

# LYNNFIELD HIGH SCHOOL



Guidance and Counseling Department

**THE GUIDE TO THE COLLEGE SEARCH  
PROCESS FOR  
STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

# The Guide to the College Search Process for Students with Learning Disabilities

*Lynnfield High School Guidance and Counseling Department*

## HOW DOES **COLLEGE** COMPARE TO **HIGH SCHOOL** FOR STUDENTS WITH A CURRENT 504 PLAN OR IEP?

- High schools **MUST** provide the accommodations stated in a student's current 504 Plan or IEP.
- Colleges **DO NOT** have an obligation to provide the accommodations stated in a student's 504 Plan or IEP.
- Education is a **RIGHT** in high school.
- Education is a **PRIVILEGE** in college.
- High schools must provide a free and appropriate education.
- Colleges need only meet the "**reasonable**" (as defined by the college) needs of the student.
- High schools must identify a student's disability.
- In college, students must identify and inform the college of their own needs before any services can be implemented.
- High schools must take charge and provide services to the student.
- In college, the student must request and seek out the reasonable services of the college.

The most important skill that a student with a learning difference must develop as they enter college is **SELF ADVOCACY** as the student is now expected to assume responsibility for what they do and don't do as well as the consequences of their actions.

It is important to remember that, fundamentally, the goal of any high school in working with a student with learning disability is to assist the student to reach their full potential while the goal of a college is not to discriminate against a student with learning disabilities.

A college must provide only "**REASONABLE**" accommodations but is not obligated to "**fundamentally alter the nature of the curriculum**".

Make sure that the testing/evaluation on which your high based your accommodations is no more than **three years old**.

Before you graduate, meet with your special education liaison and have them explain in detail the nature and effects of your particular learning disability so that **you** will be better able to share this information with your college. You should **read** your IEP/504 Plan from cover to cover so that you are familiar with the terminology used as well as to have a working knowledge of what your disability is.

## **How do you find services at a college/university?**

Sometimes finding information about support services takes a little bit of work. Be vigilant in your search though and you'll uncover a wealth of information prior to stepping foot on a campus. Doing your research ahead of time allows you to make the most out of your campus visit.

Sample names for college support services:

*Center for Academic Support*

*Campus Learning Center*

*Academic Success Center*

*Center for Academic Resources*

On most college websites, if you click on the Academic portion of their main page you can then look for keywords such as *academic support*, *support services*, or *disabilities support*. From there you will most likely be directed to the area of the campus that deals with students with disabilities. Keep in mind that students who need support include those with both learning disabilities and/or physical disabilities. When in doubt, you can always plug the words, *learning disabilities*, into the general college search engine and you will then be given the matching results. Again, this process often means a bit of extra digging; the information when found, is generally very informative and a great resource for comparing

In addition to contacting admissions prior to a visit, you should also be in touch with the office that deals with students with disabilities. When possible, make appointments to meet with the admissions staff member who reads for LHS, or has Lynnfield as their "territory" as well as a staff member of the support services program. You may also want to take advantage of opportunities to attend a class (when school is in session) or meet with professors in the major in which you are interested.

# Resources

## Books

K&W Guide to Colleges for the Learning Disabled by Marybeth Kravets and Imy Wax

Peterson's Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities or AD/HD

The College Sourcebook for Students with Learning and Developmental Differences by Midge Lipkin

When Your Kid Goes to College: A Parents' Survival Guide by Carol Barkin

## Websites

[www.ahead.org](http://www.ahead.org) Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD)

[www.ldonline](http://www.ldonline) LD online

[nclld@nclld.org](mailto:nclld@nclld.org) National Center for Learning Disabilities

[www.collegeispossible.org](http://www.collegeispossible.org) College is Possible

[www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu) HEATH Resource Center (National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities)

<http://student.collegeboard.org/services-for-students-with-disabilities> College Board (SAT) testing services

<http://www.actstudent.org/regist/disab/> ACT testing services

[www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org) Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

[www.ed.gov/offices/OCR](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR) Office for Civil Rights, US Department of Education

