

CHOICES

A POST-SECONDARY
PLANNING GUIDE
For Students and Their Families Exploring
Post-Secondary Options



Sponsored by:
Adlai E. Stevenson High School
Deerfield High School
Evanston Township High School
Glenbrook High Schools
Highland Park High School
Libertyville High School
New Trier Township High Schools
Niles Township High Schools
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CHOICES POST SECONDARY PLANNING GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

What are my post-secondary options? Which colleges are best for me? How do I get accommodations in college? For many students and parents, the notion of college planning and the entire application process may appear daunting. The college search and selection process can, however, be an educational adventure and should be a time of personal growth, self-understanding and goal setting. It should also include a survey of all options available to students.

The process of post-secondary options selection begins well before senior year and for students looking for colleges offering specific support programs or services, the search should begin in earnest in junior year. It is important to encourage the student to take the initiative during this process. Parents should remain in the background cheering on their student's journey toward independence. Often it takes considerable planning, research and patience to ferret out the relevant information that factors into decision-making. For many students, the goal of "getting in" to a school or post-secondary program is just that, the goal. However, this goal should also include "staying in" and enjoying it. Therefore, the process of self-reflection, analyzing the ways in which one learns best and understanding how one's disability impacts learning become critical. It is through this self-knowledge that students can make their decision of which program will be more tailored to their needs and therefore, the best match.

The information in this booklet is designed to help you through the process of post-secondary planning. It is the product of input from counselors and special educators representing each of the high schools sponsoring the CHOICES fair.

The CHOICES Committee: Emily Caldeira, Glenbrook North High School; Patricia Finnerty, Niles Township High Schools; Stephanie Gordon, Deerfield High School; Elizabeth Howes, Niles Township High School; Julie Manning, Glenbrook South High School; John Ostrowski, Evanston Township High School; Steve Rose, Highland Park High School; Steve Rochon, Libertyville/Vernon Hills High Schools; Merle Spielman, New Trier Township High Schools; Terese Sullivan, Adlai Stevenson High School

GETTING STUDENTS READY FOR POST-SECONDARY EXPERIENCES

Parents, Counselors, Teachers and students with special needs may use this list as a reminder of helpful skills and necessary steps to take as a high school student moves toward post-secondary programs.

1. Make sure psychological testing is up-to-date.
2. Obtain all special testing records before high school graduation. Colleges as well as vocational rehabilitation offices request these records to assist in providing special services to students.
3. Make contact with the local Office of Rehabilitation Services before graduation. ORS offers a variety of services to eligible students such as vocational assessment, job placement and financial assistance.
4. Consider a vocational assessment as a way to amplify present and future goals.
5. Make sure the student's knowledge of study skills is adequate. In addition to high school assistance, consider special study skills classes offered at community colleges, private agencies or individual tutoring.
6. Consult with the high school to get a good understanding of how much support or special help the student is receiving. It is important to determine realistically whether minimal support services or an extensive program at the college level will be needed.
7. Help students to increase their independent living skills. Help them learn to manage their own checking accounts, do their own laundry, cleaning, some cooking, etc.
8. Encourage part-time jobs or volunteer positions. These are helpful to improve socialization skills as well as to give a better understanding of work situations and expectations and responsibility.
9. Make sure students have a good understanding of their particular disabilities. They should know and be able to articulate their strengths and weaknesses as well as what compensating techniques and accommodations work best for them.
10. Help students understand how their disabilities are connected to social experiences with peers, families and employers. A visual or auditory discrimination deficit and/or an attention deficit disorder frequently lead to missed cues and inappropriate timing in conversation.
11. Encourage students to be their own advocates. A good first step is to encourage them to discuss their disabilities and needed accommodations, if any, with their regular high school instructors.
12. Learn about Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This law indicates what types of accommodations must be provided and/or allowed at postsecondary institutions if a student requests them. The responsibility is on the individual to initiate the provision of services and accommodations (unlike the requirements of I.D.E.A. which puts responsibility on elementary and secondary schools).
13. Get information on special exam arrangements for SAT and/or ACT. Options include extended time, readers or cassettes.
14. Try to visit colleges and post-secondary programs or training facilities before making a definite choice. Also, look at the communities in which they are located.
15. Make sure the student has had visual and hearing evaluations recently. Only qualified specialists should administer such evaluations.
16. Encourage students to have their own memberships in organizations specific to their disability. Newsletters can help keep them informed about new resources and special programs.
17. Make sure it is the student's choice to attend school. The most successful students are those who have high motivation and a good understanding of their particular strengths and weaknesses. They understand that it may be harder and take more time to manage post-secondary work. They are committed to spend that extra time studying, and to request and use appropriate accommodations when needed.

Adapted from: Carol Sullivan, counselor for LD students, Northern Virginia Community College and the staff of HEATH Resource Center, 1987

SELF-DETERMINATION: A CRITICAL SKILL FOR POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

Not all students with learning or other disabilities will consider postsecondary education, nor are all appropriate for it. But if students are motivated and capable of going to college, there are things that can be done at the secondary level that will better prepare them for the transition to college, and they involve a joint effort by students, teachers, parents and counselors. Self-determination is a concept that includes, but is not necessarily limited to, being well-informed about options and choices, taking appropriate classes, developing self-awareness, and perhaps most importantly, learning self-advocacy skills (Aase and Price, 1987; Aune and Ness, 1987; Gartin, Rumrill & Serebreni, 1996).

