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The ABCs of Speaking Up for Yourself

A workbook to help families talk to their children about self-advocacy and
have a voice in the IEP process

Early Elementary Level (Pre-K through 2)



RUTGERS

Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School

THE BOGGS CENTER
ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



In partnership with NJDOE Office of Special Education. Funded by IDEA-Part B 2024-2025

This book
belongs to:



DEAR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES,

This workbook was developed to support families in developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills that can support each child's path to a meaningful life.

The planning for a good adult life starts now. Self-advocacy skills are essential for all people and having them helps children express to educators and others what they need to succeed.

No matter the person's age, everyone has strengths and preferences that can be shared. If your child has a disability and is supported by an Individualized Education Program (IEP), they also have an IEP team. The IEP includes planning for adult life (transition planning) the year the student turns age 14, or younger if appropriate. Your family and your child are a key part of this team and with your input, an effective IEP can be developed.

Directions:

This tool can be used in part or whole to help bring person-centered information into the IEP. You can share the information in these activities before and during the IEP meeting with your case manager.

For more information please visit the [New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy webpage](#).

Terms we use and what they mean

IEP: The Individualized Education Program is designed to meet each eligible child's unique education needs and when appropriate, includes planning for a successful adult life.

IEP Team: Includes the parent, the student when appropriate, the case manager, teachers and other educators, and others as appropriate.

Person-Centered Planning: Is a holistic strength-based process that involves supporting people in making well-informed choices and identifying respectful supports.

Self-Advocacy: Being able to express to others what you want, what you need, and what you don't want.

Self-Determination: A process by which a person controls their own life.

Modifications: A modification changes **what** the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., the content of instruction).

Accommodations: An accommodation changes **how** the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., instructional methods used, support strategies, environmental factors, etc.).

Speaking up for me

Speaking up for me means asking for what I need.



I'm Hungry!

Help, Please.



It means asking for help.

It also means telling others what I ***DON'T*** want.

No, thanks!



Speaking up for me



**At Home:
My toy is broken.
What can I do?**



**At School:
My belly hurts.
What can I do?**



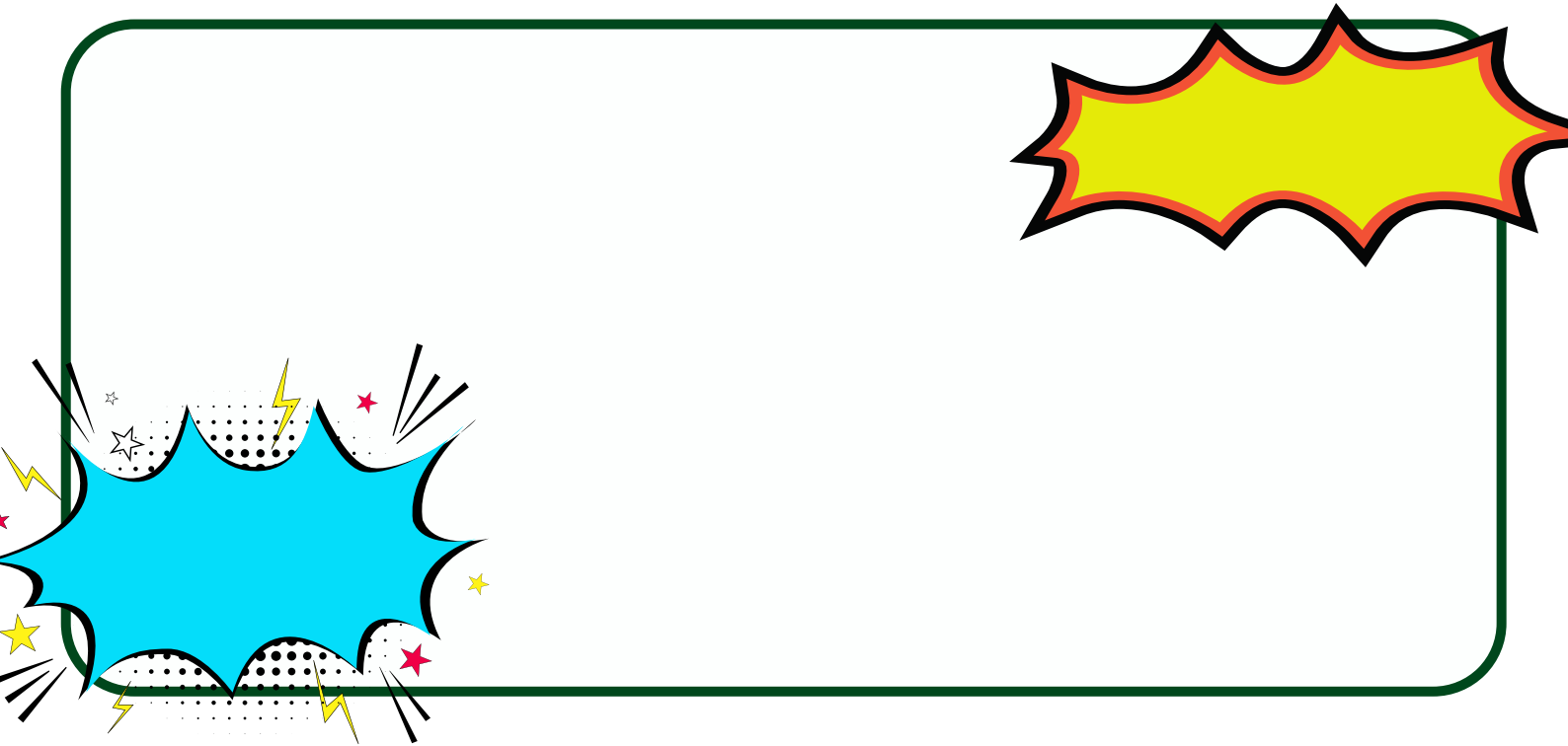
**A friend wants to
play a game that I
don't want to play.
What can I say?**



