

Decision Making and Goal Setting

Objective: To simulate the transition from parent advocacy to self-advocacy by providing the student with practice in assuming responsibility for planning and decision making.

Setting and Materials:

Setting: Instruction takes place primarily in the school, but there are also some visits to colleges and job shadowing experiences in the community.

Materials: Uses the Self-advocacy Plan.

Content Taught

The Self-Advocacy Plan, a four-step plan covering four years of high school. Starts with Learning Disabilities Seminar that covers:

1. The concept of a learning disability
2. Information about specific learning disabilities
3. School and social relations issues that related to learning disabilities
4. Specific learning strengths and weaknesses of participating students
5. People who have a learning disability and have succeeded in careers
6. Legislation regarding learning disabilities (P.L. 94-142 and Rehabilitation Act 504)
7. The availability of postsecondary assistance
8. Responsibilities of the Division of Rehabilitation Services

Teaching Procedure

Step 1

1. Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting for transition to high school. Parents are given a short explanation of the plan and parents and students are given a written booklet that describes the plan in greater detail and includes final goals and objectives.
2. Student then may indicate willingness to participate.
3. 3-5 weeks into the first marking period of the ninth grade, a case meeting is scheduled for the student with all of the classroom teachers and the resource teacher. The student is required to be present but need not be active in the discussion.

4. The resource teacher presents a summary, prepared with the student's help, of the student's strengths and weaknesses and suggests necessary classroom modifications. A brief conference is held with the student afterward to review perceptions and feelings about the meeting.
5. At the start of the second marking period, students are asked to participate in the Learning Disabilities Seminar, which meets once per week for 10 weeks under the co-leadership of a counselor and a resource teacher. Participants received no high school credit for the seminar.
6. On-site visits to colleges are planned to reinforce the content of the topics under discussion in the group and so that high school students can meet with support personnel and college students receiving support services.
7. Several weeks after the seminar is over, students are organized into small groups to focus on and discuss their learning styles and strategies. They are required to keep learning logs, which consist of personal observations of what works for their learning in class and what strategies have been less successful, and to fill out a learning style inventory. (These activities allow the students to identify their strengths and weaknesses and focus on how they think and learn. They raise student's self-awareness and help them to acquire explicit knowledge of their own cognitive resources.)

Step 2

1. Begins in the 10th grade, with the resource teacher's review of students' strengths and weaknesses. Students develop outlines describing their particular learning styles. Case meetings are held with the student 3 to 5 weeks into the first quarter. This year most students play an active role by stating their own strengths and weaknesses to the teachers.
2. In the second marking period, students participate in a career awareness seminar with other students with LD. Tenth grade activities emphasize career exploration tasks such as taking vocational interest inventories and job shadowing.
3. Students synthesize information to help them plan for the future by looking at planned courses, extracurricular activities, and summer employment that relate to newly acquired career information. The synthesizing helps ensure compatibility of programming efforts and student needs. This information is useful at PPT meetings, when students plan their academic courses for future years.

Step 3

1. Begins in 11th grade. Students compare each teacher's teaching style with their learning styles and try to identify with the resource teacher when their styles are in conflict. Students then set up individual conferences with certain teachers to discuss possible adjustments or modifications in classroom procedures or expectations.

2. Students keep records of these meetings, which are documented in the PPT file. The students must state how they function as learners and describe any modifications needed in the classrooms. The resource teacher often uses role playing to prepare them for these negotiations.

Step 4

1. Step 4 is a developmental one. Some students demonstrate, through observed behavior, their ability to self-evaluate and to decide why and if they need to use the resource room and for what purpose. After maintaining at least average performance in all major academic subjects, they are eligible to request an individual education plan (IEP) that states that they will have access to the resource room on a consulting or “as needed” basis. (This may not be the only component of the IEP; students may have additional goals and objectives).

Method of Evaluation

1. Conduct standardized, open-ended interviews with students, resource teachers, and parents.

Lesson Plan Based on:

Phillips, P. (1990). A self-advocacy plan for high school students with learning disabilities: A comparative case study analysis of students', teachers', and parents' perceptions of program effects. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 90, 466-471.