IOWA

Belin-Blank Center

PREPARING TWICE-EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE

PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

Twice-exceptional individuals face unique challenges when preparing for college. At the same time, many high school counselors do not have expertise in twice-exceptionality. Because of this, we have compiled a list of suggestions for twice-exceptional students and their parents/guardians to proactively plan for the transition to college, preferably starting by middle school/junior high.

A very important criterion in making your college decision is the specific fit for your child. The support system offered to students, the size of the college, roommate assignment, class sizes, size of the city, social opportunities, and distance from home are also incredibly important to consider.

Considering Social and Emotional Needs

Address social skill development

Because twice-exceptional students can have difficulty with social skills, working on this area is important. Students should seek out and engage in different social settings. Social skills can be developed through a variety of ways (e.g., clubs/organizations, small groups provided during school, role play activities, volunteering, part time jobs, slowly increasing time of social interaction, etc.). Commitment to enhancing this aspect of one's profile is very worthwhile.

Monitor mental health

College can be stressful at times, so strong mental health is an excellent way to cope with it. Before coming to campus, students should know to which conditions they are vulnerable (e.g., anxiety, depression, addictive behaviors, eating disorders) and have various strategies or resources to manage them. There is a wealth of relaxation strategies (e.g., deep breathing, visualizing, being outdoors, listening to music) that students can become familiar with to build a repertoire to bring to college. Many times, students are prescribed medication to address anxiety or depression, so medication management is closely aligned with mental health. If a student sees a therapist, it is recommended that transitioning to college be discussed. Many students can maintain a relationship with their established therapist during college or can get connected to campus counseling services.

Practice friendship skills

Many times, schools focus on bolstering skills related to making friends. Students should practice and maintain key relationship building skills such as introducing oneself to others, seeking conversations with others on campus, setting up time to socialize with friends, and following-up over text. A goal should be for students to grow in their independence in establishing friendships versus waiting for parents/guardians to arrange social outings. While twice-exceptional students appreciate time to recharge their "social battery", college is an opportune time to meet new people.

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Developing Independence

Adhere to sleep hygiene

Student wellness in college includes getting enough sleep. Some keys to sleep hygiene are keeping a consistent sleep schedule, developing a relaxing bedtime routine, turning off devices, getting exercise, and managing stress. The importance of sleep during college cannot be overstated.

Closely related to getting the right amount of sleep is waking oneself up in the morning and getting ready for the day. Students who get enough sleep usually don't struggle with waking up in the morning. Ideas to consider assisting with waking oneself up in the morning are moving the alarm so a student must get out of bed to turn it off, using a light therapy alarm clock, and giving oneself a convincing reason to get out of bed. If a student has tried to wake up on their own and failed, or if this attempt isn't going well, they should take a step back and evaluate. What might be some new actions to try? Because attending class is essential for success in college, waking up on your own is imperative.

Establish medication management

In high school, medication is kept in the nurse's office. At the University of Iowa, students are responsible for both storing and administering their own medication. Students should begin practicing assuming responsibility for taking and refilling their medications while still under parent supervision to build independence. There are apps that can be used to help students track and remember to take their medications, such as *MediSafe, MyTherapy,* and *Did I Take My Meds*?

Limit screen time

Streaming and video games are enjoyable for many students, however, excessive time with these activities can be very counterproductive and negatively impact sleep, attending class, and meeting others. A thorough examination of personal screen time usage should be conducted and, if it is deemed a problem, a concerted effort to change behavior should be exerted before getting to college.

Maintain a functional living space

A living space should have the goals of providing calm and serving as a study space. Keeping a room relatively organized promotes both. To prepare for college, students should maintain their own room/space at home where things are put away and kept clean.

Practice self-advocacy

Self-advocacy is the ability to communicate one's needs. It is very important for success in college, work, and life. The first step in self-advocacy is recognizing and understanding what needs improvement in one's life/current situation. Next, students must recognize what supports or resources are available to them. These might be in or outside of school. Finally, schedule an appointment with the appropriate support person or resource. It is best to address challenges early to get on a path of assistance versus avoiding a problem, question, or situation.

College classes are much different than high school classes. Students are expected to spend a considerable amount of time outside of class working on things related to a class. They are also larger, so there is less focus on individual students. Unlike high school teachers, not all college professors received comprehensive teacher training. Review of class content and reminders of assignments and test dates are not common in college. Self-advocacy helps to remediate the classroom changes at the college level.

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Exploring Academic Opportunities

Build a personal academic portfolio through:

- PSAT, SAT, or ACT (subtest scores in stronger subjects can be highlighted)
- AP, IB, and/or Honors Courses
- Dual Enrollment Courses
- Extracurricular Activities
- Volunteer Opportunities

Consider community college

Community college is an excellent way to be fully immersed in collegiate level coursework without having to juggle moving to a new location. It also affords a student time to further develop executive functioning, communication skills, and self-advocacy. Independence can be solidified (e.g., waking oneself up, following academic timelines and processes, medicine management, advocating for oneself with professors/college instructors) and confidence can be built through a year of community college success. It is also a great way to complete some general elective requirements and save tuition money.

