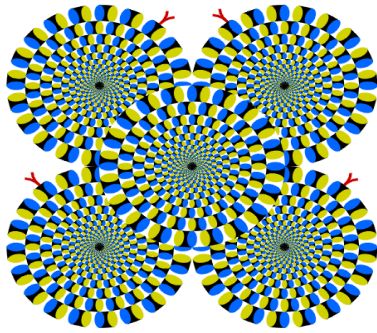
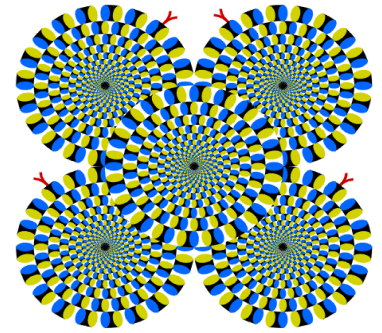




TRANSITION WHEEL



POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION ACCESS

“We acknowledge that not everyone needs to go to college. But everyone needs a postsecondary education. Indeed, we have seen ample evidence that some form of postsecondary instruction is increasingly vital to an individual’s economic security. Yet too many Americans just aren’t getting the education that they need—and that they deserve.” (The Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006, p. x)

Description/Definitions

Postsecondary education is defined as education or training provided:

- To people who have earned a high school diploma or equivalent, although some programs may waive this requirement for participants who meet specific entrance requirements
- By colleges, universities, career and technical education providers, employers, and/or apprenticeship programs
- With the intent of earning an associate, bachelor, and/or graduate degree; a technical certificate; a journeyman’s license; or other recognized education or industry credential

Access is defined as the process of:

- Applying to and entering a postsecondary program and
- Requesting and receiving necessary and reasonable accommodations described by the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Colleges and universities may be two-year, four-year, public, private, or for-profit educational institutions offering programs leading to a degree or other recognized education credential. In the Florida college system, students may also earn career certificates.

In Florida, Career and Technical Education (CTE) is one section in the Department of Education’s Career and Adult Education division that also provides Adult Education, Apprenticeship, Adult Migrant Education, and Continuing Workforce Education programs (Florida Department of Education, n.d.). The CTE delivery system includes school districts, the Florida College System, community-based organizations, and business and industry.

- Secondary Workforce Education provides career preparation and technical skills training leading to postsecondary education (e.g., technical center or college) or employment. Options include career exploration and preparation in middle and high schools, career and professional education academies, and career instruction with rigorous academics.

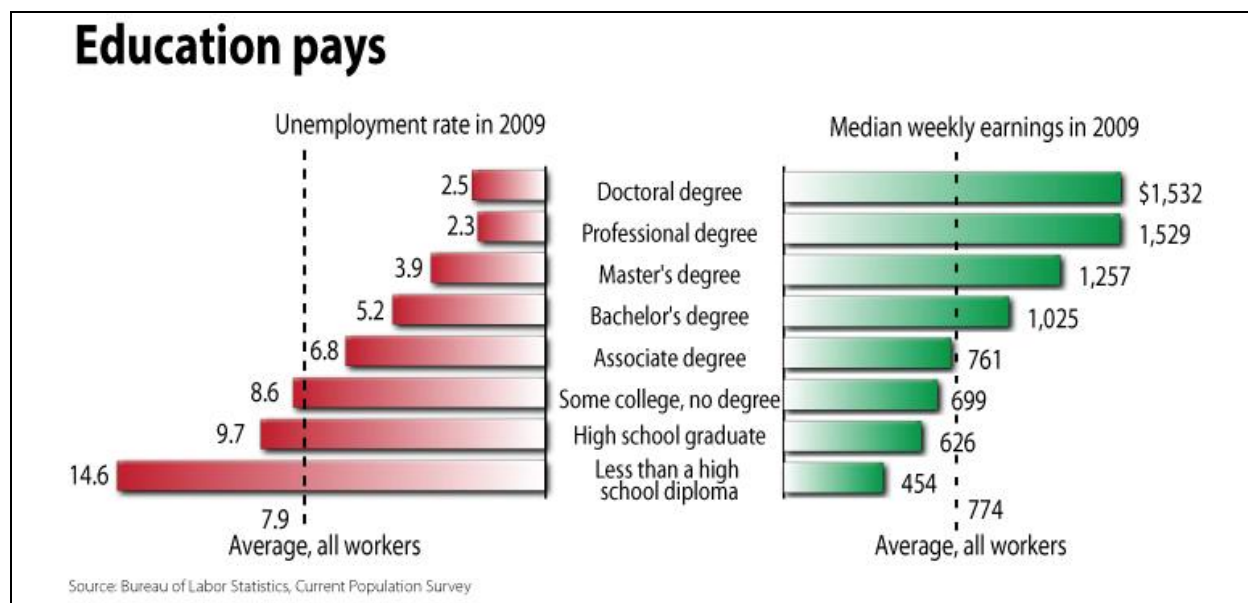
- Postsecondary CTE is technical skills training that results in specific employment and a credential, such as a career certificate, applied technology diploma, journeyman's license, college credit certificates, or associate in science (A.S.) and/or associate in applied science (A.A.S.) degree.
- Adult Migrant Worker programs help migrant workers obtain literacy and technical skills.
- Continuing Workforce Education provides training to upgrade skills for licensure or certification by a regulatory or credentialing body, new or expanding businesses, and programs that retrain employees or enhance occupational skills.
- Adult Education programs lead to literacy and the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency. Options include Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and General Education Development (GED) testing (Florida Department of Education, n.d.).

