



# Speaking Up for Myself

**A workbook for students and their families to have a voice that is heard in the IEP process**

**Elementary Level (Grades 3 - 5)**



**RUTGERS HEALTH**

**The Boggs Center  
on Disability and Human Development**

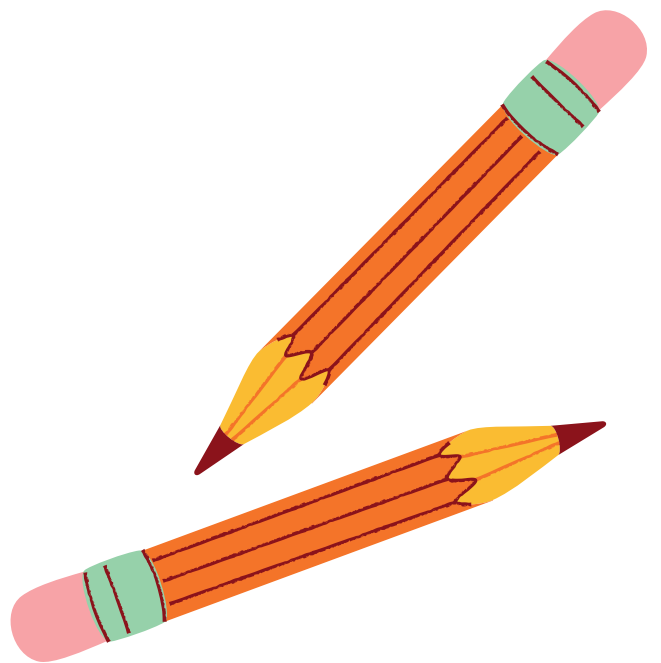
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



Developed by The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development with the NJ Department of Education, Office of Special Education, funded by IDEA Part B 2024-2025. May 2025.

**This book belongs to:**

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# Dear students and families,

This workbook was developed to support families in developing self-advocacy and self-determination skills that can support each child's path to a meaningful life.

Self-advocacy skills are essential for all people and having them helps children express to educators and others what they need to succeed.

No matter the person's age, everyone has strengths and preferences that can be shared. If your child has a disability and is supported by an Individualized Education Program (IEP), they also have an IEP team. The IEP includes planning for adult life (transition planning) the year the student turns age 14, or younger if appropriate. Your family and your child are a key part of this team and with your input, an effective IEP can be developed.

## Directions:

This tool can be used in part or whole to help bring person-centered information into the IEP. You can share the information in these activities before and during the IEP meeting with your case manager.

For more information please visit the [New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy](#) webpage.

## Terms we use and what they mean:

**IEP:** The **Individualized Education Program** is designed to meet each eligible child's unique education needs and when appropriate, includes planning for a successful adult life.

**IEP Team:** Includes the parent, the student when appropriate, the case manager, teachers and other educators, and others as appropriate.

**Person-Centered Planning:** Is a holistic strength-based process that involves supporting people in making well-informed choices and identifying respectful supports.

**Self-Advocacy:** Being able to express to others what you want, what you need, and what you don't want.

**Self-Determination:** A process by which a person controls their own life.

**Modifications:** A modification changes what the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., the content of instruction).

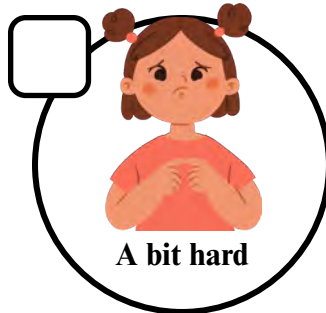
**Accommodations:** An accommodation changes how the student is taught or expected to learn (e.g., instructional methods used, support strategies, environmental factors, etc.).



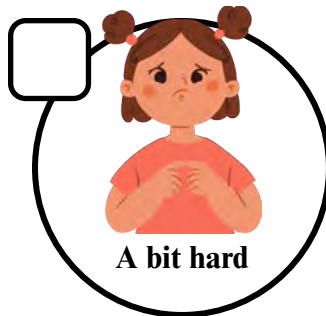
# People I Trust

When you tell other people what you need, it's called **self-advocacy**. How do you feel about speaking up for yourself? Check the circles that apply to you.

## Asking for help at home feels:



## Asking for help at school feels:



Speaking up for yourself gets easier when you practice. Sometimes we need the people we care about to help us speak up. These people are called your **allies**. Who's on your team? Draw or name/identify the people you trust in your life and are your allies.