Seek supports

Visit colleges when school is in session and ask questions. Talking with admissions and student disability services about accommodations, support with organization, academic advising, and career counseling options on campus are a must! In college, students must create their own support team. A key benefit of the Academy for Twice-Exceptionality is that a support team has already been started for students in our program.

Use summers wisely

Summer can be a time for students to foster areas they are passionate about and connect with like-minded peers. This can be accomplished through taking additional courses or attending camps. Sleep away experiences are excellent opportunities to foster independence and confidence to prepare for living away from home. The Belin-Blank Center hosts a Twice-Exceptional Summer Academy on-campus. The Summer Academy has sessions for both students and their parents/guardians.

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Resources for Talented Students Planning for College

College Board's Big Future

You can check out careers you're interested in andcan find colleges based on what's important to you. You can discover ways to pay for college.

TiLT Parenting Podcast: Navigating the High School to College Transition with Different Wired Kids

TiLT Parenting was founded by Deborah Reber, a parenting activist and bestselling author and speaker. It is a website, podcast, and social media community for parents raising differently wired kids. For this podcast highlighted, Deborah interviewed Susan Hyatt about her son launching and starting college at an out of state school and how that transition happened.

IEA's *Scholarship and Competitions Guide*

Figuring out how to pay for college can often be overwhelming! IEA has curated a comprehensive Scholarships and Competitions Guide which provides a library of over 100 resources for students in grades K-12.

7 Strategies to help Gifted Students with Autism Succeed in College

Exactly what it sounds like! What can be done to help your student prepare for college.

Navigating College Handbook -Autistic Self Advocacy Network

The Navigating College handbook is a first-of-its-kind resource written by autistic adults for autistic college students exploring the various aspects of the higher education experience.

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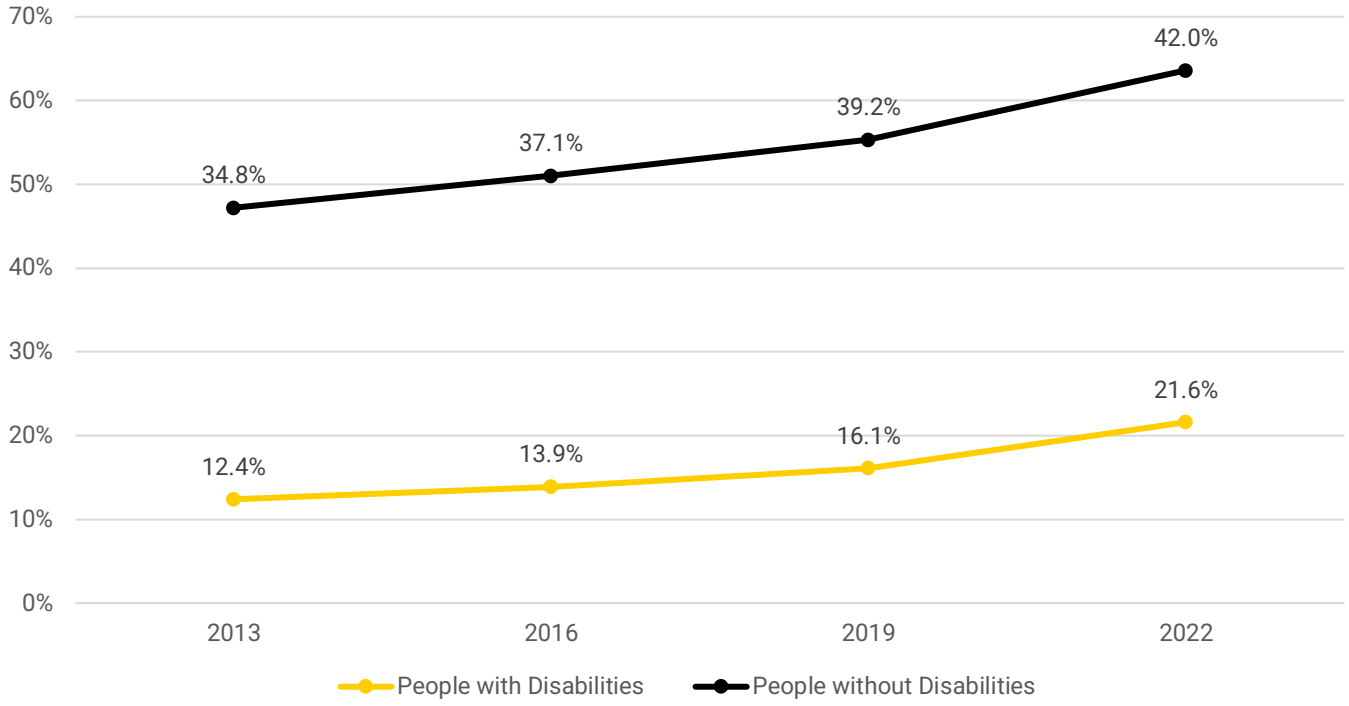
Civilians ages 25-34 with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (%)



