

Special Education Resources for Early College High School Staff



Special Education Resources for Early College High School Staff

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Working with early college students who learn differently 4

SECTION ONE

Self-Advocacy 5

SECTION TWO

Scaffolding Academic Skills for College Success 7

SECTION THREE

Early College Courses for Students with IEPs..... 10

Links to Useful Information and Resources..... 14

Introduction

Working with early college students who learn differently

The early college experience gives students with special needs many opportunities for personal and academic growth. A student with an IEP in any high school will be working toward meeting annual IEP goals and fulfilling requirements for a high school diploma. At an early college high school, a student with an IEP is also working on meeting CUNY's reading, writing, and math proficiency requirements; earning college credits; and possibly fulfilling requirements for an associate degree. The early college experience gives high school staff opportunities to help students develop skills they need in high school and beyond. Educators can help students understand what to expect in college courses, how to self-advocate, and what strategies are best for their learning styles. Students with special learning needs benefit from the positive involvement of all the adults around them during the transition from high school to college.

SECTION ONE: Self-Advocacy

One of the key areas of students' personal growth during high school is in developing self-awareness. Students who learn differently often face social stigma around acknowledging and discussing their unique learning needs. High school staff can foster an environment in which students recognize that they can talk openly with teachers about the nature of their learning styles and challenges. In high school, a student with special learning needs should see that adults will not only offer assistance, but that adults also want to listen to the student's input.

When students develop skills in self-awareness, they are more able to advocate for themselves. Students who become comfortable talking about their learning differences are better prepared for the college campus, where a student with disabilities must self-advocate for the services they need. Successful self-advocacy involves understanding one's learning style, being able to communicate about it with others, knowing what supports are available and effective, and having the confidence to get help as needed.

Students who become comfortable talking about their learning differences are better prepared for the college campus, where a student with disabilities must self-advocate for the services they need.

Student-Led IEP Process

Research supports the adoption of a schoolwide practice of student-led IEPs. The student-led IEP process gives students an active role in: convening the IEP meeting; soliciting input on progress from teachers; assisting the special education staff in writing sections of the IEP; leading the IEP meeting; discussing preferred accommodations, successes, and challenges; and monitoring their own progress

toward IEP goals. Students can participate in their IEP meetings to varying degrees, as appropriate for their level of preparation, comfort, and ability. The level of participation in IEP meetings can be gradual, increasing in intensity based on individual readiness. All students are capable of participating in their IEP meetings, but a school must be ready to commit resources to training and supporting students in this process.

Outcomes of a student-led IEP process can include:

- The wording of the IEP is more user-friendly for all participants.
- Attendance at meetings increases, and participation is more balanced.
- Educators are more likely to see the connection between the student's goals and their accommodations.
- By increasing student voice in educational decisions, the IEP becomes a dynamic document reflective of the individual student.
- The IEP meeting becomes a cooperative experience with all participants working together to assist the student.

Getting students actively involved in the IEP process means that students become knowledgeable participants in their IEP meetings and transition plans. Students use self-determination skills and develop a sense of empowerment. They gain knowledge of their own strengths and limits and practice goal-setting and attainment. The disability awareness and self-advocacy developed in the student-led IEP process give students skills and experiences associated with success in high school and beyond.

For resources and materials about Student-Led IEPs, see these links:

[1.1 Helping Students Develop Their IEPs &](#)

[1.2 Involving Students in IEP](#)

SECTION TWO:

Scaffolding Skills for College Success

High school staff can begin preparing early college students with disabilities for college course-taking in ways that benefit all students, such as building into the high school day a variety of experiences that parallel what students will experience on the college campus. The best early college experience has a planned trajectory of scaffolding and supports that are progressively removed as students build confidence and know-how for the demands of college.

Ways to incorporate college readiness skills into the high school schedule include:

- **Use a syllabus.** Start each term or unit with a college style syllabus, along with an explanation of the critical information a syllabus provides. Students who learn to work with a syllabus in each of their high school courses will recognize their first college syllabus as a familiar tool.
- **Schedule office hours.** The high school can structure extra academic help as “office hours” and “student study centers,” similar to professors’ office hours and campus academic assistance centers.
- **Teach note taking.** Starting early in high school, teachers can expose students to note taking techniques (for example, Cornell Notes) and reading strategies (for example, SQ3R) that will be useful when approaching college

The best early college experience has a planned trajectory of scaffolding and supports that are progressively removed as students build confidence and know-how for the demands of college.

textbooks. Note taking resources, including videos and step-by-step instruction can be found at "HowToStudy.org," http://www.howtostudy.org/resources_skill.php?id=9 and at Dartmouth College's academic skills center, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html>

