

# Self-Advocacy Skills and Self-Determination in Personalized Learning

## Considerations for Educators

**Personalized learning (PL)** offers students more decision-making authority over where, when, and how learning takes place and is demonstrated. For students with disabilities to succeed in personalized settings, they must learn, practice, and develop strong **self-advocacy skills and self-determination (SA/SD)**, which have been shown to improve educational and life outcomes. Educators across the country implementing personalized learning are reassessing their practices and role in the classroom to support the development of self-advocacy skills and self-determination for students.



### DEFINING KEY TERMS

**Personalized learning** is a process in which students' learning experiences are tailored to their individual needs, skills, and interests, enabling them to take ownership of their learning.

**Self-determination** is a dispositional characteristic that enables a person to act in service of freely chosen goals and make or cause things to happen in their own life.

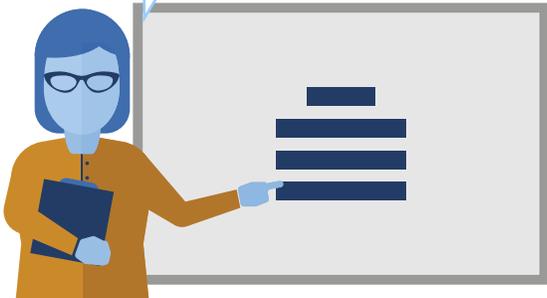
**Self-advocacy skills** include understanding yourself, your rights, and your needs, and communicating that understanding—leading to self-determination.

“All students deserve a voice in the learning process. This includes both influence around what, when, and how learning unfolds and options regarding how to demonstrate what they know and can do. Feeling successful and enjoying learning are reinforced when a student has clear goals, monitors progress and growth, knows where work fits, and understands what's next. Self-advocacy and student agency invest youth with a sense of purpose and meaning.”

— Dr. Eric Tucker, *Cofounder and Executive Director, Brooklyn Laboratory Charter School*

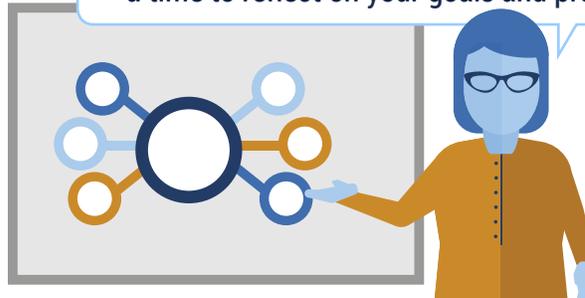
### Not Encouraging Student Self-Advocacy

Here is exactly how I want you to do this assignment.



### Encouraging Self-Advocacy

Here's the learning goal. You have options in how you show me you've learned this. We'll set a time to reflect on your goals and progress.



## TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP SA/SD IN PL, YOU CAN:

1. **Learn more about various disabilities and how they may impact student success and identify best practices for empowering SA/SD.** *Example:* A grade-level team of general and special educators can share knowledge about disabilities and discuss how to help each student develop SA/SD.
2. **Design lessons that include explicit instruction and learning objectives around SA/SD.** *Example:* A civics teacher can design a unit around the history of the civil rights and disability rights movements with learning objectives about how different populations exercised SA/SD throughout history.
3. **Implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL) alongside a personalized approach to teaching so that your students have meaningful choices in how they access, engage, and represent their learning.** *Example:* A professional learning community in PL can discuss how the principles of UDL can apply across different classrooms.
4. **Set measurable goals in your class for SA/SD in IEPs and Personalized Learning Plans and use tools and formative assessments to measure student progress in achieving those goals.** *Example:* A third-grade teacher can take the parent/teacher inventory on Self-Determination.org and discuss her findings at an IEP meeting or a one-on-one meeting with the student and her parent.
5. **Enact advisories or other activities in your classroom to give students a voice and an opportunity to weigh in on their education.** *Example:* Set Monday morning and/or Friday afternoon as a reflection period in your class, providing students an opportunity to look forward and back, reflecting on their needs, strengths and how they can move forward.