

# ***Off to College.***

*Are Our Students Ready to Succeed?*

## ***Preparing Students With Learning Disabilities for College and***

***Career:***

## ***Strategies That Improve Post Secondary Outcomes***

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# Today' Goal! Sound the Call!

“WAKE UP!”

- ARE YOU READY?
- Why should you be?
- In what ways do you need to “be ready”
  - Many students aren’t.
  - BUT!!!!



# HOWEVER,

## Many students will:

- Earn poor or failing grades
- Get placed on probation
- Get suspended for poor academic performance
- Have difficulty with peers in dorms
- Get overwhelmed, become depressed and hide in their rooms. (And no one comes looking for them)
- And when (if) they do... the semester is lost!

# 2017 ACT College Readiness Report

- 33% Met ZERO ACT College Readiness Benchmarks
- 28% Met only ONE or TWO Benchmarks
- 39% Met Exactly THREE or FOUR Benchmarks
- 27% Met ALL FOUR Readiness Benchmarks

Average ACT Composite Score was 21  
on a Scale 1-36



# Concordance Between ACT Composite Score and Sum of SAT Critical Reading and Mathematics Scores

<i>SAT CR+M (Score Range)</i>	<i>ACT Composite Score</i>	<i>SAT CR+M (Single Score)</i>
1210-1240	27	1220
1170-1200	26	1190
1130-1160	25	1150
1090-1120	24	1110
1050-1080	23	1070
1020-1040	22	1030
980-1010	21	990
940-970	20	950
900-930	19	910
860-890	18	870

But they are admitted to colleges and universities and many, many succeed

- Many Success Stories
- Some of My Former Students

• Chuck

• Enrico

• Anna

• Wally



# COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS & SUCCESS Center at American Institutes for Research March 2013\*

*Newman, L., Wagner, M., Cameto, R. & Knokey, A. M. (2009). The post-high school outcomes of youth with disabilities up to 4 years after high school. A report from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) (NCSEF 2009-3017). Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.*

*Retrieved from [www.nlts2.org/reports/2009\\_04/nlts2\\_report\\_2009\\_04\\_complete.pdf](http://www.nlts2.org/reports/2009_04/nlts2_report_2009_04_complete.pdf)*

\*Prepared for the College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) by Betsy Brand and Andrew Valent, American Youth Policy Forum, a lead partner of the CCRS Center, and Dr. Louis Danielson, American Institutes for Research

# Lower Percentage Attend 4 Year Colleges

“While students in the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) attended two-year colleges at a rate similar to their general education peers,

only 7.6 percent of students with disabilities attended four-year universities, compared with 29.2 percent of youth in the general population.”



# Fewer Graduate from Postsecondary Education

The report\* indicates that students with disabilities who graduate from high school and attend a postsecondary education program, have much lower graduation rates.

**“The majority of students with disabilities in NLT52 failed to graduate or to receive a degree from their program up to eight years after high school. ”**

<sup>3</sup> \*The NLT52 was a “10-year-long study of the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of a nationally representative sample of youth with disabilities who were 13 to 16 years old and receiving special education services in grade 7 or above, under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the 2000–01 school

year.” The study compared students with disabilities with those in the general population (Newman et al., 2009).

Retrieved from

<http://www.ccrscenter.org/sites/default/files/Improving%20College%20and%20Career%20Readiness%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

# And it is not just success in college...

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics report:
- the “average unemployment rate in 2011 for students with disabilities ages 16-65 was 16.2 percent, while the rate for those with no disability was 8.8 percent.”

(U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012)



# So the question is WHY?

- Is it the disability itself?
- The playing field can be leveled, access can be equal, however not all “players” have equal ability, talents, and opportunity for success.

Then,

- How do teachers, students, and their parents gauge what the next of challenge should be after high school?

# Is it the difference in legislation and protections?

IDEA = SUCCESS

College → 504 AND THE ADA\* = ACCESS

(\*ADA Amendments Act)

Then, how should we be preparing students for the differences?

IEP stays away from College  
must still meet  
requirement is



# Is it insufficient academic rigor in the high school program?

- Do high school student programs reflect the degree of rigor for which they are designed to prepare the students?
- Are the modifications and adaptations made in high school *diagnostic and instructive* to our planning?
- Does the student's level of success, or need for various modifications truly inform the process of planning for transition and appropriate goals?

## Is an authentic (real) understanding of the differences between high school and postsecondary education lacking?

- Differences in accessing support
- Differences in the role the student must play in his own education
- Differences between high school & the pace and intensity of the college curriculum
- Differences between life at home and life on a college campus
- Differences between the level of independence and responsibility required of the student



Do students leave high school (*and home*) with the skill set necessary for success?

