

Introduction

The process of planning for life after high school can seem daunting for many high school students. It can be especially challenging for students with disabilities. Students and their parents should keep in mind that it is all about finding the “right fit”. The post-secondary exploration process requires considerable planning, research and patience. The process should be student-directed but usually requires extensive assistance from parents.

The ultimate goal of post-secondary education is to train young adults to live independently and obtain a job allowing for personal fulfillment and financial sufficiency.

It is important to encourage students from freshman year to begin planning for their life after high school. There should be ongoing self-reflection on strengths, skills, and values. Part-time jobs and other volunteer experiences can help the student to try out different jobs and tasks. Students, parents, case managers, counselors and other support staff can all assist the student in finding options that allow the student to reach their full potential.

The information in this booklet is designed to help students with disabilities and their parents navigate through the process of post-secondary planning. The DIRECTIONS committee hopes you and your family find this guide to be a valuable resource as you embark on your post-secondary search process.

Schools provide a variety of services for students with special needs:

- Most schools offer mandated services; that is, services whose provision is required by law. Mandated services may include: priority registration, reduced course load, note takers, extended time on tests, testing in distraction-free rooms, etc. Mandatory services usually DO NOT have any additional cost.
- Schools sometimes offer additional support services, AT A CHARGE, such as tutoring, personal attendants, individually prescribed devices, etc.
- Some schools have completely separate programs, which are designed for students with special needs. These programs generally DO have a cost associated with them.

The best place to obtain additional information is the websites of the colleges/programs that you are considering.

Best wishes as you begin your planning for life beyond high school!

The Directions Committee

We would like to thank the Choices committee (<http://www.postsecondarychoices.org/>) for sharing some of the content of this booklet.

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Differences Between High School & Post-secondary:

LAWS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Question	High School	Post-secondary
WHAT IS THE LAW?	<p><u>IDEA</u>: (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act- http://idea.ed.gov) And <u>Section 504</u>: of the Rehabilitation Act 1973 (http://www.Section504.gov)</p>	<p><u>ADA</u> :(Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990- http://www.ada.gov) And <u>Section 504</u>:(Subpart E) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (http://www.Section504.gov)</p>
WHAT IS THE INTENT OF THE LAW?	<p><u>IDEA</u>: To provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities.</p> <p><u>Section 504</u>: 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 entity that receives federal funds of any kind.</p>	<p><u>Section 504</u>: 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 entity that receives federal funds of any kind.</p> <p><u>ADA</u>: Allows eligible individuals with disabilities the same access to programs, activities and services as their nondisabled peers. ADA's main purpose is to extend the legal mandate of Section 504 beyond recipients of federal funds.</p>
WHO IS COVERED UNDER THE LAW?	All infants, children and youth requiring special education services until age 22 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 Section 504 and/or ADA.

Differences Between High School & Post-secondary:

LAWS AND RESPONSIBILITIES continued

	High School	Post-secondary
More responsibilities:	School attendance is mandatory.	Students decide to attend and will probably pay tuition.
	Districts are required to identify students with disabilities through free assessment and the IEP process.	Students are responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability- they must be self-advocates.
	Students receive special education and related services to address needs based on an identified disability.	Formal special education services are not available.
	Services include individually designed instruction, modifications and accommodations based on the IEP.	Responsible accommodations and modifications may be made to provide equal access and participation.
	Individual student's needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel.	No formal support for school personnel is provided.
	Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parents(s) and/or the student.	Students are required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to instructors.
	Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if so identified as a transition need according to the IEP.	Students are responsible for making their own connections with community support agencies.

Differences Between High School & Post-secondary:

CLASSES

High School	Post-secondary
Usually follow a school-directed schedule and proceed from one class to another.	Individual students must manage their own time and schedules. Students don't necessarily attend the same classes each day and there can be long breaks between classes.
General education classes dictated by state/district requirements.	Class based upon field of study: requirements may vary.
Typically, a school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters. Summer classes may be offered but are not used to accelerate graduation.	Academic year is divided into separate 15-week semesters plus a week for final exams Hint: some institutions are on a trimester schedule. Courses are offered fall, spring and summer semesters and summer classes may be used to accelerate graduation.
Class attendance is usually mandatory and monitored carefully.	Attendance policies may vary with each instructor. Hint: Lack of attendance may impact performance.
Classes generally have no more than 30-35 students.	Classes may have 100 students or more.
Textbooks are typically provided at little or no expense.	Students are responsible for purchasing their own text books and they can be expensive Hint: An anticipated range is \$250-500 for a full time student)
Guidance is provided for students so they will be aware of graduation requirements.	Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study. It is the student's responsibility to monitor your own progress and fulfill all the necessary graduation requirements.
Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the IEP.	Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered. Hint: Modified high school coursed may not be accepted in the admission process.