One of the key and critical differences between high school and college is the level of independence that is required in the postsecondary setting. A student must be a good self-advocate if he or she is to access services in college, and this requires that the student practice the development of such skills in high school. Special education and regular teachers, counselors and parents all have a crucial role to play in this process which is so important for college success, and, really, success in the world of work as well. Teaching students to understand their strengths and weaknesses, strategies that work for them, problem-solving, and decision-making skills will provide the tools that allow greater independence and success. For students in Special Education programs, transition goals are written (hopefully with student input) into the Individual Education Plan and should address some of these elements. Role-playing and practice with expression of needs, approaching faculty, finding resources, asking for help are all components of the self-advocacy goals that can and should be taught in high school to ensure self-determination. Parents can assist by encouraging their sons and daughters to locate community resources, ask questions during college visits, become independent with such basic skills as laundry, banking and time management.

One of the biggest deterrents at the postsecondary level for students with learning disabilities is a factor called “learned helplessness”, first described by Seligman (1975) as a phenomenon that occurs when a person perceives that he or she has no control over the consequences of his/her behavior. Students whose parents and teachers advocate **for** them, instead of allowing them to experience their own decision-making, are limiting those students with the consequence that they may expect significant others to be their caretakers. Unless student experience **both** success and failure, they will not be able to understand their assets and limitations, an awareness that is critical to adult success.

Staff who work with student with learning disabilities in Disability Support Services at the college level remind us that students need to have a good understanding of their learning style, their strengths and weaknesses, and the services (accommodations) which have been useful to them. Students may not necessarily receive the same services in college, but it is helpful for them to know, for example, if extended time testing is an accommodation that is verified in their reports and has been used at the secondary level. Knowledge of learning style is valuable because it gives the student some insight into the type of class and/or teacher that will be best suited to their needs. Secondary teachers can be very helpful in clarifying these issues for students, and encouraging them to question, practice and correct in the “comfort zone” of high school. Counselors and special education teachers are also very valuable as they assist the students with the selection of courses which are both required and recommended for colleges or other programs. We sometimes overlook that a student’s strength may also lie in co-curricular activities such as sports, volunteer work or music, all of which can contribute to a greater self-confidence and self-esteem. Staff and parent encouragement to participate in such activities may have a big payoff for the student later on.

Finally, some of the best advice for students with learning disabilities comes from students with learning disabilities who have been successful, and in some cases, learned the “hard way”. Their “tips” for high school students include:

1. Confidence—work on this skill any way you can
2. Learn how to talk with teachers since they don't give you anything that you don't ask for
3. Develop good study habits and work on time management
4. Seek help as soon as possible
5. Learn to accept yourself for who you are.

Like all college students, students with learning or other disabilities can be successful if they are well-informed, well-prepared and motivated to achieve. The more students at the secondary level learn about themselves and their special needs, the easier it will be to achieve success in the “next life”, whatever that may be.

Source: Christine Durlak, Ed.D., ACSW

SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Exploring one's strengths, areas of difficulty, goals, dreams, and needs is critical to finding the appropriate match between the student and a college or training institution. For students with special needs, self-understanding and self-assessment are essential exercises for a successful post-secondary experience.

Self -understanding is that awareness or knowledge of how one's disability affects learning. This knowledge is important for several reasons:

- ❖ Helps one develop pro-active strategies for success. In this context, self-understanding means that one can assess both the specific and more subtle, unspoken requirements of a class and predict where there may be difficulty.
- ❖ Allows one to anticipate challenges, and then develop sensible plans for success. For example, an individual who has difficulty attending to or comprehending auditory information needs to know how to compensate or "get around" a class where information is delivered primarily through lectures. That individual will need to develop a plan and/or strategies for this area of weakness.
- ❖ Facilitates knowledge of what level of support one needs in college. That critical knowledge of understanding strengths, weaknesses and how an individual learns best enhances a thorough research of services available in college. Knowing one's needs can clarify if a program, support services or just accommodations would be best.

Self-understanding becomes the basis for strategies and provides information that allows not only one successful semester in college, but eight semesters and graduation from college.

Self-assessment is the ability to realistically evaluate talents, interests, goals, hopes, learning style, achievements, disappointments, and what a student will need for success in college.

- ❖ Offers an opportunity make an informed decision about what should be the most appropriate college, university or career program. Rather than looking at schools perceived as "good" or popular choices, the selection process should be based upon what is best for the individual. A "good fit" means selecting a school or program according to what one values and needs to be successful, not by attempting to fit a prescribed profile of the school.
- ❖ Coordinates with self-understanding to determine levels of support and proactive strategies.

Active participation in the process of self-understanding and realistic self-assessment guides one's journey toward self-acceptance and helps one harness as well as maximize potential.

HOW IS COLLEGE DIFFERENT FROM HIGH SCHOOL?

| PERSONAL FREEDOM IN HIGH SCHOOL | PERSONAL FREEDOM IN COLLEGE |
|---|---|
| * High school is <i>mandatory</i> and <i>free</i> (unless you choose other options). | * College is <i>voluntary</i> and <i>expensive</i> . |
| * Your time is usually structured by others | * You manage your own time |
| * You need permission to participate in extracurricular activities | * You must decide whether to participate in extracurricular activities. (<i>Hint</i> : Choose wisely in the first semester and then add later.) |
| * You need money for special purchases or events | * You need money to meet basic necessities |
| * You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities. | * You will be faced with a large number of moral and ethical decisions you have not had to face previously. <i>You</i> must balance your responsibilities and set priorities. |
| * Guiding principle: You will usually be told what your responsibilities are and corrected if your behavior is out of line. | * Guiding principle: You're old enough to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions. |

| HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES | COLLEGE CLASSES |
|--|---|
| * Each day you proceed from one class directly to another. | * You often have hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening. |
| * You spend 6 hours each day – 30 hours a week – in class. | * You spend 12 to 16 hours each week in class |
| * The school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters and some do not. | * The academic year is divided into two separate 15-week semesters, plus a week after each semester for exams. |
| * Most of your classes are arranged for you. | * You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your academic advisor. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are. |
| * Teachers carefully monitor class attendance. | * Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended. |
| * Classes generally have no more than 35 students. | * Classes may number 100 students or more. |
| * You are provided with textbooks at little or no expense. | * You need to budget substantial funds for textbooks, which will usually cost more than \$200 each semester. |
| * Your counselor guides your course selection and monitors credits. | * Graduation requirements are complex, and differ for different majors and sometimes different years. You are expected to know those that apply to you. |

| HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS | COLLEGE PROFESSORS |
|---|---|
| * Teachers remind you of your incomplete work. | * Professors may not remind you of incomplete work. |
| * Teachers approach you if they believe you need assistance. | * Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect you to initiate contact if you need assistance. |
| * Teachers are often available for conversation before, during, or after class. | * Professors expect and want you to attend their scheduled office hours. |
| * Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students. | * Professors have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research. |
| * Teachers provide you with information you missed when you were absent. | * Professors expect you to get from classmates any notes from classes you missed. |
| * Teachers present material to help you understand material in the textbook. | * Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic you are studying. Or, they may expect <i>you</i> to relate the classes to the textbook readings. |
| * Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in your notes. | * Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting you to identify the important points in your notes. When professors write on the board, it may be to amplify the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes or a tape recorder are a must. |
| * Teachers impart knowledge and facts, sometimes drawing direct connections and leading you through the thinking process. | * Professors expect you to think about and synthesize seemingly unrelated topics. |
| * Teachers often take time to remind you of assignments and due dates. | * Professors expect you to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline); the syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of you, when it is due, and how you will be graded. |

| STUDYING IN HIGH SCHOOL | STUDYING IN COLLEGE |
|---|---|
| * You may study outside of class as little as 0 to 2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last minute test preparation. | * You need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class. |
| * You often need to read or hear presentations only once to learn all you need about them. | * You need to review class notes and text material regularly. |
| * You are expected to read short assignments that are then discussed, and often re-taught, in class. | * You are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class. |
| * Guiding principle: You will usually be told in class what you needed to learn from assigned readings. | Guiding Principle: It's up to you to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that you've already done so. |

| Question | Secondary | Postsecondary |
|--|---|---|
| What is the law? | IDEA Section 504 | ADA Section 504 (Subpart E) |
| What is the intent of the law? | IDEA: To provide a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities. 504: To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability is denied access to, benefits of, or is subjected to discrimination in any program or activity provided by any public institution. | To ensure that no otherwise qualified person with a disability will be denied access to, or the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution. |
| Who is covered under the law? | All infants, children and youth requiring special education services until age 21 or graduation from high school | All qualified individuals with disabilities who meet the entry age level criteria or particular program entry criteria of the college and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by the ADA. |
| Who is responsible for identifying and documenting the need? | School districts are responsible for identifying, evaluating and planning educational services at no expense to the parent or individual. | Students are responsible for self-identification and for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their particular disability. The student, not the institution, assumes the cost of the evaluation. |
| Who is responsible for initiating service delivery? | School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities and providing special instruction, individualized education plans, and/or accommodations. | Students are responsible for notifying the Disability Support Services staff of their disability and of their need for accommodations. Accommodations, (not special education) are provided on a semester by semester basis in order for students with disabilities to have equal access to the institution's programs, services and activities. |

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| <p>Who is responsible for enforcing the law?</p> | <p>IDEA is basically a funding statute, enforced by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the U.S. Department of Education. ADA/504 are civil rights statutes enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Justice, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).</p> | <p>Section 504 (Subpart E) is a civil rights statute enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), U.S. Department of Education. The ADA is also a civil rights statute enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).</p> |
| <p>What about self-advocacy?</p> | <p>The parent or guardian is the primary advocate. Students with disabilities should learn about their disability, the importance fo self-advocacy, the accommodation(s) they need and ways to become a self-advocate.</p> | <p>Students must be able to communicate what their disability is, their strengths, weaknesses, how the disability impacts and functionally limits major life activities. They must be able to identify and justify any requested accommodations.</p> |

Kay McVey, Faculty Development Specialist PROJECT CONNECT, Henderson State University

WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE COLLEGE ADMISSION?

A survey of admissions counselors from colleges determined the top factors that influence their admissions decisions.

The results in order of importance are as follows:

1. Grades in college prep courses
 - *"regular level" courses...in general, colleges like to see:
 - *math classes that include: 2 years of algebra and 1 of geometry
 - *4 years of English
 - *2-3 years of history or social studies
 - *2 years of lab sciences
 - *foreign language classes (2 years of the same language)
2. ACT/SAT scores
3. Grades in ALL subjects
4. Class rank
5. Essay/Writing Sample
6. Counselor Recommendation
7. Teacher Recommendation
8. Interview
9. Community Service
10. Extra-curricular Activities

INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGE TESTING

"The ACT does not measure intelligence and it does not predict your ultimate success or failure as a human being. No matter how high or how low your score on this test initially-and no matter how much you may increase your score through preparation-you should never consider the score you receive on this or any other test a final judgment of your abilities."

Cracking the ACT, The Princeton Review

FACTS ABOUT COLLEGE TESTING....

1. No college board test predicts college grades or success in college.
2. Most admissions counselors like college board scores, using them as a national standard to check student grades in high school.
3. Many factors other than test scores go into the acceptance of a student by a college...grades, essays, recommendations, and commitment to an extracurricular activity.
4. Of all the elements in the presentation of a student for college admission, the ACT score is the easiest to change.

From Cracking the ACT, Princeton Review

Students who have a documented disability may be eligible to request taking a non-standard ACT and /or SAT. It is important to note, however, that it is ACT/SAT that makes the decision as to who they think is eligible for accommodations. ACT's staff of psychologists or SAT's review committee evaluate documentation and determine if a student may have an accommodation(s) and/or if the accommodation(s) requested is/are appropriate. Students whose initial diagnosis is within the current year must have copies of the case study reports accompany their application. Parents or the student (if 18 years of age or older) must sign and date the application. The case manager or special education coordinator then finishes documentation to complete the application.

