

# Self- Advocacy at OPA

- Self-advocacy: Self- Advocacy is learning to speak up on your behalf and ask for what you need. It is learning to take charge and be more independent. It builds self-confidence. Confident students feel better about themselves, take more risks, ask for the help and clarification they need and consequently do better in school and in life. As students enter the higher grades it becomes increasingly important that they are able to express their needs in a positive way as they are expected to be more independent as learners.
- Barriers to Self- Advocacy: Some students have not yet developed the ability to articulate personal strengths and needs clearly and appropriately. Students who are not yet skilled at self-advocacy often say things like:
  - “You talk too fast,” instead of, “I am finding it difficult to listen in class.”
  - “You make the tests too hard,” instead of, “I find it hard to show what I know on tests.”

Students are sometimes reluctant to ask questions in class or to request extra assistance. They don’t want to be thought of as “stupid” or “disruptive”.

## Three Steps to Self-Advocacy

1. Know yourself as a learner.
2. Know what you need to be successful.
3. Communicate your needs appropriately.

- MVEC Helps Students Understand Their Learning Strengths and Needs by:
  - Talking with students about their individual strengths and needs.
  - Explaining to students that everyone has differences in their abilities. Everyone has strengths and needs.
  - Work with students to develop strategies that support them in learning successfully
  - Focus on finding solutions, rather than criticizing the child, while demonstrating empathy for their needs.
  - Model the vocabulary needed to describe their strengths and needs (e.g. “You seem to remember better when you get a chance to ‘see’ the information”).)

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

