Promoting Self-Advocacy
A Handbook for Students

"As we start a new school year, Mr. Smith, I just want you to know that I'm an Abstract-Sequential learner and trust that you'll conduct yourself accordingly!"
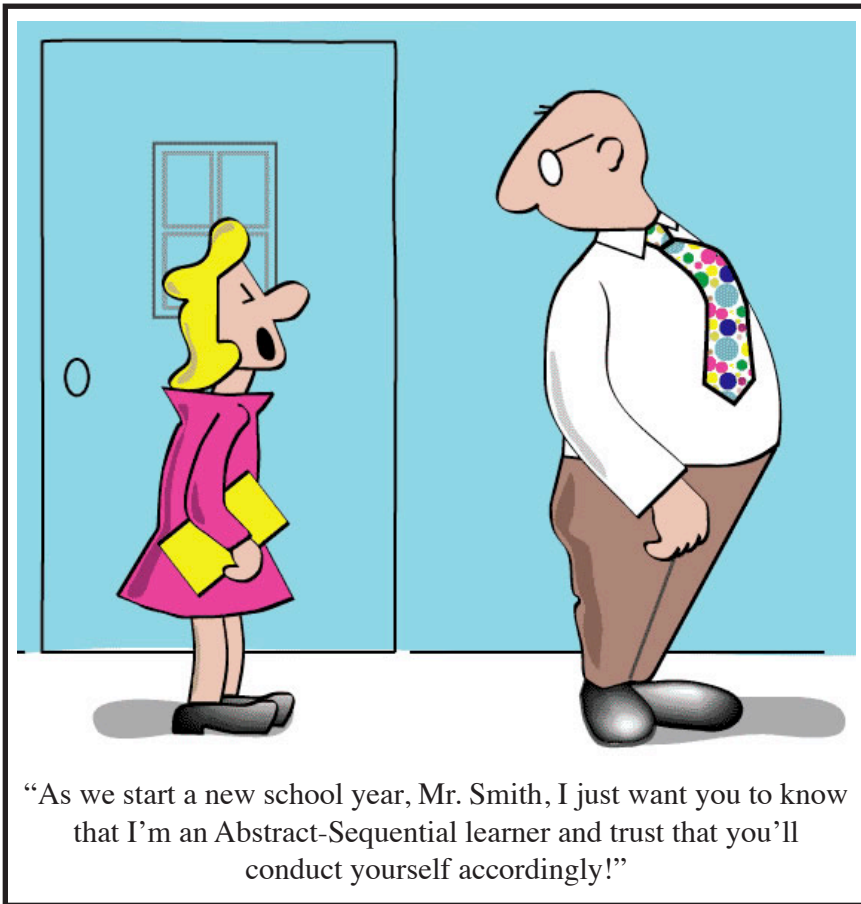
Herricks Union Free School District
Herricks Middle School
Pupil Personnel Department
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Introduction

This handbook was designed to enable students with disabilities to begin to identify and understand their own disability and how it impacts on their learning. Through this discovery our students will be encouraged to acquire the skills that promote self-advocacy, to manage their own learning process and communicate with those who are partners in their education, their teachers, their parents and their classmates. Students who are active participants in this process will be more successful in school.

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What is a Disability?

You might have heard the saying that no two snowflakes are alike. The same thing can be said about a person with a disability. People with disabilities have many different characteristics. In fact, many people with disabilities look just like everyone else. Their disabilities are often hidden.

Many types of disabilities exist, such as physical, sensory, cognitive, psychiatric, and health-related. Physical disabilities often cause a person to use special equipment like a wheelchair, cane, or prosthetic limb. People with physical disabilities often have difficulty with movement or self-care, but are otherwise just like anyone else. Another type of disability that people are familiar with is sensory disabilities. Sensory disabilities affect the senses and include blindness and deafness. Sensory and physical disabilities are usually easy for people to notice, but not all disabilities are visible. An example of an invisible disability is a psychiatric disability. This category includes conditions like bipolar disorder and depression. Medications and therapies often help people with psychiatric disabilities to live and function successfully in the community.

