

Ninth Grade:

- Provide the high school with any updated information pertaining to your condition or disability.
- Take advantage of the resources available to help you succeed: academic success classes, AIMS I & II, free peer tutoring, drop-in tutoring programs during study session or after school, clubs, etc.
- Work with Student Services personnel, your case manager or 504 Coordinator, and the College & Career Center to map out a four-year program of study.
 - Take an interest inventory, such as the short one at www.getinsights.com .
- Revise accommodations during your IEP or 504 meeting, if necessary.
- Visit the College Board (SAT) and American College Testing (ACT) web sites to learn about available accommodations on tests, and determine if you need to arrange for updated evaluations.
 - www.collegeboard.com (SAT) and www.actstudent.org (ACT)
 - Depending on your diagnosis, evaluation may need to be updated as frequently as once a year, or only once every three to five years.
 - Start the process in ninth grade; it can take several months for testing agencies to review your application for accommodations. This is especially important if you want to take the Pre-SAT (PSAT) or Pre-ACT (PLAN) in the fall of tenth grade with accommodations.

Tenth Grade:

- Finish updating any documentation pertaining to your diagnosis.
- Consider hiring outside consultants:
 - After-school tutoring programs
 - Educational and/or Behavioral Psychologists
 - Independent College Counselor experienced in working with students with special needs
- Sign-up to take the PSAT and/or PLAN (pre-ACT) if you are ready to begin the college testing process. Both are practice tests; colleges never see the results. The PSAT is best suited to students who completed Geometry in ninth grade. The PLAN is appropriate for students who are enrolled in either Algebra I or Geometry in tenth grade.
- Consult your academic teachers and Case Manager before deciding on eleventh grade courses. Your junior year grades are the most important for college admission. Avoid courses that are too challenging *or* too easy! At least four of your classes should be college-preparatory.
- Plan to do SAT or ACT preparation during the summer after tenth grade, when you can give the preparation class your full attention. Prepare for either the SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT - not both. Some students will benefit most from one-on-one test preparation, but group classes provide structure and are less expensive. Students who are self-motivated and enjoy working on a computer may want to take advantage of free and low cost test preparation available on-line.

Eleventh Grade:

- Take the PSAT in October, even if you took the test in tenth grade. The more practice tests you take, under standard testing conditions, the more confident you will be when you take the SAT Reasoning Test or American College Test later in the year.
- Sign-up to take your first SAT or ACT test, generally no sooner than March of the junior year. If you took your SAT prep class during the summer, ask the provider to schedule a refresher class for you close to the test date.
- Contact Disabilities Offices at UC and CSU campuses to determine:
 - Documentation requirements
 - Application procedures
 - Housing options and support services available
- Record the name and contact information of any Disabilities Services Office personnel with whom you speak. Keep a record of contact names and dates, any advice offered or promises received, and print out e-mail correspondence for reference later.
- Start your college search in earnest. Visit local colleges if you can't afford to travel to other schools of interest. Your visits

will help you develop a “set of preferences” as well as an understanding of the different levels of support offered by different sectors of higher education (private vs. public, UC vs. CSU vs. community colleges).

- Consider the various factors that might impact your success in college:
 - The fast paced quarter system - can you keep up? A semester system will allow you more time to tackle large amounts of reading, and write research papers.
 - How large are the classes that freshman take? Introductory classes at public universities might be scheduled in auditoriums seating hundreds of students, and science lecture halls often seat 100 - 200 students. At a community college, these same classes will enroll no more than 30 - 40 students. Classes might be even smaller at private colleges.
 - Will a college located in a metropolitan area present too many distractions? Would a small town or rural environment be more conducive to study?
 - Do you need a structured support program, with close monitoring of your progress, and specially trained tutors? These programs charge an extra fee, so they won't be eliminated if budgets are cut after you arrive on campus.
 - Will a college with “coordinated” services provide enough help? All public colleges and universities in California offer coordinated services, which provide a moderate level of support, but students must take the initiative to access and utilize these services.
 - If you have succeeded in high school for your final two years without a resource teacher, a college with a basic service program may meet your needs. These are often small, private colleges with nurturing environments, but you must be able to advocate for yourself, and the college may not have staff members specially trained to assist students with your particular condition or learning disability.
 - Lots of technology is now available to help students with special needs succeed; are the colleges you are interested in investing in these technologies?

