

Self-Advocacy and the College Transition for Autistic Students



Eric Endlich, Ph.D.

Eric@TopCollegeConsultants.com

Top College Consultants

We help with:

- Gap year, summer & support program guidance
- College selection, essays, resumes, interviews & applications
- Maximizing scholarships and financial aid



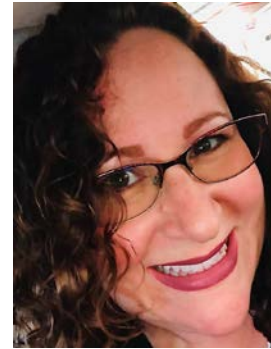
The TCC Team



Lisa Andrews



Jennifer Quinn



April Miller



Melanie Mac Caskie



Jennie Swenson



Jamey Becker



Alisha Uppal



Eric Endlich

Join our Facebook group!

**Parents of College Bound Students
with Learning Disabilities, ADHD and ASD**

17,000+ members!



Question for *you*

What are your concerns about college?



What Is Self-Advocacy?

- Speaking up for what you need
- But first, you must know your needs



Why self-advocacy is essential in college

High school

College

<input type="checkbox"/> Many hours in class	<input type="checkbox"/> Few hours in class
<input type="checkbox"/> A few hours of homework	<input type="checkbox"/> Many hours of assignments
<input type="checkbox"/> Time is very structured	<input type="checkbox"/> Time is unstructured
<input type="checkbox"/> Many supports in place	<input type="checkbox"/> Students arrange supports
<input type="checkbox"/> IDEA law emphasizes <i>success</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> ADA law emphasizes <i>access</i>



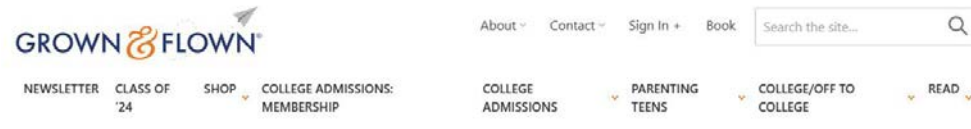
What skills do students need in college?

- **Self-awareness:** strengths & challenges
- **Self-advocacy:** seek resources, schedule/attend appointments
- **Self-management:** time, motivation, reactions, habits



“Getting Into College Is the Easy Part”

- It’s not enough to get *in*; students need to get *through*
- 2023 EAB survey: 22% don’t feel ready for college



HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR YEAR

Getting Into College Is the Easy Part

by Eric Endlich, PHD | February 28, 2023



When helping students apply to college, I am deeply impressed by their persistence in writing and rewriting what sometimes seems like an endless stream of essays. Every fall we eagerly await that exciting news flash: You're in!

And then the real work begins.



College-Capable vs. College-Ready

College-capable: Student can handle college-level *academics*

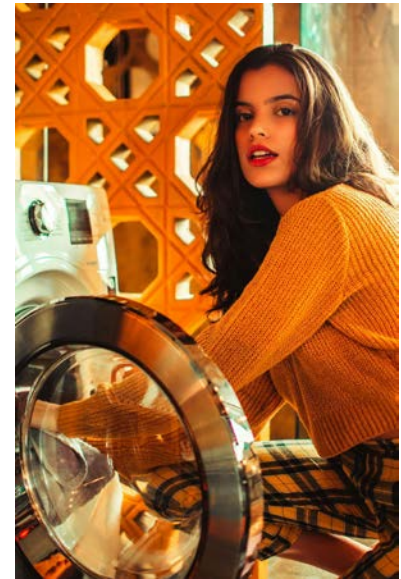
College-ready: Student can handle *independence*



Building Self-Advocacy and Independence in High School

Gradually transfer tasks to your child:

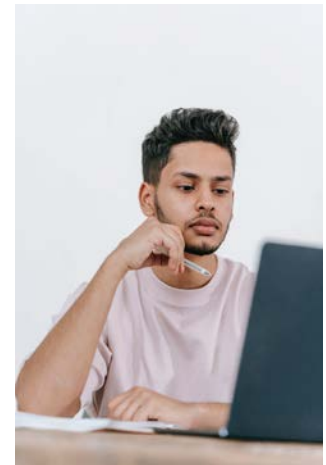
- Making appointments
- Refilling medication
- Laundry
- Waking up/bedtimes
- Meal planning
- Money management
- Communicating with school staff



Disclosure in College Admissions

Key points:

- Colleges don't ask about disability on the application
- Disclosure is not an automatic plus *or* minus
- There's no quota for disabled students
- Colleges can't legally discriminate



Applying to College: Disclosure may help explain something

Use the “Additional Information” Common App question to explain:

- Change in grades (due to diagnosis, medication, etc.)
- “Missing” courses (e.g., foreign language)
- Leave of absence



Applying to College: Identity-Focused Disclosure

- May be part of an essay (or interview)
- Should emphasize strengths and potential
- Can make for a powerful and effective essay



Disclosure *After* College Acceptance

- *Essential* to obtaining accommodations & services
- Best to contact disability services office *early*
- May involve speaking with instructors each term



College Application Challenges: Parent Survey Responses

Responses from 70+ parents of autistic students - key concerns

- **Finding autism/disability support in college (77%)**
- Selecting colleges to apply to (47%)
- Writing essays (45%)
- Time management (40%)
- The amount of work involved (25%)



Key College Selection Factors: Parent Survey Responses

1. Majors offered
2. Executive functioning support
3. College “vibe” or culture
4. Quality of disability services

[Database of neurodiversity-friendly colleges](#)



Build Skills in High School

- Counseling (school or private)
- Executive function/academic coaching
- Courses (e.g., personal finance)
- Summer programs



Consider a Gap Year

- Get a job/start a business
- Complete a project
- Volunteer
- Enroll in a college readiness program



Build Skills in College

- Learning support program
- Wellness community
- Counseling
- Advising - academic, career
- Tutoring



Support Levels in College

1. Disability accommodations only
2. Some additional services (e.g., academic coaching)
3. Comprehensive learning support program

There are several ways to obtain support



Learning Support Programs

- May involve significant additional cost
- More coordinated services
- Social component (autism programs)
- Support throughout college



Obtain support from *outside* the college

- Private executive function coach
- Therapy, medication
- Comprehensive support program
- Residential support program



Know ALL of the college resources

- Faculty office hours
- Tutoring
- Academic advising
- Mental health counseling
- Career services
- RAs
- Clubs (e.g., Active Minds)
- Librarians
- Study groups
- **Disability services**



Key Resources - Parent Survey

Most important resources (according to parents):

- **Disability services center (59%)**
- **Academic coaching (57%)**
- **Autism support program (50%)**
- Academic advising (38%)
- Clubs (34%)
- Tutoring (30%)
- Social events (23%)
- Faculty office hours (21%)



Takeaways

- Assess college readiness
- Start working on skills in high school
- Develop a postsecondary plan



Resources from TopCollegeConsultants.com

- [Are You Ready for College?](#)
- [Should You Disclose a Disability When Applying to College?](#)
- [What Questions Should I Ask the Student Disabilities Office?](#)
- [Sortable database of Neurodiversity-Friendly Colleges](#)
- [Autism Scholarships, Internships and More](#)
- [Gap Year Programs for Students with Learning Differences](#)
- [Q&A with College Programs for Neurodivergent Students](#)

Eric@TopCollegeConsultants.com





Questions?