Cognitive disabilities vary tremendously and can also be difficult to see. Learning disabilities are in this category. A person with a learning disability usually has average to above average intelligence but difficulty learning, remembering and communicating information. Learning disabilities come in many different forms and although they usually affect a person's ability to complete school-related tasks, learning disabilities can affect job performance.

Some people with sicknesses or diseases such as epilepsy, diabetes, and cancer are considered as having a health-related disability. Not everyone who is sick has a disability. You should check with your school's office for students with disabilities to see if you qualify for assistance.

Keys for Success

Having a disability does not mean you are disabled or unable to achieve. Many people with learning disabilities lead satisfying, thriving, and successful lives. Learn what factors support success: the strategies and mindsets people use to work with and around their learning disabilities.

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Teaching Our Children

A boy and his father were walking along a road when they came across a large stone. The boy said to his father, "Do you think if I use all my strength, I can move this rock?" His father answered, "If you use all your strength, I am sure you can do it." The boy began to push the rock. Exerting himself as much as he could, he pushed and pushed. The rock did not move. Discouraged, he said to his father, "You were wrong. I can't do it." His father placed his arm around the boy's shoulder and said, "No son. You didn't use all your strength – you didn't ask me to help."
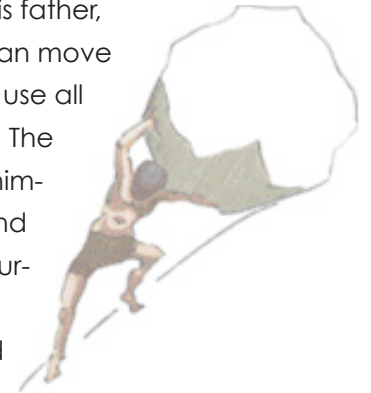
-        David J. Wolpe

Brussad, Frederick and Mary Ann, Spiritual Literacy, Scribner Publications, New York, 1996.
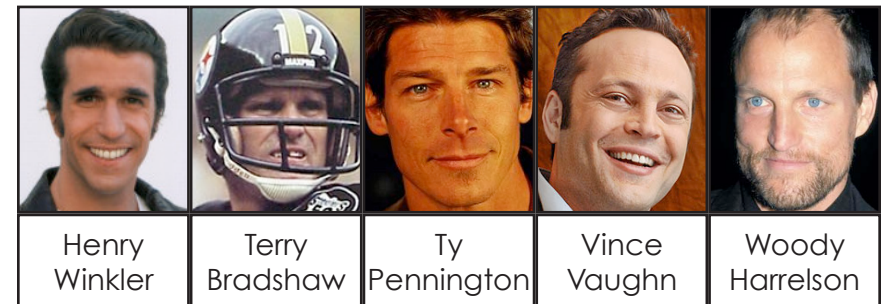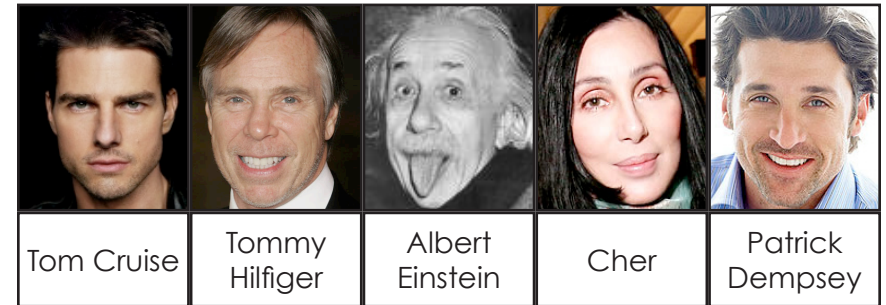
Believing in Yourself

Having a disability should not limit what you can accomplish in your life. Using your strengths and talents can lead to success in many areas. Think positively, believe in yourself and say **"Yes I Can!"** The possibilities are endless...

