



Transitioning to College:

Tips for Parents to Help Students with Intellectual Disabilities Think About College

- ✓ Talk about what college is and how it is different from high school. There are no bells; no study hall or principals. Students are expected to do what they need to do with little supervision or assistance.
- ✓ College is also a place where the student decides what they want to learn, not the teachers or their parents. Students have the opportunity to choose to learn about a topic or subject that interests them.
- ✓ Visit a local college – or two. Eat lunch there, go to the library, and talk with some students. If you can, sit in on a class or two to see what it is like. Try to get a feel for the culture and where the students ‘hang out’ and spend time together.
- ✓ Look at the different types of continuing education courses that are available for all students.
- ✓ Encourage your child to take a class while still in high school to see how the adult learning experience is different from high school.
- ✓ Discuss the things that your child would like to learn about. Although these things may not be academic, they may certainly be meaningful to them. See if a local course is available on this topic.
- ✓ Discuss all types of adult learning opportunities, including community college, continuing education, park and recreation classes, and training/classes offered through local stores (Michaels, Home Depot, Joanne’s Fabrics). Many stores offer classes on crafts and home improvement projects that might be of interest to students.
- ✓ Help your child make the connection between her learning goals and her life: A cooking class could help to a student become more independent in the kitchen; a cake decorating class could help a student get the job in the bakery at the local grocery store; the Microsoft office class could help to get a job in an office; classes taken just for fun allow you to meet people who have similar interests.
- ✓ Find out what accommodations are being provided in high school to help your child succeed.
- ✓ Work with your child to help practice asking for support in different environments from people your child doesn’t know. If your child has difficulty communicating, help create other appropriate ways to indicate a need.