- Do they have adequate executive function to handle the challenge?
  - If not, have they learned how to use compensatory strategies and assistive technology to support their needs in this area?
- Have they learned to handle money, ATM cards, their own medication, and personal needs?
  - If not, are there plans to teach them?

## And, let's not forget the “social side” of college

- Adjusting from the “norms” of home to the “norms” of campus, residence halls, etc.
- Needing to form new relationships/friendships
- Dealing with reaching out for help on one's own
  - Professors' office hours —
- ① The disability service office
  - The tutoring center
- Attending to one's personal needs
  - Dorm upkeep, laundry, meals, medication



# But it's not all bleak:

Tens of thousands of student are very successful, earning a Bachelor and Graduate degrees.

- Chuck
- Enrico
- Wally
- Anna

**What did they know that makes them different from the students who don't make it??**

For “what” are we preparing high school students with disabilities who hope to attend college?

## **SUCCESS!!!**

### **To have a plan for their future**

- The traditional college option
- The community college option
- Trade, professional, vocational education

### **To be successful in that plan**

- To be resilient
- To problem solve
- To cope with issues and problems they will confront
- To have control over their lives and to be independent



# Why do SOME students with Learning

## Disabilities fail in college?

20 = C

- “Whatever Happened to My IEP?” NO IEP IN COLLEGE!
- Issues of Executive Functioning
- Not prepared for the academic rigor
- Our “efforts” to *help* in high school (*or do they hinder?*)
- Not understanding the differences between high school and college?
- \* Not aware of Assistive Technology and how it can help them
- Not realistic in what they can and cannot do. (Understanding their level of preparedness, their strengths, the nature of their disability)



A QUESTION I ask teachers, counselors and parents:

- “Do you know and understand the differences between high school and college, in terms of the challenges students with disabilities will have to be ready to take on?”



# Some differences between high school and college (or any post secondary).

## High School

- 6 hours/day-35hrs/week
- Course length 20 or 40 weeks
- Class size: 20-28
- Weekly quizzes, tests
- Highly Structured

\* Teachers follow and review text books, give notes

## College

- 12-15 hours/week
- Course length 15 weeks
- Varies with the school
- Mid Term/Final/ Paper??
- Try to find structure!

• Student needs to integrate material from texts, readings, lectures.

# A Few More Differences to Consider

## High School

- ☐ Pass a course you can move on
- ☐ Academic Requirements can be modified by IEP
- ☐ Every teacher informed about social/academic issues
- ☐ Behavior emanating from disability not punished
- ☐ Teachers & parents constantly remind you of assignments
- ☐ Grades sometimes based on effort
- ☐ Accommodations guaranteed by an IEP. ("Shall")

## College

- ☐ Must maintain academic standing to remain (2.0)
- ☐ There is no IEP. Curriculum requirements NOT modified
- ☐ Student must inform/disclose (NOT PARENT)
- ☐ Behavior can get you in trouble and/or removed (504 v IDEA)
- ☐ Professor gives you the syllabus
- ☐ Grades based on course completion
- ☐ Accommodations may reflect school/professors' preferences & requirements "integral" to department/degree



What are the Implications? What do “we” (Parents & School) have to do?

Parents:

The time to start fostering independence is in high school- NOT after graduation!

School IEP Teams, Counselors, Teachers

Students don’t “become” independent or resilient! How are we helping?

\*Raising Resilient Children by Drs. Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein. (Mc Graw-Hill)

\*RAISING A SELF-DISCIPLINED CHILD.; 2007. MCGRAW-HILL.

# IMPLICATIONS continued

## For Students:

It is time to know:

- who you are,
- what you are capable of, and
- in what areas you are competent, and
- not competent (at least not yet!).



# Students

It is time to own:

- ***your*** assignments,
- ***your*** deadlines
- ***your*** interactions with others,
- ***your*** responsibility to know what you have to do
- and to SEEK HELP when ***you*** DON'T!!

# The Number 1 Question in my Office at FDU When I Interviewed Prospective Students

***“So please tell me a little about your learning  
disability and the ways in which it impacts you in  
school, in your classes, on tests.”***

Can anyone guess the Number 1 ANSWER???





# Self-Advocacy is *TWO* Words

- How can a student advocate for him or herself if there is no real understanding of “SELF”?
- How can a student know what things he or she needs in order to be successful if he or she has not participated in a conversation about his/her strengths, gifts areas of deficits?
- How can a student discuss his “documentation” with personnel at the post secondary level if he does not know what it is or what it says?

# Helping Students Know Who They Are

☐ Why do they need to know?