Differences Between High School & Post-secondary:

INSTRUCTORS

High Schools	Post-secondary
Grade and check completed homework.	May assume homework is completed and students are ready/able to perform on a test.
May remind students of incomplete assignments.	May not remind students of incomplete assignments, hint: It's the student's responsibility to check with their instructors to see if requirements are being met.
Often take the time to remind students of the thinking process.	Expect students to read, save and refer to the course syllabus.
May know students' needs and approach students when they need assistance.	Are usually open and helpful but expect students to initiate contact when assistance is needed.
May be available before, during and after class.	May require students to attend scheduled office hours.
Have been trained in teaching methods.	Have content knowledge but not necessarily formal training in teaching methods.
Often provide students with information missed during an absence.	Expect students to get information from classmates when they miss class.
Present material to help students understand what is in the textbook.	May not follow the textbook, but lectures enhance the topic area. Hint: Students need to connect the lectures and the textbook reading.
Often write information on the board or overhead to be copied for notes.	May lecture nonstop- If they write on the board, it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it. Hint: good notes are a must or a tape recorder may be used.

Differences Between High School & Post-secondary:

STUDYING

High School	Post-secondary
Study time outside of class may vary (may be as little as 1-3 hours per week).	Generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class.
Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for class.	Students should review class notes and text material regularly. Hint: Use the time between classes carefully.
Expected to read short assignments that are discussed and re-taught.	Substantial amounts of assigned reading and writing may not be directly addressed in class. Hint: It's up to you to read and understand assigned material or access support, such as books on tape.

TESTING

High School	Post-secondary
Frequent coverage of small amounts of material.	Usually infrequent (2-3 times a semester). May be cumulative and cover large amounts of material. (Hint: You need to organize material to prepare for tests.) Some classes may require only papers and/or projects instead of tests.
Make-up tests are often available.	Make-up tests are seldom an option and may have to be requested.
Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflicts with other events.	Usually tests are scheduled without regard to other demands.
Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests.	Faculty rarely offers review sessions; if so, students are expected to be prepared and to be active participants, or find study groups.

Differences Between High School & Post-secondary:

GRADES

High School	Post-secondary
Given for most assigned work.	May not be provided for all assigned work.
Good homework grades may assist in raising overall grade when test grades are lower.	Tests and major papers provide the majority of the grade.
Extra credit options are often available.	Generally speaking, extra credit options are not used to raise a grade.
Initial test grades, especially when low, may have adverse effect on grade.	First tests are often “wake up” calls to let you know what is expected. Hint: Watch out! They may account for a substantial part of your final grade- Contact the instructor if you do poorly.
Graduation requirements may be met with a “D” or higher.	Requirements may only be met if the student’s average grade meets departmental standards. Generally a 2.0 or higher.

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

High School	Post-secondary
State and/or district policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities.	Post-secondary institution policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities.
Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities.	Students are responsible for money management for basic needs and extra spending money. Hint: Outside jobs may be necessary and would be one more “activity” to consider for time management
Parents and teachers may provide support, guidance and setting priorities.	Students are responsible for setting their own priorities.

Who Stays in Post-secondary Education?

Skills & Tools	Successful Students	Unsuccessful Students
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal-oriented • Determination, perseverance • Self-discipline • Willingness to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of goals or career ideas • Immature • Procrastinates
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic background • Knowledge of study and compensatory techniques • Knowledge of learning style • Time-management skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of academic preparation • Protected in high school • Learned helplessness • Lack of study and time-management • Disorganized
Self-Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-awareness • Self-acceptance • Knowledge of laws, policies and resources • Assertiveness skills • Problem-solving skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrealistic expectations • Denial of disability, embarrassment • Lack of self-esteem and self-confidence • Lack of effective communication techniques • Lack of problem-solving skills

Are You Ready for the Responsibility?

Going to college is a major step in your life involving new responsibilities and independence. Successful college students with disabilities possess many of the skills listed below. How about you? Take the inventory and discover the skills and attitudes you need to develop.