[www.northshore.edu/disability](http://www.northshore.edu/disability) North Shore Community College's webpage for Support Services

[www.ldresources.com](http://www.ldresources.com)

[www.fairtest.org](http://www.fairtest.org) for a list of schools that are SAT/ACT optional

<http://www.ncset.org/> National Center on Secondary Education and Transition

[www.wrightslaw.com](http://www.wrightslaw.com) Advocacy and legal issues

## Testing/Documentation

Seven Essential Elements of Quality Disability Documentation (as published by AHEAD)

- Evaluators credentials- make sure you are working with an evaluator with current licensure and/or certifications
- Diagnostic statement identifying the disability
- Diagnostic methodology- is keeping with current common practices
- Current information on functional limitations
- Expected progression or stability of the disability
- Current and past accommodations, services and/or medications
- Recommendations

Tests used to determine eligibility: Schools most often request testing that has been done within the last **3 years**. The testing is broken up into two categories; *aptitude* and *achievement*. **It is the student's responsibility to submit testing materials for review and it is important to check each school's requirements as they may differ from one institution to another.** The IEP or 504 alone will not automatically qualify a student for services.

Aptitude :

- Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-IV)
- Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale (SB IV, V)
- Woodcock-Johnson Psychoeducational Battery: Test of Cognitive Ability
- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test

Achievement:

- Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests II (WIAT II)
- Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (WIAT)
- Woodcock Johnson Psychoeducational Battery- 3rd Edition Test of Achievement (WJ-III)
- Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK)

## Questions to ask colleges

- Does your son or daughter qualify for a learning support service college program?
- Are there special admission procedures?
- How current must my testing be to apply/receive accommodations?
- Are there additional fees for the LD support services program?
- Is the learning support services program “specifically” directed toward the LD student? Are there services available to handicapped students and the general student body?
- How many students are enrolled in the program and what is the proportion of LD students to the general student population?
- Does the program have faculty and administrative support?
- Who does the academic advising for the LD student? Are the academic advisors (those persons who help the student select courses) familiar with the goals and procedures of the learning support services program and the general characteristics and needs of the LD student in particular?
- Does the institution have course waivers or substitutions especially for foreign language and math?
- Are there remedial or developmental courses available?
- Will staff from the counseling center and other campus resources collaborate with staff from the Disabilities Office?
- Is there assistance available for improving social/interpersonal skills? Are there support groups available for LD students?
- What accommodations are available (i.e. note takers, readers, scribes, etc.)?
- What happens if a professor does not comply with my approved accommodations? What exactly does this process look like?
- What kind of tutoring is available to the student?
- Will I be provided with a formal schedule to meet with members of the support services program or is it a more informal/drop-in service?
- Is there assistance available for time management and organizational skill development?
- Knowing my learning disability, are there certain majors that may prove to be difficult for me to navigate?
- What kind of assistive technology is available (i.e.) Kurzweil, Dragon Naturally Speaking, Livescribe pens, etc? Who teaches students how to use them?
- Is the graduation rate the same (or different) for students with similar learning disabilities as mine?
- Does your office have any data that tracks the post-graduation success of students with learning disabilities?

### **Sample/Common Accommodations:**

- extended time
- audio version of exams
- computer to type exams
- voice to text (Naturally Speaking program) and text to voice (Kurzweil) software
- preferential seating
- recorded texts
- spell check on exams; correction but no penalty for in-class spelling
- note-taker or class notes from professor
- other forms of Assistive Technology
- priority course registration
- reduced course load

**It is important to remember that these are merely examples of the most commonly provided accommodations that a student may receive in college and does not mean that others will/can not be provided. This is why it is imperative that you meet with the staff in the academic support center at your college(s) so that they can look at your IEP/504 Plan, as well as the current evaluation, and give you an accurate assessment of what accommodations they will be able to provide.**

**4-Year Colleges With Reputable LD programs:** Most, if not all, four-year colleges will have some form of academic support on campus. You just have to look for it! The vast majority of program offerings are of the informal variety (i.e. drop-in centers, peer tutoring, etc.) yet, there are those that provide more formal and structured programs. Listed below are a sampling of colleges and universities whose programming tends to be characterized as just that, formal and structured.

