

Brown, H. (2000). *An assessment of a self-advocacy skills training program for secondary students with disabilities*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Auburn University, Alabama.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Self-advocacy is a skill that is becoming increasingly important for individuals with disabilities who are striving to be independent, successful, and contributing members of society. Self-advocacy can be defined as speaking up for one's self and effectively communicating one's interests, preferences, and needs to others. The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the effectiveness of a self-advocacy training program for secondary students in transition from high school to postsecondary settings. Parents and teachers have historically advocated for individuals with disabilities, but with the self-advocacy movement of the 1970s, individuals with disabilities have decided that they can and should advocate for themselves. There has recently been an emphasis on teaching these skills prior to entering postsecondary settings where these skills are crucial for independence and survival. Self-advocacy skills are generally taught in a classroom or group setting. Studies examining various methods of teaching self-advocacy skills were discussed, including specific curricula designed to introduce and improve these skills. Empirical studies related to training self-advocacy skills for adolescents and adults with disabilities were also examined. Finally, the future direction of research in the area of self-advocacy skill development was discussed.

A self-advocacy skills training program was implemented for a group of 15 secondary students with disabilities. A control group of 14 secondary students with disabilities did not receive the training. Students in both groups were given two assessments related to self-determination and self-advocacy, both prior to and after training. Results indicated that this training did have some positive effects for students who participated. Locus of control was also examined in relation to self-determination and results indicated that a higher focus of control predicted a higher level of self-determination. Finally, results showed that students who participated in this training were more likely to start a self-advocacy group in their community.