- Can I clearly explain my special talents and abilities?
- Can I describe my disability so that someone else understands my strengths and limitations?
- Do I have copies of the evaluations that document the current impact of my disability?
- Do I understand and can I discuss the content of these reports?
- Can I describe my disability history and explain the diagnosis?
- Can I explain how I learn and how I compensate in the areas where I have difficulty?
- Can I describe the types of academic adjustments, accommodations and services appropriate for me in various classroom settings and in my living environment?
- In the past, have I used similar academic adjustments, accommodations and services to those I need in college?
- Do I know where, how and when to apply for disability services at college?
- Am I prepared (academically, emotionally and socially) for the challenges college has to offer?
- Do I take regular college preparatory courses, modified courses or individualized courses?
- Am I ready to live away from home, to manage my finances, to take care of my health and to manage my academic and leisure time?
- Do I seek assistance for academic and other problems when needed?
- Do I know how to advocate for myself?
- Do I accept that it may take me longer to graduate from college than my friends?
- Do I understand that I might have to study harder than my friends?
- Do I understand that college is a challenge and that dealing with temporary frustrations is part of being an ordinary college student?
- Do I know my long-term goals? Am I beginning this life-changing process with some career goals?
- Do I have some idea about how I want to earn a living?
- Am I a good problem solver?
- Do I know and understand my legal rights?

The Why, When, What and How of Disclosure

Why disclose in the post-secondary setting?

As a student with a disability in elementary, middle, and high school, you did not need to share information about your disability to receive accommodations because the school and your parents or guardians were there to assist you with arranging accommodations. Also, you had the support of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a law that entitles students with disabilities to receive free appropriate public education. Once you leave high school, the IDEA does not apply to you. Instead, as a person with a disability, you are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Both of these laws require that covered individuals with disabilities must be provided with reasonable accommodations if the individual discloses a disability and the institution is a covered entity. These laws do not specify the process for obtaining accommodations in the same manner in which the IDEA does. Therefore, it is up to you to share information about your disability to make sure you receive the accommodations you need. After high school, accommodations are usually provided by the program's disability support service only if you disclose your disability and request accommodations. Some reasons for disclosing your disability in a post-secondary setting include:

- obtaining information about available supports and services;
- discussing academic requirements and practical components of your course of study; and
- ensuring that faculty members implement the reasonable accommodations you require in order for you to be successful in your courses.

When to disclose your disability

The timing of your disclosure depends upon when you need accommodations. Generally, there are five instances where it may be important to consider disclosure.

- Prior to enrollment - you would disclose at this time if you needed accommodations during the application process.
- At the time of enrollment - if you anticipate that you will need accommodations to complete your classes, it would be important to disclose at this point. Remember, you want to disclose your disability before you have trouble in a course due to lack of accommodations.
- During your course of study - you would disclose at this point if you discover that you need accommodations while taking classes.
- After being diagnosed - you want to disclose if you acquire a disability during your course of study and need accommodations to successfully complete the program.
- Never - you may choose not to disclose your disability if no accommodations are needed, or if you have decided to accommodate your needs personally.

How to disclose your disability

Determine your own personal privacy boundaries concerning the amount and type of information you want to share with others. Pick a time when you are not rushed and can thoughtfully explain your needs to others. Remember to keep the disclosure conversation focused on your abilities and be self-determined and practical. It is also a good idea to practice talking about your disability with someone you trust.

What to disclose about your disability

Programs may vary regarding the information they request from you. Below is information that you should be prepared to share with the disability support service staff.

- Information about your disability, including assessments and, if requested, documentation of your disability.
- Types of academic accommodations that have worked for you in the past.
- Types of academic accommodations you anticipate needing in the post-secondary setting.
- How your disability and other life experiences can contribute to your success in your studies.
- How your disability affects your capacity to learn and study effectively.

To whom do you disclose your disability?

Generally, you should only disclose your disability to those individuals who have a need to know because of the accommodation process. You may consider disclosing to the program's disability support service's staff, academic advisor, directly on your application, or to an admissions officer. Some programs discourage students with disabilities from disclosing directly to faculty and staff because of student confidentiality. It is a good idea to begin by disclosing to the disability support services office to learn what the specific procedures are for your program.

The Basics of the Post-secondary Search

Students considering post-secondary options are often faced with difficult choices. Deciding on a post-secondary path is one of the most important decisions that a student will need to make as the high school experience comes to an end. It may be helpful for a student to create a list of the 3 to 5 factors they consider most important to them in choosing their post-secondary educational option. Some of the basic areas listed below may assist in both creating that list and comparing and evaluating post-secondary options. These lists are intended to assist students in thinking about what they want and need to insure success and a positive experience in their post-secondary education.

Information about College Testing:

Students who have a documented disability may be eligible to request 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 is eligible for accommodations. ACT’s staff of psychologists and 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 testing coordinator then adds any documentation required to complete the application.

