



**Building Self-Advocates:
A key to student success**

Viewers' Guide



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Viewers' Guide

This video discusses the importance of helping students, especially those with LDs, become strong self-advocates. In order for students to successfully speak on their own behalf and advocate for their learning, they must first understand their own strengths, to develop confidence and a sense of identity. Students must also know their needs in order to navigate their school careers and advocate for the specific accommodations or modifications that they need. By providing the right kind of supports and a safe classroom environment, educators can encourage their students to speak up on their own behalf, and take risks in their learning, with the knowledge that it's OK to be different and to make mistakes. The video includes interviews with classroom teachers at elementary and secondary levels, a superintendent of special education, and a principal, who discuss a variety of strategies and tools to help students learn what works best for them and have the confidence to ask for help when they need it. Additionally, a number of students, of various ages, share their perspectives on strategies for self-advocacy and what has worked for them in the past.

This viewers' guide provides viewers with the opportunity to reflect on their role in helping students build self-advocacy skills, by reflecting on their thoughts and practices, both individually and as a group. The viewers' guide includes the following sections:

- Building Self-Advocates Concept Map is a pre-viewing activity which allows viewers to record what they know about self-advocacy and how they currently promote self-advocacy. Viewers will have an opportunity to deepen their understanding of self-advocacy and reflect on the importance of self-advocacy.
- Guided Viewing = Key Concepts is an activity intended to be completed while viewing the video. Use this space of the viewer's guide to record key concepts from the video.
- Fostering Self-Advocacy in the Classroom is a post-viewing/application activity, which provides viewers with an opportunity to further reflect on their current classroom practice, the video, and to consider what teaching strategies could supplement current practice.
- *Appendix A* provides a list of relevant resources on the LD@school website, including articles, research summaries, videos, a podcast and a tip sheet.





Building Self-Advocates Concept Map

Pre-viewing Activity

Prior to watching the video, complete the first three boxes:

What does self-advocacy mean for my students?

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What are some signs that students are becoming self-advocates?

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How do I support student self-advocacy in my classroom?


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Discuss your answers with a partner or in a small group.

Once you have viewed the video, go back to complete the fourth box:

What new ideas can I use to support my students in becoming self-advocates?

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Guided Viewing = Key Concepts

Viewing Activity

While watching the video, use the graphic organizer below to record key concepts, in response to the guiding questions.

Why is it important that students understand their **learning strengths** when advocating for themselves?

Why is it important that students understand their **learning needs** when advocating for themselves?

What can I do to create an **environment** where students feel safe and confident to self-advocate?

What are some of the reasons a student **may not want to** self-advocate?

What are the **benefits** of self-advocacy?



Fostering Self-Advocacy in the Classroom

Application Activity

This post-viewing/application activity is based on a resource found on the LD@school website, "Fostering Self-Advocacy – A Tip Sheet", developed by Lynn Ziraldo, Dr. Sue Ball, and Liz Ablett.

➔ [Click here to view the tip sheet on the LD@school website.](#)

Reflecting on the video, and your current classroom practice, complete the following chart:

Teaching Strategy	Yes – I already use this strategy	Not yet - a strategy I could consider
Teach students the four phases of advocacy: stop, think, act, and check it out.		
Teach the use of clear, direct requests or directives rather than hinting, being indirect, or presuming.		
Promote a classroom atmosphere of support, encouragement, and acceptance by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• using strategies such as co-operative grouping, learning, and play• direct teaching of the necessary social skills		
Teach the appropriate use of assertive behaviours through strategies such as modelling, role-playing, and co-operative group learning.		
Remind students that body language is very important and practice in a mirror. Assertive body language uses eye contact, head nodding, a relaxed posture, and an even-toned voice.		
Teach students the appropriate language and remind them it's not always what they say, but also how they say it, that matters.		





Relate problems to real life situations the student may encounter. Brainstorm possible scenarios the students may find themselves in. Practice the advocacy skills by using games, short stories, social problem-solving stories, pictures, role-playing, and group discussion.		
Provide opportunities for relevant problem solving in context through themes, games, and small group activities.		
Teach the appropriate language for assertive communication.		
Discuss with the student their strengths and needs, so that they may: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• understand their own strengths, needs, abilities, and interests• set goals for themselves		
Take ownership and responsibility to advocate for themselves.		

Either on your own or with a partner, brainstorm for other ways you could foster self-advocacy in the classroom and record your ideas here:

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Appendix A

Relevant Resources on the LD@school Website

- ▶ [Click here to access the video, "Our Self-Advocacy Pamphlet Journey" created by, Mike Di Donato and his Grade Eight Students.](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the evidence-based: "Strategies to Teach Self-Advocacy Skills".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the evidence-based strategy, "Supporting the Development of Self-Determination".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the evidence-informed strategy, "The Pedagogy of Care and Concern: A Winning Approach to Fostering the Well-Being of Students with Learning Disabilities".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the practice-informed strategy, "Fostering Self-Advocacy – Tip Sheet".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the practice-informed strategy, "A Teacher's Journey with Student Self-Advocacy".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the podcast, "The Journey to Becoming a Self-Advocate: Three Students' Perspectives".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to access the Talk LD podcast, "Supporting Students on their Self-Advocacy Journey".](#)
- ▶ [Click here to visit the LD@school page and access the Ask the Experts article, "What does a student need to know about his/her learning disability in order to be his/her own self-advocate?"](#)
- ▶ [Click here to read an article written by self-advocate, Elisa Blasi, "The Elephant in the Room".](#)

The CanLearn Society has produced a resource for educators that will help them teach students understand their strengths and needs and how to communicate their needs to others.

- ▶ [Click here to view the resource.](#)
- ▶ [Click here to access an article about "Self Advocacy", canLEARN Society.](#)



Thank you for watching *Building self-advocates: A key to student success* and for using this viewers' guide.

At this time, we invite you to share your thoughts and comments relating to this video; the feedback we receive will assist in the development of future videos and future content for the LD@school website. Please share your thoughts and comments by completing our short survey through this link:

👉 https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/building_self-advocates

Here is an opportunity to help out other educators!

Do you have any building self-advocacy success stories that you would like to share with LD@school? Or do you know of a specific strategy, practice or approach that has worked well in supporting the needs of students with learning disabilities at school?

👉 [Click here to send your ideas to info@LDatSchool.ca.](mailto:info@LDatSchool.ca)

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