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Speaking up for Myself

A Workbook for Students and Their Families to Have a Voice That is
Heard in the IEP Process

Elementary Level (Grades 3 - 5)



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.

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 14 or younger if appropriate. Parents and their child are a key part of this team, and with their 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.

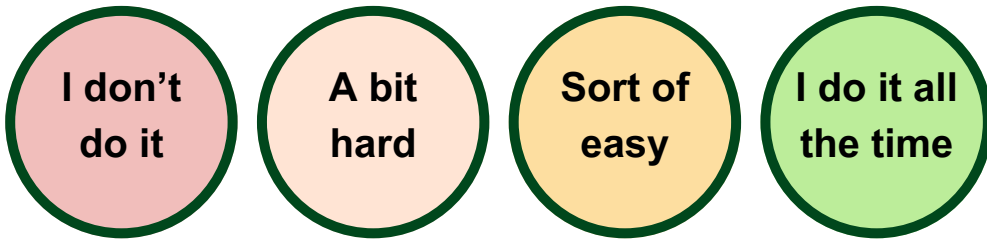
Modifications: A modification changes **what** the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., the content of instruction).

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

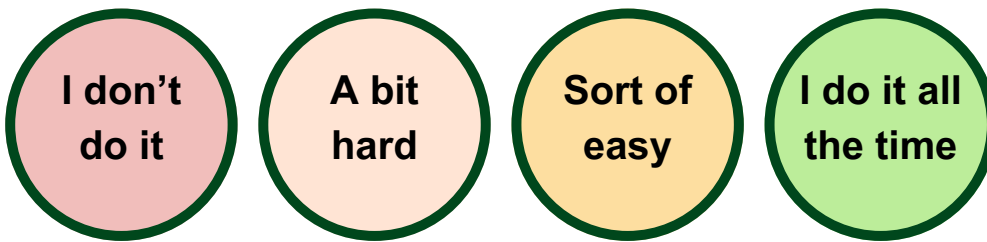
People I Trust

When you tell other people what you need, it's called **SELF-ADVOCACY**. How do you feel about speaking up for yourself? Check the circles that apply to you.

Asking for help at home feels:



Asking for help at school feels:



Speaking up for yourself gets easier when you practice. Sometimes we need the people we care about to help us speak up. These people are called your **allies**. Who's on your team? Draw or name/identify the people you trust in your life and are your allies.

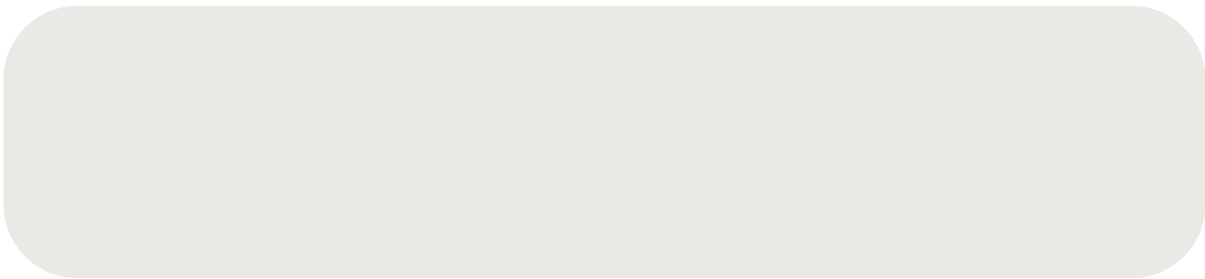


My Case Manager

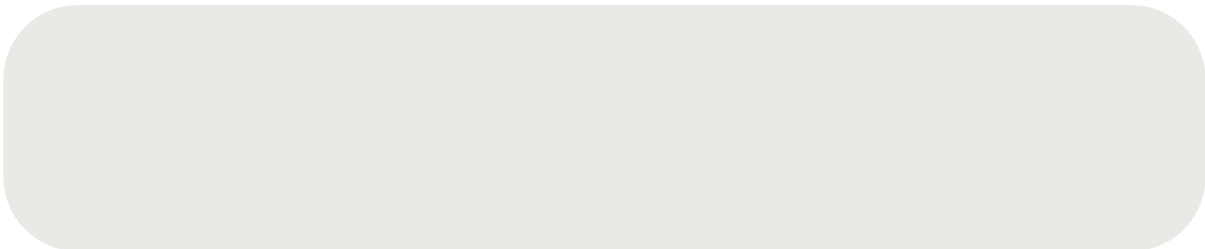
What does a case manager do?

A case manager is someone from your school who helps you, your parents, and your teachers, so that you have a great school year. If you are having a difficult time in school, you can talk to your case manager about how to make things better.

My case manager's name is:



My case manager's office is:

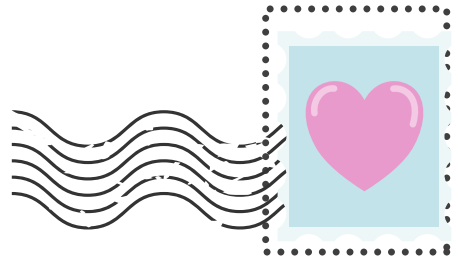


Write a postcard to your case manager to say, “Hello!” You can mail it to them or bring it to their office.

Tip: Helping your child know who their case manager is, what they do and where they are is important. This will help your child know a key person to self-advocate with about their education.

Hello

POSTCARD



Great things about Me!

It is super important to tell others what you are good at.
Use your favorite color to color all the things that you are awesome at.
Then, put an X on things that are hard for you to do.

