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Transition

Best Practice Update

Transition: Success vs. Access in Education

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Self advocacy is the ability to understand and effectively communicate one's needs to other individuals (Johnson, 2006). An essential part of self advocacy is knowing one's needs and how these needs will change at different stages of life. The needs of a child are very different than they are for an adult. Needs change because an individual's expectations, abilities, skills, responsibilities, and supports, change.

Knowing how things change throughout life is important in self-advocacy. As students transition from high school to adult life, two major factors affecting change will become obvious to them. First, they will notice that the expectations on them as adults are much bigger than they were when they were children. Second, they will notice that the supports available to them are not freely given but require effort on their part to access.

When we teach students to advocate for themselves, we teach them to "know yourself," "know what you need," and "know how to get what you need" (Johnson, 2006). As students exit high school we need to inform them of what is going to be expected of them as adults. They need to know how the support they receive in high school will change when they join the adult world.

Changing Expectations

The following comparison of expectations between high school and college was developed by Southern Methodist University based on a pamphlet prepared by Old Dominion University with funding from the Virginia Department of Education. This illustrates the kinds of changes in expectations students should be aware of when they transition to the adult world, especially college.

Following the Rules in High School vs. Choosing Responsibly in College

High school is mandatory and free	College is voluntary and expensive
Your time is structured by others	You manage your time
You can count on parents and teachers to remind you of your responsibilities and to guide you in setting priorities	You must balance your responsibilities and set priorities. You will face moral and ethical decisions you have never faced before
Each day you proceed from one class directly to another, spending 6 hours each day—30 hours a week—in class	You often have hours between classes; class times vary throughout the day and evening and you spend only 12 to 16 hours each week in class
Most of your classes are arranged for you	You arrange your own schedule in consultation with your adviser. Schedules tend to look lighter than they really are
You are not responsible for knowing what it takes to graduate	Graduation requirements are complex, and differ from year to year. You are expected to know those that apply to you
Guiding principle: You will usually be told what to do and corrected if your behavior is out of line.	**Guiding principle**: You are expected to take responsibility for what you do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of your decisions.

Adapted from (http://www.smu.edu/alec/whyhighschool.html)

Going to High School Classes vs. Succeeding in College Classes

The school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters and some don't	The academic year is divided into two separate 15 week semesters, plus a week after each semester for exams
Classes generally have no more than 35 students	Classes may number 100 students or more
You may study outside 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 seldom need to read anything more than once, and sometimes listening in class is enough	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 need 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.

Adapted from (http://www.smu.edu/alec/whyhighschool.html)

High School Teachers vs. College Professors

Teachers check your completed homework	Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume you can perform the same tasks on tests
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 materials 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 you to relate the classes to the textbook readings
Teachers often write information on the board to be copied into 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 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
Teachers carefully monitor class attendance	Professors may not formally take roll; but they are still likely to know whether or not you attended
Guiding principle: High school is a teaching environment in which you acquire facts and skills.	**Guiding principle**: College is a learning environment in which you take responsibility for thinking through and applying what you have learned.

Adapted from (http://www.smu.edu/alec/whyhighschool.html)

To read more about the differences from high school to college, go to http://www.smu.edu/alec/whyhighschool.html).

Changing Supports

There are different laws regarding disabilities for students in high school and for adults. In school, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) emphasize success. Teachers are required to make modifications, accommodations, and adaptations to enhance student success. As an adult, disabilities are covered under a different law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This law emphasizes access. Because of this change in law, supports provided to persons with disabilities also change.

The following comparison of supports mandated by law for high school and college was developed by University of Wisconsin-Platteville and illustrates the kinds of changes in supports that will affect students when they transition to the adult world. These changes in law not only affect students as they pursue higher education but also as they seek accommodations in the workplace and other community settings.

