



Self-Advocacy is a Communication Skill

“Can I get one?” asks a classmate when a preschooler explained a hearing aid’s cool features. Another playmate tries to pull a child’s cochlear implant cord. A stranger inquires “Why do they have that on their head?” In all these scenarios parents might give simple answers to help build awareness of deafness and listening devices. As they get older children with hearing loss can follow their parents’ modeling to be proactive about their communication.

For school assignments or class introductions young students with hearing aids or implants could choose to explain their devices. They might share homemade books about how they hear or join parents in discussing communication with staff. Older students can guide peers to recognize how to improve listening. Many students benefit from remote mics, reduced noise, circular seating, written directions, and captioning. Over time friends will support children’s communication in school and social settings.

Parents often take actions to promote their children’s communication. They might have formal meetings or informal conversations with teachers, coaches and others about children’s hearing or devices. There might also be appointments with therapists and audiologists. Children with hearing loss can be involved briefly in those discussions. Participating in problem-solving increases children’s self-awareness and self-confidence.

Families can guide children to recognize communication challenges and identify helpful strategies. They might practice letting others know what is needed in certain conditions. Children’s roles will vary by age, personality, parent expectations, cultural norms, and social circumstances. Perhaps a preschooler shares concern about communication. An older child might say what causes difficulty. A teen could act to change a situation.

Examples of Advocacy Opportunities

Concern	Cause	Change
Hearing	Too noisy, too far	Tell teacher, move closer, use remote mic
Seeing	Too dark, too bright	Tell speaker, switch seat, improve lighting
Devices	Not working well	Tell parent, change battery, check device
Groups	Too big, uncertain rules	Tell adult, obtain info, pair with peer
Interaction	Communication not clear	Tell person, ask questions, explain to friend

Children gradually take more responsibility for their listening, communication and learning. They start to report concerns and make requests. Eventually when they can explain what works and assert themselves children become empowered. Parents can encourage children from a young age to be aware of their right to participate and advocate for themselves. Self-advocacy builds social-emotional strength that becomes a life-time communication skill.

Become a Self-Advocate

What is Self Advocacy?

It is a way to assist or assert yourself.

Self advocacy are actions you choose.

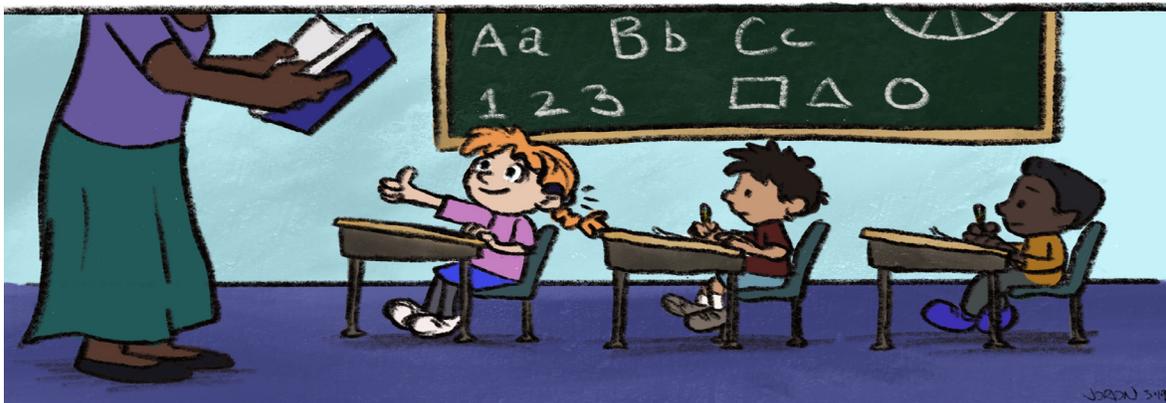
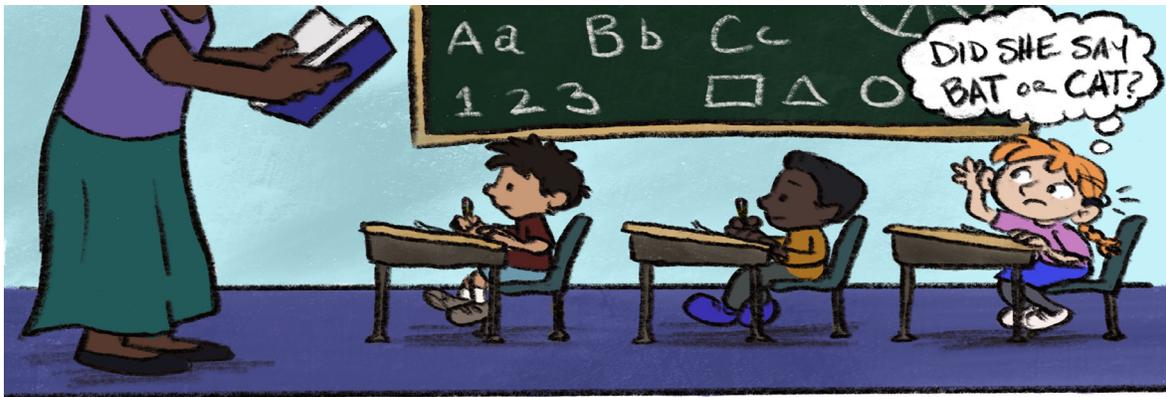
It is how you try to improve a situation.

Self advocacy is what you tell, ask or do

It takes practice to learn to advocate.

Self Advocacy is part of communicating.

Adventures in Advocacy



Self Advocacy Steps

Talk to your parents about communication

Think where any changes could help

Tell others how or when they can assist

Trust yourself to advocate and achieve