

## Lesson 4 Block 1: Teacher Sheet

### Lesson Synopsis

Students learn what an important role communication skills play in self-advocacy. By learning to use Communication Cards and Conversation Plans, students strengthen their ability to communicate their needs and issues.

### Lesson Objectives

1. Explain why communication is so important for self-advocacy.
2. Describe some communication challenges that may make self-advocacy difficult.
3. Create and use a Communication Card or Conversation Plan to make self-advocacy easier or more effective.

### Lesson Activities

1. Introduce lesson concepts

Many individuals with a wide range of disabilities have trouble communicating – the words don't come out right, the words don't come out fast enough, or the words don't come out at all. Students may be unaware of these types of communication challenges and how they can impact the ability to advocate for oneself. A Teacher PowerPoint on these issues is included.

When exploring communication issues, adjust the discussion to the needs and experience level of the students. If the students are inexperienced in thinking about their communication challenges, they may need to be provided with concrete examples of communication issues in action. More experienced students may be able to provide examples of communication issues from their own lives. Some students may state they have no communication problems. These students can still be encouraged to think about communication generally.

2. Student Centerpiece

After exploring lesson concepts and ideas, students will work on making Communication Cards and Conversation Plans. These are flexible self-advocacy tools that can enable students to more adroitly communicate in school, at work, and in the community. Note, students may come up with varying answers to the question about Allen's Conversation Plan in the Student Centerpiece. Some students may resist the idea of using Cards or Conversation Plans because they feel these tools will make them stand out in a crowd. This is a legitimate concern worthy of discussion. What are the benefits and what are the risks?

3. Enrichment Activities

Please refer to the *Lesson 4 Block 3: Enrichment Activities Sheet* for activity ideas and details.

## Lesson 4 Block 2: Student Centerpiece



Hidden Social Rule:  
Self-advocacy requires good communication skills.

In previous lessons, you learned how important self-advocacy can be. Anytime you need to advocate for yourself, you will need good communication skills. Strong communication skills help adults explain their needs, solve problems, and understand each other.

### *Communication Issues*

People with disabilities like autism can find communication challenging. Even people without disabilities sometimes struggle when it comes time to communicate.

Sometimes it is hard to find the right words. Sometimes words don't come out at all. And sometimes it takes a while to get the right words together.

### *Exploration of Your Own Communication Issues*

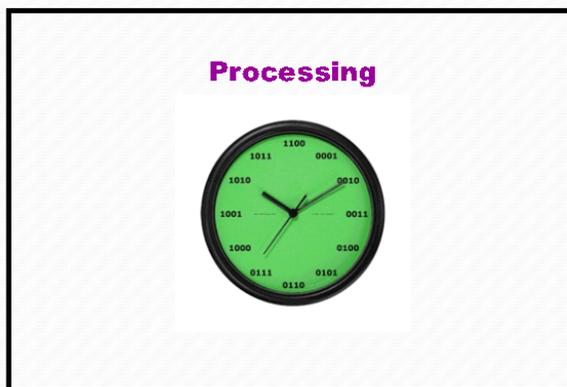
Have you ever had trouble communicating? For example, have you ever had a problem finding the right words or getting up the courage to tell someone you were having a problem? Did it ever take you a long time to explain yourself? What happened? Have your classmates had any communication issues? What did your classmates do?

### *Communication Cards and Conversation Plans*

Communication Cards and Conversation Plans are just two tools you can use to make communication easier.



### Cards: Example 1



Look at Abby's "Processing" Communication Card. Abby's teachers thought she wasn't answering questions in class on purpose. Once Abby made this Communication Card, her teachers knew she was paying attention and just needed an extra moment to formulate her responses.

Look at Allen's Conversation Plan.

## Conversation Plan: Example 2

*When I'm in a place that is too noisy:*

"All this loud noise makes me uncomfortable.  
I'm going to take a break and find somewhere quiet."

A Conversation Plan is just a line or two of things to say that you come up with *in advance* to deal with common situations in your life. What situations do you think Allen used his Conversation Plan for?

*Communication Is Part of Self-Advocacy – And Life!*

Communicating is tricky for everyone. Tools like Cards and Conversation Scripts can help you get your point across. Do you think practicing with Cards and Conversation Scripts can make communicating easier?

## **Lesson 4 Block 3: Enrichment Activities Sheet**

### **Create Communication Cards**

Provide the class with index cards or small pieces of card stock, magic markers, old magazines, scissors, and glue. Use the arts and crafts materials to create Communication Cards for situations from the students' lives, or for fictitious situations presented by the teacher if the students are inexperienced with sharing their own situations. Students can be as creative as they want to be, adding their own drawings and decorations, or pictures and slogans cut out of magazines.

### **Communication Cards Dramatizations**

Act out situations using Communication Cards. How does it feel to use them? Are the Cards effective?

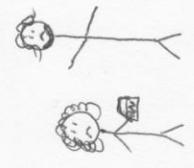
### **Conversation Plans**

Give the students a scenario that keeps happening for a fictitious student. For example, maybe this student has lots of trouble making eye contact, and others think he is ignoring them. Have the students brainstorm a Conversation Plan that might be useful in this recurring situation, and then act out use of the Conversation Plan.

### **Real-World Practice**

Students can make and then practice using a Card or a Conversation Plan outside of the classroom. More experienced students can make a Card or Conversation Plan independently at home, test it out in a real-world situation, and then share results with their peers and/or teachers. Less experienced students could go somewhere as a group and help each other use Cards and Conversation Plans to communicate a sensory issue, to ask for a break, or to deal with any other hypothetical issue for which a Card or a Conversation Plan may be useful.

Lesson Four Social Narrative: Communication

<p><b>SCIENCE</b></p>  <p>The experiment takes about two weeks.</p>	 <p>After two weeks you'll see some changes.</p>	 <p>Are you listening?</p>
<p>Today I was talking to my biology teacher.</p> 	<p>It is hard for me to look people in the eyes.</p>  <p>Yes, I'm listening. It's just hard for me to look at people.</p>	<p>He thought I wasn't paying attention.</p>  <p>Oh! OK, well then in about two weeks...</p>
<p>This could have turned into a disaster.</p>	<p>Instead, I explained.</p>	<p>Communication saved the day!</p>