****PLEASE MAKE NOTE OF SPECIFIC DEADLINES FOR TESTING. NOT ONLY ARE THE DEADLINES EARLIER THAN FOR STANDARD TESTING DATES, CASEMANAGERS NEED ADEQUATE TIME TO COMPLETE APPLICATIONS, AS THIS IS A LENGTHY PROCESS.**

Source: Crack the ACT, Princeton Review

HELPFUL HINTS FOR COLLEGE PLANNING

- _____ 1. Invest in, and actively participate in classroom activities that focus on understanding your strengths, weaknesses, the way you learn best, and your accommodations. Review and discuss this information with your case manager/counselor/special education teacher.
- _____ 2. Obtain a copy of your 4-year plan and general test scores (ACT/SAT), class rank and grade point average. If possible, review this information with your case manager.
- _____ 3. Become involved in Individual Educational Plan conferences and actively participate in setting goals for your IEP.
- _____ 4. Arrange an appointment with your college or transition counselor to begin the college planning process
- _____ 5. Bring materials listed in #2 for the first appointment to facilitate discussion of your learning profile. This information will help to determine the appropriate level of support services you will need in college.
- _____ 6. Develop a list of priorities that reflect your learning style, accommodations, your interests and main concerns to use when exploring colleges.
- _____ 7. Conduct a college search using both school resources and the Internet.
- _____ 8. Attend all school-sponsored college planning meetings and college fairs.
- _____ 9. Conduct in depth research of colleges identified as possible choices, and request applications, a view book, a program of studies, etc.
- _____ 10. Place in individual, color-coded, pocket folders any information or correspondence received from each college of interest. Label each folder with the name of the school and other pertinent information
- _____ 11. Xerox several copies of your applications and practice first on the photocopies before completing the “official” one.
- _____ 12. Make an appointment with your counselor/case manager as needed to review pertinent information, check applications, investigate additional options, or gain additional information about schools investigated. Include your counselor, parents and case manager when appropriate.
- _____ 13. Plan to take the ACT and/or SAT in the spring of your junior year or in the fall of your senior year.
- _____ 14. Contact colleges to which you plan to apply to find out if or how the school would like documentation of a disability sent. Schools have different policies and procedures that frequently change. Rather than have confidential information available for anyone to read, a simple phone call can insure that your personal information will reach the appropriate destination at the right time. You must have a consent form on file in the Special Education or Guidance Office with your parent’s signature or your signature (if you are over 18) before testing can be sent.

- _____ 15. If possible, plan to visit targeted schools before making a final decision.
- _____ 16. If an interview is part of the admissions process, practice interviewing. Make sure you have solid knowledge of your learning style, accommodations and learning needs. Be prepared to discuss the strategies you use to compensate for areas that challenge you.
- _____ 17. When you write your personal statement or if you need to write an essay for admissions, make sure to proof read and type it before submission. Some schools may ask for hand written essays. Make sure your final product is legible, neat, grammatically and mechanically correct.

YOU ARE ATTENDING COLLEGE, SO TAKE INITIATIVE - BE IN CHARGE. HARD WORK AND THOROUGH RESEARCH CAN RESULT IN A GOOD FIT FOR BOTH YOU AND YOUR COLLEGE!

Source: Pamela Geyer-Howell (revised from Rolfe, '90)

QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE COLLEGE SEARCH

Finding the right college is very important for every student. Finding the right match for a student with a learning disability is particularly important. Armed with knowledge about the continuum of services that colleges and universities provide, the student and his/her family can ask further questions to insure a good fit between the student's special needs and the college. It is important to start the college search looking at the same factors that all students consider. Size, geographic location, selection of majors, admissions requirements, cost, resources, athletics and social activities are important features of a college experience. Once these things are considered, it is time to ask the following questions:

1. Is there a separate admissions process for students with disabilities?
2. What documentation is required?
3. Describe the range of accommodations available to students with disabilities.
4. Are accommodation determinations based on the high school IEP recommendations?
5. Is there a separate fee for enhanced LD services?
6. What is the training of the people who offer the services?
7. How many LD, ADD, ED students do you serve?
8. How many learning specialists are there who give direct service to students?
9. What is your retention rate for freshmen? For freshmen with disabilities?
10. What is your graduation rate for all students? For students with disabilities?
11. Do you ever offer waivers or substitutions? Under what circumstances?
12. How are testing accommodations handled?
13. What services do you offer?
14. How do students access tutoring services?
15. Is there a fee for tutoring?
16. Do you offer study skills and/or learning strategies courses? Are they offered for credit?
17. What is the climate on your campus for students with disabilities?
18. How long have these support programs or services been available?
19. Are support services or the program funded through the college or through government grants?

