

The Difference Between High School and College

You know where you are going and are excited for the new freedoms you'll have. Along with that freedom comes a lot more responsibility. As a college student, you are more in charge of your life, what you do day to day, and how you spend your time. This is a good thing, but it can also be difficult if you're not used to handling so many responsibilities.

In high school, you have a team of people helping you be successful, as the federal **Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)** requires. This team – school psychologist, counselor, teachers, parents and you, the student – create an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or 504 Plan as a road map toward that success.

However, the educational rights covered in high school under IDEA do not apply to your education in college. Instead, colleges must comply with the **ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act)**, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Civil Rights Restoration Act.



Differences in Policies and Procedures

By starting with the laws and policies governing both high school and college, you can better understand some of the differences in your education.

High School

- The school is responsible for identifying students with disabilities
- The school must provide the assessment of disability, classify disability, and involve parents
- School staff will discuss academic progress with parents or legal guardians
- The school must develop an Individualized Educational Program
- The school must provide a free and appropriate education including modified program and appropriate related services
- The school must coordinate the provision of all services, monitor progress, and evaluate results

College

- The student must self-identify or disclose his/her disability
- The student must provide documentation of his/her disability to the designated office
- The student is considered an adult with privacy and confidentiality protections. Staff cannot talk with parents or legal guardians about the student's academic progress

- The student must request specific accommodations and provide supporting evidence through documentation
- The student must act as independent adults to activate and obtain accommodations and structure weekly schedules
- The college must provide reasonable accommodations for students who qualify



Differences in Classes

In high school, you must attend your classes, and your attendance is monitored. In college, where you have more freedom, you are expected to follow the instructor's attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus. Check the chart below for other differences.

High School

- Class attendance is mandatory and monitored carefully
- Teachers will usually approach students who are having academic difficulties
- Teachers remind students of assignment due dates
- Teachers will provide students with missed information when they are absent
- Teachers many times will provide extra credit assignments to help students raise their grades
- Make up tests are usually available
- Teachers present information to help the student understand the textbook

College

- Students are expected to follow the instructor's attendance policy as stated in the syllabus
- Students are responsible to ask the instructor for help
- Students are responsible for keeping track of their projects, assignments, and tests dates
- Students must approach their instructors for information they missed when absent
- Extra credit assignments are not usually given
- Make up tests may not be an option
- Instructors may not follow the textbook, but lectures enhance the topic



Differences in Accommodations

One of your first campus appointments should be with the Disability Services Office counselor to discuss your accommodations. In college, accommodations refer to those services and modifications that give students with disabilities an equal opportunity to learn and benefit from the educational process.

High School

- Modifications that change course outcomes may be offered based on the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP).
- Services include individually designed instruction, modifications, and accommodations based on the IEP.
- Appropriate accommodations are determined by the student's IEP.

College

- Reasonable accommodations may be made to provide equal access and participation.
- The college is not required to lower or effect substantial modifications to essential requirements.
- Appropriate accommodations must be determined based on the student's disability.



Differences in Parent's or Legal Guardian's Role

When you graduate high school, you will have moved on from the big team of professional and family advocates you were once surrounded by. That doesn't mean there aren't people in college who won't help you, but you must seek them out, ask for their help. Family and guardians do not have automatic access to college staff and administrators.

High School

- Legal guidance is provided by IDEA.
- Parents must ensure that their child attends school until the age of 16
- Periodic progress reports are given to parents
- Teachers are free to approach parents without consent from student to discuss student's progress
- The parent is the student's legal guardian
- The parent is expected to advocate for the student

College

- Legal guidance is provided by Section 504 and ADA
- Parents are not required to send their child to college
- No progress reports will be given to parents
- Without a release of information signed by the student, the teacher legally cannot include the parents in any part of the educational process
- The student is his/her own legal guardian unless there is a court order to the contrary
- The student advocates for her or himself