

Top Mistakes Parents Make During the Transition to College

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Mistake #1:

Not Knowing What Types of Options
are Available

Four main types

1. Life Skills Programs
2. Traditional Accommodation Based Schools
3. Enhanced Program level of Support
4. Highly Specialized Schools

1. Life Skills Programs

These programs are typically residential in nature and usually provide some type of 24 hour availability of staff. Degree or Non-degree in nature, they usually contain components of independent living and vocational development. They may or may not provide a “typical” campus experience.

2. Accommodation Based

By far the most common. All colleges and universities are required by federal law to provide routine accommodations such as extended time for exams, note taking assistance, electronic textbooks, sign language interpreters, etc.

Usually there is a centralized office to coordinate these. Either a Disability Professional or a College Rep (or both) will staff these tables.

Know who you are talking to tonight!

3. Enhanced programs

These are programs that combine traditional accommodations such as extended time for exams with services such as tutoring, academic coaching, resource professionals, etc.

As the service component is not required by law there is typically an additional charge for the service components which are rolled into a single package price. Often these programs are expected to generate the revenue they need to pay for the overhead they use. Fees can be quite expensive and are in addition to regular tuition.

4. Highly Specialized Schools

Highly specialized schools are schools such as Beacon College and Landmark College where the entire curriculum and support services are geared toward students with learning disabilities, ADHD, ASD, or learning style differences.

Language is Important

- ▶ Use of language is important here.
- ▶ All colleges and universities will offer accommodations. It is probably more helpful to talk about the kind of accommodations and supports a campus has rather than using the word “program” which can potentially confuse what a college here tonight thinks you are looking for.

Accommodation Definitions

High School vs. College

In high school there are many accommodations and services available to students with disabilities. They may all be grouped together under the descriptor “accommodations” and include everything from extended time for exams, reduced number of exam questions, deadline extensions, tutoring, and the availability of a resource room.

In college this changes significantly due to differences in legislation between K-12 and the Post-Secondary world. In the Post-Secondary world tutoring is a service, not an accommodation, work loads are not decreased, and there may not be a resource professional available on a routine basis. Tutoring, academic coaching, and homework review are considered “services” and are not required by law.

For colleges and universities choosing between a school with traditional accommodations and a school with and an enhanced program level of support depends largely on the level of executive functioning and independence your student has. The more self-starting and willing to advocate for themselves the better the experience will be at a school **without** an enhanced program.

Also check if the services you may want are available a la carte.

Mistake #2:

Not transferring as many executive functions as possible to your student by the end of high school.

The greatest predictors of success at a larger university are adequate executive functioning skills and an ability to self-advocate

Mistake #3:

Not scheduling a meeting with the DS office during a college visit

Mistake #4:

Assuming accommodations will
“transfer” from high school to college.

Accommodations do not “transfer”

Many parents assume that if they send copies of an IEP or a Summary Report to the college or university that this is all the college needs and that everything on the IEP will automatically apply at college. This is not typically the case.

Many colleges will need “primary verification” of the disability which ranges from a letter from a licensed care provider to, for learning disabilities, a copy of the comprehensive testing report. This information is sometimes in what the high school sends over, but not usually!

Documentation requirements vary significantly from college to college so do not assume that if your documentation is adequate for one college that it will be so at all colleges!

Mistake #5:

Not checking in a timely enough manner what the DS office needs for disability verification while there is enough time to arrange it.

Mistake #6:

Failing to follow exact instructions to apply for accommodations at the college or university of choice. Instructions should be on the DS office webpage.

Most require some type of application form in addition to the documentation.

Mistake #7:

Assuming that a smaller campus will automatically be better for a student with a disability

Regardless of the size of the institution the available supports for students needs to be comprehensive. In any college choice you ideally look for a balance of support for the first two years and “bench strength” for the last two.

Nothing replaces the campus visit to get a feel for what it would be like to be an undergraduate student at a larger university

On choosing a larger campus

- ▶ Do not choose a school based on your initial anxiety.
- ▶ Remember how you felt the first day of high school and how you feel now.
- ▶ Students who attend large high schools are usually better prepared for a larger campus experience than are students from smaller high schools.
- ▶ You may well be looking at colleges that are actually smaller than the high school you currently attend.
- ▶ A larger campus may feel significantly smaller than it appears it would on paper.

- ▶ Look at the onboarding process (Orientation, On Iowa)
- ▶ If you are looking at a smaller school it is important to find out how many students leave for the weekends. That can greatly impact your college experience.
- ▶ A larger campus may have a more robust career center and attract a greater number of employers.
- ▶ A larger campus may have a stronger alumni network to aid in your career.

