The Self-Advocacy Strategy

Enhancing Student Responsibility

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Researchers at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning (KU-CRL), along with their research associates throughout the country, are firmly committed to the professional responsibility for updating, revising, and integrating current research and evaluation findings into the existing components of the *Learning Strategies Curriculum.* The new **The Self-Advocacy Strategy** manual reflects that commitment. This new manual is an updated version of the manual for the *Education Planning Strategy* (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1987). It was created to more effectively address the complex educational and transition concerns of students and others exhibiting learning and performance problems and reflect recent developments in strategic instruction, motivation, and self-advocacy research. Many of the changes incorporated into this new strategy manual also stem from invaluable feedback and suggestions provided by SIM trainers, teachers, students, parents, and other professionals who have taught or learned the original strategy.

Self-Advocacy Defined and the Purpose of the Strategy

Self-Advocacy, as defined in the new manual, refers to an individual's ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert one's interests, desires, needs, and rights. It also involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions. The idea of teaching students to make effective learning and development decisions and to use self-advocacy skills is based on research which has shown that students who have positive self-perceptions and perceived control over their learning activities are more willing and motivated to work successfully with the adults in their environments.

Thus, the purpose of the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* is five-fold. First, as a motivation strategy, it is designed to enable students to systematically gain a sense of control and influence over their own learning and development. Second, the strategy focuses students' attention on their learning and transition skill strengths and provides them with a systematic process for identifying specific skills they want to learn or improve. Third, mastery of the strategy enables students to take an active role in making decisions related to their learning and development experiences. Fourth, the strategy provides students with a way of getting organized before any type of conference or meeting. Finally, the steps of the strategy remind students about behaviors and techniques needed for effectively communicating and advocating for their education and/or transition goals.

Focus of Instruction

Instruction in the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* is directed toward increasing students' self-knowledge and understanding that, regardless of the learning situation, they control what, how, how well, and why they learn. Thus, the instruction is designed to increase students' investment in their own learning, intrinsic motivation, and commitment to learn.

Additionally, while the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* is a motivation strategy that students can use when preparing for and participating in any type of meeting or conference, the emphasis of the instruction is directed at the importance of students becoming active participants in their lives by advocating for and negotiating their own futures.

Through *Self-Advocacy Strategy* instruction, students learn how to inventory their educational and/or transition strengths, areas to improve or learn, and choices for learning or needed accommodations. Further, they learn how to set goals for learning and for preparing themselves for the transition from school to adult life. With regard to transition, students learn how to identify their current interests and needs with respect to independent living skills, career and employment skills, financial and consumer skills, social and family living skills, citizenship and legal skills, health and wellness skills, community resource skills, and leisure and recreation skills. In addition, they learn how to communicate this information in a productive manner during conference or meeting situations and to take an active role in making decisions. In sum, the instruction provides students, parents, and others a framework or **"strategic system"** for making plans and carrying out those plans related to successful educational experiences and transitions from educational settings to the work force, adult life, and community settings.

Something Old and Something New

Those who are already familiar with the *Education Planning Strategy* need not be alarmed with the publication of this new manual. The *Self-Advocacy Strategy* is comprised of the same "I PLAN" Steps and "SHARE" Behaviors as the *Education Planning Strategy*. The major

difference between the new manual for the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* and the old manual for the *Education Planning Strategy* is that the new manual contains instructional procedures, materials, and activities for two types of conferences: Education Planning Conferences and Transition Planning Conferences.
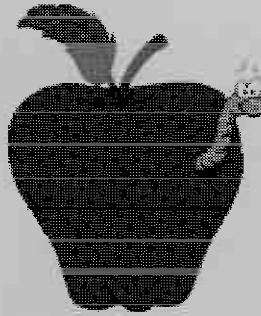
(Information in the old manual was limited to Education Planning Conferences only.) In some states and school districts, these two types of planning conferences are conducted separately. In other states and school districts, education and transition planning take place during the same conference.

Information in the new manual helps educators decide which type of conference to conduct, based on whether students need to focus primarily on education planning, transition planning, or both. For elementary-aged students, Education Planning Conferences may be the best choice. For adolescents and adults, including those who have already left school, Transition Planning Conferences are more appropriate. For middle, junior-high, and high-school students, both Education and Transition Planning Conferences may be appropriate. In any case, all students determined eligible for special education services **are required by law** to have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is developed in a planning conference before they are placed into a special education program and before they receive any special education services. In

addition, students who are receiving special education services are required to have **transition** goals addressed in their IEP by the time they are 16 (and when appropriate, by age 14 or younger).

