Supporting College Success: Technology Solutions

Presenters:

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PATHWAY TO INDEPENDENCE

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Agenda

The transition from high school to college is a critical step for all students, but for those who are blind or visually impaired. Today, we will discuss the common challenges students face when entering college and how they can be addressed before they transition.

Common Struggles College Students Encounter

Note Taking:

Issue:

- Many students may rely on someone else taking their notes. In college, this assistance is often reduced and students find themselves unprepared to take notes independently.

Why is this important?

- Professors often speak quickly, and missing key points can impact learning and performance. Being able to take detailed, organized notes in real-time is critical for staying on top of coursework.

- ADD WRITING/Typing speed for notetaking

Technology Solutions:

- Students must be proficient in using accessible note-taking tools, such as screen readers combined with efficient typing on a physical keyboard, digital recording devices, and/or specialized software.

Common Struggles College Students Encounter

Touch Typing on a QWERTY Keyboard:

Issue:

- Students often rely on adaptive devices or low-vision strategies but may not have the touch-typing skills necessary for efficiently using a computer or assistive software. We also find students are heavily reliant on their iPad/iPhone rather than using their laptop – screen typing is not efficient for college work.

Why is this important?

- Many college assignments, exams, and projects require fast and accurate typing. A student who can type proficiently has an academic advantage, especially when using screen readers that require keyboard navigation.

- ADD TYPING SPEED

Technology Solutions:

- Mastering touch typing is crucial. Programs like Talking Typer or TypeAbility can help students practice and develop efficient typing skills on a QWERTY keyboard, making them more independent and ready for college

Common Struggles College Students Encounter

Accessing Online Platforms and Learning Management Systems:

Issue:

- Many students are unfamiliar with the features of online platforms like Blackboard or Canvas. Navigating these systems can be a challenge if students aren't proficient in the screen reader required to interact with them proficiently.

Why is this important?

- Learning management systems are the backbone of many college courses, where students submit assignments, access materials, and participate in discussions. A lack of familiarity can result in falling behind in class.

Technology Solutions:

- Early training in navigating LMS platforms using screen readers or other assistive technologies is essential. Students should practice accessing course materials, submitting assignments, and communicating with professors through these systems.

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Common Struggles College Students Encounter

Over-reliance on Low Vision Methods:

Issue:

- Students with low vision may depend heavily on magnification tools or large print materials. While these methods work well in high school, the increased volume and pace of college material can make them inefficient.

Why is this important?

- Relying solely on magnification or large print slows down productivity, especially when dealing with dense reading assignments or digital resources.

- Add READING SPEED

Technology Solutions:

- Emphasize the need for learning auditory methods, such as screen readers (JAWS, VoiceOver) and text-to-speech technology, to increase speed and efficiency. These tools allow for faster processing of information, essential in a fast-paced college environment.

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Common Struggles College Students Encounter

Poor Organization and Time Management:

Issue:

- College courses are often more demanding, with less hands-on guidance from instructors. Students need to manage deadlines, assignments, and exams on their own, which can be overwhelming without the right organizational tools.

Why is this important?

- Procrastination and disorganization can lead to missed assignments and underperformance in college.

Technology Solutions:

- Introduce students to accessible time management and organizational tools, like digital calendars, reminders, and to-do lists to track assignments and deadlines effectively. These tools integrate well with screen readers and can help students plan their days efficiently.

What are some things that you can do ahead of time?

- **Limit Braille Notetakers**: Use Braille notetakers for class notes, but complete assignments on laptops.

- **Promote Laptop Use**: Encourage students to reduce iPad use in class, favoring laptops for academic tasks.

- **Ensure Typing Proficiency**: Help students master touch typing to enhance efficiency.

- **Introduce Screen Readers**: Familiarize students with JAWS, ZoomText, or Fusion for accessibility.

- **Conduct Technology Assessments**: Ensure students have the right tools for college.

- **Reduce Physical Note Takers**: Encourage independent note-taking with technology.

What are some things that you can do ahead of time? (Reviewing the IEP for College Transition)

- **Audit Current Accommodations:**
  - Review the IEP to see which accommodations are no longer in use
  - Discuss which accommodation are essential for college
- **Empower Students and Families:**
  - Encourage collaboration between students, families, and team members to understand the accommodations
  - Promote student involvement in decision making as well as making material accessible independently while still in school.

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What are some things that you can do ahead of time? (Reviewing the IEP for College Transition cont.)

- **Plan for technology transfer:**
  - Ensure students are trained on college-appropriate technology before high school graduation.
  - Avoid gaps by planning for the transition to new devices and software in advance.
- **Focus on training:**
  - Provide ample time for students to become proficient with new tools before entering college.

What are some things that you can do ahead of time? Working with the Paraprofessional

- **Fostering Mobility Independence**
- **Building note taking and organizational skills**
- **Developing Time management skills**

What are some things that you can do ahead of time? Paraprofessional & Mobility

Challenge: Overreliance on paraprofessionals can prevent students from developing essential mobility skills, such as navigating hallways or unfamiliar environments independently.

Impact: Students may struggle to move confidently in college settings, where personalized assistance isn't readily available.

Solutions:

- Gradually phase out para support during transitions.
- Incorporate structured orientation and mobility training.
- Encourage students to use assistive tools like GPS apps and mobility canes.

What are some things that you can do ahead of time? Paraprofessional & Note-Taking

Challenge: Heavy reliance on paraprofessionals for note-taking can leave students unprepared to manage their academic workload.

Impact: Students may lack experience in independently capturing, organizing, and accessing class materials.

Solutions:

- Introduce note-taking strategies using assistive tech like laptops and screen readers.
- Teach organizational skills, such as file management and time-blocking.
- Encourage self-reliance by transitioning to personal note-taking.

What are some things that you can do ahead of time? Paraprofessional & Time Management

Challenge: Students accustomed to reminders from paraprofessionals may struggle with managing deadlines and schedules independently.

Impact: Poor time management can lead to missed assignments, unpreparedness, and added stress in college.

Solutions:

- Introduce digital tools like calendars, reminders, and task managers.
- Teach prioritization and planning techniques.
- Gradually reduce reminders, helping students take ownership of their responsibilities.

Computer Hardware and Software for college success

- You laptop computer with the Windows 10 or 11 operating system, JAWS 2023, and Microsoft Office 2016, 2019, or 365. You should also have a Gmail account.

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Contact Us

THANK YOU

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