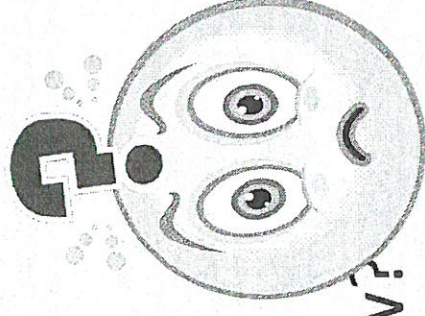
☐ What should they want to know?

- Strengths

- “Gifts”

- Interests

- Areas in which they are not “so strong”





# Steps to Take and Things to Consider in Transition

- Turning 14 or entering freshman year does not bestow judgment and independence.
- Saying in an IEP that Johnny has to be more independent doesn't make it so. We need to "take" him to that point.
- If Johnny doesn't understand why he needs extended time (*it's embarrassing mom!*), or assistive technology (*nobody else does it*) he is not going to request it or use it at college! (just 2 examples)
- If Johnny doesn't understand how or why special education actually helped, he is not going to voluntarily go seek help.

# Think of High School as the AUDITION!!

It is the time where we should allow the student to:

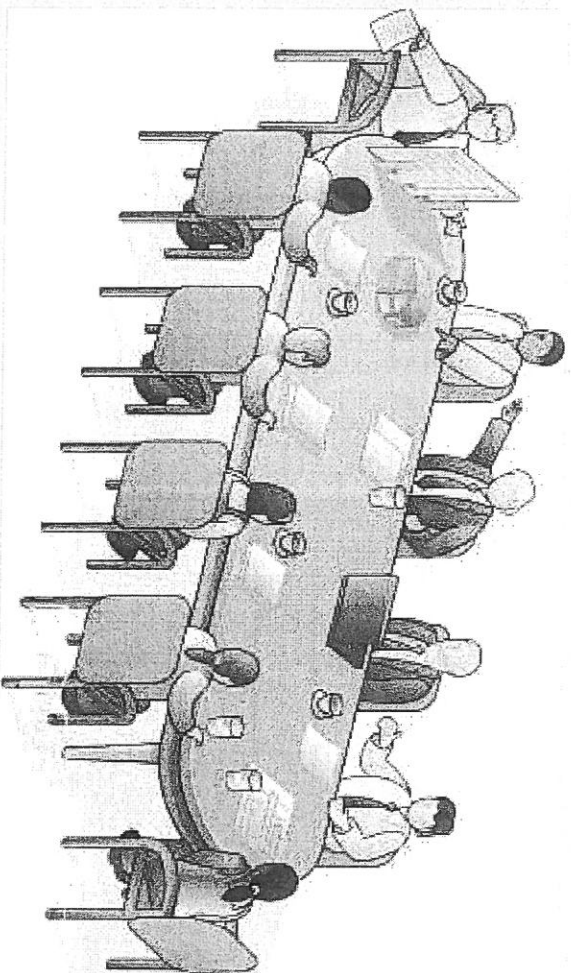
- “test the mettle”
  - Plan a course of study
    - It should be the most rigorous program IN WHICH the student can experience success!
  - Plan for the college experience
    - All that we’ve covered thus far
  - Plan for college environment
    - A world with freedoms, challenges and other “18 year olds” trying to be adults.



# The High School IEP meeting

By the Spring of 11<sup>th</sup> Grade: (EARLIER?)

- Who needs to be in charge?
- Why?
- At What Level?
- What happens if he/she can't



# Learning What the Words Mean

The “Whose IEP Meeting is It Anyway”  
(See Handout)

What do students and parents learn from all of  
our evaluations, tests results and meetings?

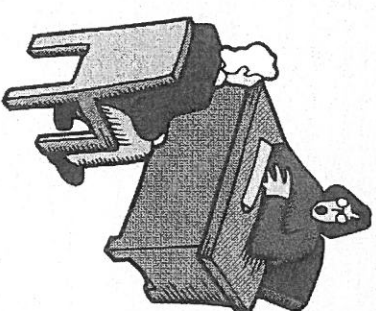
Examples of what the evaluations tell us:

What **SHOULD** they learn?