Source: Compiled and revised from various college documents

COLLEGE APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Obtain applications; college catalogues, housing information and financial aid forms by writing to the Office of Admissions of the college (s) in which you are interested. (Addresses are available on websites and in counseling offices). Complete applications and send them to the Office of Admissions.
2. Counselors often complete student recommendations for colleges. Complete all required forms for the counselor so he/she can write a recommendation that truly reflects the student. If you want your counselor to include comments from teachers in the recommendation be sure you have asked teachers to write comments and forward them on to the counselor. If there are school forms that address these issues, complete then give them to your counselor.
3. All students receiving accommodations are generally encouraged to include a personal statement with their application. This essay, which will serve as a cover letter, should describe your disability and compensatory strategies. Your case manager and other faculty can assist you with this letter.
4. Make an appointment with your counselor or appropriate staff before the application deadline to review your applications. Make the appointment well before the deadline time as it may take more than a week to meet with appropriate staff at peak application times. Bring the following items with you when you meet:
 - ❑ Application and any required forms.
 - ❑ Personal statement addressing your disabilities.
 - ❑ Application fee paid by check or credit card.
 - ❑ A completed transcript request form(s) or appropriate documents to request transcripts, including parent signature (cannot be processed without this if you are under 18*.) An official transcript must be mailed directly by the high school.
 - ❑ Any other forms or information required either by the high school or college.
5. Check on policies for sending testing information documenting your disability, *both* for colleges and your high school. You may need to contact the Admissions Office to determine the college's policy regarding documentation. Schools handle documentation of a disability differently.
6. Students must arrange for this documentation to be released. Students should complete any Release of Information Forms prior to turning in the application, as confidential records cannot be released without either the student's signature (18 years or older) or parent signatures. This will insure that your application file will be complete when the college or university reviews it.
7. Plan ahead; allow several weeks for an application to be processed and mailed.

8. If teacher and/or case manager recommendations are required:
- ❑ Give teachers/case manager the appropriate forms at least 2-3 weeks in advance, as this is a time consuming favor. Teachers are not required to write recommendations.
 - ❑ Provide a stamped envelope addressed to the college.
 - ❑ Tell the teacher/case manager the application deadline.
 - ❑ If possible, provide a data sheet highlighting your performance in their classrooms.
 - ❑ If you might be requesting more than one recommendation from a teacher/case manager, please inform them so a copy may be retained either by the teacher or counselor.
 - ❑ Write a thank you note to the teacher/case manager.
9. If the college requires a counselor recommendation, meet with your counselor at least two weeks before the application deadline in order for your counselor to write a thorough recommendation, a personal appointment and any relevant forms or information should accompany you to this meeting.

Follow-up communication:

- ❑ Send ACT/SAT scores officially through ACT and/or The College Board. You can complete this task either through the mail or on line at <http://www.act.org/aap/scores/howrequest.html>.
- ❑ Notify your counselor or case manager whenever you receive a decision from a college or university.
- ❑ Once you have made a final decision about which college to attend, contact all other colleges that accepted you and notify your counselor and case manager of your decision. With regular admissions, you have until May 1 to send a college a tuition deposit. You may not deposit at more than one institution. Doing so may cause you to forfeit acceptances.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

A Personal Statement is a brief essay that accompanies your college application and reflects knowledge and understanding of your disability and the way in which you have compensated or overcome difficulties resulting from that disability. It cannot only disclose the disability, but also can explain any unusual circumstances on your transcript. It is an opportunity for admissions to consider you as a person, not a GPA, class rank and an ACT score. In one page, you can reveal your strengths, areas of challenge and how you strategize around your disability. In other words, it is an opportunity to demonstrate how well you understand and compensate for your area(s) of challenge. Since colleges like that students have a good understanding of their disability, know compensatory strategies and are good self-advocates, a personal statement is an excellent way to demonstrate that. However, it should not be a brag sheet. Furthermore, a personal statement is not required as part of the admissions process, but recommended.

There may be some schools that may not consider the personal statement, and for other schools, it may trigger a request for further documentation. However, this disclosure should not be a detriment for admission; it can only be an advantage.

How to Write a Personal Statement:

1. Collect:

- ❑ Information about your disability
 - ❑ Experiences you have had that have contributed to your growth as a learner and /or personal growth
 - ❑ **Start this process as early as possible**, especially if you have difficulty with writing or do not do well on tests, particularly essay exams.

Sources: IEP, Teacher Contact Letters, Progress Toward Goals Essay, old essays or papers that describe how you have compensated for areas of difficulty.

2. Brainstorm:

- ❑ Strengths, ways you learn best
 - ❑ Weaknesses, compensatory strategies
 - ❑ Activities-school and community...how they have contributed to your personal growth?
 - ❑ Travel-camping experiences...how have they contributed to your personal growth?

3. Organize:

- ❑ Cluster information into appropriate categories
- ❑ Create an outline

4. Write:

- ❑ Rough draft should be:
 - *about a page in length
 - *rewritten until the statement reflects exactly what you want the college or university to know or understand about you
- ❑ Submit your draft to either your counselor, case manager, the staff in the writing lab, or your favorite English teacher for comments/revisions
- ❑ Final draft should be:
 - *free of grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors
 - *typed/word processed or very carefully and neatly written

SAMPLE PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Personal Statement #1

Fluffy Dewgood ss# 000-666-333

Tests have always been a source of frustration, anxiety and disappointment. Although I felt I studied and worked hard, my test grades never reflected the amount of effort I put into preparing for them. I hated tests and dreaded each time I got my test results back. Often fighting back tears, I would vow to work harder, try harder. It was so difficult to understand why my answers were either totally wrong or almost right, but not quite right enough. This pattern continued until the end of my freshman year of high school. In May of 1997, I was diagnosed with a learning disability. My disability affects not only the way I perform on tests, but also inferential reading comprehension and how I solve word problems in math and science. Although it is more difficult for me to apply information when I must perform on tests, I always do well on projects. Projects and hands on activities are where I can truly demonstrate what I know.

For the last two years of high school I have attended a Learning Strategies class that has helped me to study more efficiently for tests and break down word problems so I can solve them more easily. I now actually use strategies such as annotating novels and lecture notes to help my reading comprehension. This was really hard at first because it slowed my reading. Once I forced myself to keep annotating, I learned to be a more efficient and much better reader. Supplementing my lecture notes, and regular reviews of them are other strategies that keep me up-to-date for each class. To help me with word problems, I highlight important information, cross out what is unnecessary, and try to rephrase the question so that I can understand it better in order to solve it. Because I now study more efficiently and plan better for tests, my grades have dramatically improved. As you can see from my transcript, my math and science grades have changed from C-and D+ to B's.