# My Case Manager

## What does a case manager do?

A **case manager** is someone from your school who helps you, your parents, and your teachers, so that you have a great school year. If you are having a difficult time in school, you can talk to your case manager about how to make things better.

**My case manager's name is:** \_\_\_\_\_

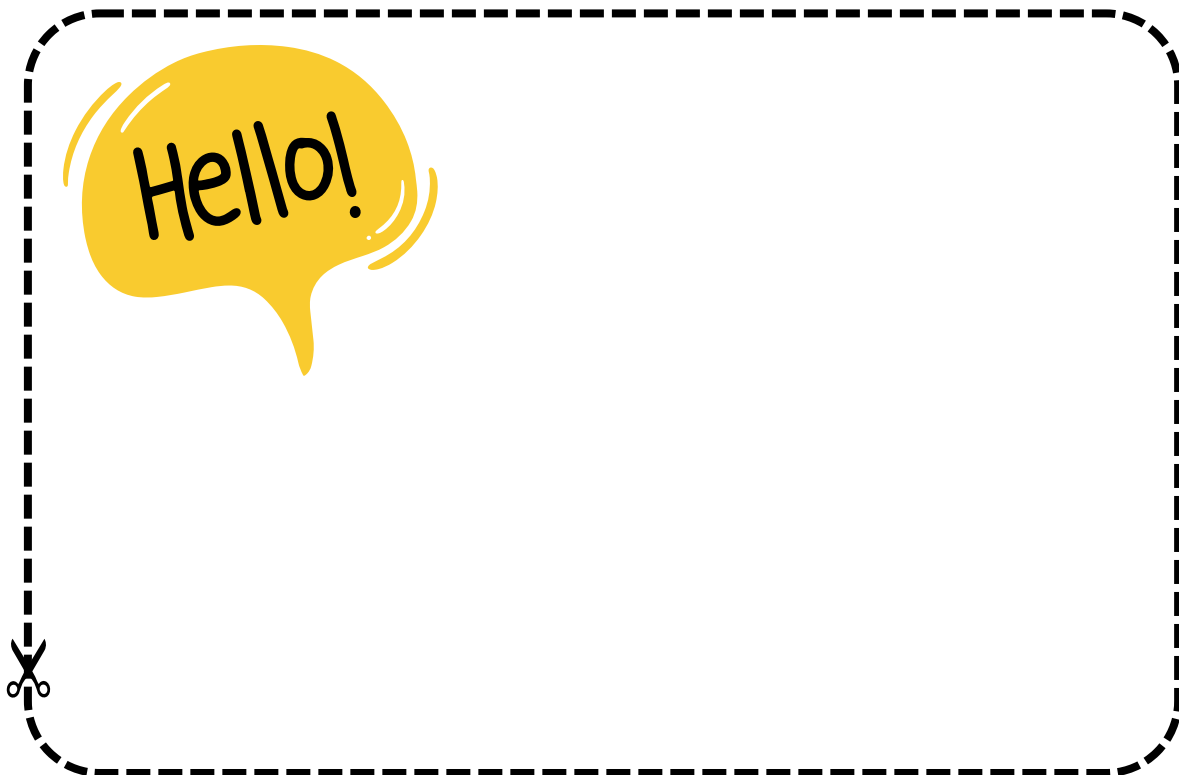
**My case manager's office is:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the postcard on this page and the next to say "hello" to your case manager. When you're done, cut it out and mail it to them or bring it to their office.**



## Front

Use the front of the postcard to draw a picture of yourself or some of your favorite things to help your case manager learn more about you.

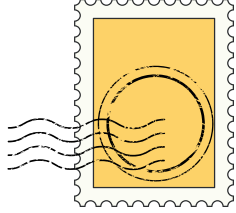




**Tip:** Helping your child know who their case manager is, what they do and where they are is important. This will help your child know a key person to self-advocate with about their education.

