

College Admissions for Students with Learning Disabilities NYSAIS College Counselors Conference 2017

IDEA vs. Section 504/ADA

Section 504 and the ADA, which apply to postsecondary education, are very different from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which covers grades pre K – 12. This means that some adjustment of the perspectives of students, parents, and instructors is necessary when making the transition from high school to college.

| IDEA Pre-K - 12 | Section 504/ADA Post-Secondary Education |
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| Every child is entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the “least restrictive environment” possible. | Students compete for admission and must be “otherwise qualified” to enter college, without consideration of disability. Students participate in the general curriculum of the college. No continuum of placement exists. |
| Focused on creation of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will help the student participate in the general curriculum as much as possible. | Few colleges have “plans” for students with disabilities. Most outline accommodations without regard to goals or progress. |
| Requires yearly meeting of general education teachers, special education teachers, and auxiliary service personnel to discuss progress and set goals. | The student is responsible for meeting with disability services and with instructors to discuss needs and concerns. |
| Often involves significant modification of the curriculum and of assessments (e.g. students may learn only the major concepts of a unit, may be able to take shortened tests, or be exempt from certain assignments) | Instructors are NOT required nor encouraged to fundamentally alter the content or goals of their courses, though they may be required to make changes that do not affect essential content or goals. |
| Classroom teachers receive a copy of the IEP and should have a thorough understanding of the disability and the plan. | Instructors receive a brief summary of the disability in an accommodation letter, but are not given access to specific diagnostic data unless provided by the student. |
| There is often pressure on special education and general education teachers to do whatever is necessary to help students move on to the next grade level. | Students with disabilities should be graded by the same standard as other students, regardless of the means through which their responses are provided (on tape, orally, typed rather than handwritten). |
| Law of Entitlement Guarantees SUCCESS | Civil Rights Law Guarantee ACCESS |
| <i>Taken from the Ithaca College website</i> | |

Different Options for Academic Support in College

Colleges for Students with Learning Disabilities: the most structured and supportive college option for students with LD.

- Beacon College (FL)
- Landmark College (VT)

Comprehensive Academic Support Programs: structured programs found on mainstream college campuses. Typically fee based. For example:

- Marist College – Learning Disabilities Support Program
- Curry College – PALS Program
- Adelphi University – Learning Resources Program
- University of Arizona – SALT Program
- American University - Learning Services Program

Disability Services: all colleges & universities have an office of disability services, which provides basic accommodations for any students with diagnosed learning disabilities (as well as physical disabilities, hearing and vision impairments).

- Accommodations often include extended time, separate space for test taking, note-takers, etc.
- Each college/university determines what they consider to be “reasonable” accommodations, that will provide students with equal access to an education

Academic Support Services: academic support that is available to help *all* students succeed. For example:

- Peer tutors, writing center, study-skills workshops, etc.