Due to the major differences between the two types of conferences, three inventory sheets and other associated materials are included in the new manual: a revamped **Education Inventory** and revised education skill lists; a modified Education Inventory called **"My Personal Inventory"** for younger students in grades 2 through 5; and a new **Transition Inventory** and transition skill lists for students in middle, secondary, and post-secondary settings.

The Instructional Sequence

An additional difference between the two manuals is that the new manual reflects current knowledge and technology involved in providing effective strategy instruction to students such that their acquisition and generalization of the strategy is enhanced. Therefore, the new manual is organized around the Instructional Stage Model, with each stage incorporating such effective instructional practices as advance, lesson, and post organizers to promote student learning, goal attainment, and use of the strategy.

A modified version of the latest acquisition and generalization stages (Ellis, Deshler, Lenz, Schumaker, & Clark, 1991) has been utilized in the new manual. (See Figure on page 4.) Students with learning and behavior problems who participated in the field-test studies mastered the strategy when the instructional stages as presented in the Figure on page 4 were implemented.

Because of the differences in scope and purpose of Education versus Transition Planning Conferences, the

new manual contains two different Model and Prepare Stages. The first one, Stage 3A, provides instructions for preparing for **only** an Education Planning Conference. The second one, Stage 3B, provides instructions for preparing for **only** a Transition Planning Conference.

When combining the two conferences into one, teachers should first follow the directions for education planning in Stage 3A and then implement an abbreviated version of Stage 3B. In this case, parts of the Education Inventory and the Transition Inventory can be selected and combined to reflect the unique needs of a student. For example, the career and employment planning section of the Education Inventory might be omitted since the Transition Inventory contains a similar but more detailed section. Parts of the Transition Inventory might be selected as more appropriate for some students than others. For example, one student's Transition Inventory may reflect his needs to focus on independent living skills while another student's Transition Inventory may reflect her needs to focus primarily on future educational options.

Two sets of **Model Cards** are included in the new manual to be used in Stages 3A and 3B. The first set is comprised of Education Model Cards for students preparing for Education Conferences, and the second set is comprised of Transition Model Cards for students preparing for Transition Conferences. Like the instructional procedures, the card sets can be combined for those students preparing for both types of conferences or combined conferences.

A separate **Simulated Education Conference Guide** and a separate **Simulated Transition Conference Guide** are also included in the new manual for instruction during Stage 5:

Group Practice and Feedback. Similarly, separate **Individual Mastery Checklists** are provided for the different types of conferences in Stage 6: Individual Practice and Feedback.

Concepts and Skills Included in the Strategy

The major concepts and skills acquired by students who learn the *Self-Advocacy Strategy* include:
* Non-verbal and verbal behaviors necessary for good communication;
* Self-instructional skills;
* Active listening skills;
* Self-knowledge and self-awareness skills;
* Social and pragmatic skills;
* Decision-making skills;
* Planning skills;
* Self-Advocacy skills;
* Conversation skills;
* Obtaining information skills;
* Accepting criticism and feedback skills;
* Questioning skills;
* Negotiation and problem solving skills; and
* Accepting responsibility.

When and Where can Students use the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*?

