

# Catch the Wave

## A Guide to Post-Secondary Education for Students with Disabilities in South Dakota



This document is designed to help students, families and IEP team members to improve their knowledge of postsecondary disability issues, and ultimately, to improve the success rate of students with disabilities in those settings.

Prepared by:  
Transition Services Liaison Project Staff  
221 S. Central Ave., Pierre, SD 57501  
(605) 224-6287  
www.tslp.org  
Updated June 2020



Special thanks to the following funding sources:  
South Dakota Department of Education-Office of Special Education Programs  
South Dakota Division of Rehabilitation Services

Special Thanks To:  
Doris Stusiak, Disability Services Director, NSU  
Karen Gerety, Director of Disability Services, USD  
Katy Murphy, Accommodations Coordinator, USD

The Transition Services Liaison Project is funded by the South Dakota Special Education Programs Office and the Division of Rehabilitation Services. This is a Black Hills Special Services Cooperative publication, which does not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the departments granting funds.

A Note to Students:

More education typically means better employment options and a better quality of life. Reading the information in this document will help you to better plan your transition from high school and make an informed decision about pursuing further education. It will also inform about what services and supports are available for you.

The transition from high school to postsecondary education is difficult for ALL students. Choosing this route to a career requires much thought and planning.

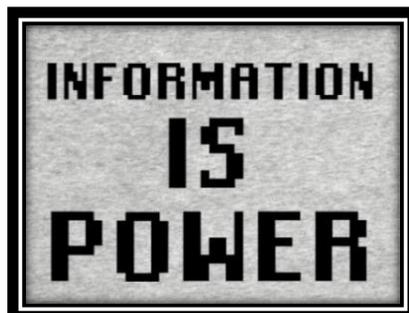
## DECISIONS, DECISIONS, DECISIONS!



Students with disabilities face additional challenges that must be addressed, including but not limited to:

- Setting goals that you can reach
- Taking the right foundational courses in high school
- Knowing what to expect at a university or technical college
- Knowing your strengths and how you learn best
- Starting the planning process early
- Finding ways to work around the things you struggle with
- Knowing what accommodations or support services work for you
- Learning to communicate your needs to instructors
- Developing good study skills and practicing problem solving skills
- Making the needed connections with postsecondary supports to be successful

Students and parents need to be aware of the expectations at postsecondary schools while they are still in high school to ensure they will be prepared at the next level. Being prepared tends to help you feel more confident when going into an unfamiliar environment. The goal of this booklet is to provide information to increase your skills and confidence as you venture on to the next step after high school.





## COLLEGE COUNTDOWN CHECKLIST

A checklist with timelines is a very useful tool for all students planning for postsecondary education. This checklist, designed for students who have a disability, can also serve as a transition guide for the IEP team. Please copy this document and use it!

### PRE-HIGH SCHOOL

- Take challenging and interesting classes to prepare for high school. Get support through accommodations or modifications as needed.
- Develop an understanding of your disability and how it affects your learning.
- Identify skills for academic independence (such as time management, study habits, note taking, memorization, test taking).
- Participate in extra-curricular activities (such as music, clubs, sports, organizations).
- Develop a list of career interests. Speak with adults who you think have interesting jobs. Ask them what they like about it and what level of education is required.
- Complete career interest assessments online, such as SDMyLife.
- Develop strong study habits.

### FRESHMAN YEAR

- Develop self-advocacy skills, including attending your IEP meeting.
- Strengthen understanding of your disability and how it affects your learning.
- Develop skills for academic independence-continue practicing good study habits.
- Participate in volunteer work experiences and extra-curricular activities.
- Explore career options through career fairs, career interest activities, etc.
- Incorporate transition goals and services into IEP.
- Investigate assistive technology tools and other services that may benefit you, such as speech to text software, digital text, screen reading software, interpreter, etc.
- Talk to your school counselor about education after high school. Talk about what classes you should take in high school if you're thinking about going on to a university or a technical college.

## COLLEGE COUNTDOWN CHECKLIST

### SOPHOMORE YEAR

- Strengthen self-advocacy skills including participating in or leading your IEP meeting.
- Verbalize your disability and how it affects your learning.
- Strengthen skills for academic independence-identify what modifications you receive and why.
- Pursue paid work experiences (like Project Skills) and/or extra-curricular activities.
- Identify career interests and aptitudes. Research majors that might be a good match with your interests and goals.
- Identify needed assistive technology tools, or other needed services.
- Take the PLAN or Pre-ACT test with or without accommodations.
- Incorporate transition goals and services into IEP.
- Complete career assessment on SDMyLife and work on developing portfolio.
- Apply for external services such as VR, Benefits Support, Bookshare, DakotaLink, etc. as appropriate.

