

Materializing Self-Advocacy Skills with Families of Students with Special Educational Needs

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Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy refers to **speaking up for oneself**, expressing one's needs, and defending one's interests (Test et al., 2005). It is a core component of the broader concept of self-determination, through which individuals live autonomous lives and make decisions independently (Wehmeyer et al., 2003).

1. Context

In the school context of the Canton of Vaud (Switzerland), students with special educational needs (SEN) are expected to become self-advocates to **discuss and ensure the implementation of the support they require**. However, these skills develop gradually, beginning in early childhood through everyday experiences. Therefore, family involvement is crucial in supporting their acquisition.

However

lack of resources to develop the skills

still a deficit-based perspectives of children with disability

△ emphasis on functional aptitude
△ lack of confidence in their ability to be advocates for their own lives

2. Conceptual framework

Educational resources for parents are more effective when

- are designed with direct input from families (Mas, 2020)
- are adaptable to their unique circumstances (Schenker et al. 2016)
- and recognize the diversity of family needs and cultural backgrounds and needs (Mensah-Gourmel, 2024)

Relational Materialism (RM):

- Non-human and matter can be granted **'agency'** (Hultman, 2010)
- Agency** : is an in-between different bodies and mutual engagements and relations with objects, space etc.
- RM increased «attentiveness to young people's mediated actions» (Reddington & Price 2018:466): instead of viewing children incomplete beings needing guidance, RM focus on **the various materialities** that children continually **engage with** and **in different ways**. (Lee, 2001)

However

parents are very rarely asked about the materialities of the resources created for them/with them for educational purposes.

3. Our research : Participatory Research with families

The activities are posted on a website and can be used independently: a guide and downloadable materials.



4 mothers
4 disabled teenagers
2 researchers



Collaborative design of resources

Free access Independently used by families and schools


Based on

- Problem-solving in daily routines** (Lile-Diamond, 2018; Papay et al., 2015)
- Children's literature activities** (Lile-Diamond, 2018; Papay et al., 2015)
- Problem scenarios at school** (Campbell-Whatley, 2006)
- Communication skills** (Hammer, 2004; Prater et al., 2014)

a adaptation of material from «understood.com» or «Imdetermined.org»

5. Examples of resources that have evolved in response to feedback received from families.

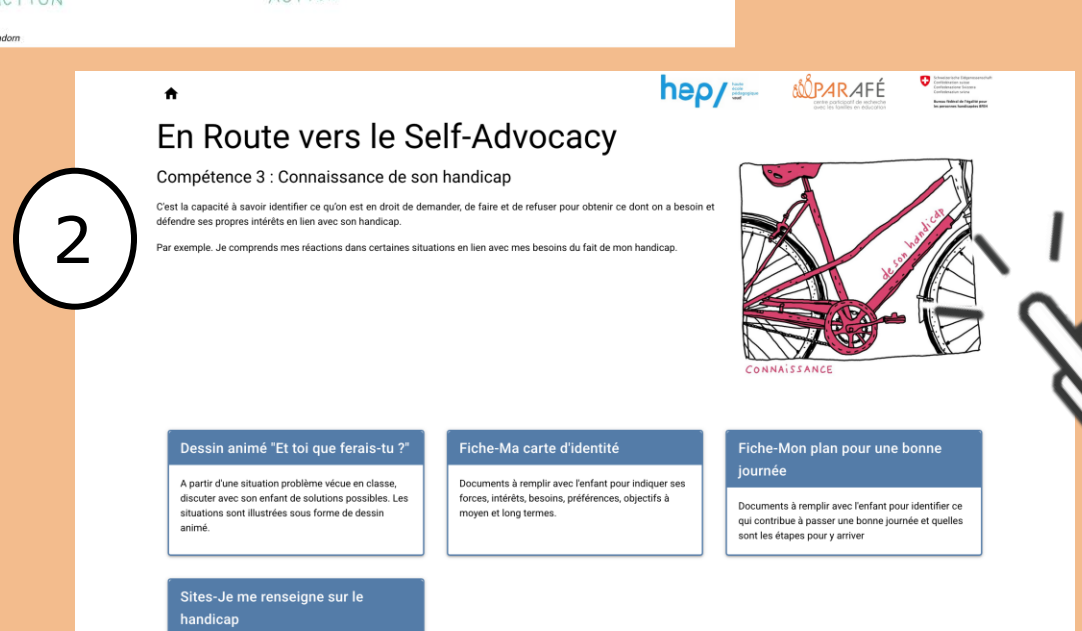
1 Website



3 Skills trained

Free access material to download and print

2



4 Adaptation

Instruction

Adaptations possibles :
• Sélectionner les images qui sont les plus significatives pour votre enfant.
• Utiliser des photos plutôt que des images.

6. Families'evaluation

At the University

&

At home

Parents propose arrangements to promote mutual engagements

- The object - body engagement in various ways**
 - Asking for the material to have more pictograms and colors
 - Asking for a personal adaptation linked to what the child likes >> pictures of its life
- Engagement with various materialities**
 - Asking for distinctive sign to identify the type of equipment
 - Asking to be able to color the material
 - Asking for the material equipment to be more resistant so that actions can be taken on it (drawing on it for eg.)
 - Asking for more accessibility
 - Change, font, writing size, drawing width,...
 - Add tutorial video

We laminated the morning routines so he could take them to camp.

Use real photos for places of remembrance

« ...lamine so that you can use an erasable pen to rewrite or make changes. »

If necessary, cover instructions with your hand depending on age

For the action box, red is aggressive because it is associated with error. I would use the pink from the first page again

Families are very aware of the various materialities that children continually engage with and in different ways.

« As the mother of a child with ASD, I found these activities really helpful. They can be done with your child to help them and encourage self-awareness, enabling them to verbalise what they need or what makes them happy. »

Cards, families and kids make themselves «intelligible to each other as different kinds of matter involved in an active and ongoing relation (barad, 2007)» (Hultman, 2010 :530)

7. Discussion:

Between playing cards, signs, images, shapes, colors, layouts and the bodies of the participants (young and adultes) : specific problems emerge that need to be solved «as an effect of their mutual engagement» (Hultman, 2010: 530)

It is not a question of thinking of the child as having difficulties in carrying out activities, but rather of conceptualizing the interaction between the child, its family, and the environment. .

A transformative recognition of children' intra-actions could signal a reworking of the special-education model

- How can this information be conveyed in a simple way? In the rules of the games, for example? ?**

Temporary solution found: encapsulated under the term adaptation

4. Purpose of the poster

To present the contents of the evaluations of the material created, carried out by around forty families during workshops.

References