Making friends



Helping others



Sharing



Being Honest



Hard working



Playing Outside



Art



Waiting



Reading



Science



Math



Playing Sports



Listening



Swimming



Music



Playing Video Games



Taking Pictures














Playing with and taking care of pets



Tip: Write your own in! Help your child learn their gifts.

Important to Me

Color in the circles that are most important to you.
These things make it a GREAT DAY!

Spending time with friends 	Free Time 	Playing Games/ Sports 	Being called on 	Having alone/quiet time 
Listening to music 	Doing things with my family 	Feeling like I am doing a good job 	Knowing what's happening today 	Art 
Helping Others 				

What makes for a good day for your child?



Tip: Making sure students have more "Good Days" means others knowing what is important to them, so that those things can be present or absent. Think about a typical day for your child. What makes it better? Who is there? What are they doing? Where are they? Think about home and school.

Learn What Helps Me

Color in the top **3 things** that help you.

Working
with a
partner



Taking
Breaks



Moving
around



Taking deep
breaths



Sitting near
the teacher



Sitting near
the board



Having a
fidget toy



Having a
schedule



Check in on
me



Repeating
directions



Extra time
to respond



What are some other things that help your child?



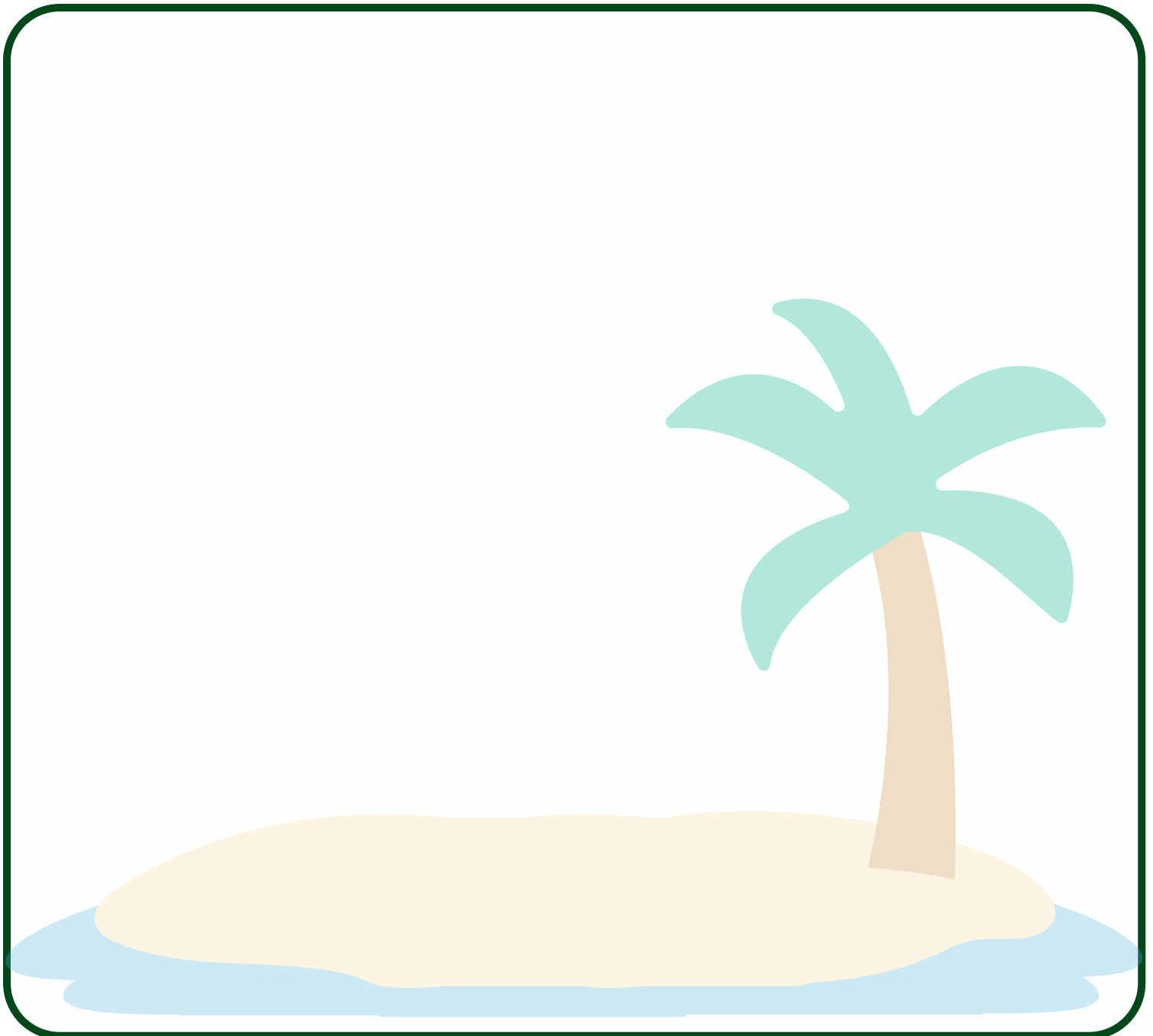
Tip: What makes for a bad day or situation for your child? What's happening at that moment? What should others do to support them? What doesn't help? Think about home and school.

My Island

Let's help others learn more about you by creating your own island.

What will your island look like? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- 2 people you will bring to your island to be with you.
- 2 items that you really care about.
- 2 things that you would do for fun on your island.
- 2 things that you would do to relax.



Tip: Your child can use words, drawings, photos or cut outs!

For Students and Families:

- What will make you *most* comfortable 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 in the IEP meeting room? If not, why would you be uncomfortable with having your child at the IEP meeting?
- 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?
- What are some dreams that you have for your child?

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 managers before the IEP Meeting.

NOTES SPACE AND QUESTIONS I HAVE

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.

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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>