

Preparing For Your Self-Advocacy Meetings

Instruction in Self-Advocacy Benchmark:

Increase awareness of opportunities in the community to build leadership skills, expand community networks, and increase advocacy skills. (Partial)

Note to those providing service:

These activities are developed in a way that allows the learner to gradually build upon their skills. Each student has different foundational skills so some students may need more support or instruction than others. With that being said, you can choose what activity you start with based on your learner's strengths and needs.



Extended Pathways

Students who are interested or enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) or postsecondary education, regardless of disability (remember to presume competence!), may or may not need some of the information that seems introductory in nature. Take as much or little time as needed based on student knowledge. More specific activities related to CTE and postsecondary education are identified as extended activities and pathways.

Preparation and Materials Needed:

- This lesson is long with a lot of options from activities to tools. Be familiar with both your student's advocacy and writing skills, but also your comfort level with the various tools. You can pick the activities or tools based on your ability to deliver an impactful service to the student.
- Prepare needed assistive technologies and/or accommodations (ex: communication supports (visual, objects, pictures, voice output devices, etc.), physical supports/space access needs, vision supports, hearing supports, sensory needs/supports).
- Computer to access videos and websites. Print materials in advance if necessary.



Print

- [IEP Vocabulary \(Powerpoint\)](#)
- [IEP Social Story](#)
- [My Planning Meeting PowerPoint](#)
- [My Planning Meeting Worksheet](#)
- [Cincinnati State Transition Guide for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [High School to College Worksheet](#)
- [Charting the LifeCourse: Portfolio for Exploring](#)
- [Disability Disclosure Note Catcher](#)

Activities to Meet Benchmarks

Activity 1: Your Plan, Your Voice

This activity aims to review vocabulary related to an IEP.



Discuss: Learning the important words in your Individualized Education Plan can help you understand how it works and how it connects to other plans, like a plan for getting a job or other services. Knowing these words can help you take control of your plan and be more involved. We'll go over the vocabulary together.

[Note to Instructors: Instructors may consider skipping for students enrolled in post-secondary education or currently on a 504 Plan.]



Review: [IEP Vocabulary PowerPoint](#). *[Note to Instructors: Feel free to modify the vocabulary to meet your students' needs.]*

- **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** This is an individualized plan created by a team of educational professionals, caregivers and the student that outlines what a student needs to learn and what help and supports they need to have in place to learn the skills and goals listed.
- **Future Planning:** A statement that can be made by you, your staff, and/or your caregivers about what you want to do as you grow up and prepare to graduate high school. This can include future plans for employment, school, and life.
- **Profile:** A summary of who you are, your preferences, interests, needs and strengths (PINS).
- **Transition Planning:** A plan that will help outline what you will do when you graduate high school. This plan should include goals around education, employment and independent living.
- **Post-Secondary Education:** Learning that happens after high school, like college, a trade school, adult enrichment, or vocational training.
- **Competitive Integrated Employment:** A job where you work alongside people without disabilities, do the same job tasks, and earn a comparable wage for your work.
- **Independent Living:** Being able to take care of yourself, with or without supports, which includes things like cooking your own meals, cleaning your home, and managing your money.
- **Present Level of Performance:** This describes how well you are doing in school right now with a particular subject. This should include what you have been working on, how you are doing with the content, and what supports you may need to do better.
- **Annual Goals:** There are academic areas you want to learn or get better at during the school year. Annual goals should be developed based on your present level of performance in the academic category and should build off previous year's goals.



- **Accommodations:** These are special types of help that make it easier for you to learn. They might include things like having extra time on tests or using a computer to write instead of using a pencil.
- **Modifications:** These are changes made to what you're learning to help you succeed. It might mean learning different things or in different ways than other students in your class.
- **Related Services:** These are professional staff that help you at school to achieve your transition and annual goals. These professionals could be a speech therapist, occupational therapist, behavior support professional, or physical therapist to name a few.
- **Meeting Participants:** These are the people who come to your IEP meeting. They might include your caregivers, teachers, advocates and other professionals who help plan your education.



Extending the Conversation

If you are working with students who have questions about various people who may be on their IEP team, and what their specific role is to the team, you can watch these videos to gain a better understanding.



Watch: [Let's Introduce You to the IEP Team \(1:45\)](#)

[Note to Instructors: There are 23 videos in this group. These videos are not meant to be watched in order, but only pick the ones that relate to student needs/questions. These videos will provide a general overview of each potential team member and what their function is. When watching the Community Representatives video, they refer to Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD) as Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).]