### JUNIOR YEAR

- Refine and practice self-advocacy skills, including leading your IEP meeting.
- Refine and practice skills for academic independence. Consider decreasing or eliminating modifications if possible.
- Participate in paid work experiences and/or extra-curricular activities.
- Review career interests, have further assessments in area if needed.
- Learn how to access/coordinate assistive technology tools and other support services as needed.
- Take the ACT/SAT/ACCUPLACER exams. Arrange for accommodations prior if needed.
- Set up a file for important documents, such as medical, IEP, etc. (South Dakota Parent Connection has a "My File" available for families at [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org))
- Check your courses against general education requirements to ensure you will meet graduation requirements. Continue math and science courses.
- Attend post-secondary school fairs. Collect information on training options. Begin to identify possible schools and majors.
- Visit a campus or attend a scheduled campus preview day. Meet with all appropriate personnel. It is especially important to request to talk with the Disability Services/ADA office.
- Continue to work on portfolio. Incorporate transition goals and services into IEP.

## COLLEGE COUNTDOWN CHECKLIST

### SENIOR YEAR – Fall Term

- Review pre-high school - junior year checklist items and focus on any areas of weakness or lack of preparation.
- Check program against general education requirements with school counselor. Continue with math and science courses.
- Enroll in college prep/study skills courses as appropriate.
- Review IEP with your team. Make sure your testing, documentation, accommodations, and transition goals are up to date.
- Retake SAT/ACT test(s) if necessary. Arrange for accommodations in advance if needed.
- Apply to colleges you have chosen. Complete applications carefully. Pay close attention to deadlines!
- Prepare/add to file for important post-secondary school documents, such as current 3-year evaluation, IEP (optional), medical history, etc.
- Search and apply for scholarships that you qualify for.
- Complete and submit your Free Application for Federal Support Aid (FAFSA) at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov). Submit by the earliest financial aid deadline (usually early February).

### SENIOR YEAR – Spring Term

- Select and accept admission offer from your preferred school.
- Visit a campus or attend a scheduled campus preview day if you have not already. Meet with all appropriate personnel, including Disability Services. Register with the Disability Services office for services.
- Develop a financial plan. Return financial aid award notice.
- Inform residence hall staff if you have special room needs.
- Make sure all external services and supports are in place if needed.
- Schedule appropriate placement exams. If needed, identify testing accommodations.
- Confirm your financial aid award. Find out when award checks are distributed.

### SUMMER

- Celebrate your graduation!
- Attend new student orientation day(s) sponsored by your post-secondary school.
- If you have a roommate, introduce yourself via text, email or other social media.
- If you need your text in an accessible/alternate format, *make arrangements for this as soon as possible*. If you need help, contact the Disability Services/ADA office.
- Revisit the Disability Services/ADA office if needed.

# TOP 10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

1

**Plan early.** Studies show that students who plan for college academically, financially and personally are more likely to succeed than those who do not. Review the *College Countdown Checklist* for some ideas about what you need to do.

2

**Know your direction.** Research your career interests and possible majors before applying to post-secondary education. Your high school or vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselor can help you get career interest/aptitude testing.

3

**Develop a long-term plan.** Once you have determined your career interests, consider what it will take to achieve your goals. What degrees or licenses are required for an entry-level position? How long will preparations take? What is the estimated cost of your total education? If your goal cannot be achieved, **develop an alternative plan.**

4

**Develop a short-term plan.** Some questions you may need to answer are:

- Which institutions offer the appropriate coursework?
- What services are available to you through the institution's disability services office?
- What sources of funding are available?
- Do you have the prerequisite skills to be admitted?
- What are your personal preferences concerning location of the school/university, size of campus, extracurricular activity offerings and student residence accommodations?

5

**Make a match.** Which institutions closely meet your short and long-term plans?

6

**Set up a file** for important documents. Keep separate, clearly labeled folders of information (e.g. copies of financial aid and school applications, a set of documents including your up-to-date IEP, ability/achievement reports, reports from physicians/ therapists and counselors, vocational rehabilitation information, transcripts, correspondence). South Dakota Parent Connection has "My File" available for families.

7

**Mark important deadlines and key dates.** Be sure to meet them!

8

**Assemble your support team.** Make early contact with the Disability Services/ADA Coordinator at the institution you plan to attend. Visit the campus with your family and meet the residence hall personnel, financial aid counselor, etc. Make sure you know how to connect with these people: disability services coordinator, vocational rehabilitation counselor, sped case-manager, physician/therapist and/or other people that may be pertinent to your success.

9

**Have your financial plan in place** before registration. This includes funding for assistive technology, personal services (e.g. personal attendant, interpreter) if needed, school tuition and fees, books, transportation costs, and any other needed services.

10

**Consider post-secondary education as a new adventure.** Have fun & work hard!

## You are the “I” in Your IEP!

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that supports special education and related service programming for students and youth with disabilities. Amendments to IDEA in 2004 placed a new emphasis on preparing students for further education.

Quality transition planning should first help you to identify your own unique strengths, preferences, interests and needs, and then help you to compare your skills to what is required for different postsecondary options. Active student participation and family engagement are critical to the transition planning process. Students and families interested in higher education are encouraged to consider the college environment that provides the best educational program and support services to assist students with meeting their needs and career goals. Your IEP team is responsible for helping you to prepare to reach your long-term goals. A strong team will increase your odds for success. **You** are the most important person at your meetings, and you should consider yourself the *captain* of your team!