Supports mandated by IDEA vs. Supports mandated by ADA

In high school the school has responsibilities which include the following:	*The post-secondary level institutional role changes as follows:*
Identify students with disabilities	**Protect** a student's right to privacy and confidentiality
Provide assessment of learning disabilities	**Provide** access to programs and services, for persons with disabilities.
Classify disabilities according to specified diagnostic categories	**Inform** students of office location and procedures for requesting accommodations
Involve parents or guardians in placement decisions	**Accept** and evaluate verifying documentation
Provide certain non-academic services	**Determine** that a mental or physical impairment causes a substantial limitation of a major life activity (see definition of disability) based on student-provided verifying documents

Place students in programs where they can benefit (in any way) by placement committee with parent participation and approval	**Determine** for students who are otherwise qualified for participation in the program or service, with or without accommodations, whether a reasonable accommodations are possible
Structure a large part of the student's weekly schedule	**Make** reasonable accommodations for students who meet the above qualifying criteria
Modify educational programs	**Provide** reasonable access to program and service choices equal to those available to the general public
Prepare Individualized Education Plans (IEP's)	**Suggest** reasonable adjustments in teaching methods which do not alter the essential content of a course or program
Provide a free and appropriate education	**Assure** that off-campus and contracted program facilities also comply with Section 504 (Subpart E) and ADA
Provide appropriate services by the school nurse or health service	**Inform** students of their rights and responsibilities

(http://www.uwplatt.edu/disability/students/lawdiff.html)

Because the mandated supports change under the law, individual responsibilities also change as follows:

Students have a responsibility to:

- **Self** identify or disclose their disability to the designated office for disability services.
- **Provide** verifying documentation to that designated office.
- **Obtain** assessment and test results and provide them as requested by that office.
- **Act** as independent adults, use appropriate self-advisory strategies
- **Arrange** their own weekly schedules
- **Contact** their instructors to activate and adopt accommodations for each class.
- **Arrange** for and obtain their own personal attendants, tutoring and individually fitted or designed assistive technologies.

(University of Wisconsin-Platteville, 2005)

Post secondary institutions are not required to:

- Reduce or waive any of the essential requirements of a course or program
- Conduct testing and assessment of learning, psychological or medical disabilities
- Provide personal attendants
- Provide personal or private tutors (but tutoring services are normally available to persons without disabilities must be accessible to persons with disabilities who are otherwise qualified for those services)
- Prepare "Individual Education Plans" (IEPs)

(University of Wisconsin-Platteville, 2005)

To read more about the differences in laws from high school to college, go to http://www.uwplatt.edu/disability/students/lawdiff.html.

Other Resources

Other sites with similar types of information include the following:

Checkers and Chess: What's in a Game? The Transition from High School to College uses the analogy of "Checkers and Chess" to describe the differing perspectives of college students and professors (http://www.cte.udel.edu/aboutteach/nov93/3.html).

Options After High School for Youth with Disabilities. This TRANSITION SUMMARY focuses on identifying, pursuing, and obtaining postsecondary training and employment and discusses how families and professionals can help young people with disabilities develop these important self-determination and self-advocacy skills from childhood on through transition to adulthood (http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/outprint/ts7txt.htm

Supporting the transition from high school to adult life presents the Transition Support Model developed at Vanderbilt University with funds from U.S. Department of Education and the John F. Kennedy Center at Vanderbilt (http://www.vanderbilt.edu/News/register/Oct9_00/story13.html)

The Top Ten Things Professors DON'T Want to Hear
http://www.umt.edu/provost/newfreshmen/default.htm

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Guide to "Frequently Asked Questions" (http://www.house.gov/ed_workforce/issues/109th/education/idea/ideafaq.pdf).

Higher Education Manual for North Dakota Students Entering College which provides information about college students legal rights and tips on how to problem solve (http://www.ndpanda.org/products/hied2/Higher_Ed._Res._Guide_Word_6.0.doc).

Transition from High School to College which discusses the differences in laws as they apply to college students with disabilities and their responsibilities (http://www.okahead.org/transition.html).

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Oklahoma Association on Higher Education and Disability (nd). Transition from high school to college. http://www.okahead.org/transition.html.

Services for Students with Disabilities. (2005). Transition from high school to college. University of Wisconsin-Platteville, http://www.uwplatt.edu/disability/students/lawdiff.html .

Spectral Fusion (2003). Top ten things professors DON'T want to hear. University of Montana http://www.umt.edu/provost/newfreshmen/default.htm

University of Wisconsin-Platteville (2005). Transition from high school to college. WI: University of Wisconsin System. http://www.uwplatt.edu/disability/students/lawdiff.html.