- **Teach study strategies.** Teachers in all high school classes can offer tools for time management and opportunities for students to try a variety of study strategies that can be useful in both high school and college courses. Many high school students struggle with organization, but managing time and materials can be critical for academic success. Showing students how to develop and maintain an organization system can be a life-long benefit. One approach to organize class materials is the "Master Binder" system described in the Universal Design of College Algebra at Landmark College, <http://usablealgebra.landmark.edu/learning-study-strategies/math-master-notebook/>. An article from Landmark College describes how the traditional "Master Binder" system for papers has evolved into an electronic format: https://www.landmark.edu/uploads/pages/doc/Attn_2014_04_DIGITAL_NOTETA KING.pdf

A planning tool students can use with large assignments is available at the "Research Project Calculator," <https://rpc.elm4you.org/> ->this site will be shut down 6/6/17.

- **Teach time management skills.** Time management is a very valuable skill, and students will benefit from learning how to use a paper or electronic version of a monthly calendar and daily schedule of assignments and tests. There is a comprehensive set of resources to help high school and college students develop effective study and time management skills at HowToStudy.org, <http://howtostudy.org/>

- **Teach how to modify assignments.** In a college course, all students are given the same assignments; students will not receive modified assignments that are sometimes used in high school classes. High school teachers can teach strategies students can use to modify course assignments and material on their own. These strategies include breaking down complex assignments into smaller tasks, dividing lengthy reading assignments into smaller chunks, and listing individual steps to solve math problems. Further information on study tools and strategies are found in the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Toolkit, <http://udltechtoolkit.wikispaces.com>.
- **Teach how to use technology tools.** Special education teachers can give students study strategies and tools—including assistive technology—similar to those that students use on college campuses, targeted to a student’s specific learning style and needs. An informative brochure, “Assistive Technology: A Parent’s Guide,” is available at:
http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/e_guide_at.pdf?date=3-13-06&status=new.
- A comprehensive Wiki page from Georgia’s “Tools for Life” organization also provides information and resources on assistive technology:
http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Main_Page
- **Talk about college.** To supplement college prep or student development courses, high school teachers in all content areas can help students by talking about what to expect in college courses. Students will benefit from hearing about the textbooks, lectures, assignments, and note taking that is typically required in a college course. A helpful source of college preparation tools, including advice from students with disabilities about their experiences in the college environment, is “Going to College,” <http://www.going-to-college.org/campuslife/index.html>

SECTION THREE:

Early College Courses for Students with IEPs

Legally and practically, there are some important distinctions between students' rights and educators' responsibilities in secondary and post-secondary settings. At the elementary and secondary levels, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that school staff identify and evaluate students with special needs. A school's special education staff is responsible for writing an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and the school must provide the modifications and accommodations specified to move a student toward the identified educational goals.

At the college level, students are covered by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) legislation, which shifts responsibility to the student to disclose learning needs to the campus disabilities office.

At the college level, students are covered by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) legislation, which shifts responsibility to the student to disclose learning needs to the campus disabilities office. Students must demonstrate eligibility by providing appropriate documentation and asking for the services they need. The key difference between high school and college for students with disabilities is that on a college campus, students must self-identify and self-advocate for the services they need. Unless a student self-discloses to the Office of Disability Services, the college will not have any information about the student's disability, learning differences, or need for supports. One way to summarize the difference is that the overall objective of legislation covering students in K-12 is academic success, but the focus of legislation covering students in college is access. A chart summarizing these differences is: [1.4 Differences between high school and college for students with disabilities](#)

Students with disabilities must decide whether they want to talk with the Office of Disability Services and request the services and accommodations that will support their academic progress. On a college campus, students with disabilities need to be able to explain the nature of their academic challenges, what services and accommodations they have received, and what specific supports will help them succeed in their college classes. A helpful resource for students learning about disability services on campus is "Going to College," <http://www.going-to-college.org/campuslife/index.html>. This website offers clearly presented information, activities, and resources for students considering how and whether to request services.

The Office of Disability Services has many different supports and services available, depending on a student's needs, including electronic texts, extended time and separate location for testing, or an FM amplification device. Some of the special education services that are commonly provided to high school students, such as a co-teaching setting or modified assignments, are not offered in college. Further information about campus services is available at: [1.5"Examples of On-Campus Services for Students with Disabilities"](#)

To request disability services on a CUNY campus, students need to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services. The early college liaison can assist with this process. Students should bring their current IEP and any associated testing or medical documentation to their appointment. The campus staff works with students to identify the reasonable and appropriate supports and services. At CUNY, students typically receive a letter from the Office of Disability Services to give to each instructor who needs information about the supports and services. The letter does not disclose any information about a student's disability; it only describes the services a student will receive in that class. The student is free to provide the instructor with as much additional information as they wish. The student can go back to the disabilities office to request adjustments or changes to the

accommodations as needed. More information can be found at CUNYs "Disability Resources and Services,"

<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/sa/services/disabilities/faqs.html> .