Consider including some (or all) of these additional people to participate in your IEP meetings if you are considering going on for further education. The bullets listed beneath their titles give examples of why/how they could be a helpful member of your team.

### **SCHOOL COUNSELORS:**

- Match your transcript with requirements for various universities and technical colleges
- Career counseling
- Provide information about college entrance exams, college fairs, visitation days, financial aid, scholarship opportunities, and other crucial information for students planning to pursue a university or technical college education

### **REGULAR EDUCATION TEACHERS:**

- Discuss your strengths and weaknesses
- Provide ways to help you improve your skills
- Discuss accommodations
- Assist in developing a recommended course of study within their area of expertise

### **POSTSECONDARY DISABILITY COORDINATORS:**

- Bring expertise to your IEP team on what you can do now to prepare for further schooling
- Inform of accommodations and services available to you at postsecondary institutions
- Assist you in connecting with appropriate individuals on campus

### **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) COUNSELORS:**

- Provide guidance and counseling regarding occupations that match your interests and skills
- Inform you on schools that provide training for the careers you are interested in
- Give assistance in identifying resources at the selected school
- Advocate for students and can provide both advice and encouragement as you enter the postsecondary setting
- In some cases, based on financial need, VR may help pay for certain postsecondary expenses

## The Importance of Self-Advocacy and Communication Skills

Self-Advocacy:  
Know Yourself,  
Know What You  
Need, Know How  
to Get It

In a recent survey, youth provided some valuable insight into transition services. *The **lack of self-advocacy training** was identified as the number one problem that impedes the transition to postsecondary education and employment for youth who had received special education services.*

Your parents and special education teachers can help you foster self-advocacy skills through -

- ✓ Regularly discussing your strengths, preferences, interests and needs with you
- ✓ Requiring accountability from you
- ✓ Encouraging you to conduct the communication between your regular educators and you
- ✓ Actively involving you in your IEP and goal setting

To help you prepare for postsecondary education, your special education teacher should encourage you to discuss the accommodations you need due to your disability with your other high school teachers.

One of the critical differences that you will encounter as you enter postsecondary education is this - no one at a college or technical college can, or will, seek you out because they think that you might have a disability. Therefore, the need for becoming a self-advocate is super important!

A diploma does not equal a 'cure.' Many students with disabilities (especially learning disabilities) decide to try postsecondary education without self-identifying and requesting accommodations or support services. They may go to the Disability Services office to request accommodations and help only after failing mid-terms, or near the end of a semester, when their grades are failing. It's never too late to request services, but remember, services are not retroactive at the postsecondary level. You can't 'go back' and retake a test for a better grade, for example.

**Speak up for yourself!**

**Explain your disability and limitations caused by it.**

**Reach out to others when you need help.**

**Know your rights & responsibilities.**

**Communicate accommodations you need to learn.**

**Find out who your supports are.**





# Who Stays in Postsecondary Education



CATEGORY	SUCCESSFUL STUDENTS	UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS
<b>Motivation</b>	Goal-oriented Determination, perseverance Self-disciplined Willingness to work	Lack of goals or career ideas Immature Procrastinates Not motivated to work hard
<b>Preparation</b>	Solid academic background Knowledge of study and compensatory techniques Knowledge of learning style Time-management skills	Lack of academic preparation Protected in high school Learned helplessness Lack of study and time-management Disorganized
<b>Self-Advocacy</b>	Self-awareness Self-acceptance Understands own limitations and what is needed to be successful Knowledge of laws, policies and resources Assertiveness skills Problem-solving skills	Unrealistic expectations Denial of disability, embarrassment Lack of knowledge of legal rights Lack of self-esteem and self-confidence Lack of effective communication techniques Lack of problem-solving skills



## Tips About Classes and Coursework in High School

All students who are planning to attend a college, university, or technical college need to plan well ahead to make a successful transition from high school to the next level of education. This is even more critical for students with disabilities. Having the right academic preparation can help you have a smooth transition.

some things to  
**Think**  
about



- Modifications should be replaced with accommodations to the greatest extent possible before leaving high school.
- Pull-out classes should be a last resort if you have post-secondary aspirations. If serious about college, you may need to struggle to earn a “D” in Algebra or Geometry, instead of taking a consumer or business math course where a “B” may be a given. For some students, a taste of what is expected at a college (grade-level course work without modifications) may serve as a wake-up call or the need to look at some other means to achieve employment goals.

- Math is the most frequently mentioned subject area that postsecondary disability services coordinators state is needed for better preparation of students with disabilities for college-level coursework. Many students must take one or more remedial math courses (which are costly and do not apply towards a degree) in order to prepare for the math class required for college graduation.
- At South Dakota’s public universities, the general ed math requirement is College Algebra or another approved math course, which is similar to a high school Algebra 3 course.
- Suggestion: Take a math class every year of high school to prepare for college or university math. Check with the school you’re interested in to learn about their math requirements.
- If grammar and writing skills are weak, consider taking the class again, taking English electives, using a computer tutorial, or working with a tutor. The alternative could be a no-credit remedial course.
- Some students with a disability opt for an extra year of high school or take summer classes to better prepare for post-secondary.