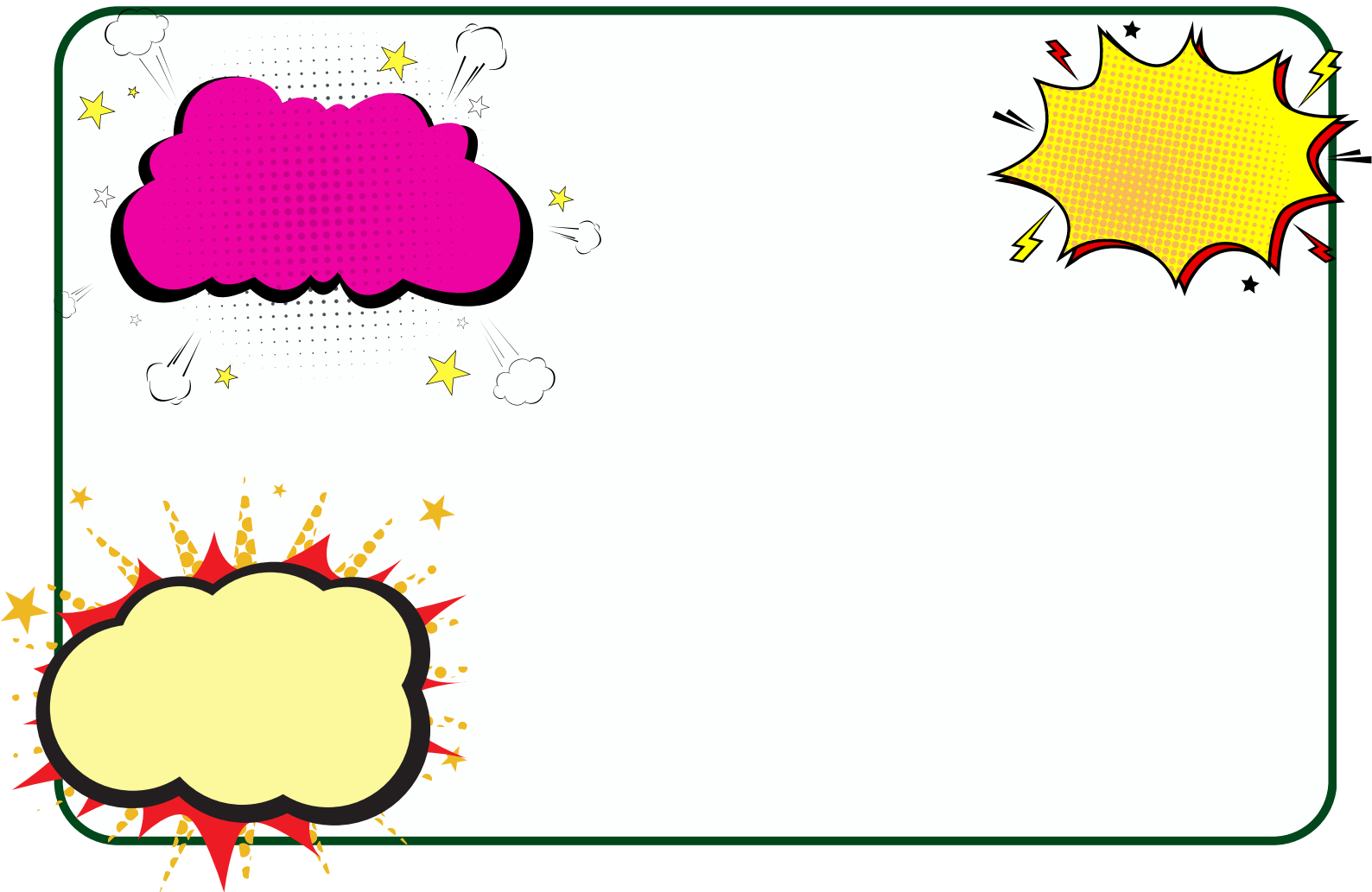
TIP: Self-advocacy is a skill that can be taught and learned. The more opportunities children have to practice self-advocacy, the more likely they will be able to use the skill in new situations. How can you support your child to share preferences at school or with new people? Is there something they use to effectively let others know what they need or want?

