

Self-Advocacy Skills and Self-Determination in Personalized Learning

Considerations for Policymakers

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. Policymakers can advance policies that set the conditions for and support SA/SD by prioritizing accessibility, measurement of SA/SD skills, and adequate resources to empower students to develop and practice these skills.

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.

“We all play an important role within a child’s life in creating the right conditions and expectations that ensure they have equitable opportunities to achieve success in life beyond school. No one has more of a stake in a child’s life than the child, so the development of their skills in self-advocacy and self-determination are critical to the improved outcomes that we, and each of them, envision.”

— Johnny Collett, *Assistant Secretary of Rehabilitative Services US Department of Education (Formerly Program Director at the Council of Chief State School Officers)*

Not Encouraging Student Self-Advocacy

What students need is...



Encouraging Self-Advocacy

How can we think together
about creating a more
student-centered system?



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

1. **Adopt a strengths-based approach to PL by emphasizing student development of SA/SD skills.** *Example:* Adopt a definition of strengths-based Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) through reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
2. **Provide students with opportunities to practice skills associated with SA/SD.** *Example:* Adopt policies that allow students to receive academic credit for out-of-school learning opportunities that meet high standards of rigor including quality service and work-based learning experiences.
3. **Make sure students have meaningful options and choices by emphasizing accessibility in education.** *Example:* You can provide incentives for schools that adopt the principles of Universal Design for Learning in reform efforts.
4. **Incorporate measures of SA/SD into the evaluation of student, educator, and school success.** *Example:* Adopt capstone requirements, performance assessments and school climate surveys that measure self-advocacy skills and self-determination in students.