



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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Preparing Students with Learning Disabilities for College: What Parents and Students with IEPs Need to Know by Wendy Overturf

Graduating from high school and preparing for college are exciting milestones. For students with learning disabilities, college brings important changes in how support is provided. When parents understand these differences, they can help their child prepare for success before classes begin.

One of the biggest changes is that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) does not follow a student to college. Colleges do not provide special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Instead, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act apply to colleges. These laws protect students from discrimination and require colleges to provide reasonable accommodations, but they do not require colleges to provide specially designed instruction or create an IEP.

Students with learning disabilities can be very successful in college, but they should know that supports look different than they did in high school. Rather than having teachers and case managers arrange accommodations, college students are responsible for requesting them. This means students must contact the college's disability services office, provide documentation of their disability, and work with staff to determine appropriate accommodations. Also, parents cannot automatically contact professors or access student records unless the student provides written permission.

As you begin looking at colleges, ask questions about the disability support services available on campus. Every college has a disability services office, but the level of support can vary. Some colleges offer academic coaching, tutoring, executive functioning support, mentoring, and learning specialists in addition to accommodations. Others provide only the accommodations required by law. Finding a college that matches your child's needs can make a significant difference in their success.

Students with learning disabilities may qualify for accommodations such as:

- Extended time on tests and quizzes
- Testing in a quiet or reduced-distraction setting

- Audio versions of textbooks
- Text-to-speech or speech-to-text software
- Note-taking assistance
- Permission to record lectures
- Priority course registration
- Access to assistive technology and learning software

These accommodations help remove barriers to learning, but they do not reduce academic expectations. Students are expected to meet the same course requirements and learning outcomes as their classmates.

One of the most important skills students can develop before leaving high school is self-advocacy. Students should be able to explain their learning disability, describe how it affects their learning, and identify the accommodations and strategies that help them succeed. They should also feel comfortable communicating with professors if questions arise about their approved accommodations.

Before graduation, families should gather important documentation. Many colleges ask students to provide recent educational evaluations, medical documentation if appropriate, and copies of their most recent IEP or evaluation report. Because documentation requirements vary, it is helpful to review each college's disability services website well before enrollment.

When visiting campuses, schedule a meeting with the disability services office in addition to the regular campus tour. Ask how students request accommodations, what documentation is required, how long the approval process takes, and what additional academic supports are available for students with learning disabilities.

Preparing for college involves much more than choosing a major or finding a residence hall. By understanding how disability services work, encouraging self-advocacy, and researching available supports, families can help students with learning disabilities make a successful transition from high school to college and build the confidence they need to thrive independently.

HOME LEARNING



Graphing with M&M's

This is a great activity for 2 or more children (or an adult) so results can be compared. M&Ms can be used as an engaging tool for children to practice graphing skills. Each person would have a small bag of M&M's and sort them into colors. Then each color and number could be graphed. It will be interesting to see if the bags basically have the same number of each color. After the activity, each person gets to keep the candy. Check out this YouTube [video](#) for more information on making bar graphs.



Fire Prevention Week October 4–10

Fire Prevention Week™ is
October 4–10 , 2026.

[“Charge Into Fire Safety™. Safe Charging Is a Superpower”](#) focuses on the everyday charging habits that can help reduce the risk of lithium-ion battery fires and keep homes and communities safer. Plug in. Power up. Stay safe!

Also be sure to include these activities.

Practice a Home Fire Escape Plan

Draw a simple map of your home together. Help your child identify two ways out of each room and choose a safe meeting place outside. Practice your escape plan as a family and talk about the importance of staying low if there is smoke



Smoke Alarm Check

Test your smoke alarms together. Count how many smoke alarms are in your home and discuss where they are located. Talk about why smoke alarms should be tested every month and batteries replaced as recommended.



Fall Colors

Discover the fall colors in Wisconsin with the official [Travel Wisconsin Fall Color Report](#). Wisconsin's state forests and parks offer a wealth of fall color viewing opportunities. Use this [link](#) to find a state forest, park recreation area or trail.

Apples Everywhere

Fall is definitely apple season. This season peaks in September and October. Enjoy these read alouds with your child.

- [Ten Apples Up on Top!](#)
- [The Biggest Apple Ever](#)
- [Apples](#)
- [Apple Farmer Annie](#)

Applesauce

Making applesauce is a wonderful hands-on activity because it naturally combines reading and math in a fun, meaningful way. Children learn best when they can connect academic skills to real-life experiences, and cooking provides many opportunities to do just that. Best of all, they end the activity with a delicious homemade snack they helped create, making learning both memorable and rewarding.