" Self-knowledge must precede self-advocacy."
-Mel Levine, MD

People We Know With Disabilities

Tom Cruise	Tommy Hilfiger	Albert Einstein	Cher	Patrick Dempsey

Henry Winkler	Terry Bradshaw	Ty Pennington	Vince Vaughn	Woody Harrelson

George Washington	Orlando Bloom	Erin Brockovich	Keira Knightley	Leonardo DaVinci

Promoting Self-Advocacy

The development of self-advocacy tools enable individuals to become active participants in planning their future. Self-advocates speak up for themselves on their own behalf. They stand up and ask for what they need because they realize that no one else knows how they think and feel.

Self-advocacy is the best kind of advocacy because it puts the individual in charge. There's no waiting for someone else to change the situation. Self-advocates make the changes for themselves.

1) Students as Self-Advocates

- Know your IEP (Individual Education Program)
- Recognize and utilize strengths
- Recognize your learning style and how you learn best
- Be aware of your responsibilities
- Ask for help
- Attend extra help class
- Talk to teachers about assignments
- Discuss your progress with Guidance Counselors
- Check your teacher's Herricks website
- Learn to use study strategies:
    o Be organized
    o Plan your time
    o Use agenda book
    o Use calendar
    o Organize binders
    o Set aside time to study
    o Complete all homework

2) Parental Advocacy

- You are a crucial part of your child's learning process.
- Encourage your child to be successful in the classroom.
- Encourage your child to speak for himself/herself
- Know your child's IEP
- Know your child's strengths and weaknesses
- Understand your child's learning style
- Be familiar with classroom expectations
- Develop a routine for homework and studying
- Create an environment with necessary supplies
- Check agenda book on daily basis for assignments and notes
- Check for completion of short/long term assignments
- Keep an open line of communication with teachers

3) Teachers

- Know each student's IEP
- Implement all accommodations
- Teach to students' strengths
- Design lessons with multi-sensory presentations
- Protect confidentiality of students with disabilities
- Collaborate with team teachers
- Help students use technology
- Teach self-advocacy in Guided Study and Resource Room

Test-Taking Strategies For Students

Preparing For The Test

- Complete class work and homework on time
- Note test dates in your agenda book
- Attend extra help after school
- Have a clear understanding of homework assignments before you go home
- Get a good night's rest
- Eat a healthy breakfast
- Create a study guide plan and review daily (flash cards, study notes)

During The Test

- Relax, breathe deeply and stay focused
- Read and pay careful attention to ALL directions
- Make sure you read all questions before answering
- Don't spend too much time on one question
- Underline and highlight important information
- Think positively
- Look over the test when you are finished

Parent Test-Support Strategies

- Check agenda for upcoming tests and assignments
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for his/her homework, class work, and study preparation
- Support your child's academic strengths
- Have realistic expectations of your child's perfomance while encouraging their best efforts

Types Of Learning Styles

Different people learn in different ways and it is good to know what your own preferred learning style is.

Auditory Learners – learn through hearing verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say.

Visual Learners – learn through seeing and may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays of the material (i.e. diagrams, illustrations, notes, hand-outs)

Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners – learn through moving, doing and touching, actively exploring the physical world around them, they may find it hard to sit still for long periods of time.

Multi-sensory Learners – combination of ALL learning styles

Knowing Your IEP

The IEP creates an opportunity for teachers, parents, school administrators, related services personnel, and students to work together to improve educational results for children with disabilities.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)
An IEP is a legal document that describes the educational program that has been designed to meet that child's unique needs.

