

Helping Students With Exceptionalities Build Self-Esteem, Resiliency and Independence

All students, including those who have exceptionalities, have a right to self-determination. This means helping students be able to make their own choices and set their own goals. Students are better able to practice self-determination when they are supported in building their self-esteem, resiliency, and independence.

What can you do to make a difference?

- ▶ Help empower your child to advocate for themselves. Tell them they can speak up for themselves. Their voice is crucial. They can be involved in discussions about their education and tell adults what they do well and what helps them learn.
- ▶ Help your child understand their own talents, strengths, and needs as a learner.
 - Talk about what they do well. What successes have they had? What is an accomplishment they are especially proud of? When did they try really hard to do something? Celebrate their efforts and achievements.
 - Discuss what they need help with. Everyone finds things hard sometimes. What will help them grow?

These questions are important for *all* students to think about, so they can contribute to decisions about their learning opportunities and their lifelong success.

- ▶ Turn mistakes into learning opportunities. Reassure your child that people grow when we try new things, sometimes fail, and learn from things that go wrong. Students with exceptionalities should be encouraged to take on challenges that are right for them, so they can achieve more than they thought possible.
- ▶ Encourage your child to focus on positive things – about themselves and others. Sometimes this takes practice and patience. Talk to your child about strategies that will help them be optimistic and not give up if things become hard.

- ▶ Make sure your child or teen has opportunities to be independent at school. If they need support with their daily needs, school staff can still try to find ways for students to do as much as possible on their own. Or maybe sometimes they can do things with support from another student, rather than an adult.
- ▶ Be alert to how you and your child are included in goal-setting at school. Is there space for your child's voice? Do people ask your child what they want? Do they have chances to communicate what will help them achieve the things that are most important to them?
- ▶ Make sure your child is involved as much as possible in choosing strategies and options that are right for them. Everyone needs different things at different times. You and your child know best what works well and what might need to be changed.
- ▶ Talk to school staff about how you will all know when your child has met a goal. How will your child have opportunities to talk about their successes? How will everyone know when your child feels ready for new goals? How will successes be celebrated?
- ▶ Listen to your child. Try to put away distractions sometimes and give your child your full attention. Notice what your child is saying, and how they are saying it – what they might be feeling.
- ▶ Being a parent isn't always easy. There are always many things that keep us busy. We all get tired. Be proud that you are your child's best advocate and their greatest source of support. Celebrate your own efforts.

Other Resources to Know About

Inclusion BC is a non-profit provincial organization that advocates for the rights and opportunities of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Inclusion BC members include people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and organizations that serve them.

The Inclusion BC web site includes a free Parent's Handbook on Inclusive Education that provides a wealth of information for families. See www.inclusionbc.org.

The Inclusion BC Handbook also includes an online template document for creating a one-page profile of your child. It can help you share a summary about your child at the beginning of every school year. Some parents find it helpful to create a one-page profile to introduce their child to new teachers.

The Family Support Institute of BC is a provincial society committed to supporting families who have a family member with a disability. It is a grass roots family-to-family organization with a broad volunteer base. Its supports and services are FREE to any family.

The Family Support Institute has created MyBooklet BC – a FREE online tool that families and people with disabilities can use to create a beautiful and personalized information booklet for a loved one or for themselves.

You and your child will meet many new people during their education. Communicating the same information to different people can be exhausting! To consider whether this resource would help you, consider the following questions.

- ☐ Are you tired of constantly repeating your “story” to doctors, teachers, therapists, friends and family?
- ☐ Do you wish all your important information was in one document?
- ☐ Do you wish you could share more than just the medical and diagnostic facts?
- ☐ If you answered yes to any of these questions, you’ll want YOUR OWN MyBooklet now!

It's as easy as 1-2-3 to create a booklet

1. Create a FREE user account.
2. Fill in the forms you want.
3. Print YOUR OWN MyBooklet and share! Or if you don't have a printer, ask the school or your Band Office to print it for you.

See <https://mybookletbc.com>

