



# Parent Guide for College Success

A workbook for parents  
of students with learning  
differences entering college

Presented by  
NorthBridge College Success Program

[northbridgeaz.org](http://northbridgeaz.org)



Dear Parent,

The transition to college can be a challenging time for parents of children with learning differences. The support networks that help families through grade school and high school are no longer available. Children must exhibit greater self-sufficiency and advocate for themselves.

This guide is designed to help parents prepare for this exciting, but potentially stressful, transition. Exercises in this workbook include conversation guides to help you and your child find the postsecondary path that best fit your needs.

Finding support for your child can ease the transition to postsecondary education. NorthBridge College Success Programs offers support in college enrollment and advising, academic support, and assistance in securing accommodations from the Disability Services office.

We work closely with the parents of students in our program because we understand that parents still play a vital role in the success of their son or daughter. Read on for tips and advice on how to make this transition easier for yourself and your college-aged child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jason Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Jason Moore  
Executive Director  
NorthBridge College Success Program

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# Is College the Right Option?

There are many potential postsecondary paths that may be successful for your child. What is most important is finding the right fit, based on the individual needs of your child and your family.

## **Below are some common options to consider for graduating high school students.**

**FOUR YEAR COLLEGE:** A traditional four year college can be a challenge for any student. Succeeding requires hard work without much supervision. Talk with your child's teachers and school counselors to discuss what type of school is the right choice. Smaller schools may offer more personalized attention, while larger ones may provide more resources. Meet with each school's Disability Services Office to make sure the right team is there to support your child.

**TWO YEAR COLLEGE:** A two year college may be a good option for students who are unsure about their career paths. These programs give your child the option to move on to a four year school once they strengthen their skills in a two year program.

**TRADE AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS:** Trade or certificate programs offer students a direct path into the workforce. Students who prefer a hands-on learning style may benefit best from this type of school. These schools offer a wide range of interests including web design, electronics and fashion. It may be a good idea to find out what certificate programs community colleges and universities offer in your city.

**THE MILITARY:** The military may be a potential option for students who thrive in a structured environment. Training involves a lot of repetition and discipline. It is important to consider your child’s learning differences and how this could impact their training in the military.

**TAKE A BREAK:** It is completely normal for your child to feel like they are not ready for college immediately after high school. In most European countries, students take what is referred to as a “gap year” and defer from immediate college enrollment. Typically these young adults use this time to travel, volunteer or find an internship.

**CAREER:** College is not necessarily for everyone. Depending on their field of interests, it may be more rewarding for your child to focus on a career instead of a degree. Help your child volunteer or find an internship and encourage them to build on their skill sets.

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## **Are Online Classes a Good Option for Young Adults With Learning Differences?**



Online classes can be a great option for many reasons. Online classes allow students to work at their own pace and in an environment that they are comfortable.

At NorthBridge, we often recommend that our students take a combination of online and on-campus courses. It is important to note that there are particular classes that work better online than others. The students at NorthBridge have found tremendous success in their online classes with the right support in place.

# Selecting a College

## Discuss with your Child

### **🗨️ A FOUR YEAR PROGRAM IS NOT THE ONLY ROUTE.**

Many children think going to a four year college is the only option. Starting out in a two year program may be the best step to set your child up for success. Discuss transferring schools once he or she discovers what major to pursue. Earning an associate's degree is a good way to ease into the college experience.

### **🗨️ FIND A CAMPUS THAT IS RIGHT FOR THEM.**

Whether your child has dreams of going away to a big city, or would rather stay close to home, location is not the most important part of the process. It is crucial that students pick a school that best reflects their interests, abilities, level of independence and ultimate career goals.

Be sure to reach out to an advisor at the Disability Services Office before committing to a college. Ask what support services and accommodations the school can provide for your child. You may also want to get in touch with your child's high school guidance counselor or an academic support center (like NorthBridge) for additional guidance.

### **🗨️ HELP THEM EXPLORE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.**

Colleges do not just look at grades alone. They want to see that students have an interest in non-academic areas as well. While considering a college, university or trade school, look at what extracurricular opportunities the campus offers. Encourage your child to join a club, youth group, sport and/or volunteer work in high school, and then plan to continue that activity in college if it is a good fit. Joining an activity is a good way to make friends and connections outside of the classroom.