Components of an IEP

Student and Guardian Information

Recommended Classification and Placement Information - classification is based on tests done every three years

Special Transportation

Recommended Special Education Programs and Services - these are the individualized special education services you will be receiving during the school year
   - Special Education Programs
   - Related Services
   - Program Modifications/Accommodations/Supplementary Aids and Services
   - Assistive Technology Devices/Services
   - Support for School Personnel on Behalf of Student
   - Testing Accommodations
   - Participation in State and Local Assessments
   - Including Foreign Language exemption and adaptive physical education

Present Levels of Academic Achievement, *Functional Performance and Individual Needs* - this area will list your strengths and weaknesses in academic achievement, social development, physical development and management needs
   - How the Student's Disability Affects Involvement and Progress in the General Education Curriculum
   - Academic Achievement, Functional Performance and Learning Characteristics
   - Standardized Test Results
   - Social Development
   - Physical Development
   - Management Needs

Committee Meeting or Agreement Information – summary of your annual review meeting discussing your's current programs and recommendations for the following year

Other Options Considered - Least Restrictive Environment Statement

Reporting Progress to Parents – quarterly reports sent home regarding progress made on annual goals. Based on a combination of a variety of classroom assessments and teacher evaluations
   -A = Achieved
   -PS = Progressing Satisfactorily
   -S = Some Progress
   -NS = Not Started

Definitions of Test Modifications

Test modifications are changes in testing procedures or formats that provide students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in test situations and to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities. Test modifications can change the way in which test items are presented to the student, the student's method of responding to test items or the process a student uses to derive responses to test items. Test modifications should not be excessive; they should alter the standard administration of a test to the least extent possible.

The Purpose Of Test Modifications

The purpose of test modifications is to enable students with disabilities to participate in test programs on an equal basis with their nondisabled peers. They provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery of skills and attainment of knowledge without being limited or unfairly restricted due to the effects of a disability.

In determining a student's need for such modifications, emphasis must be placed on the necessity for modification, not merely the potential benefit from modification. Test modifications are provided in order to address a disability, and to the extent possible, they are intended to minimize the effects of a student's disability. Conversely, such modifications are not intended to substitute for knowledge and abilities that the student has not achieved; they are not intended to provide an unfair advantage over students taking tests and examinations under standardized conditions. The fact that a student may be expected to achieve a higher score with test modifications is not an appropriate sole criterion for providing such modifications.

Common test modifications found on students' IEPs or 504 Plans, are described below. Every possible modification that may be appropriate for students with disabilities is not included, since students' needs are too diverse to attempt to address all possible situations in this publication. More specific guidelines and regulations are provided by the New York State Education Department publication on Test Accomodations.

Flexible Schedule

Some students with disabilities may require a different time schedule extended time to complete examinations.
Examples:
   - time extension
   - breaks during tests

Flexible Setting

For some students with disabilities, the standard location for test administration may not be appropriate. Some students are easily distracted or have difficulty remaining on task.
Examples:
   - separate location
   - minimal distractions

Revised Test Format

Some students with disabilities may not be able to take a test using the standard test format. Some students with visual, perceptual or motor impairments do not have the ability to read regular size print.
Examples:
   - Braille or large print
   - Increased spacing
   - Scantron exempt

Revised Test Directions

This should help the student understand the directions but not provide additional information
Examples:
- read test directions aloud
- directions explained

Use of Aids

Devices that assist student
Examples:
- Auditory Amplification Device
- Calculator
- Word Processor

Program Modifications / Accommodations

Some of a student's educational needs may be met using classroom accommodations. The modifications are typically provided by General Education teachers, Special Education teachers, and/or Special Education support staff.
Examples:
- Preferential seating
- Copy of class notes
- Refocus and redirection

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Individual Education Program
2008-2009
Confidential Student Information

STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

*Indicates who the IEP is written for along with basic family information.
 -address
 -phone number
 -birth date

RECOMMENDED CLASSIFICATION AND PLACEMENT INFORMATION

*Indicates your child's disability
*Start and end date of services
*Re-evaluation date (this is updated every three years)
*Special transportation

RECOMMENDED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Special Education Programs:

*This section gives the specifics of the program such as when, where and how often you will receive certain special education classes.

