Developing Self-Advocacy and Self-Determination Skills
By Karen Anderson, Director, Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss
http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com  SSCHL

Objectives:
- Describe the steps to building self-advocacy and self-determination skills in students with hearing loss
- Describe strategies for specific skill building with students
- Use hierarchies and assessment tools to determine expected skill development

Context for Self-Advocacy
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.

- Expanded Core Curriculum

Self-determination is: “The realization of strengths and weaknesses, the ability to formulate personal goals, being assertive, and making decisions. Self-efficacy is the skill set needed to attain self-advocacy. Self-advocacy are the actual skills and knowing how to use them.

Self-advocacy includes skills and knowledge related to the student being able to:
- Recognize/describe own skills and needs
- Know the how, who, and when to ask for assistance
- Make decisions and then take the responsibility to deal with the consequences of actions
- Set own goals and create a plan to reach them

Access CANNOT be fully achieved with the use of hearing technology, visual communication, and teacher accommodations alone. Full participation requires that the student advocate for his or her own access/learning needs. Work begins in preschool to recognize how hearing loss and the listening situation impact understanding and what THEY can do. The self-advocacy skill set should be developed from preschool through grade four, or at the beginning of specialized instruction services.

Student Knowledge of Hearing Loss: awareness/understanding of challenges listening (and why)
- What is my hearing loss?
- How does my hearing loss affect me?
  - Specific issues listening to speech
  - Awareness of environmental challenges
  - Specific listening challenges in school
  - Specific challenges with LIFE-R listening situations

Why is this important?
1. Students will be asked about their hearing loss throughout life and need to know the answers to typical questions
2. Students need to recognize that they have additional challenges to communication (They don’t know what they didn’t hear but are aware that others may ‘get it’ faster and better than they do.)
   - What speech sounds are hardest to hear?
   - How close do you need to be to hear the sounds?
   - What happens in noise?

Role play how the student would answer: How much hearing (loss) do you have? Or Explain his hearing loss to a new teacher.

Audiology Self-Advocacy Checklists: Elementary, Middle and High school (Each are 1 page)
Minnesota Compensatory Skills Checklist for Students with Hearing Loss: K-2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, grades 9-12 specific skills

Styles of Communication
Role-play ways a student could react if he couldn’t hear the words clearly for a class spelling test. The student studied the words but the teacher is not using the FM microphone and some sound alike. The student raises his hand. Role play what he could say to the teacher.

Scenario 1: Aggressive 	Scenario 2: Passive 	Scenario 3: Assertive

Developing and Improving Use of Specific Self-Advocacy Strategies
Expectations!
Assess first….What is the student already doing when a communication breakdown occurs?
Teacher LIFE Checklist: Self-Advocacy and Instructional Access
Useful to raise teacher awareness, as a baseline measure and to measure progress in student use of self-advocacy activities

After LIFE Questions – a measure of self-awareness and self-advocacy
1. What do you do to let your teacher know that you didn’t hear or understand what she said?
2. What do you do if it is too noisy in your classroom, making it hard for you to understand what your teacher says?
3. What do you do when a student’s voice is too quiet for you to understand during a class discussion?
4. What do you do when you can’t hear or understand what your friends are saying when you’re hanging out?
5. What are the things you do when you are trying to communicate and it’s noisy?
6. What would you do if your listening technology is not working?

Now that you know what he does…Teach specific strategies
Limited ‘menu’ of strategies - 13 Tools – refer to handout. [Thinklink.com for making ‘targets’ on photos](http://thinklink.com)

Ways to work on self-advocacy skills:
- 13 Tools Speaker, Listener, Place handout
- What’s the Problem Game
- Monkey Talk Game
- Rule the School Self-Advocacy Game

How clearly can the student identified listening challenges and strategies? My 3 most difficult listening situations in school are? Two ways for me to change things in the classroom so I can hear and listen better are? Three things I can ask or tell other people that will help me to hear and listen my best in the classroom are?

Developing Self-Determination Problem Solving
Self-Advocacy - skill set so students know how, and in what situations, it is appropriate for them to advocate for their communication needs.
Self-Determination - knowledge needed to problem-solve situations so the student can make their own decision on what to do, if anything, in challenging communication situations.

Working only on self-advocacy means doing only half of what is needed for students to truly be prepared to advocate independently.

Upper Grades = Self-Determination
- C.O.A.C.H. is a 'How to' and "What to do" book for the development of skills for secondary students. The program uses a problem solving model of C.O.A.C.H. - Concern- Observe- Access-Collaborate- make it Happen to address access and communication needs.

C.O.A.C.H.
C – Concern: Conversation - review issues in each class; Knowledge of self/emotional factors; Big picture
O – Observe: Functional listening: The Human Factor - Social Intuition
A – Access: Identify accommodation options; Situation analysis; Timeline of access
C – Collaboration: Social language; The issue of disclosure
H - make it Happen; Problem solving
C.O.A.C.H. Child-Directed Instructional Model
Session Steps: Initial conversation, discuss concern, work on problem-solving, underlying skill or activity assessment.

Implementing Strategies
- Use the After LIFE results, discuss advantages and disadvantages of strategies available
- Discuss what to expect in classroom when the student tries implementing a strategy
- Reflect how it worked & further coaching.

Break it down
Systematic Process to Implement Strategies
- Build on student’s baseline skills and nurture their growth and expansion in the classroom setting (role-playing, small group)
- Include self-advocacy in daily expectations (teacher awareness via Teacher LIFE-R)
- Present self-advocacy strategies as a menu of choices
- Approach as implementation in the classroom as Choose/Do/Reflect/Try Again

Move toward Self-Determination
Step-by-Step Changes:
What should you do first?
- Use student’s most challenging LIFE-R situations.
- For the next_____ days I want to improve LIFE situation #_____.
- Student writes the challenge in own words.
- Choose a time of day that the student will use the strategy (i.e., during math).
- The strategy I want to try is: _____.
- I will know it helped if _____.
- Try it.
- Result of trial:_____.
- Try again

Tracks Advocacy Tools Used – Handout chart
Opens Conversation to communication style being used
Best practice: Observe student in natural settings. Combine with student reporting.

Summary
- If a child is to fully participate in the classroom he needs to have fully functioning amplification – only he, with training, will be able to identify hearing changes.
- Children with hearing loss will experience communication breakdowns. Full access and full participation requires skillful use of self-advocacy and communication repair strategies.
- The hierarchy of skill building begins in preschool and should be completed by the end of grade 4
- Instruction in self-directed problem-solving should occur in secondary school.

Karen Anderson can be reached at karen@successforkidswithhearingloss.com