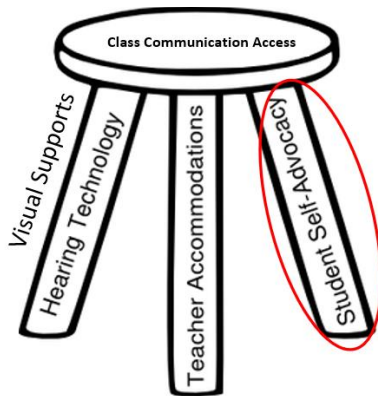


Self-Advocacy Instruction – Necessary for Full Participation



The ‘bread and butter’ of itinerant support to students with hearing loss is often considered to be ensuring communication access, supporting language development, and self-advocacy skills training. While access relates to ADA requirements, and supporting language is linked to academics, training in self-advocacy is too often considered to be non-academic and therefore not necessary. One thing we know for sure about our students is that they will miss or misunderstand more communication than their peers. This is the basis for ongoing language and vocabulary issues and underlies the need for self-advocacy. Access and teacher accommodations cannot close all ongoing speech perception or communication gaps. It truly is necessary to teach self-advocacy skills to enable students to fully participate in the classroom and act appropriately when they know they have not fully received or understood information.

If a student who was low vision was continually knocking into people, desks, and classroom walls due to the inability to clearly see everything, a vision specialist would likely be called in to assist the student in developing appropriate orientation and mobility skills. A student with hearing loss often incompletely hears, misses spoken information, or misunderstands what is said. Self-Advocacy training is to a student with hearing loss what orientation and mobility training is to a student with visual impairment.

Students do not know what they didn’t hear because they didn’t hear it – yet they are often held accountable for receiving and fully understanding this information. Full participation in the classroom requires that a student recognize when a communication breakdown occurs, and self-advocate for their listening and learning needs. Students who are deaf or hard of hearing must have the knowledge and skills to access accommodations and support in any setting and as an integral part of an independent adulthood. Ideally, students would have instruction in self-advocacy from preschool through grade 4 (about age 10). As they reach the tween and teen years, focus should change on supporting the student’s ability to problem-solve communication issues as part of their self-determination of future goals.

Components of Self-Advocacy

Following are basic questions that students with hearing loss typically require instruction in so that they can understand their hearing needs and respond appropriately.

Self-Advocacy

1. What does it mean to have a hearing loss?
2. Why do I have problems understanding (relate to hearing loss and language issues)?
3. How does my hearing loss affect me (school, socially)?
4. When do I have problems understanding what people say?
5. How important are my hearing devices?
6. How do I know when my hearing devices are not working?
7. What should I do when they are not working?
8. What can I do when I know I have not heard what was said (specific self-advocacy & communication repair strategies)?

Self-Determination

9. How much am I willing to have the hearing loss impact how well I do in school (planning/future goals)?
10. When is it critical for me to disclose my hearing loss (problem solving)?
11. What are my legal rights to access, supports, and services?

Self-Advocacy		
Knowledge -HL impact on not fully perceiving info -Independence with hearing devices	Communication Breakdown -When they occur -Why they occur -What to do (skills)	Communication Repair Skills -How to request clarification
Self-Determination		
Setting goals and creating a plan	Deciding when to disclose hearing loss (problem solving)	Taking responsibility to ‘try’ or ‘get by’ (owning consequences)

From the Office of Civil Rights

We need to encourage students to understand their disability.

- They need to know the functional limitations that result from their disability.
- Understand their strengths and weaknesses. Be able to explain their disability to others.
- Be able to explain their difficulties in the past, and what has helped them overcome such problems.
- This should include specific adjustments or strategies that might work in specific situations.
- They must practice explaining their disability, as well as why they need certain accommodations, supports, or services.

U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Transition of Students With Disabilities to Postsecondary Education: [A Guide for High School Educators](#), Washington, D.C., 2007

He Does Not Know What He Did Not Hear

This reality underlies the requirement to teach self-advocacy, specifically teaching the student about what he does hear, does not hear and under what conditions, and how to use situational awareness to recognize when he likely missed information. **Some knowledge of hearing loss teaching and assessment resources:**

1. [Advocacy in Action](#) Self-Advocacy Curriculum
2. Audiology Self-Advocacy Checklist – [Elementary School](#) [Middle School](#) [High School](#) (PDF)
3. [Building Skills for Success in the Fast-Paced Classroom](#)
4. [ELFLing](#)
5. [Monkey Talk Self-Advocacy Game](#)
6. [Phonak Guide to Access Planning](#)
7. Recorded Functional Listening Evaluation Using Sentences ([FLE](#))
8. [Rule the School Self-Advocacy Game](#)
9. [Steps to Success](#) Scope and Sequence of Skills for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Teaching Hearing Device Use and Troubleshooting

Some knowledge of hearing device use teaching and assessment resources:

1. [Advocacy in Action](#) Self-Advocacy Curriculum
2. [Building Skills for Independence in the Mainstream](#)
3. [Hearing Aid, FM, Roger Pen Bingo game](#)
4. [SEAM – Student Expectations for Advocacy & Monitoring Listening and Hearing Technology](#) (PDF)
5. [Steps to Success](#) Scope and Sequence of Skills for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Teaching Self-Advocacy Strategies

Some knowledge of self-advocacy skills teaching and assessment resources:

1. [Advocacy in Action](#) Self-Advocacy Curriculum
2. [Building Skills for Independence in the Mainstream](#)
3. [Building Skills for Success in the Fast-Paced Classroom](#)
4. [COACH: Self-Advocacy & Transition Skills for Secondary Students](#) who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
5. [Guide to Self-Advocacy Skill Development: Suggestions for Sequence of Skill Attainment](#) (PDF)
6. [Monkey Talk Self-Advocacy Game](#)
7. [Phonak Guide to Access Planning](#)
8. [Rule the School Self-Advocacy Game](#)
9. [SCRIPT 2nd Ed: Student Communication Repair Inventory & Practical Training](#)
10. [Steps to Success](#) Scope and Sequence of Skills for Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing
11. [What's the Problem Game](#)

Success in the general education setting requires an ongoing instruction program in self-advocacy skills needs, including hearing aid independence, to be a part of the services provided to students with hearing loss as part of their IEP or 504 Plan.