**YOUR  
CHALLENGE**

**Rigorous  
Coursework  
in  
High School**

# South Dakota High School Graduation Requirements

(approved by SD Board of Education Standards – 7/2018)

A student's personal learning plan must document a minimum of 22 credits that include the requirements in the table below. In addition to the base requirements for the High School Diploma shown below, students may earn one or more of three advanced endorsements: Advanced Endorsement, Advanced Career Endorsement and Advanced Honors Endorsement. Advanced endorsements outline specific additional coursework within the base diploma requirements to denote specific emphasis.

## Requirements for SD High School Graduation Base Diploma

<b>4 UNITS OF LANGUAGE ARTS</b> must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Writing: 1 unit</li><li>• Speech or Debate: .5 unit</li><li>• Literature: 1 unit (must include .5 unit American Literature)</li><li>• Language Arts electives: 1.5 units</li></ul>	<b>1 UNIT OF FINE ARTS</b>
<b>3 UNITS OF MATHEMATICS</b> must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Algebra I: 1 unit</li></ul>	<b>½ UNIT OF PERSONAL FINANCE or ECONOMICS</b>
<b>3 UNITS OF SCIENCE</b> must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biology: 1 unit</li><li>• Other Lab Sciences: 2 units</li></ul>	<b>½ UNIT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION</b>
<b>3 UNITS OF SOCIAL STUDIES</b> must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• U.S. History: 1 unit</li><li>• U.S. Government: .5 unit</li><li>• Social Studies electives: 1.5 units</li></ul>	<b>½ UNIT OF HEALTH or HEALTH INTEGRATION</b>
<b>1 UNIT OF ANY COMBINATION</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approved Career &amp; Technical Education</li><li>• Capstone Experience</li><li>• World Language</li></ul>	<b>5 ½ UNITS OF ELECTIVES</b>



For more information on graduation requirements, or to see a list of approved courses, go to:  
<http://doe.sd.gov/gradrequirements>.

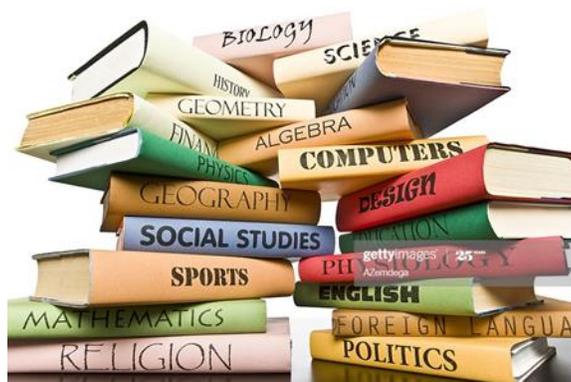
For more information on Advanced Endorsements, talk to your school counselor.

## SD Colleges and Universities Admissions Requirements and Exams

Teachers, students and parents should be familiar with the entrance requirements for four-year universities and colleges. Admission standards vary from school to school. In South Dakota, the six public universities are under the regulations of the Board of Regents. Admission policies and procedures vary by each institution. Contact the institution you are interested in attending to get more information. Some common admission requirements are:

- Scores from Smarter Balanced Assessments;
- Minimum course requirements with an average grade of C (2.0 on a 4.0 scale);
- An ACT composite score of 18 or that meets the institution's requirements;
- A high school GPA that meets the institution's requirements.

\*For students pursuing a two-year degree, requirements may differ. Contact the individual school for more information.



Students should contact the Admissions Office at each institution for information on eligibility for tuition and fee reductions and scholarships. Students must submit the required application for admission and the necessary official transcript or transcripts and other required documents to the school of their choice.

High school students usually submit: ACT results, an official high school transcript (if a high school graduate), or proof of GED and an official transcript for all previous college work as part of their application. Also required is a physician's certification that the student has received or is in the process of receiving the required two doses of immunization against measles, rubella, and mumps.

For more information about requirements at South Dakota's Board of Regents (SDBOR) public universities, go to: [www.sdbor.edu](http://www.sdbor.edu) or email: [info@sdbor.edu](mailto:info@sdbor.edu). For more information about non-SDBOR schools, contact the individual school you are interested in.

## SD Technical College Admissions Requirements and Exams

Entrance criteria at South Dakota's four technical colleges may vary greatly. The required reading, writing and math achievement scores for admission are typically based on skills required by the individual programs that are offered at each technical college. For example, an associate degree in Paralegal or Accounting may require higher math or writing scores than a degree program in welding or auto body repair.

### Entrance Exams:

- The ACT is an achievement test that covers reading, math, English, and science. It is the preferred entrance exam for colleges in the central US.
- PLAN assessment for sophomores. It is essentially a pre-ACT test to help you and your school counselor to identify your academic strengths and weaknesses.
- ACCUPLACER is a computerized placement test used to assess an incoming student's proficiency in reading, writing, English and mathematics. The technical colleges in SD use this test for admission.

Accommodations are available for the ACT assessment to students who can provide the appropriate disability documentation that is required. Talk to your school counselor or [www.act.org](http://www.act.org) for additional details.