****Note:** It is important to be aware of and meet specific deadlines for testing.

Students must start the application process for testing early enough to allow adequate time to secure needed accommodations. For example, case managers need adequate time to complete applications, as this is a lengthy process. Each school district manages this process differently. Please consult your school’s testing coordinator and the standardized testing websites (www.act.org; www.collegeboard.com) to be aware of deadlines and requirements.¹

The Basics:

Is [the school/college] accredited? – accreditation is very important because it insures that the institution meets or exceeds an established, [/accepted] set of educational standards. This can be important for transfer, recognition by employers, etc. [For many vocational schools and private businesses offering educational programs, there is no academic accreditation. The result is that the “credentials” of the school or business can be]...little more than a minimal investment in assets and/or registration as a business entity.”² In these cases, it is important to establish the credentials that the school and its instructors have, and their basis/reliability/validity.

- Type of school (2-year, 4-year, vocational, etc.).
- Admission requirements.
- Disability services that you need (see section titled: Questions to Ask During the College Search).

¹ Adapted from: Cracking the ACT, Princeton Review & www.CollegeBoard.com

² <http://www.kvsun.com/articles/2007/11/15/news/111407-13-college.txt>

- Financial: cost, financing, financial aid availability, scholarships, and student employment opportunities.
- Number of students, co-ed or same sex.
- Location – urban/rural, close to home, etc.
- Academic/educational programs/majors available (remember, you may think you want a certain program, but insure that if you change your mind, other programs of interest are available), student-faculty ratio, typical class size.
- Private school or public school (public is often less expensive), schools with a certain religious or other affiliation.

Campus Resources:

- Library
- Technology Resources
- Health service, psychological support
- Accessibility
- Extracurricular activities – student organizations/clubs, athletics, intramurals, etc.
- Study abroad, internships, etc.

“Living” Environment:

...a visit to schools and colleges being seriously considered is critical to the post-secondary decision process...it is the best way to obtain an accurate view of any institution...the visit(s) should occur during a time when the school is in session...

- Commuter campus, living on or off campus
- Comfort – food? type of food plans? rooms? clean?
- Accessibility
- Physical size of campus
- Transportation
- Area in which school is located and its assets
- School’s commitment to inclusion
- Social life
- Campus safety
- Health & medical care

Statistics:

...perhaps the most frequently asked question is, “How do you rate this school?”
(Illinois State Board of Education)

There is no specific rating system that is universally accepted for post-secondary educational facilities. However, looking at school statistics for success in retention, graduation/program completion, acceptance to graduate and professional programs and job placement (including salary), can offer some insight into the school’s ability to prepare students for post-secondary success.

FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES – See section titled: Questions to Ask During the College Search.

FOR VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND PRIVATE BUSINESSES:

1. Number of students who enrolled during school's last fiscal year
2. Number of students who did not complete the course of instruction/did not graduate
3. The percentage of students who did not complete the course of instruction for which they enrolled for the past fiscal year as compared to the number of students who enrolled in the school during the school's past fiscal year
4. Number and percentage of students who passed the State licensing examination
5. Number and percentage of graduates who requested placement assistance by the school during the school's last fiscal year
6. Number and percentage of graduates who obtained employment as a result of placement assistance by the school during the school's last fiscal year
7. Number and percentage of graduates of the particular school who obtained employment in the field and did not use the school's placement assistance during the school's last fiscal year
8. The average starting salary for all school graduates employed during the school's last fiscal year

By looking closely at these numbers, you can determine the success rate of students who enrolled in the school.

By comparing the numbers indicated in the first 3 statistics above, you will get an indication of how many students started the course of instruction and made it all the way through.

If you are considering a type of training that involves state licensing from some other agency (e.g. Professional Regulation, Department of Public Health), the number and percentage in statistic 4 above will indicate how many graduates of this particular school passed their licensing exam as a result of the training received at the school.

Note: there is an excellent resource tool, The College Navigator (<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>) , that can be used to obtain data on the colleges you are considering.

Questions to Ask During the College Search

Finding the right college is important for every student. Finding the right match for a student with a disability is particularly important. The student and his/her family must ask questions to ensure a good fit between the student's needs and the college. It is important to start the college search looking at the same basic factors that all students consider (see previous discussion on: The Basics of the Post-secondary Search). Once these factors are considered, it is time to ask the following types of 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 services?
6. What is the training of the people who offer the services?
7. How many students with disabilities 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 offer course waivers or substitutions? Under what circumstances?
12. How are testing accommodations handled?
13. How do students obtain tutoring services? Is there a fee for tutoring? Who are the tutors?
14. Do you offer study skills and/or learning strategies courses? Are they offered for credit? Does credit count toward graduation?
15. What is the climate on your campus for students with disabilities?
16. How long have disability support programs or services been available?
17. Are the support services or program(s) funded through the college or through government grants? How does the funding affect your costs?
18. Are students with documented disabilities given early registration privileges?
19. Does the school offer assistive technology equipment? What type? Where is it located? Any fee for use? What type of assistance is available?
20. Is there a support group for students with disabilities on campus?
21. Does the school offer courses or a summer program that help students with disabilities transition to post-secondary education?
22. Discuss any specific housing needs.

