



CHOICE AND DECISION MAKING PARENT TIP SHEET

Parents can teach their students how to make choices and decisions at home or in the community. Choice making is simply showing a preference between two or more options. Decision-making involves considering all the potential solutions in a situation, understanding the consequences associated with each solution, and choosing the solution that best serves your needs about long term issues or outcomes. Parents should encourage their children from an early age to begin making choices and decisions so the children have more say in their own lives. Getting the whole family involved by using fun and engaging activities can be rewarding. These tips and many more can be found in the resource *Fostering Self- Determination Among Children with Disabilities – Ideas from Parents for Parents* from the University of Wisconsin’s Waisman Center.

Tips

- Explicitly teach your child the difference between a choice and decision. Teach about consequences and give age appropriate, relevant examples.
- Allow your child to make simple choices to begin with such as which shirt to wear out of a few options. As the skills grow, try to expand to different areas and more choices. Send home simple data sheets for the parents to track their child’s progress at home.
- Provide lots of practices and feedback so children can learn. Children should be making choices across contexts, materials, environments, etc.
- Model choices or decisions you make and the steps you took to reach your choice or decision
 - ❑ Example: figuring out your available options, determining which you chose and why
- Allow your child to make decisions that have apparent consequences. Using the “if _____, then _____” format can be helpful to understand that all decisions are followed by a consequence. It makes students consider the consequences of their choice or decision.
- Ask your child how they decided to make a decision after they have made one. Have them elaborate their process so they can practice advocating for their own decisions.
- Model your process of reflecting on decisions. Explain a big decision you had to make, the consequences, and what the results of that decision were.
- Advocate for your child’s right to make his or her own life choices, especially as they get older, during the IEP and transition process.