Activity 2: Preparing for Your Next Meeting

This activity aims to help students prepare for their IEP meeting.



Watch: [Student Led IEP Meeting \(3:20\)](#)

Now that you've got the key IEP terms down, it's time to step up and take charge in your planning meetings! This video will show you how student-led IEP meetings work and exactly how you fit into the process. Think of this as a chance to use your voice to make sure your needs and goals are front and center. Even though we're focusing on IEP meetings now, you'll find that these self-advocacy skills can help you take charge in any planning meeting. Let's dive in and start shaping the future you want!



Discuss: Now that you've learned about student-led planning meetings, let's put this knowledge into action. Below you will find lots of different tools that you can use in future meetings. Regardless of the type of meeting, being able to communicate your preferences, interests, needs, and strengths, and advocate for future goals will help your team design a plan centered around you and your unique needs. Let's explore some options that can help you prepare to join, share, or even lead your next planning meeting.

[Note to Instructors: There are 4 options for students to use for their next meeting. In Ohio, many different organizations are using Charting the LifeCourse Tools to help families and students plan for a good life. The focus of Options 1, 2, and 3 will come from [Charting the LifeCourse Portfolio for Exploring](#) resource. The different tools that can be used are the One-Page Description (Option 1), the Integrated Support Star (Option 2), and the Life Trajectory (Option 3). You may have already used some of these tools in previous lessons, which is great. It is important to know that there are no right or wrong ways to use these tools and resources, but really a platform for people to start talking about a goal, task, or activity.]

Option 4 is a student-led PowerPoint template to let students organize their thoughts and ideas for their next planning meeting. This option includes prompts in a PowerPoint or worksheet, so feel free to use what best fits the student.]



Option 1: One-Page Description

- **Use Simple Prompts:** Break down the [One Page Description](#) into clear sections that students can relate to, such as:
 - **“What others like and admire about me”:** Strengths, personality traits, or achievements they’re proud of.
 - **“What’s important to me?”:** Hobbies, activities, people they enjoy being around.
 - **“How to best support me”:** Any specific needs or preferences for learning or interacting.
- **Role-Playing and Practice:** Have students role-play presenting their One-Page Description in a mock Planning Meeting like an IEP, IPE, or ISP. This helps students get comfortable talking about themselves in a structured way.
- **Visual Supports and Examples:** Show completed One-Page Descriptions of yourself to inspire students and demonstrate how these profiles highlight who they are beyond academics.



Resource: [Charting the LifeCourse Portfolio for Exploring - One-Page Description](#)



Option 2: Integrated Support Star

The [Integrated Support Star](#) from the Charting the LifeCourse tools can be a powerful way for students to see all the resources they have access to and how they can support their goals. The following activities are ways to introduce the use of the Integrated Support Star.

- **Break Down Each Support Area:** Explain the five points of the star—personal strengths and assets, relationships, eligibility-based supports, community-based supports, and technology. Describe each category with examples, so students understand what kinds of supports fit into each area.
 - **Personal Strengths and Assets:** These are qualities, talents and skills unique to the person filling out the star. These could include personal characteristics like creativity or problem-solving skills. These can also be personal interests or hobbies.
 - **Relationships:** This category includes the people in the student’s life who provide support, encouragement, and guidance. It could be family members, friends, mentors, teachers, coaches, or even neighbors. These relationships play a role in helping the student feel connected, supported, and valued.

- **Eligibility Specific Supports:** These are formal supports the student qualifies for based on their needs or disability status. Examples include IEP accommodations, disability services in college, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities (OOD), County Board of Developmental Disability Services (DDS), Social Security benefits, or any other government-funded support services. These resources are often individualized to provide necessary assistance for success.
- **Community Based Supports:** This category includes resources available within the community that are open to everyone, such as recreational centers, libraries, youth programs, clubs, and volunteer opportunities. Community resources provide opportunities for students to connect, learn, and grow outside of formal, eligibility-based services.
- **Technology:** This includes tools, devices, and applications that support the student's independence and learning. Examples are tablets, communication devices, accessibility apps, task management tools, or educational software. Technology can enhance the student's ability to communicate, learn, stay organized, or engage in activities they enjoy.
- **Use a "Support Star Scavenger Hunt":** Have students brainstorm resources they already have in each category and fill out their own support star. For instance:
 - **Personal strengths:** Skills, interests, personal qualities
 - **Relationships:** Family, friends, mentors, teachers
 - **Eligibility-based:** IEP accommodations, vocational rehab services
 - **Community-based:** Local clubs, community centers, volunteer opportunities
 - **Technology:** Apps, accessibility tools, devices they rely on
- **Link Supports to Goals:** Help students connect each type of support with their personal or academic goals. For instance, if a student's goal is to increase independence, they could look at how community resources or technology might help.
- **Practice Presenting It:** To build confidence, have students practice presenting their Support Star to the group. This gives them a chance to explain how they plan to use these supports to reach their goals, making their team meeting participation more meaningful.