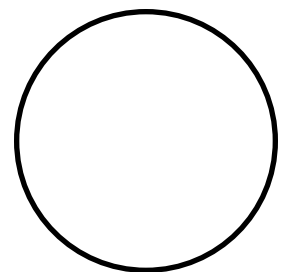
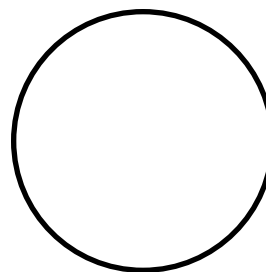
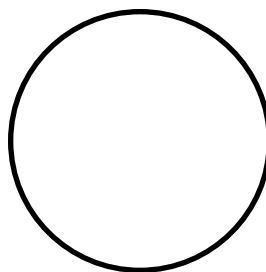
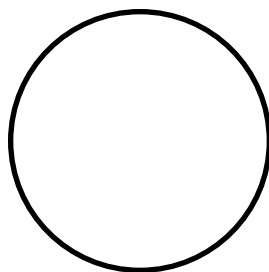
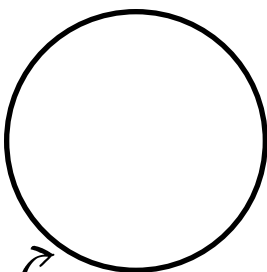
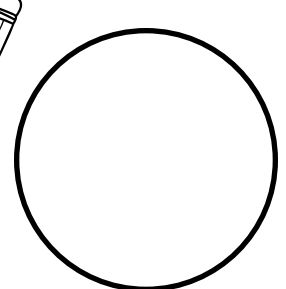
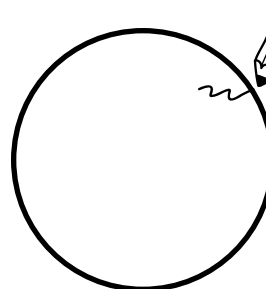
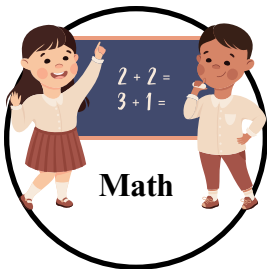
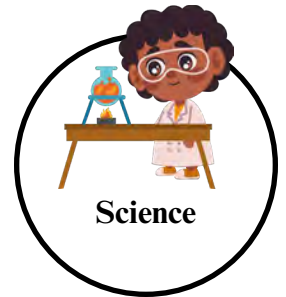
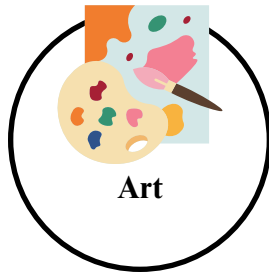
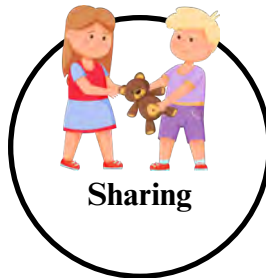
## Back

Write a message using the blank space on the left. Fill out the “to” section with your case manager’s name and office information. Fill out the “from” section with your name, teacher, and classroom.

<p><b>From:</b></p>	<p><b>To:</b></p> 
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# Great things about me!

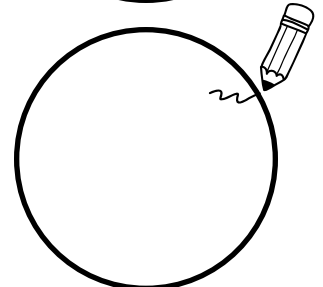
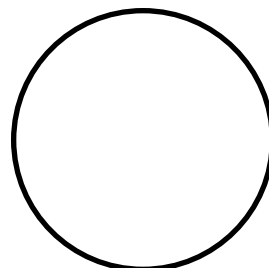
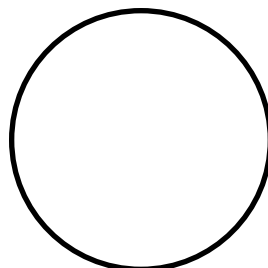
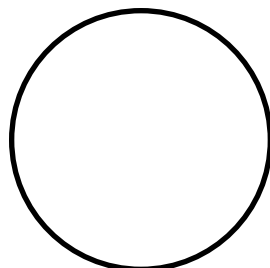
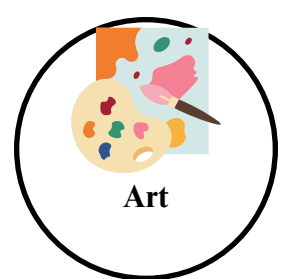
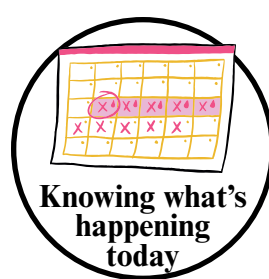
It is super important to tell others what you are good at. Either check or use your favorite color to color all the things that you are awesome at. Then, put an X on things that are hard for you to do.



