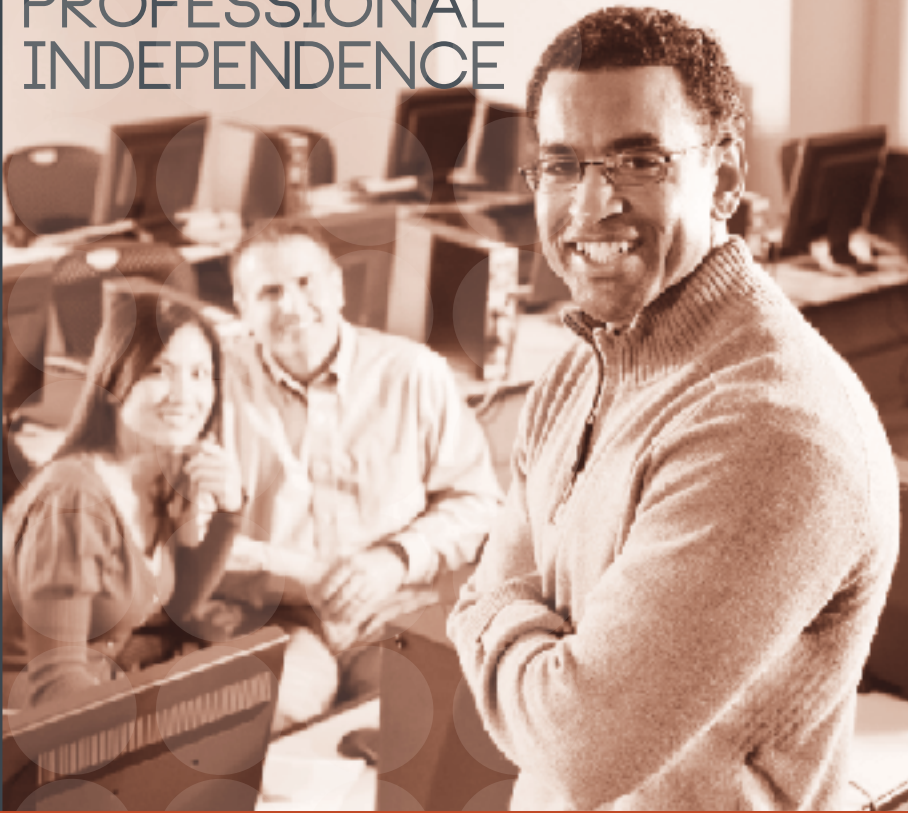


SUCCESS
PROFESSIONAL
INDEPENDENCE



e-college

ACHIEVEMENT
MENTOR PROFESSIONAL
ACKNOWLEDGE SUCCESS
ACOMPLISHMENT SHARING
ENCOURAGE

Teachers
and Students
Working Together

We are fortunate, within our region of the state, to have several collaborative partnerships. These groups have several ongoing initiatives designed to better prepare students with disabilities for success in college. The E-College curriculum is the result of casual conversation about “what more might we do?”

Created by:

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We were assisted in the endeavor by the directions and suggestions of special education teachers and guidance counselors from the school districts within the Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative and Duluth Public Schools.

Design of books by:

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Though this curriculum can be used without the mentoring component, we do not feel that it will be as effective or have the impact that it can by connecting high school students directly with college students. The connection process, however, will require the collaborative effort of a college disability coordinator.

To high school students: College is an opportunity that can dramatically improve the quality of the rest of your life in the jobs you have; in the amount of money you make; in the respect you get; and in the friends you make. Like many good things, a successful college career requires hard work, discipline and focus. The next several weeks are designed to help you understand what you can do now to better prepare yourself for that experience and what to expect once you get there. It is also meant to give you suggested skills and strategies that you can employ to make the process easier. To assist with this effort, you will have the help of a successful college student who also has a disability. This person will be able to give you first hand information about college expectations and advice on how to meet those expectations.

To special education teachers: In developing this course, we sought to provide many options. It may be used with one student or as a class curriculum. From the classroom activities, you can decide to complete one activity or all the activities. Though the “chapters” are laid out in weeks, you could take whatever time you determined appropriate for your students on any one unit. For the variety of activities, we have identified multiple resources; some may address an entire unit, some a single question; some are very detailed while others quite open. Our hope is that you let your student guide you as much as you guide them and that together you reach a level of comfort in the activities you choose.

To college disability coordinators: You are to be thanked above all others because the help that you are providing is over and above most every job description. You are helping because you care. Your job will be to identify successful college students with disabilities who are willing to mentor a high school student. You will also be asked to assist in matching mentors and mentees as well as to arrange for a location on campus for the college students to meet with the mentoring coordinator for a training session. Without your involvement, this project could not take place.

To mentors: During the questioning of participants following our pilot run of this curriculum, we were very pleased to discover that rather than being a hardship, college mentors felt gratified and honored to participate and frequently stated that they learned as much about themselves as they offered to the students they mentored. Every one of the college students volunteered to continue being mentors.



What Is It?

E-college is an eight week high school curriculum for high school students with disabilities. It is designed to provide college bound students with the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully meet their post secondary education goals. A unique and powerful feature of this program is that student learning is reinforced through email mentoring with a successful college student who also has a disability.

The curriculum seeks to make students aware of the vast difference between high school and college and provides them with methods of dealing with those differences. It promotes the development of skills in high school that will translate in to success in college. It promotes self and disability awareness and the development of strong self-advocacy skills.

How Does It Work?