Apprenticeship is composed of two parts: (1) on-the-job training provided by an employer with regular pay raises that accompany increases in skills and knowledge and (2) classroom instruction that is directly related to the trade or career. Apprenticeships prepare participants to pass examinations required for industry journeyman or technician licenses. Unlike other types of postsecondary education that are regulated by U.S. and state Departments of Education, apprenticeships are regulated by the U.S. Department of Labor and state Apprenticeship Councils.

Note that some postsecondary institutions, particularly state colleges (formerly known as community colleges), may offer the full spectrum of postsecondary education options: two- and four- year degrees, technical certifications, classroom instruction for a variety of apprenticeship programs, and full apprenticeships in trades employed on campus.

Relevance

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has found that “education pays in higher earnings and lower unemployment rates” (BLS, 2010, May 27) per the following chart:



The BLS chart uses average and median figures that do not tell the whole story. For example, Wheary and Orozco (2010, p. 1) found that “one- and two-year credentials in engineering and in health care can deliver higher salaries than bachelor degrees in other fields” and that “from a salary and opportunity standpoint, earning a one-year credential or associate’s degree is often better than failing to complete a four-year degree.”

Students with disabilities who graduate from college exhibit similar employment rates and salaries compared with their counterparts without disabilities (Madaus, 2006). Although this statistic is heartening, students with disabilities attend college at a much lower rate than their peers who do not have a disability (Shaw, Madaus, & Dukes, 2010). The National Longitudinal Transition Study 2 (Newman, 2008) reports that when surveyed in high school, 76.7 percent of youth with disabilities aspired to attend a postsecondary school or program. However, two years after high school, only 19 percent were attending a postsecondary school or program.

Making postsecondary education a reality for students with disabilities requires careful transition planning and attention to the application process.

Differences between High School and Postsecondary Education

Postsecondary education is much different than primary and secondary education. This is especially true for students with disabilities. Postsecondary options should be researched well in advance of application deadlines to identify and address issues that may impact student decisions. Following are a number of factors that must be considered.

Postsecondary education is *not* subject to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA). Under IDEA, elementary and secondary students are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Special education, accommodations or modifications, and any necessary related services must be provided in a manner that meets the unique needs of students and facilitates the attainment of their postsecondary goals in education or training, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living. In other words, the intent of IDEA is to ensure that students with disabilities *succeed* in school. Some elementary and secondary students with disabilities may have protections provided by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Colleges, universities, and other postsecondary education providers, on the other hand, must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADA) of 2008 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The intent of the ADA Amendments Act and Section 504 is to prohibit discrimination based on disability and to ensure *equal access* to college services and activities for people with disabilities who are “otherwise qualified” (Madaus, 2005, p. 32). It is up to students to disclose their disabilities, if they so desire; to request accommodations and services related to their disabilities; and to provide the necessary documentation of their disabilities as required by the institution. It is also up to students to advocate for themselves, including discussing accommodation needs with faculty and instructors and filing complaints through the postsecondary institution’s grievance or equal opportunity process if they feel they have been discriminated against.