Obtaining Disability Accommodations And Related Services at the College Level

If you are a student with a disability attending, or planning to attend, a college or university, you may need academic or work-related accommodations and related support services. The only way you can receive academic accommodations and services related to a disability is when you:

1. Contact the coordinator of disability services on your campus;
2. Provide the required documentation of your disability;
3. Request services each academic term; and,
4. Work out specific accommodations.

Contacting Disability Services

All colleges have a person assigned to provide services to students with disabilities. (Schools may or may not have an office titled “disability services,” or similar, where these services are managed.) The office or coordinator, who is often identified as the Disability Services Coordinator, may be located in the college’s counseling or student affairs center. If you wish to request accommodations, you must do so by registering with this office. If you are already attending the college, you should meet with the Disability Services Coordinator to find out what documentation of your disability is required. If you are planning to attend the college in the near future, you should ask ahead of time about the documentation requirements and due dates.

****Note:** It is recommended that you register with Disability Services prior to entrance to college.

Providing Required Documentation

All colleges – community, technical and four-year/graduate universities – require documentation of a student’s disability and need for accommodations in order to determine:

- Eligibility for services, and
- The specific accommodations and services that are needed.

If you are a student who received special education or other disability supports in high school, the school psychologist, private psychologist or a medical doctor most likely completed testing. A copy of that assessment may be sufficient as documentation of your disability. Your most recent IEP (Individual Education Plan) and/or SOP (Summary of Performance) can be helpful, but generally won’t qualify as documentation of your disability for college purposes. Some colleges have a time limit on accepting documentation. Most colleges will accept documentation as valid if the date of testing is within three years of the date of college enrollment. Since most high schools have a time limit on how long they retain student records after graduation (usually five years), it is best to request a copy of your last IEP and a copy of an updated assessment (performed by the school psychologist or medical doctor) before you graduate. If you must be tested for a disability after high school graduation, you must pay for that testing and it can be expensive.

Requesting Services

After meeting with you and reviewing your documentation, the Disability Services Coordinator will better understand how your disability impacts your learning, and will be able to determine possible accommodations. Keep in mind that services must be requested from the Disability Services Office each term. Services will not be offered **unless you make the request**. You are your own best advocate to make your needs known, and to request additional help if the provided supports are not addressing your learning needs. You “should be able to describe how [your] disability affects the following aspects of learning:

- Classes (lectures, laboratory, web-based classes, collaborative groups)
- Assignments (reading, writing, calculating, keyboarding, library work)
- Communication (speaking, listening, using phones and e-mail)
- Evaluation (tests, papers, oral reports, group presentations, projects)
- Time constraints (timed tests, deadlines, assignment due dates)
- Attendance (class, required activities, residential living requirements)¹

Working Out Specific Accommodations

It is important to know what accommodations are available, and which are likely to work for you. You may not need the same accommodations for each class – a history class, for example, may require a different accommodation than a math class. You will be in partnership with the Disability Services Coordinator and the course instructor to work out which accommodations will work best for you. Although the college is required by law to provide a reasonable accommodation, they may not always agree to your request for a specific accommodation. Determining which accommodations will be effective can sometimes be a process of experimenting and making adjustments.

Accommodations in an academic setting may include, but are not limited to:

1. Provision of note takers, readers, scribes for exams, proofreaders, editing services, lab assistants, and tutors. (Note: individual tutoring is not a required accommodation, and is considered by many schools as a personal service for which the student must arrange and pay.)
2. Provision of textbooks and other educational materials in alternative form, such as audiotapes, large print, electronic format (e-text) or Braille.
3. Access to adaptive computer equipment (i.e., Assistive Technology) in computer labs and libraries.
4. Sign language, oral interpreting and real-time captioning services.
5. Alternative testing services such as; extended time, quiet location, taped tests, oral tests, alternative test sites or use of a computer as an aid for quizzes and exams.

6. Access to adaptive equipment such as closed caption devices, amplified phone receivers, low vision reading aides, tape recorders and computer enhancements.
7. Equal access to classes, activities, housing and services.
8. Preferential seating in the classroom.
9. Extension of timelines to complete assignments, certification or degree requirements.
10. Permission to take less than full-time credit and still be eligible to receive financial aid.
11. Foreign language and math course substitutions, e.g., option to take foreign culture class instead of foreign language.
12. Early registration.

Adapted from: Ladders to Success: "A Student's Guide to School after High School," Puget Sound Educational Service District, 1966.

