Now What: Navigating Your College Journey with Purpose & Self-Efficacy

Navigating College with an IEP or 504

Presented by Dr. Jenn Antoni



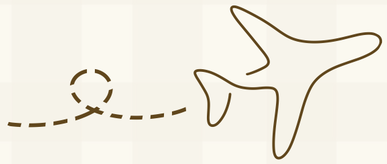


Rights, Privacy, and Building Your Safety Net



- Your Voice, Your Choice:
  - You decide if, when, and how to share your diagnosis with the Disability Services Office.
  - Professors can not ask you about the reason for an accomodation plan!
  - FERPA privacy protections empower you as an independent adult in managing your educational records.

Understanding the ‘Agency’ Shift





High School

IDEA Framework:

- System-supported: Schools proactively identify needs and coordinate accommodations.
- Focus on guided structure and structured encouragement.

Higher Ed

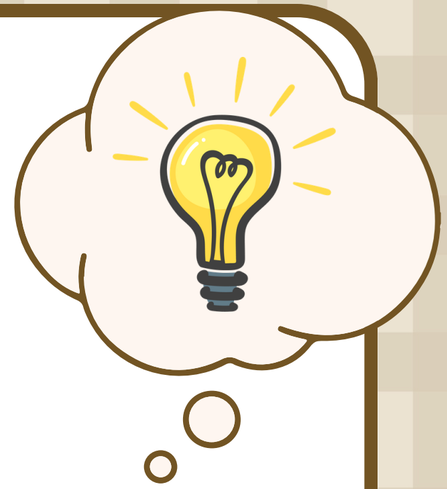
ADA & Section 504:

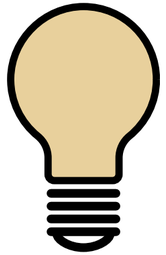
- Student-driven: You take ownership of your learning journey by reaching out and self-identifying.
- Focus on equal access, self-direction, and personal empowerment.

Managing Expectations (What College Accommodations Do & Don't Do):

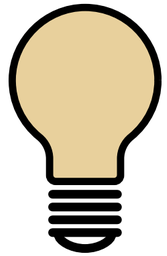
- Access, Not Success Guarantee: Accommodations provide equal access to academic materials; students remain responsible for meeting course grading standards.
- No Curriculum Modifications: Course requirements, assignment depth, and essential learning outcomes are not waived or altered.
- Interactive Decision Process: Approval is based on documentation and an intake meeting with Disability Services—it is not an automatic carryover from an IEP or 504 plan.

Bridging High School & College: What Accommodations Look Like in Higher Ed



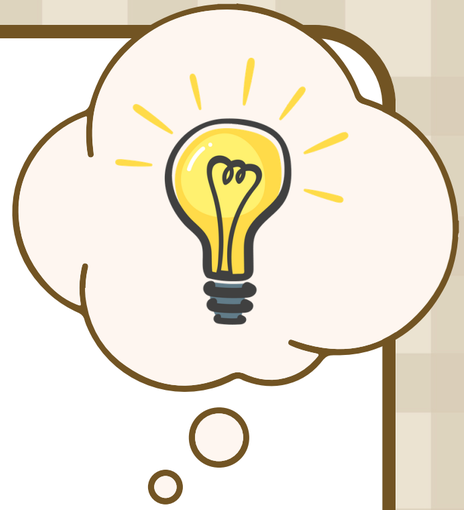


- Extended time for processing and thoughtful expression.



- Distraction-reduced settings to help maintain focus and reduce anxiety.



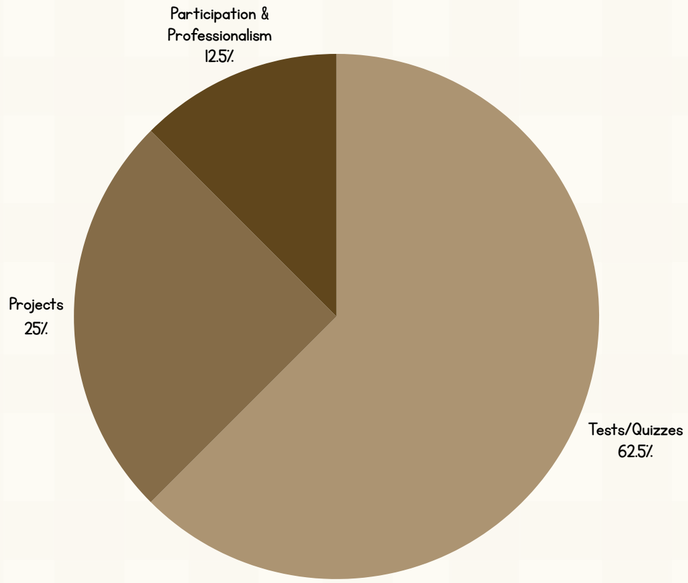


Assistive technologies: Speech-to-text/text-to-speech software (e.g., Kurzweil, Glean, Dragon), screen magnification, or smartpens.