Under the ADA, students with disabilities may request accommodations, but the postsecondary institution is only required to provide accommodations considered “reasonable” as defined by the law. Postsecondary schools are not required to provide modifications that would change course content or graduation requirements. Nor are they required to provide technology or services that are considered “personal” in nature, although they may be available if the family pays for them (Association on Higher Education and Disability [AHEAD], n.d.). The websites of AHEAD and the HEATH Resource Center at The George Washington University have resources for counselors, parents, and students that explain disability services on college campuses.

Another important difference is related to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA protects the privacy of educational records for students who attend schools and institutions that receive funding

from the U.S. Department of Education. In elementary and secondary schools, parents may inspect education records for their students and may request that inaccurate or misleading educational records be corrected. They may also provide written authorization to release information from student records to a third party. However, these rights transfer to the student when he or she (a) reaches the age of 18 years or (b) attends a postsecondary institution at any age. FERPA privacy rights include health records maintained by campus health clinics or other entities providing health care services on behalf of the college or university.

Under FERPA, parents may access education records for students 18 and older if the student is claimed as a dependent on the parent's federal income taxes and the school chooses to release to the parents (U.S. Department of Education, 2005) or if the student grants permission, usually by signing a release form available at most educational institutions.

Health care records that are not subject to FERPA may be subject to the Privacy Rule of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2008), which protects "individually identifiable health information" from unauthorized release. Under HIPAA, parents who make health care decisions for their minor children have access to the children's health care records. There are certain exceptions for court-appointed guardians, treatment for which parental permission is not required, and confidential relationships between a provider and the child to which the parent has agreed (Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami, 2005).

In addition to the governing laws, there are other important differences between high school and postsecondary settings. Colleges and universities generally have shorter class times, larger class sizes, more studying required to keep up with class assignments, fewer tests, grade requirements for maintaining academic eligibility, significant differences in instructional methods, and greater personal freedom (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002). Students are given a syllabus at the beginning of class and are expected to use it to manage course requirements, such as submitting assignments, preparing for tests, and actively participating in class activities. Those who fall behind may receive no follow up from instructors other than a failing grade. It is up to the student to seek guidance from faculty and tutors should they need assistance if they are having difficulty. The situation may be similar in other postsecondary education settings.

Apprentices "earn while they learn" and are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act while they are working for their employers. Apprentices must be able to perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations. More information on workplace accommodations can be found on the Job Accommodation Network website at <http://askjan.org/>.

Applying to College

There are a number of excellent resources that can guide students through the college selection and application process, beginning with the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students website, more commonly known as *FACTS.org*. (Of particular interest to counselors and educators is the link to the *Counseling for Future Education Handbook* in the "Advising Manuals" section of *FACTS.org*.) Other resources include the College Board's *Apply to College* Web page and the *My College Options* website. The *Going to College* website has captioned videos of college students with disabilities who (a) provide tips for selecting and succeeding in college and (b) describe their postsecondary experiences. The websites for AHEAD and the HEATH Resource Center contain numerous resources that are helpful for transition specialists and school counselors as well as students with disabilities and their parents who are preparing to navigate through the college application and enrollment process.

A growing number of postsecondary education providers, including colleges and universities, are providing on-campus programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008 encourages comprehensive and inclusive model programs serving students

with intellectual disabilities. “Comprehensive Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities” are defined as “degree, certificate, or nondegree programs...offered by an institution of higher education...to support students with intellectual disabilities who are seeking to continue academic, career and technical, and independent living instruction at an institution of higher education in order to prepare for gainful employment” (Public Law 110-315, Section 760(1)). Students enrolled in these programs may be eligible for federal financial aid.

Florida is currently engaged in expanding opportunities authorized by the HEOA, including model comprehensive transition and postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities. Contact information on programs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities at a number of Florida postsecondary sites may be found on the Promising Practices Transition Sites’ page at <http://www.project10.info/PromisingPractices.php>.

The *Think College!* Website, <http://www.thinkcollege.net/>, provides resources for students, families, and professionals, including a searchable database of postsecondary education initiatives for students with intellectual disabilities. Project 10’s website, <http://project10.info>, contains a number of resources (listed in the resource section below) that provide information on (a) postsecondary options, including colleges and universities; (b) pilot transition sites that serve students with disabilities at Florida colleges, universities, technical and technology centers, and worksites; (c) institutional and programmatic accreditation of postsecondary institutions and programs; (d) a financial aid pop quiz for postsecondary options; and (e) financial resources and scholarships for students with disabilities.

