

Two Articles on Helping Students with ADHD Transition from High School to College

from www.specialedconnection.com

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Expert: Nature of disability can cause transition problems for students with ADHD

Key points:

- **Help students with ADHD recognize patterns of strengths, weaknesses**
- **Highlight differences between high school, college accommodation process**
- **Give students checklist of steps to use during first year of college**

Students with ADHD may not successfully transition to postsecondary settings if you do not help them identify how their disability impacts their learning, sources say.

"The nature of ADHD makes students vulnerable to transitional problems," said Geri Markel, an ADHD consultant and coach based in Ann Arbor, Mich. "They often have a 'now or never' mentality and are prone to procrastination," she said.

As such, they may enroll in a postsecondary program, but fail to register with the office of disability services, advocate for accommodations, or maintain their medication schedule, Markel said. "If these students do not succeed during their first year, they are likely to drop out or develop mental health issues that can further frustrate their efforts to be successful," she added.

Fortunately, you can help these students make a positive transition to a postsecondary program by reviewing their transcript to identify patterns of strengths and weaknesses and giving students a checklist to help them during their first year of college.

Transcript review

First, a staff member should meet with the student during his junior year to review his transcript. This will enable the student to identify patterns of academic strengths and weaknesses and better understand how his disability impacts his learning, Markel said.

The transcript might show, for instance, that the student performs well on homework, classwork, and quizzes -- assignments he can prepare for overnight or complete in the "now," Markel said. On the other hand, it might show he scores low on cumulative exams, which require long-term preparation -- usually not a strength for students with ADHD, Markel said.

If the student recognizes these patterns, he can begin using interventions, such as reviewing his notes from past lessons each week, that offset the impact of his disability and lessen his chances of repeating these patterns in college, she said.

Accommodations

Second, a staff member should tell the student how to apply for accommodations at the college level, especially if he has been receiving accommodations under Section 504 or the IDEA, Markel said.

In general, a student files his information with the office of disability services. Next, if he meets requirements, the office will issue a letter stating the accommodations he is entitled to receive. Finally, the student will present the letter to his professors and request his accommodations, Markel explained.

Checklist

Third, create a checklist of steps for students with ADHD to follow, Markel said.

The checklist might include these statements:

- **Assume responsibility for yourself.** Set goals for the summer and first semester of college. Determine what action steps will help you move toward those goals. Goals might include going to class everyday or passing all of your tests.
- **Develop a support network.** See if the college has an ADHD support group. Also, collect contact information for local psychiatrists and counselors.
- **Identify what study strategies will serve you best.** Speak to each of your professors before classes start, and ask them what study habits work best for their classes. For instance, some professors test for detail recall, while others ask students to write about global trends discussed throughout the semester.
- **Be mindful of what works for you.** That is, determine what types of self-management skills, such as deep breathing or exercising, will help you cope with stress.

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- [Psychologist: Students' study habits should mimic those required in college](#) (Sept. 5)
- [New study links weight risks, ADHD](#) (July 9)

Contact [Geri Markel](#).

Melissa Greenwood covers Section 504 issues for LRP Publications.

II.

September 5, 2008

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Psychologist: Students' study habits should mimic those required in college

Parents often are unsure how to help their child with ADHD prepare to make a positive transition to college, sources say.

They recommended you work closely with parents, and highlighted some tips to share with them.

"Parents need to identify what supports they have been giving their child to offset the impact of [his] disability and start backing off, letting the student become more independent," said Gary Eisenberg, a family child and adolescent psychologist specializing in ADHD and LD in Boca Raton, Fla.

The student's study habits, for example, should begin to mimic those that will be expected of him in the postsecondary environment, Eisenberg said. There should be less prompting of the student to study for tests or complete assignments, he said.

Consider this additional advice to work with parents of students with ADHD:

- Encourage parents to invite their child to attend any school meetings regarding accommodations, said Linda Cain, family educational and therapeutic consultant in Boulder, Colo. While not all students with ADHD are served under the IDEA or Section 504, those who are should be involved in planning meetings, she said. This helps students better understand their needs and what accommodations are available to them. Too many schools exclude students from the IEP and 504 plan processes, Cain said. However, if students have a hand in determining accommodations now, they will be better prepared to self-advocate later on, she said.
- Advise parents to take their child on college visits, said Geri Markel, an ADHD consultant and coach based in Ann Arbor, Mich. Also, encourage these students to listen to college lectures, which are available online, Markel said. Students with ADHD often have difficulties taking notes, listening to lectures, and preparing to answer questions. The more exposure a student has to the college classroom, the better he can prepare. For instance, he might realize he should request the use of a tape recorder, she said.
- In addition, recommend parents enroll their child in a college program for high school students, Cain suggested. These programs often offer students the opportunity to take one or two college-level courses during the summer, and receive study skills training and support, she said. This will give students an idea of what college is like, but with the added supports they may need.

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September 5, 2008

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