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Asking Questions about Learning Disabilities: A Gateway to Self-Determination

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Students with disabilities often have a hard time speaking up for what they need. There are a variety of reasons for this, but as a special education teacher I only have control over a fraction of them. This curriculum is designed to help students investigate both their disabilities as well as the disabilities of their peers; specifically autism spectrum disorders, emotional and behavioral disorders, and specific learning disabilities. Current studies show that students who understand their disabilities become more comfortable with themselves, and in turn become more confident, improve their self-advocacy skills and end up being more successful learners. This self-knowledge is the first step towards becoming a self-determined learner, a goal I feel is achievable for all of my students. Though my students are in high school, this curriculum could be used in a general or special education classroom at any grade level with little to no alteration. By using strategies such as the Question Formulation Technique and association skills, students will explore what is means to have an educational disability and the best way to exploit their strengths in order to overcome their struggles.

(Developed for Tutorial Resource, grades 9-12; recommended for Special Education and could be slightly altered to be of use in Humanities or Science curriculum, grades 6-12 [could be altered to include younger grades])