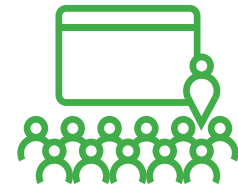
🗨️ **SOCIALIZING.** Understanding how your son or daughter handles social situations is important. Discuss with them how to adjust to life in college. Talk to him or her about the importance of building friendships and getting to know their peers. There are several natural ways to meet other students on college campuses. Help them explore clubs and other campus activities. These opportunities exist at both universities and community colleges. Suggest that he or she join volunteer groups or a sports league to help them build confidence.

## Ask Yourself

### HOW WILL CLASS AND SCHOOL SIZES AFFECT MY CHILD'S ABILITY TO LEARN IN COLLEGE?

Large class sizes generally mean students do not get the level of support that they need from their teachers. At state universities, this can be difficult to avoid. In the first few years of your child's postsecondary experience, your child may find themselves taking their prerequisite classes in large lecture halls. This can be overwhelming and can cause your child to become withdrawn.

Community colleges generally have a smaller student to teacher ratio. This matters because the quality of interaction your child has with his or her professor will impact their ability to succeed. Students who are in smaller classes have shown higher test scores, better grade averages and improved attendance.



## Ask the College

### WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO MY CHILD WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES?

University and college campuses give qualifying students access to disability resources. The Disability Services Office has experience working with some of the challenges experienced by both students and parents during the transition from high school to postsecondary education.

**Disability Services Offices provide important accommodations, including:** note taking assistance, extended test times, permission to record lectures, reader/scribe for exams, alternative forms of textbooks and assistive technology.

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- ✓ **NOTE TAKERS:** Note taking accommodations can be offered in various forms. One of the most common techniques is peer note-taking. Students with learning differences will be provided with a set of notes from another student already enrolled in the course.
  
  - ✓ **RECORDED LECTURES:** Students with a diagnosed learning difference may be allowed to record class lectures. This may include the use of a Smart Pen, digital recorder or computer software.
  
  - ✓ **TESTING:** Alternative testing accommodations are available to students who are registered with disability services. Students are responsible for communicating with professors before an exam to discuss testing formats. Some of the alternative test forms are enlarged text fonts, the use of assistive technology, isolated testing rooms or a step-in reader or writer.

- ✓ **EXTENDED TIME:** Additional time on tests generally follows the “time and a half” rule based on the duration of standard exams. Instructors provide this accommodation by allowing a student extended time directly before or immediately after a scheduled exam time, during office hours or at any other mutually agreed upon time.
  
- ✓ **ALTERNATE LOCATION:** Students can be set up at a separate testing site to make completing exams and quizzes less distracting and intimidating. The purpose of this is to eliminate any testing distractions that could hinder a student with learning differences.
  
- ✓ **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY:** Assistive technology can support both compensatory and remedial approaches for students in college. Computers, handheld devices and software programs are forms of assistive technology that can help eliminate distractions, decrease the stress and make information more accessible allowing students to focus on the concepts and content of the course and exams.
  
- ✓ **PREFERENTIAL SEATING:** Some students with learning differences may prefer to sit in the front, back or side of the classroom. Depending on a student’s needs, they may require a specific chair or table to increase their work productivity. The professor must be made aware of these requests and must set up accommodations based on their classroom’s layout.

You might be wondering...

## How Much Access Do Parents Have to Professors in College?

For both parents and students, understanding that postsecondary education requires initiative and diligence on the student's part is vital. If your son or daughter is making the choice to attend a college, he or she must commit to spending extra time studying and seeking help when needed.



As students transition into postsecondary education, they are required to be independent. This is an adjustment both parents and students need to adapt to. Parents are accustomed to being involved in every step of the educational process at the high school level. Suddenly, they have very little control over the educational process because, in the eyes of the higher educational institution, the student is a legal adult at the age of 18. For the first time the student becomes the primary decisionmaker. Parents who are used to being able to contact teachers and administrators with relative ease during the high school years find themselves shut out of the educational process, which can be a hard adjustment to make. Parents who want to stay involved need to inquire about information release forms their child must execute that will allow some access to progress and grades.

College success programs, like NorthBridge, allow families to establish a more typical lifestyle at home and remove the tension from the parent-child relationship that can develop when a parent is highly involved in their child's day-to-day decisionmaking.