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The following *Semester Success Checklist* is an example of a document that we use at the University of Iowa with students in the Academy of Twice-Exceptionality. During weekly meetings, students reference it to guide their initial time on campus and celebrate their successes. This document can be adapted to other colleges and universities.

Semester Success Checklist

Check off these items throughout your semester to help you stay on track. We recommend you begin with items in bold. Add additional goals to the blank spaces. For more information, refer to the attached "Helpful Hints for Semester Success", and ask for help if needed.

Belin-Blank Center & Academy for Twice-Exceptionality

☐ Success! I know how to get to the Blank Honors Center.

☐ Success! I know who at the Belin-Blank Center to contact with my questions.

☐ Success! I scheduled meetings with my GA to set and discuss my goals.

Academics

☐ Success! I know my course schedule and have saved an accessible copy (e.g., printed, in my phone, on a calendar, etc.)

☐ Success! I know how to get to ICON and MyUI.

☐ Success! I know where all my classes are being held.

☐ Success! I obtained all my textbooks and course materials.

☐ Success! I decided on a method to organize and track assignments (e.g., planner, electronic calendar, etc.)

☐ Success! I reviewed my syllabi and noted important due dates.

☐ Success! I scheduled weekly study times and planned where I will study.

☐ Success! I saved my academic advisor's name and contact information.

☐ Success! I know when my professors are holding office hours.

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☐ Success! I know how to contact my professors for help.

☐ Success! I know strategies to effectively communicate with my professors.

☐ Success! I explored the website for Student Disability Services, and I know how to get there.

☐ Success! I visited the website for the Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates (ICRU) to learn about research opportunities.

☐ Success! I have started to think about what I want to major in.

☐ Success! I know where to find scholarships.

☐ _____

☐ _____

Logistics

☐ Success! I know how I will get to each class (walk/bus/bike/etc.), and how long it will take to get from class to class.

☐ Success! I know where to obtain food and/or snacks on campus (and if applicable, the dining room schedule in my residence hall).

☐ Success! I know how to navigate the CAMBUS system and use its app (if applicable).

☐ Success! I know where I will park and have obtained a parking pass (if applicable).

☐ Success! I know how to monitor the weather in Iowa City.

☐ Success! I signed up for Hawk Alerts.

☐ Success! I know how and where to pay my bills (if applicable).

☐ Success! I made arrangements for my work study position (if applicable).

☐ _____

☐ _____

Living Space

☐ Success! I set up my living space and included items that make me happy.

☐ Success! I know how to contact my residence assistant (if applicable).

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☐ Success! I organized a study space.

☐ Success! I set up a schedule for cleaning and tidying my living space.

☐ Success! I know strategies to manage conflict with my roommate(s).

☐ Success! I know how and when I will complete laundry (if applicable).

☐ _____

☐ _____

Wellness

☐ Success! I scheduled time for three meals per day.

☐ Success! I established a consistent sleep schedule.

☐ Success! I planned time for getting physical activity.

☐ Success! I am aware of ways that help me manage stress.

☐ Success! I made time for activities I enjoy.

☐ Success! I am committed to seeking help when I need it.

☐ Success! I browsed University student support resources online and know how to access those that are relevant to me (e.g., Student Disability Services, University Counseling Service, Student Health, etc.)

☐ _____

☐ _____

Social

☐ Success! I reviewed extracurricular activities and found at least one I want to join.

☐ Success! I have a plan for connecting with family, friends, and important people in my life.

☐ Success! I have a plan to connect with new people on campus.

☐ _____

☐ _____

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Personal

☐ Success! I learned something new.

☐ Success! I tried something new.

☐ Success! I thought about goals for this semester.

☐ Success! I have started thinking about goals for this school year.

☐ Success! I have started thinking about goals for my college career.

☐ _____

☐ _____

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The following *Career Planning Checklist* is an example of a document that we use at the University of Iowa with students in the Academy of Twice-Exceptionality. During weekly meetings, students reference it to guide their career exploration requirements.

CAREER PLANNING - YEAR ONE

	Task	Date
☐	Investigate majors and careers	Fall Semester
☐	Sign up for My Career Path	Fall Semester
☐	Take Major and Career Explorations Course	Spring Semester
☐	Meet with Career Coach	Spring Semester

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