

# Learning Disabilities: 10 Success Tips for High School Students with College Aspirations

By Joan M. Azarva, Ms.ED

Of course you would like the transition to college to be as seamless as possible, right? Why not prepare yourself starting now! Here are ten actions to implement while in high school that will make the postsecondary transition easier:

- 1. Take both English and math in your senior year.**
  - ❖ Even if you have enough credits to meet college requirements, do not skip these classes. “If you don’t use it, you lose it” definitely applies; freshman year of college will be much harder if your basic skills are rusty.
- 2. Take college prep courses.**
  - ❖ It is natural to want to take the easiest classes to raise your GPA and glide through senior year, but colleges know that trick. They want to see transcripts with the most challenging courses you can handle.
- 3. Make sure your documentation is current (no older than 3 years).**
  - ❖ An IEP does not substitute for a psycho-educational evaluation. Ask colleges what specific documentation they require. Know the accommodations you need to succeed, and make sure they are included on the list of recommendations at the conclusion of the examiner’s report.
- 4. Be able to articulate your strengths and weaknesses.**
  - ❖ When you meet with Disability Services directors, you are expected to know how your disability affects your performance. If you use compensatory strategies, mention them, along with areas of strength.
- 5. Know your learning style.**
  - ❖ Familiarity with your learning style is important for two reasons: it dictates how you study and which teachers you may want to consider taking.
- 6. Take both the SAT and ACT.**
  - ❖ More colleges are accepting the ACT than ever before. Submit the higher score of the two....*if the ACT is accepted.*
  - ❖ The SAT reading passages are purposely created to be boring; the SAT is almost an endurance test of how well you can attend to dry subject matter.
  - ❖ Science is included on the ACT, so if that’s your strong suit, you may have an advantage with the ACT.
  - ❖ In certain areas, the SAT is more abstract.
  - ❖ While mandatory on the SAT, the essay section is optional on the ACT.

**7. Look at colleges that don't require the SAT or ACT.**

<http://www.fairtest.org/univ/optional.htm>

- ❖ Smaller schools are more likely to look at your entire profile rather than just your statistics. More colleges are opting to eliminate SAT/ACT scores as part of their admission requirements. If you feel you test poorly, you may have a better shot at one of these schools.

**8. Practice advocating for yourself.**

- ❖ Throughout high school, your parents stood up for what you needed. In college you are considered an adult, and legally, it is not longer your parents' responsibility to look after your school matters. You are expected to know what you need to succeed (i.e. extra help) and go after it. College instructors will not approach you if you are lost. *You* need to make the first move. Practice assertiveness in high school, so you are comfortable with it by the time college rolls around.

**9. Start taking notes on your textbook readings.**

- ❖ If you don't take notes while you read, you are reading *passively*. What does that mean? It means that your eyes may be going over all the words but your mind may be a million miles away. Taking notes while you read is the best way to keep your mind active and alert. It is impossible to take notes and daydream at the same time.

**10. Start studying (NOTE: Studying ≠ Reading!).**

- ❖ It's hardly a secret that high school students with LD have little homework and/or studying. Some students with good memories *may* get away with simply looking over the material in preparation for a high school exam. In college, however, each test encompasses too much material for that method to be adequate. An important component of studying is seeing how well you can *restate* the information.
- ❖ Take this study skills survey to see how you can improve NOW!  
<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/9120/>

The more you do now to get into the college "mindset", the more competent you will feel when you actually get there. For some students with disabilities, the routines needed to do well in college may seem overwhelming. For now, do not try to change all your behaviors at once. Implement new behaviors slowly, gradually adding new ones, particularly for self-advocacy, note taking and studying. By making step-by-step changes now, college will not seem nearly as daunting when the time actually arrives. Your new routines will stand you in good stead.

[THANK YOU!](#)

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