Early college high school instructors can help students prepare to speak with their instructors about accommodations. Students should know that they are not required to disclose any specifics about their disability, but are free to do so if they choose. A student can prepare to speak with instructors by making written notes about points they want to make and practicing/role-playing the conversation ahead of time. The early college instructor can help the student prepare an outline that highlights what the student is looking forward to in the course, what a few of their academic strengths are, what challenges they face, and how their accommodations can help them succeed. A template that students can use to prepare for the meeting with the Office of Disability Services and conversations with instructors is provided here: [1.6 Talking with Your Professor](#).

As students with disabilities prepare for college courses, high school staff can also provide information and guidance about the accommodations and services available on the college campus and support the self-advocacy skills that students need to access services. In addition, the accommodations provided in a student's IEP should take into account that the student will be taking college courses during high school and should be aligned with the supports that the student can expect to receive on the college campus. For instance, a student might be in a co-teaching classroom (with one math teacher and one special education teacher) for 11th grade high school math. If the high school staff anticipate that the student will be taking a college math course on the college campus in 12th grade, staff, student and family should consider that co-teaching is not available on campus. The student's IEP can designate other supports or services that the student could receive on the college campus, or can indicate other services available from high school staff to support the student's success in the college course, such as extra math instruction or SETTS.

Similarly, the transition plan that is part of the IEP should reflect a student's early college courses and credits. The transition plan, is required to be part of the IEP starting by age 14 (or younger, if appropriate), and is updated annually. It will outline the steps the student will take to reach their goals for adult life, and must be based on input from the student and family. The transition plan provides details of the student's expected direction with respect to education, related services, community support, and employment. For early college students, the transition plan should include the student's college course-taking, internships or workplace learning, and build the plan for next steps after the student leaves high school around the foundation of early college courses the student has taken. Additional information is available in the NYC DOE Transition Guidance Document, available here: [1.7DOE Transition Guidance Doc](#)

Links to Useful Information and Resources

The U.S. Department of Education Transition Guidance document, "Advising High School Students with Disabilities on Postsecondary Options," includes tools, services and strategies, and procedural concerns for successful transitions. This 192-page resource answers counselors' most frequently asked questions about postsecondary opportunities for students with disabilities.

<https://www.heath.gwu.edu/files/downloads/toolkit.pdf>

The mission of the National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD) is to improve the lives of the one in five children and adults nationwide with learning and attention issues by empowering parents and young adults, transforming schools, and advocating for equal rights and opportunities. <http://www.nclld.org/>

Information and resources for educators about learning disabilities and ADHD is available at LD Online. <http://www.ldonline.org/>

Information about free assistive technology tools that students can use on their own devices is provided through Understood. <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/assistive-technologies-basics/assistive-technology-thats-built-into-mobile-devices>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) resources provide preparation and support for teachers. http://www.cast.org/our-work/learning-tools.html#.WI_DHx17LzM

University of Oklahoma's Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment has many free online resources for educators working with students with disabilities, including lesson plans and assessment tools, to foster self-determination. The Zarrow Center facilitates student-directed educational, employment, and adult living outcomes for

individuals with disabilities; fosters innovative self-determination oriented instruction and transition education practices; and prepares educational leaders.

<http://www.ou.edu/content/education/centers-and-partnerships/zarrow/transition-education-materials.html>

The Center on Technology and Disability (CTD) is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Center is designed to increase the capacity of families and providers to advocate for, acquire, and implement effective assistive and instructional technology (AT/IT) practices, devices, and services. <http://ctdinstitute.org/content/about-ctd>

The Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) is a professional membership organization for individuals involved in the development of policy and in the provision of quality services to meet the needs of persons with disabilities involved in all areas of higher education.

<http://www.ahead.org/>

"Assistive Technology: A Parent's Guide" is an informative brochure with resources and worksheets created by Schwab Learning.

http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/e_guide_at.pdf?date=3-13-06&status=new

Learning Ally is a national not-for-profit dedicated to bringing parents, teachers, and the community together to empower dyslexic, blind, or visually impaired students to succeed. They have a large library of audio books available by subscription.

<http://www.learningally.org>

A comprehensive Wiki page from Georgia's "Tools for Life" assistive technology program provides information and resources on assistive technology.

http://www.gatfl.gatech.edu/tflwiki/index.php?title=Main_Page