SDMyLife.com is the state's online academic and career planning system for middle and high school students. It is free of charge to school districts statewide. The website also houses these state-mandated items: career interest inventory for 8<sup>th</sup> graders, career aptitude assessment for 10<sup>th</sup> graders, as well as a tool for building a Personal Learning Plan.

Through SDMyLife, students and schools in SD have access to ACT prep resources at **no cost**. Students can complete a practice ACT test, enter their answers into software provided by SDMyLife, and receive an analysis of how they did, the areas they need the most work on, etc. Then students can work through tutorials to help them perform better in their critical areas. Students who invest 10 or more hours into preparing for the ACT with these resources see an average increase of one to three points on their actual ACT test results.

To learn more, check out the website at [www.sdmylife.com](http://www.sdmylife.com) or email [sdmylife@state.sd.us](mailto:sdmylife@state.sd.us).

## Things to Keep In Mind

### High Expectations Should Start Early



IEP decisions on your course of study (classes) and transition services which are made as early as the seventh grade can set expectations that will follow you through graduation. To keep all options open for you beyond high school, consider taking courses that fully challenge, yet don't overwhelm you. Too often, students with disabilities are limited by others having low expectations of them. Well-meaning parents and teachers may be too quick to shelter you from situations where you might possibly fail.

---

### Selecting the School to Attend

After researching postsecondary schools, you should visit the schools on your short list to get a better feel for the campus and people before deciding which school to attend. Before making your final selection make sure to:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Check out the schools' websites
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Chat with your school counselor to get sound advice
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Attend scheduled visitation days at colleges
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Connect with the Disability Services Coordinator regarding procedures/services
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Ask family, friends or acquaintances about specific colleges they have attended
- 

### Parent Role Changes

Postsecondary staff must respect your right to privacy. Communication between parents and school staff is not allowed without a signed release from you, the student. You will be doing all the speaking for yourself, so it is very important to realize the importance of being a good self-advocate!

---

### Finances

One of the main reasons that students drop out of postsecondary is financial difficulties. Students with disabilities who may require more study time than other students, need to be very careful when attempting to balance work with the demands of school. If possible, focus just on school until you have a successful semester or two behind you. Saving money for school, applying for federal financial aid, and developing a realistic budget can help you to stay focused on academics.



## Time in Class

You should plan to attend classes regularly. In high school, students attend classes for approximately 30 hours per week. At most technical colleges, seat time can be very similar to seat time in high school. However, at a college or university, a full-time schedule is a minimum of 12 semester hours, which is about 12 hours of class time per week.

---

## Time Management

Being away from home and parents for the first time, with the freedom to make many choices, can be a challenge for all freshmen. Below are 10 tips to consider to make the most of your time as a college student:

1. Set up a regular study schedule
2. Review the syllabus for each course at the beginning of the semester
3. Make a calendar of due dates for projects and test dates (deadlines can sneak up on the disorganized!)
4. Set aside study hours on a daily and weekly basis to keep up with reading, homework, tests, and projects
5. Plan for an eight or nine-hour day, to include both class time and studying
6. Start projects early and set deadlines for completing parts of the project
7. Develop solid organizational skills. A Disability Services Coordinator may be able to assist you with this.
8. Identify locations to study productively, such as the library or a quiet area
9. Find other students to study with
10. Search out apps available to help you manage your time effectively



---

## Grades

At most colleges and universities, you will be expected to maintain at least a “C” average, with nothing lower than a “C” in your major. Failure to meet the minimum grade point average can result in academic probation and possible loss of financial aid. If you are working with Vocational Rehabilitation, they also have grade expectations for you while attending college.

---

## Mentors

Finding an upperclassman, with or without a disability, to act as a mentor may help you to get through rough times. Every new student can benefit from encouragement and advice. Your academic advisor or Disability Services Coordinator may help you to find this type of a support person.

## Communications with Instructors

Most instructors are very willing to work with you to help you to be successful. Building a relationship with your instructors is the first step, which means that you actually have to talk with them! Small talk is great, but you also need to be able to share your strengths, learning style, challenges, and needed accommodations with your instructors. Practicing this type of communication skill with your high school teachers will ease your transition to the next level.

---

**STUDY TIPS**

**TRY NOT TO CRAM**  
Studying subjects in small chunks over multiple days will help you remember more information than cramming the night before an exam.

**MAKE A REASONABLE STUDY SCHEDULE**  
Making a study schedule will help you to avoid cramming and procrastination. Keeping your schedule realistic (time for breaks etc) will help reduce stress.

**EAT WELL & EXERCISE**  
Eating well during finals will keep your mind ready to absorb new information. Exercising will help improve your memory by reducing your stress.

**JOIN A STUDY GROUP**  
Forming a study group can really motivate you to study. Explaining difficult concepts out loud will help you figure out what you understand and what you still need to go over. (It's even better if everyone brings snacks!)

**MEET WITH YOUR PROFS**  
Scheduling an appointment (or even just sending off a quick email) with your professor will help you to figure out what to focus on for the exam.

**SET A TIME LIMIT FOR EACH SUBJECT**  
Setting a time limit and then fully committing to studying during that time will help you to avoid procrastination!