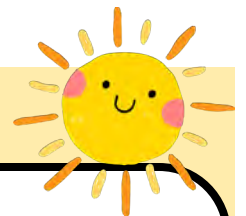
**Tip:** Write in your own! Help your child learn their gifts.

# Important to me

Color in or check the circles that are most important to you. These things make it a great day!



What makes a good day for your child?



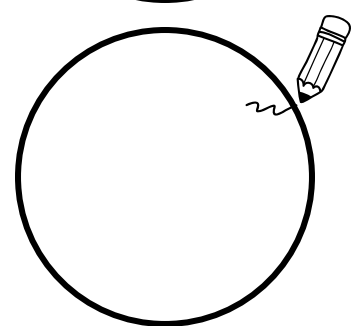
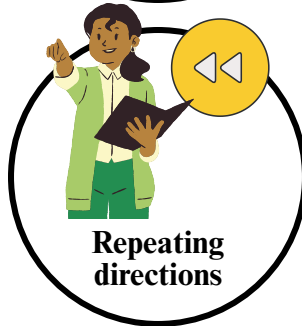
Large empty rounded rectangle for writing answers.

**Tip:** Making sure students have more "Good Days" means others knowing what is important to them, so that those things can be present or absent. Think about a typical day for your child. What makes it better? Who is there? What are they doing? Where are they? Think about home and school.



# Learn what helps me

Color in or check the 3 things that help you most.



**What are some other things that help your child?**

Large empty box for writing or drawing.

**Tip:** What makes for a bad day or situation for your child? What's happening at that moment? What should others do to support them? What doesn't help? Think about home and school.

# My Island

Let's help others learn more about you by creating your own island.

What will your island look like? Here are some ideas to get you started:

- 2 people you will bring to your island to be with you
- 2 items that you really care about
- 2 things that you would do for fun on your island
- 2 things that you would do to relax



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners and a black border, intended for a child to draw or write about their island.

**Tip:** Your child can use words, drawings, photos, or cut-outs!

# For students and families

What will make you most comfortable at the IEP meeting?



If you only had 2 minutes to tell educators what they need to know about your child, what would you share?

Would you feel comfortable having your child in the IEP meeting room? If not, why would you be uncomfortable having your child at the IEP meeting?

Could the IEP team accommodate your child so you would be comfortable with them sitting in? For example, provide coloring books and toys off to the side of the room.

What can you share on your child's behalf?

What are some dreams that you have for your child?

**Tip:** Think about some ways that you can support and prepare your child to attend the IEP meeting. Also consider sharing your responses to these questions with your case manager before the IEP meeting.

## Students Notes & Questions:



## Parent Notes & Questions:



# References & Additional Resources



**New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Policy**  
<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/policy/index.shtml>

**NJ Transition Toolkit**  
<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/njtransition/>

**PCAST Webpage**  
<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/programs/pcast.shtml>

**SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**  
<https://spanadvocacy.org>

**The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development: *Act Early Resilience Toolkit***  
<https://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/act-early-resilience-toolkit>

**The Boggs Center on Disability and Human Development: *The Next Steps: Addressing Concerns about Your Child's Development Quick Guide***  
<https://boggscenter.rwjms.rutgers.edu/resources/publications/the-next-steps-addressing-concerns-about-your-childs-development>



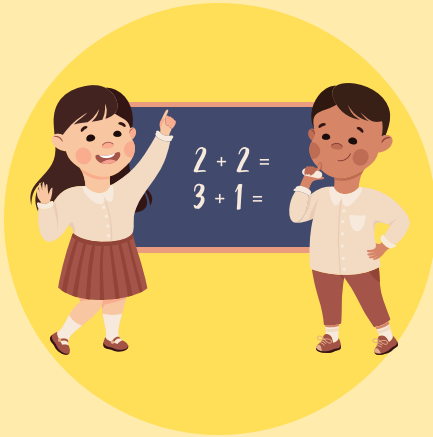
## Special Thanks

The Person-Centered Approaches in Schools and Transition Project (PCAST) would like to thank our partners at the NJ Department of Education, Office of Special Education, all of our educators, students, and their families in New Jersey for making this learning possible.

A special thanks to Brick Township High School, Eastern Regional High School, Haddon Heights School District, Hammonton School District, Lindenwold School District, and Pennsville School District, for their lesson development which contributed greatly to this workbook.

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