COLLEGE
FOR THE STUDENT WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES

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Overview

• Part 1: Finishing Strong: Junior and Senior Year in High School
• Part 2: SAT/ACT, Testing, College Admissions
• Part 3: Choosing a College that is a Good Fit for Your Student
• Part 4: 1st Semester @ College - Making a Plan & Making the Most of Support Services
Part 1: Finishing Strong
Part 1: Finishing Strong Junior and Senior Year

1. Find out about how your learning differences impact your academic performance - what helps, what works for you, what accommodations you are provided by law and how to get them.

2. Learn how to take tests.

3. Learn how to study.

4. Practice self-advocacy, talking to people and communicating - email your teachers, make your own medical appointments, do your own laundry, shop for food, take public transportation.

Parents need to (re)engage with student’s learning to understand his or her level of independence accurately and realistically. Know how well your student reads and what / how much the school is doing to support your student. In addition to academics, college students are expected to be proficient with executive functioning tasks such as planning / tracking, chunking material for study, time management and interpersonal communication.
Get your documents ready!

- Colleges generally require documentation to show you have an on-going disability that impacts academic performance.
- Evaluation within 2 years of applying to college, usually done in junior or senior year. Updated note from physician.
- Accommodations must be listed in the iep/504 during senior year in high school.
Possible Accommodations and Supplementary Services
(These vary greatly by college and are usually based on what is determined to be necessary per the evaluation document and IEP/504 in high school)

More common:
- Extended time on tests (rarely on assignments).
- Course notes provided for lecture classes.
- Preferential seating.
- Digital audio textbooks, readers, electronic text readers.
- Preferred or early registration.
- Counsel on which courses to take given an instructor’s style and sensitivity to learning differences.
- Use of calculators, laptops, digital recording of lectures.
- Assistance with proofreading and essay writing.

Less common:
- Course waivers and substitutions. Reduced or redistributed course load.
- Modified exam arrangements.
- Assistance or coaching with personal organization and time management. Training and support in developing and maintaining motivation and attention.
- Support for students on medication or with other health conditions.
- Social skills groups and/or planned or structured social opportunities. Supported or specialized housing
- Assistance with note-taking.
Part 2: Testing & Admissions

SAT/ACT Testing, Accommodations, College Admissions
Part 2: SAT/ACT Accommodations

1. Meet with counselor in 10th grade to make sure timeline is appropriate for your student. File submission for testing accommodations can take up to 6 months due to a new verification system. Verify your student is taking the appropriate prerequisites.

2. Practice for real on the PSAT and the PLAN.

3. Plan retake opportunities into the timeline.

4. Extended time is usually awarded at 50%, not 100%.

5. Ask for school based testing if anxiety is impacting performance. This must be documented by a physician or evaluation and should also be listed in IEP/504.
College Admissions

- Colleges do not use IEP/504 as part of the consideration for admission. The same criteria apply to your student.

- You do not submit your IEP/504 at time of application.

- Consider including references to overcoming your learning challenges in your essay.
Part 3: Choosing a College

...that is a good fit for you!
Questions to ask when visiting / researching colleges

Ask if they track their LD graduates - where did they go? What employment outcomes?

What is the retention rate of LD students?

What types of in-service or support does the school offer faculty for accommodating students with special needs?

Is support, tutorial and assistance offered by interns, graduate students, peer tutors or trained professionals?

Are any college credit academic support, coaching or executive functioning support classes offered?

How are accommodations determined and granted at the college and who grants them? Are they based solely on the high school IEP or 504?

Talk to current users of support services and/or their parents.
Other Considerations

- Cost
- Programs of Study
- Type of College: University, Tech School, Military, Specialized Certification (such as Digipen), Community College
- Location
- Social connections and campus life
- Other friends attending, relatives nearby
- Medical / mental health support services
Part 4: 1st Semester @ College

Making a Plan & Making the Most of Support Services
Before you go...

1. Contact the office of disability support to schedule an appointment.
2. Get contact list for writing lab, tutoring, campus mental health services.
3. Visit the library and identify a study area.
4. Visit housing and determine support needs.
5. “Contract” with parents about communication, grades, financial support and behavior expectations... include bonuses for achieving both grades and non-academic goals!
After you get your schedule...

- Plan a daily routine
- Make “appointments” to do homework daily: exactly when you are going to study, where you are going to study, what exactly you will accomplish (should be practicing this during senior year in H.S.)
- Have 3rd party accountability with parent, coach or tutor
- Check in weekly, be honest about challenges - there is support!
- Understand how to drop a class without penalty
- Visit disability office to confirm testing accommodations
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>10th</th>
<th>11th</th>
<th>12th</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take the PLAN</td>
<td>Take the PSAT</td>
<td>Take the SAT / ACT</td>
<td>Make a plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare file to submit to college board</td>
<td>Eval (or during 12th)</td>
<td>Pick 5 colleges, apply to 3</td>
<td>Use accommodations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-meet with counselor</td>
<td>Research / visit colleges, go to summer college bootcamp</td>
<td>Work on study skills and self advocacy</td>
<td>Make new friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start process to understand how you learn</td>
<td>Learn how to take tests</td>
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4 Year Checklist
Epilogue: Plan B

- If you leave college, write down everything you remember before you leave - what was hard, what you did not like, what was fun, what you will miss.
- Consider continuing with a reduced schedule at college as a part-time student with part-time employment.
- Contact DVR office in Bellevue for employment assistance!!! ALL people with an IEP or 504 qualify for this service.
- Make a weekly schedule including social events, volunteering and job. Get exercise or join an adult sport league.
- Visit former teachers, talk to other adults about college - surprisingly few people finish college in 4 straight years.
- Maintain academic skills in C.E. / community college, online classes.
- Read for pleasure regularly.

Note for Parents:
Ages 18 - 24 are sometimes the hardest to navigate for both parents and students. Community resources are scarce for many disability groups who have higher academic functioning, but low executive functioning or social skills. You will need some “case manager” skills in order to support your student during this time period. Get to know as much as possible about your student now, while in high school and understand how 504/IEP accommodations can be used in both college and work settings. Join a support group or network with other parents of young adults with disabilities.