# Worksheet for Parents & Students

Help your child decide which path to take after high school. Fill out this worksheet together to keep note of which school qualifications are important to you both.

## General Information

Is there a city or state you have in mind? \_\_\_\_\_

Ideal School Location:  Near  Far  Online

Environment:  Large City  Small City or Town

School Size:  Small (under 2,000 students)  
 Medium (2,000 - 15,000 students)  
 Large University (greater than 15,000 students)

Annual Tuition Costs: \_\_\_\_\_

## Academic Support

Learning Disability: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child know what degree they would like to pursue?  Yes  No

## Student Life

Which of these organizations/activities is important to your child on campus?

- Greek Life    Sports    Newspaper  
 Community Service    Academic Clubs

Does your child plan to live on campus?    Yes    No    Undecided

It is important that your child's school has:

- Lots of outlets/activities  
 Few outlets/activities  
 My child will not be very involved on campus

## Disability Resource Office

Is access to assistive technology important to you and your child?

- Yes    No

What types of accommodations/supports does your child require to be successful?

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What level of advising is needed for you to feel your child can navigate college on their own?

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Would your child reach out to a tutor on campus?

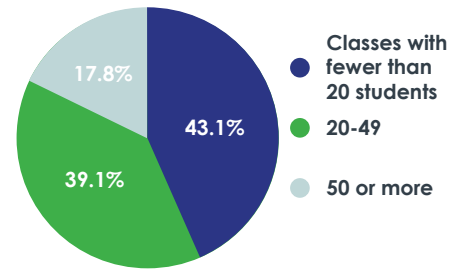
- Yes    No    Undecided

# Quick Glance at Arizona Colleges



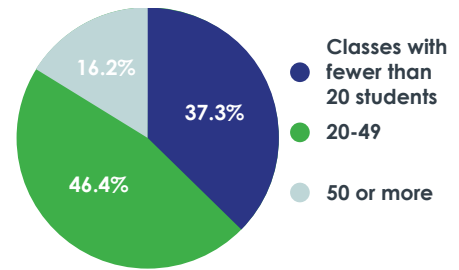
**ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Undergraduate Students:** 66,000 | **Avg GPA:** 3.5  
**Tuition:** \$9,811 | **Popular Programs:** Business, Social Sciences, Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Visual and Performing Arts and Engineering



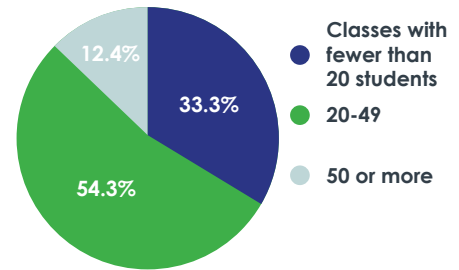
**UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA**

**Undergraduate Students:** 32,000 | **Avg GPA:** 3.4  
**Tuition:** \$10,581 | **Popular Programs:** Business, Biological and Biomedical Sciences, Social Sciences, Psychology and Interdisciplinary Studies



**NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY**

**Undergraduate Students:** 22,700 | **Avg GPA:** 3.4  
**Tuition:** \$9,990 | **Popular Programs:** Business, Education, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Health Professions and Social Studies



**MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Students Enrolled:** 23,678  
**Tuition:** \$1,974  
**Popular Programs:** Visual and Performing Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities and Health Professions

**SCOTTSDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Students Enrolled:** 10,313  
**Tuition:** \$1,974  
**Popular Programs:** Visual and Performing Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities and Business

**PARADISE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Students Enrolled:** 9,477  
**Tuition:** \$1,974  
**Popular Programs:** Visual and Performing Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities and Health Professions

**CHANDLER - GILBERT COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**Students Enrolled:** 14,399  
**Tuition:** \$1974  
**Popular Programs:** Visual and Performing Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, General Studies and Humanities and Business Marketing

\*Based on 2013 stats  
 Source: U.S. News & World Report,  
<http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges>



NorthBridge is dedicated to helping college age young adults with learning differences excel in a postsecondary education. Students are provided with a multi-layered support system that focuses on both academic success and personal development.

Our program offers the necessary support to help students excel in their postsecondary educational endeavors. Through individualized academic support and mentorship, our center reinforces effective executive functioning strategies, so that our students improve their study skills, stay organized, and find academic success.

#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**



Visit: [northbridgeaz.org](http://northbridgeaz.org)

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