At first, the knowledge of having a disability was a relief. It explained so much and helped me realize that poor test scores and grades were not because I was dumb or lazy. However, after awhile, I was less relieved and more angry. I was stuck with this disability, and it wore me down, like a bulging, too full backpack. I began to hate, once again, school and everything associated with learning. Fortunately, my period of wrath was brief. I have learned to accept my disability and work with it. I have also learned to persevere, facing down my fears, and the challenges that weighed me down. In fact, I actually see my learning disability as an asset. I know I view the world a little differently than most, and I probably get more satisfaction from the hard work necessary to demonstrate my knowledge. Occasionally my backpack becomes very heavy; but I now have strengthened my ability to carry it. I wear it with pride because it has taught me how to balance the load, made me strong enough to carry it, and granted me the knowledge that I am better for having it.

SAMPLE PERSONAL STATEMENTS

Personal Statement #2

Re: Dudley Weldon ss# 000-999-123

Dear Mr. Letmein:

I am a senior at Highland Park High School and have received support services through the Special Education Department. Although I currently only have 504 accommodations, I worked for two and one half years with my case manager to develop strategies to compensate for a difficulty with organization of information and a weakness in written expression.

I have developed my own style for creating charts, webs and lists of information to help me see the connections between ideas and information. When I understand the connections, it is easier for me to organize the material that I must learn. I also practice a variety of pre-writing strategies to not only help me generate ideas for papers, but also to assist in organization of those ideas. A way to help me with my difficulty with the mechanics of writing is to use my own checklist of my most common errors to edit my papers. I am also grateful to my teachers and people in the writing lab who help me on a regular basis. Fortunately, my accommodation of extended time for writing in-class essays also helps me do the best job of demonstrating what I know.

I have attempted to stretch my self both academically and socially. I attend all mainstream classes and am proud of my steady improvement in grades. I have worked very hard, and it is gratifying to finally see the positive results of my work. Because of my interest in Business Management, I have participated in various clubs and organizations at school. My job 10 hours a week as a clerk in the local pharmacy has taught me much about working with many kinds of people. Participation on the Lacrosse Team has also taught me a great deal about teamwork, hard work and commitment.

At this time, I am interested in studying Business Management in college. I know that I want to develop further my organization and writing skills. Because of this, I will need some support in college to help me be successful. I am a hard worker and am motivated to succeed. I have researched the _____ Program/Support Services and feel it would provide the services I will need to maximize my potential at the college level. I look forward to communicating with you.

Sincerely,

Dudley Weldon

DOCUMENTATION

Documentation of a disability is the presentation of all appropriate testing, medical records and other data to interested institutions, facilities or service personnel that confirm that an individual has a disability.

Documentation entitles a person with a disability to any needed accommodations and/or services he or she deserves. Most colleges and post-secondary institutions need information that supports the diagnosis of a disability. Generally, this means they prefer psychological testing, educational testing, social history (this is especially important for a diagnosis of ADD, and a speech/language assessment (for diagnosis of a language disorder)).

To send documentation, the student must obtain the salient information from designated school personnel at their respective high school, as all information is confidential. Either the parent or student (18 years or older) must sign a Release of Information Form before information is actually released.

There are no simple answers to how, when and where to send documentation. So much depends upon the school and their ever-changing policies. Some schools like documentation along with applications, others do not. In general, most Admissions Offices do not want to see documentation until after matriculation to that college. This is particularly true of larger schools. Those who choose to send documentation along with their application often find their documents have been sent directly and immediately to the Office of Disability Services. These documents are not examined until the student actually makes an appointment after enrolling in the school. For colleges that have programs (for which one pays extra money), there often is a separate application. Documentation is usually required to determine eligibility to access the program and sending it to the program is a part of the application process. However, it is best to contact the Admissions Office to learn specifically how and when to send and who should receive documentation. Please remember that documentation of a disability will not hurt chances for admission, as it is illegal to discriminate either for or against a student with a disability.

LEVELS OF SERVICE

Universities and colleges provide services for students with disabilities in a variety of ways. Although we have categorized then defined levels of service, it is important to note that support programs/services generally work on a continuum. The categories below are very general and simplified. The best way to understand how schools provide support is to contact the colleges, ask questions and best of all, meet specifically with service providers.

PROGRAM

- Fee for services
- Trained staff/professors with expertise in delivering services
- Separate application
- Documentation required
- Regular scheduled meeting with assigned learning specialist
- Coordination of accommodations, assistive technology and tutoring
- May be involved with general admissions process

COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES

- Learning specialist involved with support and coordination with campus resources
- Learning specialist available to meet with students on as needed basis
- No separate application
- Minimal involvement with admissions
- No fee
- Documentation required
- Tutoring often delivered by peers
- Student responsible for arranging accommodations
- Support available to all students

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Student must have solid knowledge of how disability impacts learning
- Student must be articulate and a strong advocate to access support and accommodations
- Student will need to access campus resources independently
- Academic support may not and generally is not centralized
- Student must be responsible when arranging his/her accommodations
- Documentation required
- Tutoring often delivered by peers
- Support available to all students

ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY

- Documentation approved by 504 coordinator
- Student must be completely independent when seeking support or accommodations
- Student meets only once per semester to receive letter of accommodation
- Student must have solid knowledge of how disability impacts learning
- Student must be articulate and a strong advocate to access support and accommodations
- Student will need to access campus resources independently
- Academic support may not and generally is not centralized
- Student must be responsible when arranging his/her accommodations
- Documentation required
- Tutoring often delivered by peers
- Support available to all students

RESOURCES FOR POST-SECONDARY INFORMATION

Websites

www.lda.org Learning Disabilities Association

www.ahead.org Association of Higher Education and Disability

www.ncl.org

<http://www.chadd.org> Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder

<http://www.ldonline.org> LD online

<http://www.ldanatl.org> Learning Disabilities Association

www.nichcy.org National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities

collegenow.biz

<http://www.acb.org> American Council of the Blind

<http://www.winthrop.edu/clddefault.html> The council for Learning Disabilities

<http://finaid.org/finaid/documents/heath.html> HEATH Resource Center; Financial Aid for Students with Disabilities

www.collegeboard.com

www.heath.gwu.edu.