Twelfth Grade:

- Take the SAT or ACT again, in October or November. Arrange for scores to be sent to colleges of interest when you register for the test(s), not after you receive the test results.
- If the college you plan to apply to requires an essay or personal statement, self-disclose your condition or disability in the essay. If you choose not to, your application will not be considered within the true context of your high school experience, and the college will not be obligated to provide you with support services once you arrive on campus. Private colleges, in particular, often hire support staff based on the self-disclosed needs of admitted students, and do not have enough funding to hire staff to support every possible condition or disability.
- Take the time to identify and reflect on your talents, not just your deficits, and highlight them throughout the application process. Celebrate your successes!
- Consider taking a “gap” year after high school to catch-up or simply improve your academic and/or life skills. A gap year could be a fifth year of high school, community service, travel, a job or internship, or some community college courses. However, if you start college in California at a community college - even taking just one course - you will be considered a transfer student by UC and CSU campuses. Transfer students must stay at the community college until they are college juniors. Private/independent colleges, except for the most academically competitive, are more welcoming of students who want to transfer after a semester or two at a community college.
- Make sure you understand the differences between services and accommodations mandated at the high school level, and what is available at the college level. Current laws provide access to higher education, but do not guarantee success.
- Try to arrange overnight visits to your top choice colleges before you make your final decision. Attend classes, eat in the dining hall, and get a feel for how students treat each other. Contact the Admissions and/or Disabilities Services Office for assistance.
- If you decide to attend Diablo Valley College, take advantage of the dates set aside for students with special needs to complete placement testing, with accommodations, apply for admission, and sign-up for orientation, on the DVC campus, all on the same day. These dates are usually in early March. Contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office in February.

Some web sites to explore:

- www.going-to-college.org
- www.aspergersresource.org
- <http://idanatl.org> (National Organization for Learning Disorders)
- www.fairtest.org (lists colleges and universities that are test optional or test flexible)
- www.uccp.org (free interactive college-prep and Advanced Placement courses offered by the University of California)

- www.ctcl.com (*Colleges That Change Lives*' web site)
- www.heath.gwu.edu (Heath Resource Center)

Visit the **College & Career Center** page at www.northgatehs-pfc.com for many more links to college-related web sites.

Recommended print resources:

The K & W Guide to Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities, by Marybeth Kravets and Imy Wax, The Princeton Review

Colleges with Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Disorder, by Charles Mangrum and Stephen Strichart, Peterson's

Colleges That Change Live: 40 Schools That Will Change the Way You Think About Colleges, by Loren Pope, Penguin Books

Fiske Guide to Colleges, by Edward B. Fiske, Sourcebooks, Inc. This narrative guide provides insight into well-known colleges across the country.

Cool Colleges for the Hyper-Intelligent, Self-Directed, Late Blooming, and Just Plain Different, by Donald Asher, Ten Speed Press

Admission Matters: What Students and Parents Need to Know About Getting Into College, by Sally Springer and Marion Franck, Jossey-Bass. Authored by a mother who is also an administrator at a University of California campus, this very readable yet comprehensive guide is written from a California point of view.

Learning Outside of the Lines, by Jonathan Mooney and David Cole

Preparing for College: Options for Students with Learning Disabilities, by Lydia Block and Wayne Cocchi

Self-Advocacy Skills for Students with Learning Disabilities: Making it Happen in College and Beyond, by Henry B. Reiff

College Guide for Students with Learning Disabilities, by Annette Sclafani and Michael Lynch, Laurel Books