Watch this [short video](#) for instructions on how to make applesauce. If your child is a reader, have them help you read an [applesauce recipe](#). This is also a great time to talk about fractions. For example, measuring out 1/2 cup of water is a practical application of fractions.

WI FACETS EVENTS

[Building Your Child's Advocacy Skills](#)

Date: October 7, 2026

Presenter: Mike Hipple, WI AAC Network

Serving on Groups: Tools and Tips (Sections 4 & 5)

Date: October 8, 2026

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

¿Es mi hijo elegible para un IEP? Aprende sobre el proceso de evaluación (Pregrabado)

Date: October 8, 2026

Presentadora: Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

IEP 4: Reevaluation and Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) (Pre-recorded)

Date: October 13, 2026

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Neurodivergence and 2e: Strengths, Supports, and the Power of Advocacy

Date: October 14, 2026

Presenter: Teresa Nair, Program Manager at REEL (Resilience and Engagement for Every Learner)

Dyslexia and Special Education/Dislexia y educación especial

Date: October 21, 2026

Presenters: Rose Kilmurray, WI DPI and Dr. Stacy Gray, Early Learning Specialist

Serving on Groups: Understanding and Using Data (Section 6)

Date: October 22, 2026

Presenter: Jan Serak, Serak Consulting

¿Qué se escribe en un IEP? Parte 1: ¡Comienza con lo esencial! (Pre grabado)

Date: October 22, 2026

Presentadora: Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

IEP 5: Writing the IEP (Part 1) (Pre-recorded)

Date: October 27, 2026

Presenter: Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

Compassion Resilience for Parents and Caregivers

Date: October 28, 2026

Presenter: Brittney Fair, Rogers Behavioral Health

UPCOMING STATE EVENTS

Leadership in Action: Finding the Leader in You Click Here for Flyer

Date: October 8 & 22, 2026 6pm to 8pm - *Register by Monday, October 5th*

Parent leadership goes beyond volunteering. This 2-part series focuses on empowering parents and family members to join a school group that promotes and builds strong family-school partnerships.

Participants will learn about:

- Working in partnership to effectively communicate with schools
- Building engagement and ensuring relevant parent participation
- Supporting teams to work together by setting up clear meeting guidelines and using conflict resolution to turn problems into success.

All participants will receive printed training manuals from Serving on Groups and Leading by Convening.

DPI Special Education and Pupil Services Pre-Conference-Save the Date

Date: October 14, 2026

Starting in fall 2026, DPI has made some changes to the State Superintendent's Conference on Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership. In partnership with the Wisconsin Council of Administrators of Specialized Services (WCASS), DPI is coordinating a pre-conference day called the DPI Special Education and Pupil Services Pre-Conference. The

agenda for the DPI pre-conference will follow a similar structure as DPI's previous Special Education and Pupil Services Leadership conferences. The full day pre-conference will continue to include content identified by DPI to support special education and pupil services leadership including:

- Keynote speakers
- DPI legal updates
- A variety of sectionals highlighting DPI speakers, projects, and resources

[Family, Youth & Community Engagement Network October 2026](#)

Date: October 21, 2026

Held Virtually 4:00-5:30pm

The Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative (WSPEI) is hosting a series of virtual community engagement events this school year.

[Children Come First Conference - Save the Dates](#)

Dates: November 16-17, 2026

Location: Kalahari Resort, WI Dells, WI

As one of the largest and longest-running family-driven events in the state, this conference is dedicated to addressing the pressing needs of children and families living with mental and behavioral health issues.

ONLINE RESOURCES: Learning Disabilities

[Understanding the Differences between High School and College I Think College](#)

This guide was created by the Think College Transition team to help teachers, families, and students prepare for college. It discusses the need to plan for the ways that higher education will be different than high school, including academic expectations, increasing independence, and new social environments.

This resource is available in English and Spanish. [Click here to view the Spanish language listing for this resource.](#)

- [Workforce Innovations and Opportunity Act of 2014](#)

[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#)

This site has a variety of technical assistance and best practice resources related to comprehensive special education evaluations in which the characteristics of specific learning disabilities are assessed, including the specific learning disability category criteria worksheet in Wisconsin.

[Wisconsin's Informational Guidebook on Dyslexia and Related Conditions](#)

The informational guidebook discusses screening, instruction and intervention, and resources that can support improved learning for school-aged individuals with characteristics of dyslexia. The audience for the information is broad and includes (but is not limited to) parents and families, educators, interventionists or reading teachers, and educational leaders.