<http://usa.cx.bridges.com> click on “student”, user id :student id number, password: find out from your school

www.dowhatyouare.com/mtsil user id: student, password: plan

INTRODUCTION TO CAREER PLANNING

You really cannot begin postsecondary planning without also considering career or vocational planning and, in reality, to plan for life after high school is also to plan for an eventual career. It does not matter if you are not sure “what you want to be”, or that you really are clueless about what to major in or study. You can still give some thought to course selection, internship opportunities and job interest while also exploring schools.

As with college planning, there are any number of questions students can ask themselves to begin career exploration. For example, “what do I do best?”, “what do I like to do?”, “what do I NOT want to be?” are questions you can begin to think about as early as junior high school. Remember also that each “career area” may have as many as a hundred job opportunities with various levels of education. For example, “working with animals” may begin with information about being a veterinarian but what about “companion animal trainer” or “zookeeper” or “marine biologist?” Only a thorough search will yield a comprehensive list for you.

It’s important for students and parents to understand that the young person of today is likely to change jobs four or five times during his or her lifetime. Gone are the days when a career choice meant you had that job until you retired. The job market changes, interests, goals and values change, and opportunity changes. So explore several areas, don’t feel locked into any single one.

It is also important to realize that choosing a career is a **PROCESS**. It begins with course selection, but also includes such things as jobs, co-curricular activities, internships, involvement in sports, clubs or organizations, leisure and recreation. All of these define who you are and where you are going and most importantly, they involve making **CHOICES**. The more knowledge and information you have about a career or area of work that interests you, the better able you will be to make career choices. The information in this booklet is, once again, a beginning. The next steps will be yours to take.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT CAREER AWARENESS **AND** **CAREER EXPLORATION...**

- Perhaps you can register for a class on campus this summer especially designated to explore a career area.
- Perhaps you can arrange for a day to shadow a family friend or acquaintance who is in the field that interests you.
- Perhaps you can call to arrange an information interview with someone who is currently engaged in the career of your dreams.
- Be sure to read the career suggestions included with your ACT score report later this spring. Review the suggestions made by your PLAN Interest Inventory.
- Take a Career Inventory at www.DoWhatYouAre.com/mtsil
User ID: student Password: Plan
- Be sure to explore your school's internet subscription website for extensive career information. You can search for career details by listing your favorite subject or a general area of interest. You can take mini interest inventories. You can search for college information or college suggestions. You can review typical math and writing skills daily required by a particular career or consider a typical ethical decision. If a career that interests you is not included in the database you can even request that a profile be developed. Access this sophisticated career information and extensive additional career related links from an internet connected computer.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT TRADE/TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

- A. Does the school clearly state its objectives?
- B. Can the school successfully meet these objectives?
- C. What are the minimal academic skills required for entrance into the program?
 - a. Can any accommodations be made for teaching students at a lower reading or math level (such as texts in simpler language)?
 - b. Must all students proceed at the same pace?
- D. Are the school's teachers qualified?
 - a. Is there a special needs coordinator for students in the program or a vocational support team?
 - b. Does the staff have an understanding of learning disabilities?
 - c. Do instructors have recent job experience in their fields?
- E. Does the school provide up-to-date courses and methods of instruction?
 - a. What basic knowledge of tools is needed for participation in the program?
 - b. Does the school provide and maintain adequate physical facilities, classrooms, and laboratories?
 - c. What safety rules must be followed for entrance into the program?
 - d. Does training occur in places that closely resemble actual job sites?
 - e. Is on-the-job- training part of the curriculum?
- F. If a student wants to transfer credits to a four-year college or another technical/vocational institute, is there someone at the school who will help?
- G. Will job opportunities be available after training?
 - a. Will someone at the school help with finding employment?
 - b. Are current students satisfied with the school and are employers satisfied with school graduates?

THE NEW WAVE IN CAREER EDUCATION **TRADE AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS**

A MATTER OF FACT

- Two-thirds of the occupational students in this country attend private career schools and most complete their course work.
- Tuition ranges from \$1,500 to \$5,000 averaging \$3,000 for a ten-month course in most private occupational schools.
- Women account for nearly 42% of all students enrolled in post-secondary schools with occupational programs.
- There has been a 16% increase in enrollment over the last two years in private career schools.
- The National Association of Trade and Technical Schools (NATTS) is comprised of over 1,000 accredited private career schools that train over 700,000 students each year in more than 100 career fields.
- As recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, NATTS provides the Hallmark of Accreditation to qualified private trade and technical schools.
- Career training programs range from actor to x-ray technician. The major occupational programs include auto/diesel, electronics, heating and air-conditioning and medical/dental technicians. Skills range from the high tech to the traditional trades.
- Programs vary in length from three months to two years. Each program is designed to train students in the shortest possible time for the best possible job.
- All programs offer “hands-on” training and are designed to create skilled entry-level personnel.
- The national retention rate is 74% with a 73% placement rate. Some schools maintain a 100% placement rate
- Enrollments range from 5 to 5,000 students. The average school enrollment is about 400 students.
- Many technical and office occupations now require postsecondary career training as more employers prefer to hire trained personnel rather than provide training.

Source: National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, Rockville, Maryland

THE NEW WAVE IN CAREER EDUCATION

TRADE AND TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

CAREER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Q. Isn't college really the best way to get a good job?