Applying to Career and Technical Education

As noted previously, CTE providers may include public, private, and for-profit colleges; trade associations and other industry groups; employers; secondary schools; and a category of institutions variously described as independent postsecondary schools (IPS), proprietary schools, or trade schools. Application requirements will vary depending on the type of provider and the programs provided. The IPS application process commonly includes an application, some type of assessment, an interview with one or more school representatives, and a financial review and contract.

Every student who is investigating an independent postsecondary school or a for-profit college or university should visit the website of the Florida Commission for Independent Education (CIE)—specifically the page titled “How Do You Know Which School or Program is Best for You”—including contacting the CIE office to ensure that the institution is licensed or approved in Florida. CIE may also have information on proprietary schools in other states.

Many independent postsecondary schools and for-profit educational institutions will provide information on licensing and accreditation, completion and placement rates, starting wages upon employment, financial options, and cancellation and refund policies. To ensure that this information is available for all such schools, the U.S. Department of Education has published regulations to “improve integrity” of postsecondary institutions receiving funding under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 66832) in order to address issues relating to “test score abnormalities,” accommodations for individuals with disabilities, “substantial misrepresentation by an institution of the nature of its educational program, its financial charges, or the employability of its graduates,” and other concerns (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 66832).

Applying to an Apprenticeship Program

When most people think of apprenticeships, they usually envision the construction trades—carpenter,

electrician, plumber, bricklayer—because apprenticeships have been established in the construction industry for generations of United States workers. However, the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Office of Apprenticeship website lists over 1,000 registered apprenticeships in fields as diverse as able seaman, chef, child care development specialist, dental assistant, emergency medical technician, truck driver, laboratory technician, and geodetic computerator.

Minimum qualifications for applying to an apprenticeship vary by program and may include the following:

- Proof of age (minimum 16 or 18 years of age depending on the occupation)
- Education (grades, academic placement test, high school graduate or equivalent)
- Ability to physically perform the essential functions of the occupation
- Aptitude tests
- Previous work experience
- Interviews

Once an applicant is accepted to an apprenticeship program, he or she starts the on-the-job training. The related classroom instruction is scheduled at specific times of the year, often in the evenings from September through April. The cost of the related classroom instruction is often, but not always, paid by the employer, with contracts requiring repayment by apprentices who do not complete the program becoming more common.

Information on apprenticeships in Florida may be found on the Florida Apprenticeship Council website, <https://www.fldoe.org/workforce/apprenticeship/council.asp>, or by searching the DOL Apprenticeship Sponsors Database by state and county. Search Tip: Apprenticeship programs are often clustered in urban areas, so neighboring cities are a good place to start a search if programs are not available in an applicant’s local area.

Final Thoughts

- More detailed information on postsecondary education can be found in the Postsecondary Education section of the Project 10 website at <http://www.project10.info/PostsecondaryEducation.php>.
- Students should understand the differences between secondary and postsecondary education.
- Students and families should carefully research postsecondary education options and institutions to find the most appropriate match for student goals, skills, interests, and needs.
- Students and families should carefully research postsecondary institutions and programs to ensure that they are properly accredited, licensed, and/or registered by the appropriate accrediting organization and/or federal or state oversight agency.
- Students should fully understand their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and the Privacy Rule of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.
- Students should have the self-determination and self-advocacy skills necessary to manage their decisions and responsibilities before they begin postsecondary education
- If possible, students should visit postsecondary sites prior to enrollment, including visiting the office responsible for providing services to students with disabilities and speaking to students with disabilities who are enrolled there.

Resources

Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD) – Student & Parent Resources

<http://www.ahead.org/students-parents>

Provides Frequently Asked Questions for students with disabilities and their parents as well as “Transition Resources A – Z.” (Note: Links are located in the “Site Navigation” column on the left.)

The College Board's Apply to College Page

<http://www.collegeboard.com/student/apply/index.html>

Includes information on selecting a college, admissions tests, college applications and essays, decision making, wait-lists, what to do if you receive a rejection letter, and more.

FACTS.org

<http://www.facts.org>

Provides information and links for finding, applying to, and paying for Florida colleges or programs. Resources are also provided for college students, counselors, and educators, including links to disability support services offices and contacts at over 50 educational institutions and state offices.