- Landmark College
- Curry College: PAL Program
- Dean College
- Lesley University
- Mitchell College: Learning Resource Center
- Mt. Ida College: Learning Opportunities Program/Learning Skills Lab
- American International
- Westfield State University
- Bridgewater State University
- Framingham State University
- Fitchburg State University
- Salem State University
- Worcester State University
- Mass College of Liberal Arts
- UMass-Dartmouth
- UMass-Boston

- UMass-Lowell
- UMass-Amherst
- Springfield College: Student Support Services
- Colby-Sawyer: Academic Development Center
- New England College: Pathways Center
- Johnson & Wales: Center for Academic Support
- U. Hartford: Learning Plus Program
- U. Connecticut: S.E.A.D. Program
- Beacon College: located in Florida. If your student is willing to travel, this may be a wonderful option!

**One caveat to this list: just because a college or university's name does not appear, it does NOT mean that it is NOT right for your son or daughter. This is not an exact science, and new and exciting academic support programs are being unearthed by families all of the time. There are close to 2,400 4-year college and universities in the country. Be patient, be vigilant, be flexible, and see what is out there!**

**Two-Year Colleges with Specified LD Programs:** Two-year colleges are terrific options for students to begin their collegiate education; schools where they can stay one or two years (and possibly receiving their Associate's Degree in the process) while receiving the requisite academic support necessary to further develop their skills in the classroom.

- North Shore Community College: [http://www.northshore.edu/disability\\_services/](http://www.northshore.edu/disability_services/)
- Middlesex Community College: [www.middlesex.mass.edu/disabilityservices/](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/disabilityservices/)
- Middlesex Community College Transitions Program: [www.middlesex.mass.edu/transitionprogram/](http://www.middlesex.mass.edu/transitionprogram/)
- Bunker Hill Community College: <http://www.bhcc.mass.edu/studentlife/studentservices/disabilitysupportservices/>
- Northern Essex Community College: <http://www.necc.mass.edu/student-services/support/social-services/disability-and-vocational-services/>
- Dean College: <http://admissions.dean.edu/admissions/academics/learning-support-services>
- Marian Court: <http://www.mariancourt.edu/>
- Thompson School of Applied Sciences at UNH: <http://www.thompsonschoo.unh.edu/>
- Bay State College: <http://www.baystate.edu/campus-life/support-services/learning-accomodations/>
- Mass Bay CC: <http://www.massbay.edu/Current-Students/Disability-Resources.aspx>
- Roxbury Community College: <http://www.rcc.mass.edu/studentservices/disabilities.asp>
- Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology: <http://www.bfit.edu/Academics/Academic-Success-and-Support/Disability-Support-Services>
- Laboure College: <http://www.laboure.edu/Laboure/Services/Disability-Services>
- Mitchell College: <https://community.mitchell.edu>

- Lynn University Old Forge Center (NY): [www.lynn/academics/oldforge](http://www.lynn/academics/oldforge)
- New York Institute of Technology: Vocational Independence Program
- Landmark College
- Lesley University's Threshold Program

**In addition to the schools listed above, there are countless trade-based programs in and around the Boston area with focuses that range from culinary arts to carpentry to HVAC to plumbing. Whether it is ITT Tech, Universal Technical Institute, The Peterson School, or Le Cordon Bleu School of Culinary Arts (just to name a few... believe us, there are many more!), you may find that the services they provide for LD students are not as comprehensive as those offered at a more traditional four and two-year college. Again, it is a matter of speaking with members of the institution's admissions office and asking what, if any, disability support services they provide to their respective students.**

**Alternative/Gap Year Programs:** Need to recharge your batteries? Want to see the world? Looking for time to figure just what it is you want to major in? Gap years are an increasingly popular choice amongst high school graduates, whereby they choose to spend the year (or first semester) after high school involved with an organization, domestically or abroad, as opposed to heading straight into college. Doing so will certainly delay the collegiate search and selection process but, can prove to be a wonderful source of personal growth and maturity for the right student.