Note-taking supports: Permission to audio-record lectures or access shared peer notes/captioning technology.

Colleges are not required to provide personal care aides, 1-on-1 tutoring, personal devices, or modified homework deadlines.

Authentic Mastery of Course Learning Outcomes



- Accommodations provide equal access without altering core course standards, encouraging authentic mastery of subject matter.
- Approach conversations with your professors as a collaborative partnership centered on your learning goals—framing accommodations not as an obligation, but as essential tools that allow you to fully demonstrate your understanding and engagement in the course.

Mindful Self-Advocacy



When sharing your accommodation letters, focus on your learning profile and commitment to the subject. Share what strategies help you thrive, invite their guidance, and frame the conversation around your shared goal of academic success.

Developing Emotional Resilience & Responsibility

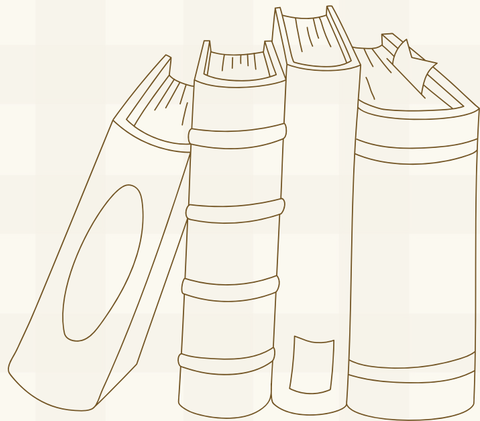
Proactive Engagement:

- Initiating accommodation requests early cultivates confidence and stress resilience.



Navigating Independence:

- College life offers greater flexibility, requiring strong self-management, executive functioning, and emotional regulation.
- Seeking support is a sign of strength and self-knowledge–professors and campus staff are partners in your success.



Choosing the Environment Where You Thrive

Structured Support

- Comprehensive coaching tailored for neurodivergent learners or specific learning differences.
- Offers individualized executive functioning, social connection, and transition mentorship (may involve additional fees or specialized admissions).

Self Directed

- Standard campus resource centers offering individualized reasonable accommodations.
- Fosters independent navigation and self-management skills.



Positive Trends In Higher Education



- Over 20% of undergraduate students now report having a disability, fostering strong peer communities and reducing stigma.
- Expanded adoption of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) benefits all learning profiles. Modern campuses prioritize mental health integration, digital accessibility, and strength-based support.
- Proactive coaching and accessible technologies continue to drive higher retention and graduation rates for students with learning differences.

Timeline for Accepted Students

- Spring, Senior year → Contact Disability Services after acceptance
  - Reach out once the student has been accepted and is seriously considering or has chosen the college. Ask about registration, required documentation, deadlines, and the process for requesting accommodations.
- Spring-early summer → Gather documentation and submit the request
  - Obtain the IEP or 504 Plan, recent evaluations, relevant medical or psychological documentation, and information about the accommodations that have helped the student. The college may require additional or different documentation.
- Summer → Schedule an intake meeting
  - The student should meet with Disability Services to discuss their disability-related needs, reasonable accommodations, assistive technology, housing needs if applicable, and how to request accommodations from instructors.
- Before classes → Confirm accommodations are ready
  - Make sure the student knows how to access approved accommodations, arrange testing accommodations, request accessible course materials, and communicate with professors. Some services require advance notice.

Preparing Your Documentation with Intention



- Understanding Your Profile: Gather recent evaluations (IEP/504 Plan, psychological or educational testing) to articulate your strengths and support needs.

- Functional Impact: Focus on how accommodations help you demonstrate your true potential in an academic setting.



Practicing Self-Determination Before You Go



- Active participation in IEP/504 meetings to practice self-advocacy
- Strengthening daily habits: time management, self-care, organization, and stress mitigation strategies.
- Graduate with your current evaluations, IEP/504 documents, and Summary of Performance (SOP) ready for your college journey.

Any Questions?

For more information about this presentation,

reach out to Dr. Antoni: jantoni@somsd.k12.nj.us



Resources

Looking for specifics about colleges & programs?

Click HERE to learn more!

Thank You!

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