Once students have learned the strategy sufficiently, they can use it prior to or during any type of conference or meeting such as:
* An informal conference with instructors, other professionals, or parents;
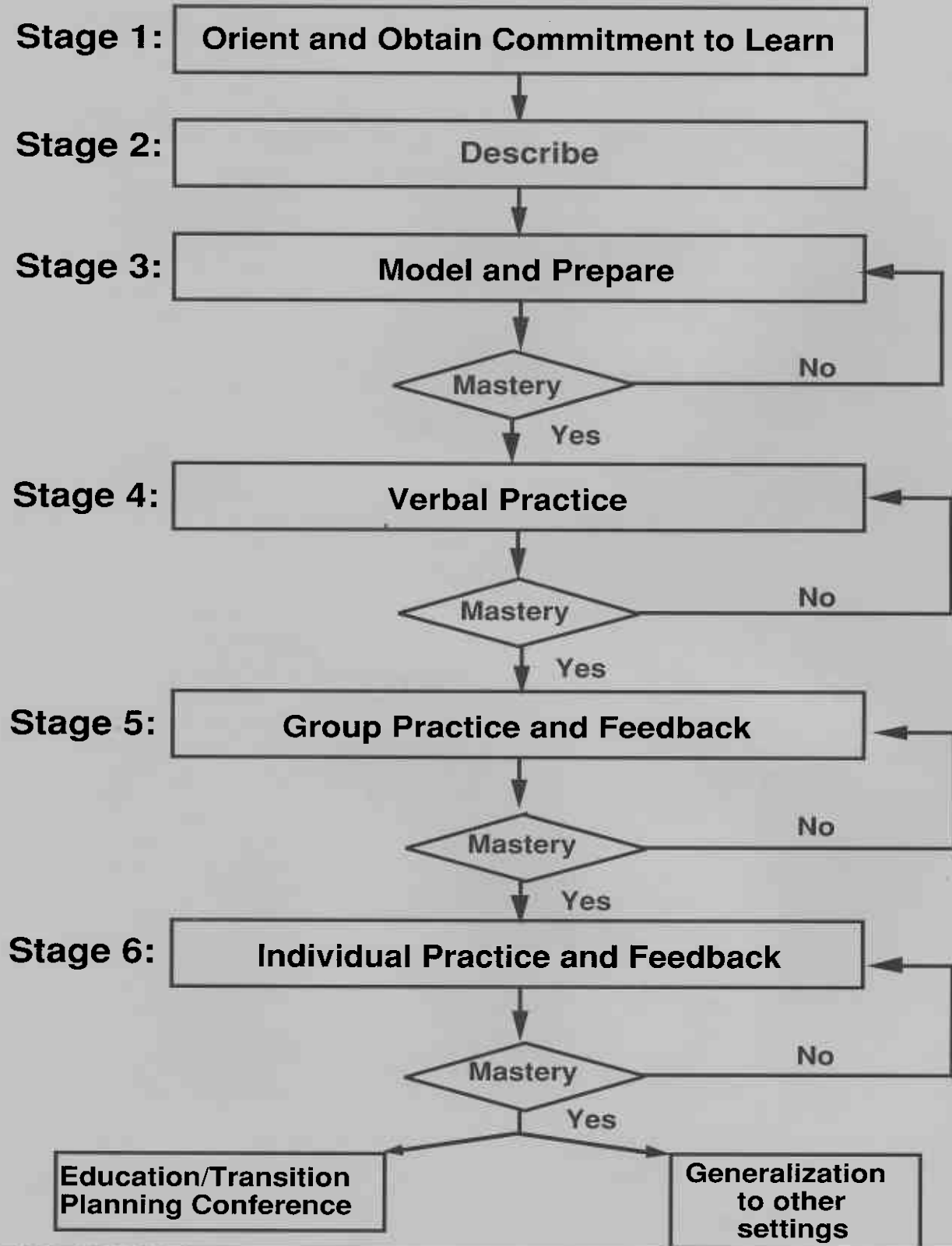* An Individualized Education Program (IEP) Conference that is held at least annually for students receiving special education services;
* An Individualized Transition Program (ITP) Conference held for the purpose of planning and specifying needed transition services for students with disabilities, no later than age 16, and when appropriate, beginning by the age of 14 or younger;
* An Individualized Vocational Education Program (IVEP) Conference held at least annually for special education students receiving vocational education;
* A career planning conference conducted by a school counselor;
* A vocational-planning conference conducted by a vocational evaluator, counselor, or career counselor;
* A Vocational Rehabilitation Program (IVRP) conference conducted with a rehabilitation or vocational evaluator or counselor; and
* Disposition meetings or conferences for adjudicated youth with court-appointed social workers, probation officers, and youth evaluators; and
* A job interview or a performance evaluation.

The new *Self-Advocacy Strategy* should be viewed as an effective tool that can be used by students, both young and old, to plan their education and/or transition programs with the ultimate goal of increasing their motivation and commitment to learn. This strategy focuses on helping students identify and verify their beliefs about their education and transition strengths, make informed learning and development decisions, and advocate for themselves. It is taught to enable students to identify and prioritize their needs, choose goals, and increase their interest in and efforts toward learning and attaining their goals. By providing students with opportunities to learn

THE SELF-ADVOCACY STRATEGY
INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE

Stage 1: Orient and Obtain Commitment to Learn

Stage 2: Describe

Stage 3: Model and Prepare

Mastery — No

Yes

Stage 4: Verbal Practice

Mastery — No

Yes

Stage 5: Group Practice and Feedback

Mastery — No

Yes

Stage 6: Individual Practice and Feedback

Mastery — No

Yes

Education/Transition Planning Conference
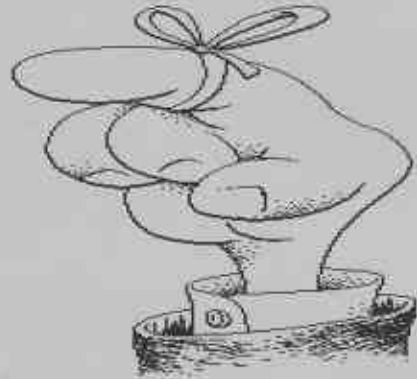
Generalization to other settings

PREFIX POWER

A Game of Concentration
Developed by
Marsha Pearsaul and John Pfeifer
Vero Beach, Florida

**For students who have trouble remembering how
to pronounce their word beginning**

The traditional game of concentration can be a powerful tool to help students remember the list of 56 word beginnings that students are required to master for the *Word Identification Strategy*. Some elementary and low-functioning students may need this activity to reinforce their pronunciation and retention of the prefixes. Remember, students are not required to know the meanings of individual word beginnings.

STEP ONE: Prepare the PREFIX POWER Cards. Enlarge and use the cards on pg. 6, or rewrite the cards using the blank sample at the bottom of this page.

STEP TWO: Select the sets you need to reinforce. We suggest 5-10 pairs (one Prefix Card and its accompanying Word Card). Lay the cards face down on the floor or table.

HOW TO PLAY:
The first player turns a card face up. The teacher pronounces the prefix or word card that appears. That player turns a second card face up looking for the match to the prefix or the word card he/she previously turned. The teacher pronounces the card. If the cards match, the student must pronounce both the prefix and matching word correctly to remove the card from the playing surface and to get one point for the match. If the student fails to match or pronounce correctly, the cards are returned to their face down position, and the next player begins his/her turn. Students continue in rotation until all cards are claimed. The player with the most points at the end of the game wins. As the students become more proficient, the teacher may choose not to pronounce the prefixes or words at all.

Prefix Card	*Word Card*

Prefix Cards	Word Cards	Prefix Cards	Word Cards
ab-	ab sorb	hydro-	hydro scope
ac-	ac count	hyper-	hyper sonic
ad-	ad here	loco-	loco mote
ante-	ante hall	non-	non sense
anti-	anti war	ob-	ob ject
ap-	ap point	intro-	intro vert
at-	at tack	inter-	inter pret
auto-	auto mat	per-	per son
be-	be hind	op-	op pose
bi-	bi cycle	of-	of fend
col-	col lect	multi-	multi ple
com-	com plete	mono-	mono cle
con-	con nect	re-	re make
circum-	circum flex	pro-	pro found
de-	de fend	pre-	pre tend
dem-	dem ocrat	para-	para graph
di-	di vest	post-	post test
dis-	dis may	se-	se cret
dys-	dys lexia	sub-	sub merge
em-	em ploy	sup-	sup press
en-	en rage	super-	super man
epi-	epi center	retro-	retro gress
ex-	ex cuse	sur-	sur prise
for-	for ward	tri-	tri ad
fore-	fore warn	tele-	tele phone
mis-	mis take	trans-	trans pose
in-	in set	ultra-	ultra sound
im-	im press	un-	un clear

RAP´N

by
Rosemary Reichstetter
CCR Teacher, Leadmine Elementary
Raleigh, North Caroline

Let´s do a little RAP'N RAP'N . . . I´ll lead.
To help us understand information we read.
Let's read. I say, read . . . The paragraphs we need.
Then Ask - first 1, then 2, as agreed:
       Ask what it's all about,
       Then get 2 facts that leave no doubt.
Now, Paraphrase the words in print.
Saying what, to us, they meant.
Write it down . . . .Make a note . . . .

That's RAP'N, friends. I say, RAP'N, RAP'N!
That's RAP'N, friends. RAP'N, RAP'N!

R stands for Read. Read the paragraph.
A stands for Ask - first 1, then 2.
       1 for just one main idea;
       2 for two supporting facts.
P means to Paraphrase . . . .
       Tell it in your own words.
N is for Note; Write it . . .down.

That's RAP'N, friends. I say, RAP'N, RAP'N!
That's RAP'N, friends. RAP'N, RAP'N!

and use decision-making and self-advocacy skills, they will become better prepared to be full participants in our democratic society.

References

Ellis, E.S., Deshler, D.D., Lenz, B.K., Schumaker, J.B., & Clark, F.L. (1991). An instructional model for teaching learning strategies. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 23* (6), 1-23.

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