1 Region Five Transition Guide, <http://sharedwork.org/documents/TransitionGuide.pdf>

Post-secondary Financial Considerations

A variety of sources available to pay for post-secondary education are shown below. Most students find that a combination of resources is required to meet the financial requirements of post-secondary education:

The Heath Resource Center Toolkit goes on to state:

High school counselors frequently receive requests from parents for information about financial aid and scholarships to help defray the rising costs of post-secondary education. Students with disabilities are often under the impression that a documented disability guarantees access to...funds for college level education. Unfortunately, in most instances...there are relatively few disability-specific grants and scholarships awarded; and most of [those] are highly selective, and usually awarded to the highest achieving students.¹

“A STEP BY STEP GUIDE [TO] APPLYING FOR FINANCIAL AID”²

- Start search as early as possible.
 - Search for a college.
 - Search for "free money."
 - Apply as early as possible.
- After applying for admission, file your forms.
 - Get the forms, know the deadlines. Different colleges have different deadlines.
 - File the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon after **January 1st** of your senior year as possible and every year thereafter. You can complete the FAFSA online at www.fafsa.ed.gov
 - Complete any supplemental aid application or institutional aid application that the college requires.
 - File any other applicable forms, such as housing or meal plan applications, by the deadlines.
- You've been accepted.
 - Compare the financial aid award packages carefully. The award packages from each school will vary, yet each will provide information on how much federal, institutional and state aid you are eligible for. Take the time, with your parents, to compare the packages and follow up with the individual financial aid offices if you have any questions. The moment has come! Choose the school you want to attend and accept in writing. Decline all other offers, in writing.

- Don't forget to follow through.
 - Accept your award package.
 - Choose your student loan lender.
 - Submit your student loan applications.
- You're on your way.
 - Complete your loan entrance counseling (usually an online process). When you borrow for the first time, you must show proof that you understand the student loan process before money is disbursed. Your financial aid advisor can give you details.
 - Sign for the money (if required). The money will be sent to your school electronically or by check. Some schools apply the money to your tuition bill automatically. Others will request you sign for the money. Keep good records and get a great education!”

Cautions

In seeking financial assistance for post-secondary education, you need to be careful. Cameron Huddleston wrote in Kiplinger that: Applying for financial aid can be intimidating and confusing. That’s why so many scams offer to do the work for you – for an up-front fee, of course. There are legitimate services out there, too, but you could get the same information yourself free. Don’t spend a dime for financial aid advice. Simply learn the system, the sources and apply early.³

The U.S. Department of Education also provides cautions:⁴

Questionable Tactics:

- Being told that there are millions of dollars in student aid that go unclaimed every year.
- Telling you that you cannot get the same information anywhere else.
- Requesting your credit card or bank account number to hold student financial aid for you.
- Some try to get you to send money by claiming that you are a finalist in a scholarship contest.
- Scholarship seminars frequently end with one-on-one meetings in which a salesperson pressures the student to “buy now or lose out on this opportunity”.

Private Search Services:

There is no evaluation process for private search services...If you decide to use one of these services, you should check its reputation by contacting the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.com), school counselors or the state Attorney General's office. The Scholarship Fraud Prevention Act created a fraud-awareness partnership between the U.S. Department of Education and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). For more information about scholarship scams or to report a scam, call the FTC toll free at 1-877-382-4375 or go to www.ftc.gov/scholarshipscams

You can also investigate the organization yourself before making a commitment:

- Ask for the names of three or four local families who have used its services recently.
- Ask how many students have used the service and how many of them received scholarships as a result.
- Find out about the service's refund policy
- Get everything in writing.
- Read all of the fine print before signing anything. If information is unclear to you, ask someone (other than the one giving you the information) to assist you.

Advice should be sought based on your needs, but be aware that a good deal of information can be found through "free" assistance from school, family, community and web resources.

1 Guidance and Career Counselors' Toolkit (2006), George Washington University, National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities.

"...there is no separately administered pool of federal aid for students with disabilities. Federal financial aid, [and/or] a combination of student loans and grants, is the primary source to help [all] students..." (Heath)

2 <http://going2college.org/StateResources/actPage.cfm?stateID=47&isMain=0&pageID=4>

3 Huddleston, Cameron, Master the Financial Aid Process (2010), Kiplinger

<http://www.kiplinger.com/basics/archives/2003/02/story11.html>

4 Adapted from: Looking For Student Aid, U.S. Department of Education, www.studentaid.ed.gov
Considerations for the College Search

Resources for Financial Aid Information

A good source for information on post-secondary financial planning is the high school counselor. Community resources are also available, for example, the local library. Other sources might include an individual's personal financial consultant, a banker, lawyer, and/or any person who is considered an expert in understanding matters related to borrowing and repaying debt. It is important to consider and understand what financial commitments are being made as they may affect you for many years. Information and resources change rapidly so it is wise to check often to insure that the information you have regarding funding, terms, deadlines, etc. are up-to-date.