Resource: [Charting the LifeCourse Portfolio for Exploring - Integrated Support Star](#)



Option 3: Life Trajectory Tool

The [Life Trajectory Tool](#) is excellent for helping students visualize their personal goals and understand what they want to work toward and what they want to avoid when working towards or setting goals. Here's a breakdown of each part of this tool:

- **What I Want in My Life:** Students identify specific aspects they want in their lives across different domains—like health, relationships, work, learning, and community involvement. This helps students envision a balanced life and identify what's most important to them in each area. If you are using this tool with a specific goal in mind, this section should reflect what the student wants as it relates to the goal.
- **What I Don't Want in My Life:** This section is where students outline what they want to avoid across different domains—like health, relationships, work, learning, and community involvement. For example, in the "relationships" area, a student might want to avoid people who don't respect their boundaries or take advantage of them. This can help students recognize potential red flags and set healthy boundaries for their friendships, romantic partners or even their providers. If you are using this tool with a specific goal in mind, this section should reflect what the student does not want as it relates to the goal.
- **The Trajectory Line:** This is the section where students will put past experiences that have influenced choices, what they want in life and what they don't want in life. On the trajectory line you will notice two boxes, one above the line and one below the line. The box above the line is where you can put things that are currently working or going well in the student's life. This can include things like classes they are doing well in, jobs or volunteer experiences that are positive, social clubs or activities they find enjoyable. In the box below the line, think about all the things that have happened in life that have prevented the student from living the life that they want. This could be things like having difficulty following a personal budget, never getting the job you apply for, or never getting to make choices about what you wear on the weekends. When students can identify experiences that are going well for them or maybe even those that are hindering their progress it will help them be able to better advocate for what they need in the future to be successful.



Resource: [Charting the LifeCourse Portfolio for Exploring - Life Trajectory Tool](#)



Option 4: Student Led PowerPoint

A student led PowerPoint is a great way to help a student prepare for a meeting and present information. It allows the student to display one slide at a time and focus on the prompt. They can use the [My Planning Meeting PowerPoint](#) and project it during their meeting. Another option students can use is the [My Planning Meeting Worksheet](#) to share their thoughts with their team.

Choose and download one of the following documents that best suit your student's learning preferences. Encourage your student to complete independently or with support.



Resource:

- [My Planning Meeting PowerPoint](#)
- [My Planning Meeting Worksheet](#)

Activity 3: To Disclose or Not to Disclose?

This activity aims to explain disability disclosure and share resources.



Discuss: Throughout your time learning about self-advocacy, you have explored your rights and responsibilities and learned how laws and protections can shift as you age and move into new environments. We have also talked about how to speak up for yourself in your meetings.

Today we're going to dive into a topic that's super important but might feel a bit tricky: disclosing your disability. While you're in school, your IEP or 504 Plan helps you get the support and accommodations you need. But as you get ready to go to college or jump into the workforce, it's up to YOU to decide if and when to share that information which will allow you to request accommodations.

In this lesson, we're going to explore what it means to disclose your disability. We'll talk about why it might be a good idea to disclose this information, how it can help you get the support you need, and what you should think about when making this decision.



Watch: [Journey to Independence: Disability Disclosure \(21:14\)](#). All job seekers with a disability are faced with the same question. Should I tell my employer about my disabilities? Watch this video to learn about Michelle's experience with this process, and learn the 5 Ws—who, what, where, when, why and how of disability disclosure for employment.