Each week of the curriculum focuses on a single topic or theme. For each topic, a variety of relevant activities, discussions and resources are provided. Teachers may choose activities that best meet their students' needs. The curriculum can be used with large or small groups, in one-on-one settings, and has even been successful with homebound instruction.

The topics are: Introductions and Acceptance; Who am I?; Career Exploration and College Programs; Getting in: Applications, Admissions and Aid; You are Not in Kansas Anymore!; Practicing Adulthood and Taking Control of your Life; Survival: How to Succeed at College; Wrap up: Ask what we missed, say thank you, goodbye.

The curriculum is provided to each teacher and a parallel guide is provided to each mentor. The teacher is free to use any combination of activities or to create his/her own in order to facilitate classroom discussion and student engagement. Each week, students will send an e-mail to their mentor for the sharing of experiences and information. Guided questions are provided to assist students who are unsure of what to ask or say. It is recommended that students spend some time each week sharing the responses of their mentors.



How Mentors Are Chosen?

A pool of possible mentors is identified by the college Disability Services Coordinator. They are identified because they have declared their disability, are being successful in their college coursework and are considered to be self-advocates.

The college mentors go through a short orientation and training session which is conducted on campus. High school students are then matched with college students primarily by career interest areas. Typically, students are not matched by disability unless that disability creates unique obstacles.

Because high school students are potentially vulnerable and no mentor background checks are conducted, all emails are filtered by the high school classroom teacher. College mentors receive only the special education teacher's email address and all of their correspondence goes directly to that teacher. Similarly, the high school student's messages are transferred to email and sent to the college mentors by the classroom teacher. In this manner, the special education teacher can monitor both incoming and outgoing correspondence and students never learn of each others' email addresses.

Contacts and Copies

For free copies of the curriculum or more detailed discussion of its implementation, please contact any of the following:

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Supplemental materials and downloadable versions of E-College can be found on the Northern Lights Special Education website at:
www.nlsec.k12.mn.us

Testimonials

Comments from Lake Superior College Mentors

I believe that E-College was a very positive experience on both sides of the paper. My mentee was awesome.

I wish I would have had a mentor when I was getting ready to think about life as an adult. In reality everyone young or old could use some type of mentor. Someone to go to for advice, look up to, or just to talk.

The one thing that I really stressed to my mentee was prioritizing and the responsibility of going to class all the time, taking time to do your homework and studying, and how communication with your professors in college is crucial.

I hope that E-college can be spread across the nation and that Lake Superior College continues to do it! It was a great success! Thank you for the chance to mentor!

The opportunity to share my past successes and knowledge with the high school student, helped realize where I've been and where I am now. More importantly, this gave me encouragement for me to prevail with motivation.

It's not only my mentee learning new things I have learned a lot myself. Being a mentor in this program has made both of us grow more, and I am honored I was asked to help out.

Testimonials

Comments from High School Teachers

The websites were VERY helpful, as was advice about study buddies and ordering books online, and housing advice.

The letter/email writing generated really good classroom discussions not only between my students and myself, but also amongst the students. This was especially true when sharing mentor responses. Several of my students expressed a strong interest in being mentors when they are in college.

I believe that my students learned a great deal and hearing things from a student who is actually being successful in college made a very big impact. The personal connection of emails added a layer of interest and excitement to the class.

The college mentors were awesome! My students loved comparing the responses they received.

I found that even though I had told my students on several occasions about one thing or another related to college, when their mentor told them the same thing, they finally believed it!!

Sample of Student Curriculum

Week 5



High School vs College

Focus for students: You are not in Kansas any more!

High schools and colleges are very, very different. Classes, atmosphere, amount of home work, schedules, kinds of people, types of teachers are all different than high school but the two biggest differences which get most students into academic difficulty are: freedom and responsibility. In college, you are free to do what you want. No one watches over you, but only you are responsible for everything you do or should do.

Resources:

Why, When, What and How of Disclosures in an academic setting after High School.
www.doi.gov/odep/pubs/fact/www/h.htm

Guides young adults with when and how to disclose their disability.
www.greatschools.org/special-education/support/940-disclosing-learning-disabilities.gs

One page document summarizes the basic difference between IDEA and ADA
www.eosc.edu/student_services/IDEA%20vs%20ADA.pdf

Student Email Tip:

Tell your mentor a bit about how independent you are: do you cook your own meals; do your own laundry; have a checking or debit account. Ask your mentor what were the biggest changes to get used to in college. Have your mentor describe what a typical day is like. Talk about some of the things that worry you about attending college and ask if they are really a problem. Ask what ways college is better than high school; what it is like to live on their own (if they do) or get along with a roommate. Do they eat better, sleep better, have more fun, work hard, study more? How do they spend their free time; how much do they study; do they attend all their classes; do they belong to any clubs or play sports?

Possible Classroom Activities



Review and discuss the "High School vs College" section of Education Beyond High School and/or Tools for College booklets. Discuss by category or item. Outline what a typical schedule for a week of college might be and compare it to high school.

Discuss topics with which students may be unfamiliar or have misconceptions such as: syllabus, what a 'credit' represents; study groups; course withdrawal; course registration; elective vs. program credits, office hours, tutors, etc.

Talk about the differences between accommodations and modifications and about IDEA and ADA. Have someone from a college talk to the class about disability services. Talk with students about the difference between "entitlement" in high school and "access" in college. Discuss personal responsibility as it relates to the freedom of college and possible strategies for dealing with problems. Attend "College for a Day" or tour a college campus.