[The National Center for Learning Disabilities \(NCLD\)](#)

The mission of the NCLD is to improve the lives of all people with learning difficulties and disabilities by empowering parents, enabling young adults, transforming schools, and creating policy and advocacy impact. The website has information on learning disabilities resources, as well as a [link](#) to sign up for their newsletter.

[Learning Disabilities Association of America \(LDA\)](#)

LDA provides support to people with learning disabilities, their parents, teachers, and other professionals with information on learning disabilities, practical solutions, and a comprehensive network of resources. These services make LDA a leading resource for information on learning disabilities.

[Understood.org](#)

The goal of the website is to help parents whose children, ages 3–20, are struggling with learning and attention issues. It provides information to empower parents to understand their children's issues and relate to their experiences. With this knowledge, parents can make effective choices that propel their children from simply coping to truly thriving. The website is very parent-friendly and offers links to information related to learning difficulties. Archived webinars are also available.

AdLit

AdLit.org is a national multimedia project offering information and resources to the parents and educators of struggling adolescent readers and writers. AdLit.org offers articles that provide research-based and best-practice information for educators, parents, and others interested in helping young people become better readers and writers.

Bookshare

Bookshare is an ebook library that makes reading easier. Members can access a huge collection of ebooks and "read their way" with the most customizable ebooks for people with reading barriers. The library has over 1.2 million titles and is the most extensive collection of accessible ebooks in the world. It includes books for school, career, and reading for pleasure. Bookshare also has titles in over 34 languages. Thanks to funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Bookshare is free for all qualified U.S. students and schools.

Dyscalculia.org

Dyscalculia is a math learning disorder that makes mathematical reasoning and computation difficult, despite adequate education, average or greater intelligence, and proper motivation. Check the website for a multitude of resources related to this learning disability.

The International Dyslexia Association (IDA)

IDA is a non-profit, scientific, and educational organization dedicated to the study and treatment of learning disabilities, dyslexia, and related language-based learning differences. The purpose of IDA is to pursue and provide the most comprehensive range of information and services that address the full scope of dyslexia and related difficulties in learning to read and write.

ReadingRockets.org

Reading Rockets provides detailed information about learning to read and strategies for supporting struggling readers at home, at school, and in the community. It offers news, practical information, expert advice, and resources for parents, teachers, tutors, childcare providers, and policy makers.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Council on Special Education 2026 Fall Public Forum

The Council on Special Education will be hosting a virtual public forum on November 18, 2026, from 5:00pm-6:30pm. The Public Forum allows the State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Special Education to:

- Listen to families, school administrators, educators, community representatives, etc.
- Gather input on the unique challenges and successes of special education in Wisconsin
- Advise the State Superintendent and the Department of Public Instruction
- Hear about any topic upon which people may choose to comment

Registration link for [the Zoom meeting](#).

If you are unable to attend the meeting on November 18th, you can also submit a comment online. Online comments will open on November 6, 2026 and close on November 20, 2026. To submit a comment please email spedcouncil@dpi.wi.gov. For additional information, please contact [Lisa Wery](#).

RESEARCH

Support Receipt: Effect on Postsecondary Success of Students with Learning Disabilities

Newman, L.A., Madaus, J.W., Lalor, A.R., Javitz, H.S. (2019). Support receipt effect on postsecondary success of students with learning disabilities. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 42(1), 6-16.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143418811288>

[Read Full Article](#)

Although more students with learning disabilities are enrolling in college than ever before, many still face challenges finishing their degree. Research shows that students are more likely to stay in college and graduate when they use the supports available to them. These supports include disability services, such as extended time on tests, note-taking assistance, or assistive technology, as well as resources that are available to all students, such as tutoring centers, writing labs, academic advising, study skills workshops, and counseling services.

This research highlights the importance of preparing students before they leave high school. Families and transition teams should help students learn how to request disability accommodations, understand the documentation colleges may require, and become comfortable asking for help when they need it. Just as important, students should be encouraged to take advantage of the many campus resources that are available to every student. Learning how to use these supports can increase confidence, improve academic success, and make it more likely that students with learning disabilities will remain in college and earn their degree.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Newsletter Topics

November: Emotional Behavioral Disabilities

December: Communication

January: Transition

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.

This monthly update is provided by Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please email [WI FACETS](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: www.servingongroups.org/newsletter



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