- Dynamy: <http://www.dynamy.org/>
- City Year: <http://www.cityyear.org>
- ISA Study Abroad: <http://studiesabroad.com/gapyear>
- Teen Life Guide to Gap Year Programs: [www.teenlife.com](http://www.teenlife.com)

For a comprehensive list of Gap Year programs, including the those mentioned directly above, visit <http://www.usagapyearfairs.org/programs>. The recommendation, as is the case with all post-high school offerings, is that you contact the desired gap year organization and inquire (if interested) about services that they may or may not provide to students with learning disabilities. Also, and this is the most important aspect of investigating a gap year, be sure to ask your student if this is something that they truly want. Are they on board and supportive of the idea? If so, terrific! If not, you may want to look elsewhere as the concept of the Gap Year experience is not something that any student should jump into if they have any reservations whatsoever.

## CHECKLIST FOR PREPAREDNESS

**To prepare for the transition to college, it is important to consider what the student's current level of functioning is with regard to the academic rigors and responsibilities associated with study at the post-secondary level. The following checklist may assist in determining a student's level of preparedness:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student can articulate strengths and limitations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student has developed study skills specific to her/his learning style
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student is able to identify needed accommodations and services
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student is able to identify when assistance is needed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student can articulate the need for assistance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student asks questions when she/he does not know or understand something
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student is able to analyze demands and plan study time accordingly
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student is able to identify key information presented in a lecture
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student is able to study on her/his own for at least 15-20 hours per week
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student can manage her/his time effectively, which includes: get self out of bed and to class on time, balance study time with socializing and alone time, and get assignments in on time

**Once a student has decided to enroll in a post-secondary institution, there are a few things that need to be in place to ensure a smooth transition. The following checklist may help with this process:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student researches colleges and universities in order to assess accommodations which may be available
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student has contacted their college's academic support center with regard to documentation guidelines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student shares documentation guidelines with appropriate professional
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student gathers and submits appropriate paperwork to the college's academic support center
- \_\_\_\_\_ Student follows up with their high school guidance counselor/IEP or 504 Plan liaison in order to collect any additional information needed

**Prior to or just after graduation:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Student schedules a meeting with their college's academic support center to discuss appropriate accommodations and guidelines for expected services

\*Adapted from the University of North Carolina

## Differences Between High School and College for Students with Disabilities

K-12	Higher Education
Education is a RIGHT and must be provided in a free and appropriate environment to individuals.	Education is not a RIGHT. Students must meet certain admissions criteria defined under ADA as “otherwise qualified.”
Applicable Laws: IDEA, Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973  IDEA is about <i>success</i>	Applicable Laws: ADA, Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973  ADA is about <i>equal access</i>
School district is responsible to identify a student’s disability	Student must SELF-IDENTIFY with Disabilities Services office at the school
School district provides free testing, evaluation and transportation to program	Students must provide current and appropriate documentation. If it is not adequate, the student can attain an evaluation at his/her own cost. Insurance may or may not cover some of this expense.
School district develops the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan to define educational services	NO IEP is developed in college, there is no special education
Through the school district, the IEP Team determines all supports and services that will be provided	The student is responsible to activate the approved services at the start of each semester
Fundamental alteration of program and curricula are required	No fundamental alterations are required
Personal services for medical or physical disability are required	No personal services are required
IEP or 504 Plan may include modifications to test format and/or grading	Accommodations to HOW tests are given (extended time, reduced distraction area) are available when supported by documentation
Student’s time and assignments are structured by others	Students must manage their own time and complete assignments independently
Parents/Caregiver have access to student records and participate in the the accommodation process. They advocate for the student.	Parents/Caregivers do not have access to student records without the student’s written consent (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act.) <b>Student must advocate for self</b>

\*Adapted from UNH and North Shore Community College