Related Services:

*Examples
 -Speech / Language Therapy
 -Occupational Therapy

Program Modifications/Accomodations/Supplementary Aids and Services:

*This is where you will find classroom modifications tailored to your child's specific needs
*Examples
 -Check for understanding, Refocusing / Redirecting
 -Additional time to complete tasks

Assistive Technology Devices/Services:

*Technology used by individuals with disabilities in order to perform a function that might otherwise be difficult.
*Examples
  -Portable Word Processor, Alpha Smart, Auditory Amplifying Devices, Spell
   Check Device

Support for School Personnel on Behalf of Student:

*Services that are provided to the teachers about your disability to help them to more effectively work with you. In special circumstances, an assistant may be provided for your class in order to help make you more successful.

Testing Accommodations:

*This is where you will find changes to testing procedures, testing materials or the testing situation in order to allow you to participate meaningfully in assessments.
*Examples
  -Extended Time
  -Test Administered in location with minimal distractions
  -Directions Read
  -Use of a Calculator

Participation in State and Local Assessments:
*This section states whether or not you will participate in the same state or local assessments that are administered to general education students.

Removal from General Education Environment occurs only when the nature or severity of

the disability is such that, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, education

cannot be satisfactorily achieved.

*In some circumstances, you may not be successful in a general education program with services. You would then be placed into a self-contained program.
*Exemption from foreign language is also possible for any classified student. A second language exemption is designed for students with significant impairments in receptive and expressive language skills.

PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT, FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE AND INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

*This part of the IEP will tell you how you are currently functioning in the different domains of development.

How Your Disability Affects Involvement and Progress in the General Education Curriculum:

*Describes your disability in detail and how it will inhibit your participation in a general education classroom.

Academic Achievement, Functional Performance and Learning Characteristics:

*This area contains specific information on your abilities and needs related to the basic skill areas of reading, math, written language, speech, etc.

Standardized Test Results:

*This section lists results of test scores

Social Development:

* This section has a descriptive summary of your relationship with peers and adults, self esteem and adjustment to the school and community settings.

Physical Development

*This section has a descriptive summary of any physical, health, and/or sensory needs as they relate to the learning process.
*Examples
 -fine motor skills
 -gross motor skills
 -medical issues
 -attending skills

Management Needs:

*This section summarizes the general environmental supports, structures, and resources that you need to benefit from instruction.
*Examples
  -Human resources, environmental modification, material resources

COMMITTEE MEETING OR AGREEMENT INFORMATION

*The purpose of the meeting is reported for the record. It may be for a variety of reasons, including an annual review/ program change, or to discuss a new evaluation. The purpose is disclosed at this point and becomes a part of the record.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

* This section contains the Least Restrictive Environment statement. The comittee's placement considerations ranging from the least restrictive to the most restrictive environment.

REPORTING PROGRESS TO PARENTS

*A parent will receive a written quarterly report on your progress of IEP goals.

MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

*These goals are the expectations of what you will be able to accomplish by the end of the time period the IEP covers, usually no more than one calendar year.

Resources / Websites

* http://www.ldonline.org/lavoie/Explaining_Learning_Disabilities_to_Your_Child

* http://www.how-to-study.com/study-skills/en/other-helpful-articles/49/your-preferred-learning-style/

* http://www.k-state.edu/counseling/topics/career/studystr.htm

* http://www.helpguide.org/mental/learning_disabilities.htm

* http://books.google.com/books?q=what+is+a+learning+disability&source=in&ei=RMVUStWwHonflAez_tTsCA&sa=X&oi=book_group&ct=title&cad=bottom-3results&resnum=11

* http://www.ncld.org/?gclid=CK_c9pa8xpsCFQRM5Qode1NgBg

* http://www.helpguide.org/mental/learning_disabilities.htm

* http://www.ncld.org/?gclid=CK_c9pa8xpsCFQRM5Qode1NgBg

* http://www.teachersandfamilies.com/open/parent/studyskills1.cfm

* Brussad, Frederick and Mary Ann, Spiritual Literacy, Scribner Publications, New York, 1996.

* Daryl Mellard and Sean Lancaster, University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning Division of Adult Studies

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