Websites

- studentaid.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2012-13-funding-your-education.pdf (tambien en Espanol)
- <http://studentaid.ed.gov> - Student Aid on the Web (tambien en Espanol)
- <http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/intellectual-disabilities>
- <http://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility> - Who gets Aid?
- <http://going2college.org/StateResources/> - Some information on Illinois resources.
- <http://www.pacer.org/publications/possibilities/> - A Financial Resource for Parents of Children with Disabilities
- <http://www.washington.edu/doi/Brochures/Academics/financial-aid.html> - College Funding for Students with Disabilities, University of Washington
- <http://www.finaid.org/otheraid/ld.phtml> - Scholarships for Students with Learning Disabilities
- <http://www.finaid.org/> - Fin Aid – Guide to Financial Aid
- <http://www.heath.gwu.edu/modules/financial-aid/> - Financial Aid – Heath Resource Center, George Washington University
- <http://www.collegeanswer.com/index.jsp> - SallieMae - The planning for College Destination Considerations for the College Search 45
- <http://federalstudentaid.ed.gov/> – Federal Student Aid Gateway (Note particularly the Fact Sheets on Loan & Grant programs and the College Preparation Checklist)
- <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/> - Free Application for FAFSA (tambien en Espanol)
- <http://www.nclد.org/parents-child-disabilities/teens/financial-aid-scholarships-resources-students-ld>

Post-secondary Opportunities

Life Skills Training

Life Skills Training programs generally offer full or part-time post-secondary educational experience to young adults with developmental disabilities. The programs often emphasize and provide opportunities in the following areas: academics and career exploration, independent living skills, and social and recreational skills. Completion of the Life Skills Training programs often result in a certificate. Programs vary with the level of services that are offered, so it is important to visit the various options.

Career Training

Career training and certification programs are affordable, fast, convenient and relevant to the current job market. The career and technical training programs provide hands-on experience in an area of interest and result in a certificate specific to a career field.

Community College

The Community College experience offers a wide variety of educational opportunities for students with disabilities who are college-bound and for students who wish to take courses for personal enrichment. Options include: Associate Degree programs (transfer to 4 year college), Associates in Applied Science (A.A.S.) degree programs (career specific), certificate programs (between 1-4 semesters) and continuing education classes and certificates which are not for college credit.

University/College

The four-year university/college path is an option for students with disabilities who are college-bound and meet university acceptance criteria. Accommodations are available at the post-secondary level, but the curriculum and assessments are not modified. It is important to include the Access & Disability Services office at each university to get a better idea of the support services available at each individual school. Some supports and services are fee-based.

The following list is a sampling of programs/colleges available in each of the four categories:

LIFE SKILLS

- Harper College (Career Skills Institute)
- Elmhurst Life Skills Academy (ELSA)
- Edgewood College, WI (Cutting Edge)
- University of Iowa (Reach)
- Search Inc. – Mount Prospect, IL
- New York Institute of Technology - VIP Program
- Minnesota Life

CAREER TRAINING

(The programs listed below are offered at Harper Community College.)

Continuing Education Courses

- Pharmacy Tech
- Culinary Arts
- Physical Therapy Aide
- Veterinary Assistant
- Therapeutic Massage
- Cisco CCNA Network
- Computer Graphic Arts

Career Certificate Programs

- Accounting Assistant
- Graphic Arts Web Design
- Early Childhood Education: Assistant Teacher
- Food Service Management
- Interior Design Technology
- Manufacturing Production
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)
- Sign Language Interpreting
- Web Development

COMMUNITY COLLEGE – Degree Programs

Associates in Applied Science (A.A.S)

Generally, students complete the A.A.S. to prepare for a career upon completion.

- Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Technology
- Dental Hygiene
- Early Childhood Education
- Electronics Engineering Technology
- Fashion Design/Fashion Merchandising
- Fire Science Technology
- Graphic Arts Technology
- Interior Design
- Maintenance Technology
- Manufacturing Technology
- Radiologic Technology
- Web Development
- Welding Technology

Associates in Arts (A.A.)

Students meet general education and major-specific courses in order to transfer to a four-year college for completion of a bachelor's degree.

Community Colleges or Two-Year Colleges with housing:

- Kirkwood Community College, IA
- Lincoln College, IL
- Vincennes, IN
- Western Kentucky University, KY (the community college is on campus and students can live in the residence halls with 4-year students)

FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY

(If a college listed below has a special program for students with disabilities, the name of the program will be notated in parenthesis.)