A. Any good job requires a specialized skill that is in demand. Doctors, lawyers, nuclear scientists and petroleum engineers achieve their skills through college. Plumbers, carpenters, computer operators, and medical lab technicians acquire their skills in other ways- apprenticeships, on-the-job training or occupational school. They all have good career opportunities.

Q. What is a marketable skill? Why is it so important?

A. Marketable skill means that you have a specific area of expertise which employers need. It may be typing, computer programming, medical assisting or a knowledge of electronics. But it is a skill needed in today's job market.

Q. Will my trade school education be transferable for college or university credit?

A. The acceptance of credits among postsecondary institutions is an individual matter and entirely left up to them. Many schools and universities have worked out mutual agreements about the transfer of credits. But the only way to find out if a college or university will accept credits from a trade or technical school or vice versa is to ask that particular question.

Q. Do occupational schools grant degrees? What is the difference between a certificate and a degree?

A. Most occupational schools do not offer degrees. Degrees are more typical of academic institutions which require liberal arts courses. Some occupational schools, however, do offer associate and bachelor degrees. Many offer certificates which like degrees show that the student has successfully completed training in a career area. But occupational school students, in addition to having a "piece of paper," more importantly have expertise in a career area.

Q. I'll need financial aid to help get me through. How do I find out what is available?

A. First, many schools assist students in locating part-time jobs to earn money for tuition and fees. Many of the jobs are in a field related to the training. Schools may also have information on scholarships. Several federal financial aid programs are available to students attending accredited schools. For information on them write to: The Office of Student Financial Aid, OPE, U.S. Dept. of Education, 400 Maryland Ave. SW, Building ROB 3, Room 4624, Wash. D.C. 20202. More information regarding financial assistance programs may be obtained directly from the school and your state's department of education.

Source: The National Association of Trade and Technical Schools, Rockville, Maryland.

TECHNICAL/VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

CATEGORIES OF SERVICE

General Support

- Evaluation administered to identify personal/academic assets
- Emphasis on individual counseling and academic advising in scheduling classes
- Peer counseling to develop social skills
- Special fees in addition to tuition

Academic Support

- Reading, writing and/or study skills “lab” courses
- Lab assistance
- Typing service
- Untimed exams
- Taped lectures
- Books on audio cassette tapes
- Reduced course load
- Faculty intervention
- Oral tests
- Study skill and organization help
- Small student-teacher ratio
- Tutorial assistance for academic classes

Vocational Support

- Realistic employability plan created
- Individual attention to job demands given by counselor/supervisor
- Opportunities structured for social interaction in the work world
- Job placement service
- Assistance given to gain entrance to unions and other professional organizations

CAREER CONNECTIONS

ENGLISH

Actor
Advertising Manager
Author
College Professor
Columnist
Copywriter
Counselor
Critic
Dramatist
Editor
Librarian
Legal Assistant
Minister (Clergy)
Proofreader
Radio/TV Announcer
Reporter/Journalist
Teacher
Technical Writer
TV Program Director

ART

Actor
Advertising Manager
Architect
Artist/Painter
Audio Technician
Cartoonist
Choreographer
College Professor
Composer
Dancer
Fashion Artist
Film Producer/Director

MATH

Accountant
Accountant Executive
Actuary
Architect
Astronomer
Bank Officer
Business Manager
Buyer-Purchasing Agent
College Professor
Computer Programmer
Computer Systems Analyst/Specialist
Credit Manager
Economist
Educational Administrator
Engineer
Farmer-Rancher
Financial Analyst
Hotel/Motel Manager
Importer/Exporter
Loan Officer
Manager
Manufacturer's Representative
Marketing Specialist
Mathematician-Statistician
Medical Records Administrator
Metallurgist
Meteorologist
Oceanographer
Personal Manager
Physician Assistant
Physicist
Production Planner
Real Estate Agent/Appraiser
Sales Manager
Scientist
Securities Salesperson
Teacher
Travel Agent

SOCIAL STUDIES

Anthropologist
College Professor
Counselor
Criminologist
Economist
Educational Administrator
Employment Counselor
Foreign Service Officer
Geographer
Gerontologist
Governmental Service Agent
Historian
Importer/Exporter
Insurance Agent/Underwriter
Job Analyst
Lawyer
Legal Assistant
Librarian
Lobbyist
Manufacturer's Representative
Market Research Analyst
Ministry/Clergy
Personnel/Human Resources Manager
Political Scientist
Probation Officer
Public Relations Representative
Psychologist
Real Estate Agent
Recreation Leader
Reporter
Social Worker
Sociologist
Teacher
Urban Planner

NATURAL SCIENCES

Aerospace Engineer
Anthropologist
Astronomer
Automotive Engineer
Biomedical Engineer
Biochemist
Biologist
Botanist
Chemical Engineer
Civil Engineer
Chemist
College Professor
Dentist
Ecologist
Electrical Engineer
Forester
Funeral Director
Geologist
Horticulturist
Industrial Engineer
Mechanical Engineer
Medical Records Administrator
Medical Technologist
Meteorologist
Mining Engineer
Nuclear Engineer
Nuclear Medicine Technologist
Nurse
Nutritionist-Dietician
Occupational Therapist
Oceanographer
Optometrist
Petroleum Engineer
Pharmacologist
Physician
Physicist
Physiologist
Psychiatrist
Radio/TV Engineer
Respiratory Therapist
Soil/Water Conservationist
Speech Pathologist
Veterinarian
Zoologist

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Archivist

Bilingual Nurse/Teacher

College Professor

Foreign Buyer

Foreign Service Officer

Importer-Exporter

Intelligence Specialist

International Lawyer

International Market Manager

International Relations Specialist

International Trade Economist

Interpreter

Linguist

Special FBI/CIA Agent

Technical Publications Writer

Translator

Travel Agent

NOTES