Florida Career and Adult Education

<http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/>

Helps adults get the basic skills needed to become productive workers and citizens. Career and Technical Education (CTE), apprenticeship, adult migrant education, continuing workforce education, Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE) including General Education Development (GED) testing, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are resources provided on this site.

Florida Commission for Independent Education

<http://www.fldoe.org/cie/>

Serves as a consumer protection agency by protecting the individual student, promoting accountability of nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions, protecting the integrity of institutions by assuring that standards are met, and encouraging programs that meet the needs of Florida citizens.

Florida's State Apprenticeship Council

<http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/apprenticeship/council.asp>

Provides information on apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships in Florida, including a database (<https://app1.fldoe.org/workforce/apprenticeship/search.aspx>) searchable by apprenticeship region, occupation, or apprenticeship sponsor. Not all apprenticeship openings are listed on this site.

Going to College

<http://www.going-to-college.org/>

Explores the college application process and campus life via a number of resources, including captioned videos of college students with disabilities who speak from experience.

HEATH Resource Center

<http://www.heath.gwu.edu/>

Provides an "online clearinghouse on postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities."

IDEA/504/ADA Comparison Chart

[https://www.morainevalley.edu/CDS/ADA-IDEA-504%20chart%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.morainevalley.edu/CDS/ADA-IDEA-504%20chart%20(2).pdf)

Compares the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act in the areas of requirements, definitions, coverage, services, funding, evaluation/documentation, individual educational plan/accommodations, and classroom placement.

Job Accommodation Network

<http://askjan.org/>

Provides information and answers questions about workplace accommodations, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and related legislation.

My College Options

<http://www.mycollegeoptions.org/>

Provides information on college selection and admissions, reasons for attending college, financial aid, keys to college success, and more.

Postsecondary Options for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

http://www.communityinclusion.org/article.php?article_id=178

Describes the types of postsecondary programs for students with “significant learning, cognitive, and other conditions” as well as current knowledge and research.

Project 10 A–Z Library of Terms and Resources: Accreditation

<http://www.project10.info/DetailPage.php?MainPageID=203>

Provides information on institutional and programmatic accreditation of postsecondary institutions and programs.

Project 10 A–Z Library of Terms and Resources: Financial Aid Pop Quiz

<http://www.project10.info/DetailPage.php?MainPageID=204>

Provides questions, answers, and resources on postsecondary grants, scholarships, and loans.

Project 10 Postsecondary Education

<http://www.project10.info/PostsecondaryEducation.php>

Provides information on colleges and universities, Career and Technical Education, and apprenticeships, including identifying options, applying to a school or program, financial planning, disclosing a disability, requesting accommodations, supporting postsecondary youth, and programs for youth with intellectual disabilities.

Project 10 Promising Practice Transition Sites

<http://www.project10.info/PromisingPractices.php>

Provides information for on-campus programs for students with disabilities (click on the “Postsecondary” box on the right) and a list of programs at a number of locations, including technical centers (click on the “18-22 Programs” box on the right).

Project 10 Scholarships, Grants, and Financial Resources for Students with Disabilities

<http://www.project10.info/FinancialResources.php>

Provides a list of financial resources supporting postsecondary students with disabilities (click on “Postsecondary Scholarships”).

Project 10 STING RAY

<http://www.project10.info/StingRay.php?PageCategory=StingRay>

Provides information on Students Transitioning Into the Next Generation, Recognizing Alternatives for Youth, a collaborative project of the Pinellas County School District, Project 10, the University of South Florida St. Petersburg, the Florida Department of Education, and the Florida Governor’s Commission on Disabilities. STING RAY offers young adults with significant cognitive disabilities, ages 18 to 22, an opportunity to experience life on a college campus while developing self-determination, independent living, and employability skills.

Think College!

<http://www.thinkcollege.net/>

Provides information and resources on age-appropriate college options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including helpful hints and a searchable database of postsecondary programs.

U.S. Department of Labor Office of Apprenticeship Website

<http://www.doleta.gov/oa/>

Provides information for employers, parents, apprentices, and prospective apprentices, including the history of apprenticeship, success stories, regional and state offices, getting started in apprenticeship, and more.

U.S. DOL Search Program Sponsors Database

<http://oa.doleta.gov/bat.cfm>

This page provides a database, searchable by state and county, of registered apprenticeship sponsors (i.e., employers).

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