**REWARD YOURSELF**  
After you've finished your study session reward yourself with a nice break - grabbing a latte, going for a walk, taking a cat nap etc. This will help prevent burn out and keep your mind ready for your next study session.

**STUDY IN APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENT**  
Studying in an appropriate environment (a library!) will help you to concentrate on your studies. Find what works for you - a cafe, your bedroom, the library, the cafeteria...

**KNOW YOUR DISTRACTIONS**  
Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, watching YouTube videos, television shows, texting... Distractions can be endless! But it's important to know what will distract you the most and to AVOID THEM AT ALL COSTS! (Turn off your phone, install a social media blocker on your computer, stay away from your t.v. etc).

## Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) can be any device, software or equipment which is used to help students increase their capacity to work, accomplish specific tasks or participate in activities. A few examples of Assistive Technology include:

- devices (computer/laptop, tablets, iPads, AAC devices),
- software (text to speech, voice recognition, screen magnifier, screen reader),
- free built-in accessibility features in everyday technologies, Chrome Apps,
- adaptive keyboard and mouse,
- adapted writing tools,
- ramps, grab bars,
- eye gaze, switches, and much more!

Innovative AT is making a real difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Many students with a variety of disabilities can benefit from accessing assistive technology in a postsecondary setting. Most universities and technical schools have several different types of assistive technology available for their students. In high school, assistive technology is a special education related service which must be addressed at each of your annual IEP meetings. Too often, assistive technology is overlooked as an essential special education component for students with plans to attend postsecondary. Students who have used assistive technology in high school, and know which tools mesh with their learning styles, are better prepared to keep up with the time demands of postsecondary.

You and your IEP team should discuss whether you would benefit from an assistive technology device or software due to your disability. An assistive technology assessment could be completed, and results shared to guide the team in making that decision. If it is agreed that AT would be beneficial, it should be written in the IEP, and used as prescribed. The IEP team should discuss who will purchase the device or software, how and when it will be used, if training is needed, etc.

### Resources:



PACER Center has extensive information on assistive technology including videos and helpful documents like 'Mobile Apps to Support Transition-Age Youth', 'Tips and Technology for Managing Time, Focus, and Sleep in College', and much more. Go to: [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org).



Dakota Link is an agency in South Dakota which can provide information, assessments, and details on possible funding sources for assistive technology. Check them out here: <http://dakotalink.tie.net/>.

## Where to Find Help at the Postsecondary Level



Universities or technical colleges receiving federal funds must designate a person to help students with disabilities to access accommodations. The Disability Services Coordinator (possibly known as ADA Coordinator) is a key player in helping students with disabilities to maximize chances for success.

The Disability Services Coordinator can assist you in a number of ways. You will want to stay as connected with them as you can. A variety of ways they could assist are:

- Participate in your IEP meetings in person or by phone.
- Make sure you and your family have the critical information about expectations at the college level.
- Review disability records to determine if you have a qualifying disability. If your documentation isn't current or comprehensive, that could cause eligibility problems for you. If you need new testing when you get to the postsecondary setting, that is generally a cost to you and your family. (As a best practice, high schools should administer a comprehensive psychological evaluation when a student with a disability is a junior or senior and plans to attend postsecondary education and will require accommodations or other supports.)
- Meet with you to determine what reasonable accommodations (if any) are needed for your current courses. *Modifications of course content and course substitutions are not considered to be reasonable accommodations.*
- Assist you to notify your instructors of needed accommodations.
- Meet with you and your instructor to discuss possible accommodations.
- Identify instructors whose teaching styles best match your learning styles.
- Assist you in planning a manageable course load each semester, based on your strengths and weaknesses. Generally, starting with a lighter load can help students with disabilities to experience early success in postsecondary. Another consideration might be to take a summer course.
- Help you make any needed connections for
  - ✓ tutoring services,
  - ✓ assistive technology, and/or
  - ✓ mental health counseling services.

**BE STRONG ENOUGH  
TO STAND ALONE,  
SMART ENOUGH TO  
KNOW WHEN YOU  
NEED HELP, AND  
BRAVE ENOUGH TO  
ASK FOR IT.**

## Factors to Consider in Advising and Course Selection

### Consider disability-related needs in schedule and course selection:

Share pertinent information about yourself with your academic advisor so they can help you create a manageable schedule, such as:

- What time of day you are more alert and do better
- Chronic issues (i.e. mental health, physical)
- Difficult topics that require more time (ex. math, foreign language)
- Time needed to eat and take medication at certain time(s) of the day

Which factors or variables are important in choosing your schedule, such as:

- Class format (small group discussion vs. large lecture)
- Teaching style
- Exam format (essay vs. multiple choice)
- Amount of reading
- Number of credit hours (desired or manageable vs. advised or required)



If a particular subject is difficult for you:

- Create a schedule that will allow more time for difficult topics. Take fewer credit hours in that semester.
- Discuss taking the course(s) in the summer, on-line, or at another school (keep in mind that many summer courses are fast-paced and intensive).