Mistake #8:

Not making sure that your son or daughter has actually followed through with the DS office procedure.

Under FERPA the “ownership” of school records transfers from the parent to the student on Day 1 of their first semester of enrollment.

There are exceptions to this but make sure your student signs a release form at the DS office!

Typically the student will be responsible for disclosing that they have disability accommodations to each instructor

Mistake #9:

Assuming that the DS office will routinely reach out to your son or daughter during the semester if they have not heard from them. Traditional colleges may not, enhanced programs may.

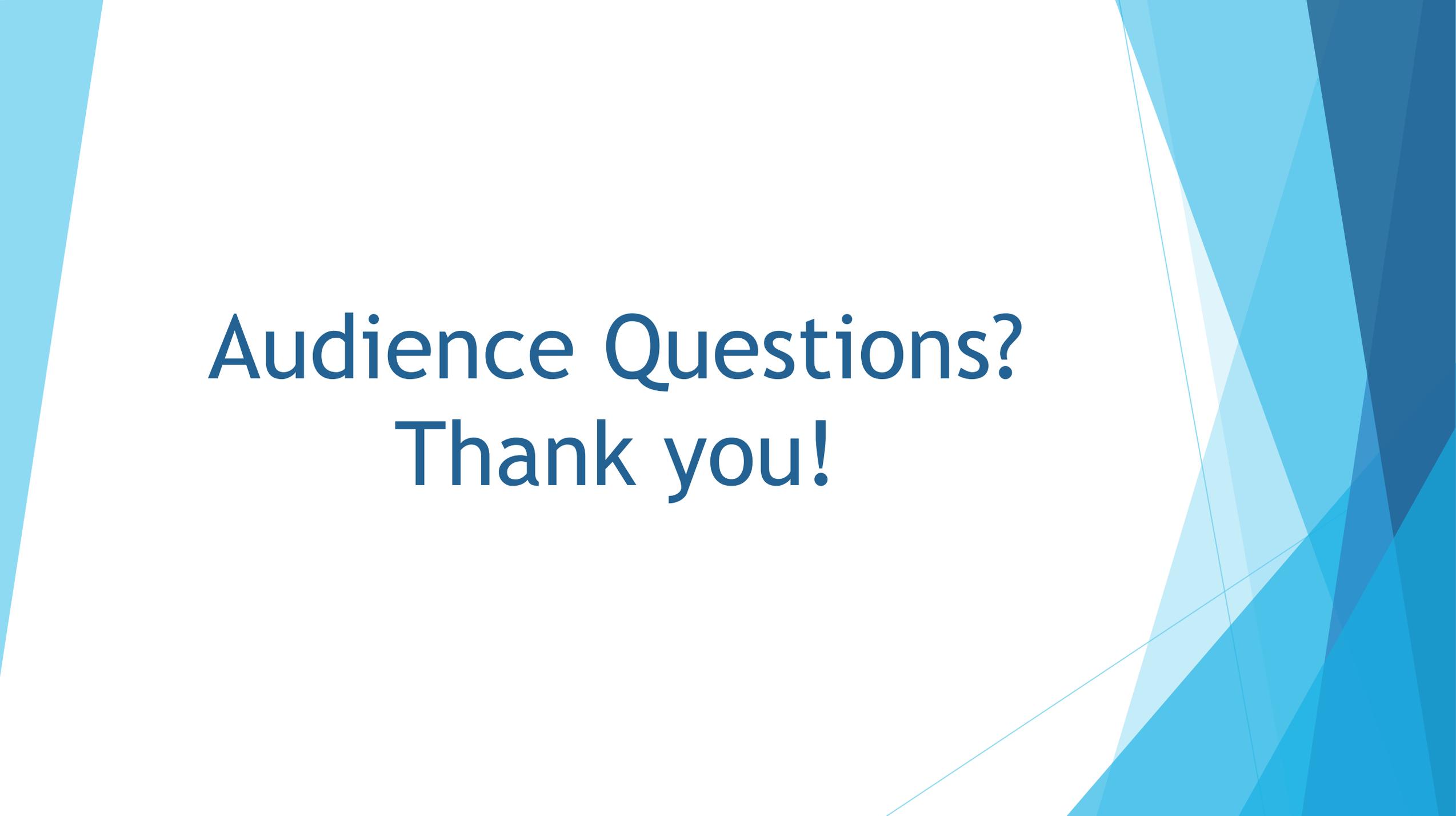
Mistake #10:

Assuming that if your student is struggling in a class that there must be something wrong/ineffective about the accommodation process.

A final thought ...

Add one more question to the ones you were planning to ask.

“Who would your college or program not be a good fit for?”

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**Audience Questions?
Thank you!**