My Power Card

Draw or add a picture of your favorite superhero, character, or person. Write their superpowers in the bubbles.



Draw a picture of you. Write your superpowers in the bubbles.



I Like You!



Draw a picture of an adult that cares about you at school.



Draw a picture of you and one friend you like to play with.

TIP: Part of self-advocacy is knowing who to go to. As students get older, it is important that they develop a circle of support just for them, those who will be trusted advisors in the future.

Amazing Me!

It is super important to tell others what you are good at.
Someone in your family colors in green 3 *things* that make you awesome.
You color in 3 *things* you like the best in your favorite color!

**Being a
Good Friend**



**Helping
Others**



**Sharing
Toys**



**Being
Honest**



**Working
Hard in
School**



**Playing
Outside**



Art



**Waiting
your turn**



Dancing



Singing



**Playing
Sports**



**Running
Fast**



Listening



Swimming



**Playing
Music**



**Playing
Video
Games**



**Taking
Pictures**



Reading



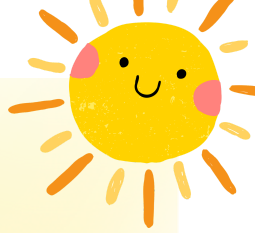
**Playing/
Building
with Legos**



TIP: Write in your own! Help your child learn and own their gifts. They can be anything that makes them who they are!

Good Days!

Color the 5 bubbles that make you MOST happy.



I feel happiest when I get to:

**Move
around**



**Listen to
music**



**Have a
Snack**



**Go on a
Computer**



Watch TV



**Talk to the
teacher**



**Play with
my friends**



Go outside



Play inside



**Go to the
Playground**



**Blow
Bubbles**



**Go to the
store**



**Making/
Building
things**



My favorite toys are:

Great Day!



A great day for me looks like...

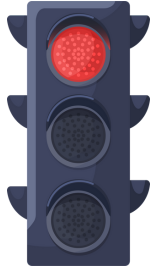
A large, empty rectangular box with a dark green border, intended for drawing or writing a description of a great day.

Four sets of horizontal lines for writing, each consisting of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.

TIP: Be specific. What makes a great day for your child? At home? At school? Who are they with, where are they going, what are they doing?

Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light

When I feel upset: (Check the circles that apply to your child, write in others as needed)



My face gets hot and red



I cry



I yell



I put my head down



I whisper



Things that I dislike:

Fire Alarm



When my teacher is out



Thunder



Feeling Tired



Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light

Create a list of things that make your child feel better when upset.

WHAT MAKES ME FEEL BETTER WHEN I'M UPSET?



Big Kid Dreams

Places I like going now:

Things I want to do when I am bigger:

YES / NO

Do things by myself

YES OR **NO**

Ride a bike

YES OR **NO**

Go to work

YES OR **NO**

Go to a dance

YES OR **NO**

Play a sport

YES OR **NO**

Learn to cook

YES OR **NO**

Have a pet

YES OR **NO**

Have friends

YES OR **NO**

YES OR **NO**

What are some experiences you would like your child to have in the next school year and further into the future?

For Students and Families

- What will make you *most* comfortable at the IEP meeting?
- What would make you feel uncomfortable at the IEP meeting?
- If you only had 2 minutes to tell educators what they needed to know about your child, what would you share?
- Would you feel comfortable having your child attend the IEP meeting room? If not, why not?
- How could the IEP team accommodate your child so you would be comfortable with them sitting in? For example, provide coloring books and toys off to the side of the room.
- What can you share on your child's behalf?

Tip: Think about some ways that you can support and prepare your child to attend the IEP Meeting. Also consider sharing your responses to these questions with your case manager before the IEP Meeting.

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SPECIAL THANKS

The Person-Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition Project (PCAST) would like to thank our partners at the NJ Department of Education, Office of Special Education, all of our educators, students, and their families in New Jersey for making this learning possible.

A special thanks to our school districts who have contributed to the development of this workbook.

REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network

<https://spanadvocacy.org>

NJ Transition Toolkit

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/njtransition/>

The Boggs Center – Act Early Resilience Toolkit

<https://boggscenterstage.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/act-early-resilience-toolkit>

The Boggs Center – Early Childhood County Resource

<https://boggscenterstage.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/next-steps-when-developmental-concerns-are-identified>

PCAST Webpage

<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/pcast.shtml>