**Spring of Junior (freshman?) Year**  
*John or Sue is in charge of the IEP for senior year.*

## **HOW??**

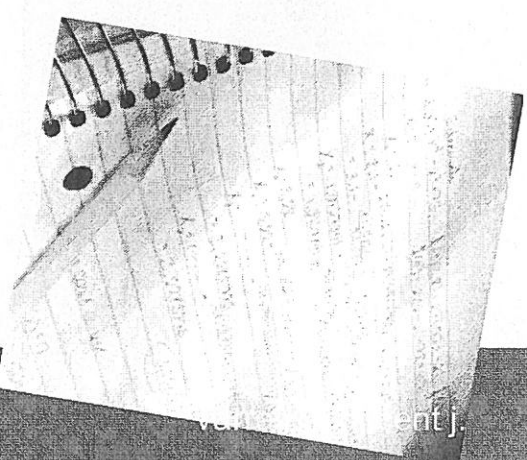


## **The structured Interview:**

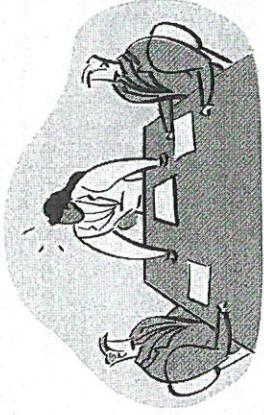
with the Case Manager  
with the school counselor  
with the Special Education Teacher  
with the General Education Teacher

## **The essay-**

Who I am! What I need to be successful?  
What I don't need? WHY?



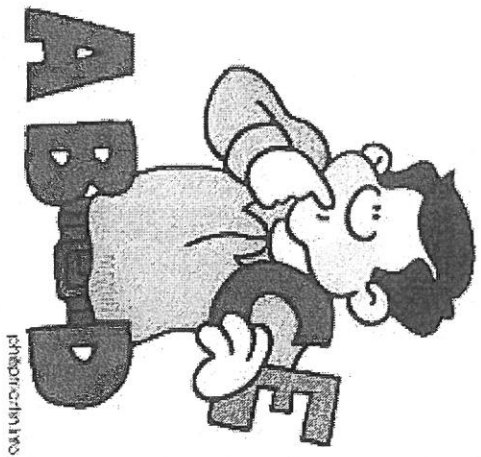
# Let “John or Sue” sit at the Head of the Table (literally or figuratively!)



- All steps in this process are to the student’s level of ability!
- Have the “essay” become the current educational status report.
- Help the student guide the conversation-Rehearse with him if necessary!
- Have tissues ready and handy at the table (for mom, dad, teachers etc.)



SO! What does it mean to be  
Ready?



# A Checklist of things students should know!

- ✓ How to explain their strengths and areas of disability to the Disability Services Office and professors when necessary!
- ✓ What their documentation says, how to access it and where to deliver it to at college!
- ✓ What accommodations they have used, why and which ones to request at college.
- ✓ How to explain their strengths and noticeable “quirks” or “uniqueness's” or idiosyncrasies to peers when necessary!
- ✓ What Assistive Technology is and how it can assist them!



# Need to KNOW!

- ✓ The name and dose of ANY medication they are taking and the reason(s) for that medication.
- ✓ The contact information for a doctor at home and the name and phone number of a doctor where they attend college.
- ✓ What their “triggers” are that may trip off fear, anxiety or a startle response that would draw attention towards them in class, the dorm or in any social situation.
- ✓ Ways to cope with stressful situations before they get out of hand.

# A check list of things students should be able to do.

- ✓ Get work completed on time: Manage your time!
- ✓ Read your textbooks efficiently and independently.
- ✓ Break long term assignments down in smaller parts!
- ✓ ASK FOR HELP!!



# Things they need to be able to do.

- ✓ Manage a budget! Protect their debit card, meal plan card etc.
- ✓ Start a conversation with ONE other person-  
✓ One they DON'T know!
- ✓ Sync their calendar to your computer and phone
- ✓ LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN! (Translation? Let others talk.)

# Things they need to be able to do.

- ✓ Access assistance at the “wellness” or counseling center.
- ✓ Access the services of the library
- ✓ Access academic support through the tutoring center or through any “special” program (like the Director of Disability Services) in which they participate.



# How do we help with the application process?

- One word of advice:

**“DESPITE”**

The power of the word despite:

- Despite my learning disability ...
- Despite my issues with organization ...
- Despite my social disability ...

# What are the needs for those going to work?

- School

- Supportive
- Structured
- Discipline is defined

- Behavior need be appropriate to the situation –school

- Lateness gets you detention
- You may get YET another chance

- Work

- Competitive
- New type of structure
- Assume you know how to behave-

- Need to judge your behavior and that of others

- Lateness gets you fired
- Get your work done “or else”! You may get fired.



# How to Discover Student's Needs for transitioning to work

- How to determine who needs what assessment
- If only it were that easy!
- What are the goals and aspirations of the student, the family?
- What have been the educational accomplishments of the student?
- Did you test the "METTLE"? How did they do?

# THANK YOU!

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- [www.vincentvarrassi.com](http://www.vincentvarrassi.com)
- A very useful link:  
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/transitionguide.html>