Resource: Use this [Disability Disclosure Note Catcher](#) to jot down your thoughts as we pause for reflection questions. *[Note to Instructors: The note catcher can be printed and shared with students to use while watching the video. Pause as needed for conversation, discussion, and note taking.]*



Click and Explore:

- [Ask JAN](#): The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) provides free, expert guidance on workplace accommodations for individuals with disabilities. It offers resources to help both employees and employers navigate the accommodation process, ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and promoting inclusive workplaces.
- [Disability Rights Ohio](#): This organization advocates for the rights of individuals with disabilities in Ohio, offering legal support and resources to address issues like discrimination, access to education, and community integration. They aim to empower people with disabilities through advocacy and education, ensuring equitable treatment and opportunities.
- [Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities \(OOD\)](#): OOD focuses on helping Ohioans with disabilities achieve independence through employment. They provide various services, including vocational rehabilitation, job placement assistance, and resources for employers to create inclusive workplaces.
- [CareerOneStop](#): This site offers resources for job seekers with disabilities, including guidance on disclosing a disability to employers and understanding workplace accommodations. It aims to support individuals in navigating their career paths while ensuring they have access to necessary resources and support systems.



Extended Pathways

This activity aims to review how disability rights and responsibilities shift from high school to college.

Transition Guide from High School to College

Are you applying for college or other postsecondary schooling or are you currently enrolled in postsecondary education? Knowing your rights and how they shift from law-to-law and setting-to-setting is very important. Understanding what is in your IEP or 504 Plan can help you be a better advocate in the postsecondary setting. Knowing how your rights and responsibilities shift between secondary education and higher education setting is an important step in applying for those allowable accommodations.



Review: the [Cincinnati State Transition Guide for Students with Disabilities](#) and discuss the differences between K-12 education and Higher/College Education by using the following questions as discussion starters:

- How is student success supported?
- Who is responsible for identifying and documenting the student's disability?
- Who is financially responsible for evaluating the disability?
- Who identifies the student's educational needs?
- Who ensures that educational goals are met?
- Who advocates for the student's needs?
- What allowances are made in student accommodation?
- Are personal services provided?
- Is there transportation to school?



Reflect: Now that you have had some time to look at the chart and explore the differences between how laws affect secondary education and higher education, we are going to reflect on key areas. You can do this by having a conversation around the questions below, or you can choose to reflect on the questions using the [High School to College Worksheet](#).

Understanding Rights and Responsibilities

- Can you explain the difference between the laws (IDEA, ADA, Section 504) that apply in high school versus college?
- How do these differences affect the type of supports or accommodations in high school versus college?

Self-Advocacy and Independence

- In college, you need to advocate for yourself. How comfortable do you feel about discussing your needs with professors or disability services staff? If you currently advocate for yourself, how do you prepare for these discussions?
- What strategies might you use or do you use to ensure that you get the accommodations you need in college?

Documentation and Accommodations

- In high school, the school provides disability documentation. In college, you need to supply it. Do you know where you can get updated documentation, if needed?
- What accommodations do you currently have that you think are essential for you in college? Have you checked if those are available?

Financial Responsibility

- Since students in college are often responsible for the costs of any evaluations, what resources or assistance have you looked into to cover these costs?
- Are you aware of any financial aid options that could help with costs associated with evaluations or other disability-related services?

Understanding Limitations of Accommodations

- How do you feel about the fact that accommodations in college cannot fundamentally alter course requirements? How does that impact your study approach?
- What are some examples of accommodations that are not provided in college (such as personal aides or transportation) that you may need to adjust for?

Goal Setting and Progress Tracking

- In college, you are responsible for meeting your own educational goals. How do you currently track your progress, and how do you track it in college?
- What are some of your academic and personal goals for college, and what support will you need to achieve them?



Click to Explore: [Differences in the Law for Students with Disabilities: High School and College/University | Ohio Wesleyan University](#): This resource explains more ways high school and college are different, including expectations for students, the role of parents or guardians, grading and testing practices, and approaches to studying.



Wrap-Up:

Advocating for yourself in planning meetings is a vital step in growing up. As you move forward, your rights and responsibilities will change, giving you more ownership of your life and its direction. Starting your advocacy journey now can make these big transitions feel more manageable and less stressful. Building your skills one step at a time begins with sharing your thoughts and feelings in meetings centered on you and your goals with people who are there to love and support you. Remember, you are the most important voice in that room, and your opinions matter! What you've learned from these lessons will support you as you continue on your advocacy journey, helping you shape your future with confidence.