How to handle a lot of reading:

- Inquire how much reading is required in the courses you will be taking.
- Get texts early and begin reading ahead.
- Ask about digital format or other means of reading texts.

If foreign language is required for your major:

- Identify options and information (ex. majors or schools without language requirement; alternatives to language requirement; degree options - B.A. vs. B.S.)

### **Differences to consider:**

Mon-Wed-Fri classes are typically 1 hour long, Tues-Thurs classes are typically 1½ hours long, and some classes are 2 or 3 hours each at the postsecondary level.

- Think about what a difference that makes for you - having a class 1-3 times a week (vs every day) for continuity, retaining information, planning ahead
- Amount of time required to pay attention, be seated in class (1 hour vs. 3 hours)

Large classes vs. small classes:

- Different course selections for same education requirement
- Take in summer vs. fall vs. spring (if course is offered that semester)
- Ability to hear, see, focus, interact
- Ask about “priority enrollment” as possible option

Considerations for how many credit hours to take:

- Concern of time (years to graduate, cost) vs. level of achievement (GPA)
- Rule-of-thumb is 1 hour in class = 3 hours of out-of-class preparation
- Impact on scholarship, financial aid, vocational rehabilitation services, other
- Consider if there is anything that would affect you taking morning or evening classes

Factors to consider to determine how much time you should allow between classes:

- Amount of time needed to get to next class (look at the map)
- Ability to get organized before beginning class, to refocus
- Possible time necessary to prepare for class (ex. read, write lab report, review notes, complete project)
- Desired time to relax, study, eat, take medication(s), etc.

Course style:

- Teaching styles – know how you learn best (lecture, participation, read on own)
- Test formats - consider how you do on different types of tests (multiple choice, essay, short answer) and share that information with your advisor
- Talk with instructor and/or look at a syllabus BEFORE enrolling in a course (many syllabi are online)

# Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Governing Laws

High School	<b>VS.</b>	Postsecondary
<p><b>IDEA</b> (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)  <b>Section 504</b> of the Rehab Act of 1973  <b>ADA</b> (Americans with Disabilities Act 1990)</p>		<p><b>Section 504</b> of the Rehab Act of 1973  <b>ADA</b> (Americans with Disabilities Act 1990)  <b>IDEA</b> no longer applies</p>
<p>School districts are responsible for identifying, evaluating and planning educational interventions</p>		<p>Students are responsible for self-identification and for obtaining disability services</p>
<p>Legal mandate</p> <p>To foster success</p> <p>IDEA provides a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment to eligible students with disabilities, including special education and related services</p> <p>504/ADA ensures that no otherwise qualified person with a disability is denied access to, benefits of, or is subjected to discrimination in any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity</p> <p>All infants, children and youth requiring special education services until the age of 21 or graduation from high school are covered. A list of qualifying disabilities is provided in IDEA, which includes specific learning disabilities, autism, hearing loss/deafness, vision loss/blindness, and more.</p>		<p>Protects civil rights-nondiscrimination</p> <p>Equal access for all</p> <p>504/ADA ensures that no otherwise qualified person with a disability will be denied access to, the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination by any program or activity provided by any public institution or entity. All qualified persons with disabilities who meet the entry level age criteria or particular program entry criteria of the post-secondary institution and who can document the existence of a disability as defined by the ADA are covered.</p> <p>Disability is defined as “any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; having a record of such impairment; or being regarded as having an impairment.”</p>

# Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Responsibilities

High School	<b>VS.</b>	Postsecondary
Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)		Section 504 and American with Disabilities Act (ADA) provide equal access and reasonable accommodations
Covers ages 3-21 or until regular high school diploma requirements are met		Covers people with disabilities regardless of age; schools may not discriminate in recruitment, admission or after admission, solely on the basis of a disability
School attendance is mandatory		Student's decision to attend
Schools are required to identify students with disabilities through free assessment and the IEP process		Students responsible for revealing and providing current documentation of a disability
Students receive special education and related services to address needs based on an identified disability		Formal special education services are not available
Services include individually designed instruction, modifications and accommodations based on the IEP. Modification is a change in the course/content and alters the expectations of the course.		Reasonable accommodations may be made to provide equal access and participation. Accommodations do not alter or lower the expectations of the course. Modifications are not allowed.
Individual student's needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel		No formal program support for school personnel provided
Progress toward IEP goals is monitored and communicated to the parent and/or the student		Students required to monitor their own progress and communicate their needs to instructors
Schools assist in connecting the student with community support agencies if identified as a transition service on the IEP		Students responsible for making their own connections with community support agencies

# Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Classes

High School	<b>VS.</b>	Postsecondary
Usually follow a school-directed schedule and proceed from one class to another		Students must manage their own time and schedules
General education classes dictated by state/district requirements		Class is based on field of study; requirements may vary
Typically, a school year is 36 weeks long; some classes extend over both semesters. Summer classes may be offered but are not used to accelerate graduation		Academic year is typically divided into two separate 15 week semesters plus a week for final exams. Courses are offered fall, spring and summer semesters - summer classes may be used to accelerate graduation
Class attendance is usually mandatory and monitored carefully		Attendance policies may vary with each instructor (Note: Lack of attendance may impact performance)
Classes generally have no more than 30-35 students		Classes may have 100 students or more
Textbooks are typically provided at little or no expense		Textbooks can be expensive (Estimate: \$300-\$800 per semester)
Guidance is provided for students so they will be aware of graduation requirements		Graduation requirements are complex and vary for different fields of study. You are responsible for monitoring your progress and seeking advice
Modifications that change course outcomes may be used based on the IEP		Modifications that change course outcomes will not be offered (Modified high school courses may not be accepted in the admission process)

# Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Instructors

High School	<b>VS.</b>	Postsecondary
Grade and check completed homework daily		Typically do not give daily assignments. Students responsible for checking class syllabus and complete required work
May remind students of incomplete assignments		Students responsible to check with instructor to see if requirements are being met
May know students' needs and approach students when they need assistance		Are usually open and helpful, but expect students to initiate contact when assistance is needed
May be available before, during and after class		Will post office hours – students responsible for initiating contact with instructor
Have been trained in teaching methods		Have content knowledge but not necessarily formal training in teaching methods
Often provide students with information missed during absence		Expect students to get information from classmates when they miss a class
Present material to help students understand what is in the textbook		May not follow the textbook, but lectures enhance the topic area. Students need to connect lectures and textbook.
Often write information on the board to be copied for notes, or information online		May lecture nonstop - If they write on the board, it may be to support the lecture, not summarize it. Good notes are a must (or a voice recorder may be used)!
Teach knowledge and facts, leading students through the thinking process		Expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information
Often take time to remind students of assignments and test dates		Expect students to read, save and refer back to course syllabus for due dates

## Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Studying

High School	<i>VS.</i>	Postsecondary
Study time outside of class may vary; may be as little as 1-3 hours per week		Generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each <u>hour</u> in class
Instructors may review class notes and text material regularly for classes		Students should review class notes and text material regularly (Hint: Use the time between classes carefully!)
Expected to read short assignments that are discussed and re-taught		Substantial amounts of assigned reading and writing may not be directly addressed in class (Hint: It's up to you to read and understand assigned material or access support, such as digital text or eBooks)

## Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Testing

High School	<i>VS.</i>	Postsecondary
Frequent tests of small amounts of material, such as chapter or section tests		Given less frequently (2-3 times a semester). May be cumulative and cover large amounts of material. Students need to organize material to prepare for tests. Some classes may require only papers and/or projects instead of tests. Test performance is the bulk of your grade.
Make-up tests are often available		Make-up tests are seldom an option (would have to be requested by student)
Test dates can be arranged to avoid conflicts with other events		Usually, scheduled tests are without regard to individual situations
Frequently conducts review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests		Faculty rarely offer review sessions. Students are expected to be prepared and be active participants, or find study groups

## Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Grading

High School	<i>VS.</i>	Postsecondary
Grades given for most assigned work		May not be provided for all assigned work
Good homework grades may assist in raising overall grade when test grades are lower		Tests and major papers provide the majority of the grade
Extra credit options are often available		Generally speaking, extra credit options are not used to raise a grade
Initial test grades, especially when low, may not have adverse effect on grade		First tests are often “wake up” calls to let you know what is expected. Each test may account for a substantial part of your final grade.
Graduation requirements may be met with a grade of “D” or higher		Students typically need to maintain a 2.0 or “C” average to remain in good standing

## Key Differences Between High School and Post-Secondary Other Factors

High School	<i>VS.</i>	Postsecondary
State and/or district policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities		Postsecondary institution policies may determine eligibility for participation in extracurricular activities
Parents typically manage finances for school-related activities		Students are responsible for money management for basic needs and extra spending money. Outside jobs may be necessary and one more ‘activity’ to consider for time management.
Parents and teachers may provide support, guidance and setting priorities		Students are responsible for setting their own priorities

## Events for Students in South Dakota Please Join Us!



### Catch the Wave

In South Dakota, regional Catch the Wave workshops are held annually to help students with disabilities, parents, teachers, and school counselors to better understand what is expected at the post-secondary level, what supports are available (instead of special education), and most importantly, what students should be doing in high school to increase their chances for success. Catch the Wave targets high school students with disabilities and is held at a college or technical college campus.

### Youth Leadership Forum

Every summer, an intensive, five-day self-advocacy and leadership training is held for South Dakota high school students with disabilities. Older students and young adults who have been successful in their post-secondary education and employment act as team leaders and mentors. Speakers who live with a disability share their stories and strategies for success. There is no cost to students or school districts for participation in this event. An application and interview process are used to select delegates from around the state.



Contact the Transition Services Liaison Project or [www.tslp.org](http://www.tslp.org) for more information on these events.

# We wish you success with your post high school goals!

We hope you have found this information helpful. Remember, planning and being prepared now will increase your chances of success later!

Some ways to obtain further information about any of the items covered in this guide include:

- Browsing college websites
- Attending YLF
- Attending Catch the Wave
- Meeting with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- Visiting with the Disability Services Coordinator at your school of choice
- Talking to students with similar disabilities who have been successful with college
- Talking to your school counselor

