need to:

- Invite the student to attend their own IEP meeting
- Make sure the student’s preferences, interests, needs and strengths are considered when developing the IEP
Self-Advocacy Skills

- Knowledge of Self
- Knowledge of Rights
- Communication
- Leadership

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy 2005
Knowledge of Self

Consider…

- Strengths
- Skills
- Need Areas
- Interventions
- Accommodations
- Modifications
Characteristics of one’s disability: Learning how their disability affects academic, living, worksite and social situations

Accommodation and support needs: Understanding how to meet the needs they have in those settings, in order to be as independent as possible
Teaching Self-Awareness

- Questionnaires and activities to identify strengths, interests and preferences
- Formal lessons plans
- Learning style stations around classroom
- IEP meetings
- Job-site self-evaluations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessments and Surveys</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIR Self-Determination Scale</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Identifies strength and need areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Creates educational goals</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ARC Self-Determination Scale</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Measures autonomy, self-regulation, psychological empowerment and self-realization.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I’m Determined: Self-Determination Checklist</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Student, parent and teacher assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>✓ Quick overview survey</td>
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Strengths, Interests and Preferences

- TN College and Career Planning System
- Personal Preference Indicators
- Functional Skills Transition Assessment
- Community-based Skills Assessment
Visit the Job Accommodation Network for ideas of reasonable workplace accommodations

- Visit the Accommodation Information by Disability page to learn about accommodations for specific disabilities

- Visit the JAN: Individuals page for resources about ADA, how to file a request for accommodations, etc. under “Publications and Resources”
Rights Change Over Time...

**IDEA Ensures:**
- FAPE
- Evaluation/IEP
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Parent Participation
- Procedural Safeguards

**ADA Prohibits Discrimination For:**
- Employment
- Schools
- Transportation
- Public and private places open to the general public.
Resources for Teaching Rights

- “The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities” — Unit 4
- ADA in the Workplace
- Invite a local Arc chapter to classroom to explain disability rights
- TN Ready
- ADA Overview
- ADA Postsecondary
Practice Learning the Laws!

https://www.onlinequizcreator.com/ada-true-false/quiz-421573
Communication Skills

- Assertiveness
- Negotiation
- Articulation
- Body Language
- Use of Assistive Technology
- Listening
- Persuasion
- Compromise

Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy 2005
Teaching Communication of Needs

- Mock interviews for jobs
- Practice requesting accommodations
- Teaching appropriate behavior and body language
  - Assertiveness, negotiation, eye contact, listening, compromise, assistive technology if needed
Teaching Communication in Steps

- Identify the goal of advocacy/the conversation.
- Develop a plan.
- Consider the other person’s perspective.
- Be aware of all potential reactions & outcomes.
- Be sure you are speaking to the right person.
- Discuss the issue/present the case.
- Be open to compromise.

Adapted from: Autism Speaks: https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Advocacy%20Tool%20Kit.pdf
Teaching Communication Skills

- The 411 on Disability Disclosure
- Skills to Pay the Bills
- TransitionTN: Practicing Self-Advocacy in the Community
- TransitionTN: Effective Non-Verbal Communication Skills
Putting it All Together

- Work through full “The 411 on Disability Disclosure: A Workbook for Youth with Disabilities”
- Review this Autism Speaks document with students, provide it to parents.
Leadership Skills

- Knowledge of resources
- Knowledge of group’s rights
- Advocating for others or for causes
Leadership Opportunities

- National Youth Leadership Forum - student representatives learn disability advocacy skills
- Y.O.! Disabled and Proud - youth organizing group for volunteering
- All for Good volunteer opportunities
- Check out your local area for opportunities
Opportunities to Practice

- Arrange class schedule
- Request course accommodations
- Meet with physician to express needs or concerns
- Interview for a job
- Express opinions at an IEP meeting
- Request job accommodations during WBL
- Practice disclosing disability with a teacher
Employment First FL:
- https://icimedia.wistia.com/medias/bwn6690liu
Self-Advocacy Q&A

Ben Robertson  
*Dobyns-Bennett High School*  
Transition School to Work Coordinator  
WBL NETN Regional Lead  
Email: brobertson@k12k.com

Billy Etter  
*Dobyns-Bennett High School*  
Transition Coach  
Email: wetter@k12k.com