Adrian College, MI (EXCEL)
Augsburg College, MN (CLASS)
Barry University, FL (CAL)
Beacon, FL
DePaul University, IL (PLuS)
Eastern Kentucky University, KY (Project SUCCESS)
Hofstra University, NY (PALS Program)
Landmark College, VT
Lincoln College, IL
Loras College, IA (Enhance Program)
Lynn University, FL (Institute for Achievement and Learning)
Marshall University, WV (special program for students on the autism spectrum).
McDaniel College, MD
Muskingum College, OH (PLUS Program)
Oakland University, MI (PTAP)
Peer Transition Assistance Program for students with Asperger's syndrome,
autism and ADHD
St. Ambrose University, IA
St. Mary's University, MN
Southern Illinois University – Carbondale, IL (ACHIEVE)
Southwest Minnesota State University, MN (AOS)
University of Arizona, AZ (S.A.L.T)
University of Indianapolis, IN (BUILD)
University of the Ozarks, AR (Jones Learning Center)
University of St. Thomas, MN (Enhancement Program)
University of Vermont, VT (ACCESS)
University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, WI (Project Success)
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, WI
Westminster College, MO (Learning Opportunities Center)
Wright State University, OH

Post-secondary Resource Websites for Students with Special Needs

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

www.ahead.org/students-parents/transitions

Professional association committed to full participation of persons with disabilities in post-secondary education. Transition Resources A–Z.

Beach Center on Disability

www.beachcenter.org/

Located at the University of Kansas. Provides resources for families of people with disabilities along with an electronic newsletter subscription.

Closing The Gap

www.closingthegap.com/

Computer technology in special education and rehabilitation resource directory, news articles, education, and conference information.

Council for Exceptional Children

888-232-7733 (voice)

866-915-5000 (TTY)

www.cec.sped.org/

An international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities. Resources include publications, a clearinghouse on disabilities and the gifted, education resources, and discussion lists.

Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology (DO-IT)

206-685-DOIT (voice/TTY)

888-972-3648 (voice)

509-328-9331 (voice)

www.uw.edu/doi/

Comprehensive set of resources and programs with a focus on access to technology, college, and careers for youth with disabilities.

Disability Resources Monthly (DRM) Guide to Disability Resources on the Internet

www.disabilityresources.org/index.html

Information about legal rights, financial resources, assistive technology, employment opportunities, housing modifications, educational options, transportation, and mobility services.

DO-IT Student Lounge (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology)

www.washington.edu/doi/Student

Information about resources and events designed to help you learn more about how to prepare for and be successful in post-secondary education and challenging career opportunities. Includes information about academics, career, college, community, and disability resources. **Going to College (U.S. Dept. of Ed./OSERS & Virginia Commonwealth University**

www.going-to-college.org

Contains information about living college life with a disability. It's designed for high school students and provides video clips, activities and additional resources that can help you get a head start in planning for college.

HEATH Resource Center (Online Clearinghouse on Post-secondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities)

www.heath.gwu.edu/

A clearinghouse on post-secondary education for individuals with disabilities.

www.k12academics.com/

National education and disability resource website.

Learning Ally

800-221-4792 (voice)

www.learningally.org/

Educational and professional books on audio, covering all subjects from kindergarten through postgraduate studies.

Life After IEPs

<http://lifeafterieps.com/12-go-to-college-planning-sites-for-teens-with-disabilities/>

12 go-to college planning sites for teens with disabilities

Mobility International USA (MIUSA)

541-343-1284 (voice/TTY)

www.miusa.org/

A clearinghouse on disability-related and parenting information regarding international exchange and educational opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)

612-624-2097 (voice)

www.ncset.org/

Identifies needs of youth with disabilities to successfully participate in post-secondary education and training, civic engagement, and meaningful employment.

National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability (NCWD)

877-871-0744 (voice)

877-871-0665 (TTY)

www.ncwd-youth.info/

Information source about employment for youth with disabilities.

National Council on Independent Living (NCIL)

202-207-0334 (voice)

202-207-0340 (TTY)

www.ncil.org/

Information and resources for people with disabilities and their families regarding independent living.

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)

800-695-0285 (voice/TTY)

www.nichcy.org/

Information on disabilities and disability-related issues for families, educators, and professionals related to children and youth.

Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor

866-633-7365 (voice)

877-889-5627 (TTY)

www.dol.gov/odep/

Resources to enhance the employment of people with disabilities.

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)

www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html

Provides leadership and financial support to states and local districts to improve results for children and youth with disabilities.

Our-Kids-Adults: Support for Parents and Caregivers of Teens and Adults with Disabilities

www.our-kids.org/OKAdults/

Information and resources on assistive technology and equipment advocacy, art, conferences and events, disability links, health and medical resources, leisure and recreation, financial and legal issues, and transition to adulthood.