USE YOUR VOICE TO SHAPE THE FUTURE

The Value of Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is more than just speaking up; it's a lifelong skill that empowers you to take control of your education, career, and personal growth.

Builds Confidence

Learning to express your needs clearly and respectfully builds self-confidence and helps you navigate challenges with resilience.

- **Tip**: Always introduce yourself and share what you're part of or what you represent. Let people know what drives you.
- **Be Authentic**: Speak clearly and with confidence, but most importantly, be yourself. People connect best with sincerity.
- **Resilience**: Even if things don't go as planned, the act of advocating reinforces your ability to face challenges with strength.

Strengthens Communication Skills

Advocating for yourself teaches you how to share your experiences effectively with different audiences, professors, employers, or policymakers.

- **Tip**: Share a short, personal story that highlights your experience. It helps people understand where you're coming from.
- **Presentation Matters**: Maintain eye contact, use confident body language, and project your voice. These non-verbal cues enhance how your message is received.
- **Adaptability**: Learn how to read the room and adjust your tone and examples to fit the audience.

Creates Opportunities

When you advocate, you open doors for yourself and others. You make your goals known and increase your chances of getting support, resources, or change.

- **Tip**: Be clear about what you need or what change you're asking for. Don't leave people guessing.
- **Connection is Key:** Tie your ask to a personal or professional story. This not only makes your request relatable but also makes it more persuasive.
- **Leadership**: Advocacy doesn't just benefit you it sets an example and opens doors for others in your community.

Leads to Long-Term Impact

Advocating now sets a foundation for future success. Whether you're negotiating at work, applying for grad school, or pushing for change in your community, self-advocacy helps you get there.

Source: The WA-SEN Guidebook, available from wa-sen.org

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- **Tip**: The more personal your story, the more powerful your message. Make people remember your why.
- **Legacy Building:** Each time you speak up, you help shape a culture where future voices feel empowered to do the same.
- **Strategic Growth:** Learning to advocate in low-stakes situations prepares you for high-stakes moments later.

Amplifies Your Voice

Your lived experience is powerful. By advocating for yourself, you contribute to a larger conversation about access, equity, and inclusion, especially in education

- **Tip**: Don't underestimate the power of your story. Someone else may need to hear it to find their voice.
- **Collective Power**: Self-advocacy can grow into collective advocacy. When others hear you speak up, they feel empowered to do the same.
- **Your Voice Matters:** Your voice can influence policy, shape culture, and drive meaningful change not just for you, but for your entire community.

Source: The WA-SEN Guidebook, available from wa-sen.org