College Success Program

Overview

Many students want to pursue higher learning but don't know where to start. This is especially true after moving from an environment with several supports and an IEP to higher education where students are responsible for seeking help and resources. Through the College Success Program, NorthBridge provides transition guidance, tutoring, and executive functioning skills coaching to our prospective and current college and vocational students. After attending their scheduled advisement meetings, students receive assistance enrolling in courses and ensuring they've applied for accommodations. During weekly one-on-one sessions, students are taught skills, tools, and processes needed to maximize success and overcome learning challenges which assures the completion of their academic programs. The NorthBridge College Success Program serves students in community college, university, and technical/vocational school programs.

Initial Session Protocol

As our student population transitions from high school to higher education, they are moving away from a K-12 environment with an IEP and multiple supportive individuals (teachers, speech therapists, occupational therapists) to a college environment where they will now need to advocate for themselves. Colleges, universities, and vocational schools expect the students themselves to have a certain set of skills to reach success including the skill to communicate effectively with professors and other academic staff members. Many students don't know where to start, which is where their NorthBridge Academic Coaches can help. We can set students up for success in their classes and their NorthBridge sessions by helping them complete the following tasks:

- Student Contract
  - It should be signed before or during the very first meeting. It will only need to be signed 1 time per year in the Fall and reviewed again the following Spring.

- - The student contract establishes expectations between the student, their parent(s)/guardian(s), their Academic Coach, and NorthBridge.
- Google Chat/Google Voice
  - Connect with the student via Google Chat or Google Voice so they have an immediate way to contact you in case of emergency.
- Syllabus Review
  - Assist the student in a review of each course syllabus to help them understand the differences between high school and college and course expectations (e.g. how many hours should they expect to study outside of class?)
- DRS Accommodations
  - Ensure the student has applied for Disability Resources and requested accommodations for the current semester.
    - (For Community College Students): If the student has not applied for Disability Resources through DRS Connect reach out to the Program Director for guidance.
  - The student should request them even if they do not expect to use their accommodations.
- Time Management Plan
  - Assist the student in finding a time management tool (e.g. Google Calendar, personal planner, calendar homework app).
    - The student should reference their syllabi/online portal to find due dates and record them in their calendar. Spend time with your student, scheduling due dates in Google Calendar/planner at the beginning of each month.
    - Students should be checking their calendars during every session and physically showing you what they have in their calendars. If they do not have anything listed, that is an opportunity for you to work with them on updating due dates and other important dates in their calendar.
- Check School Email
  - Students should be checking their email during every session.
  - Students may need to be reminded that important information goes to their school email and is important to check. **Daily reinforcement becomes a habit as they will likely need to check personal and work email daily.**
- Discuss First Week Coaching Questions

- - The First Week Coaching Questions are beneficial for new students and are designed to learn more about the student, their goals, and their needs.
- Executive Functioning Semester Growth Rating
  - The Growth Rating Survey should be filled out by students twice: once during the first week of sessions and again during the last week of classes. This survey is meant to help students and their families track the student's progress over the semester.
  - Academic Coaching staff are required to fill out the Growth Rating Survey twice: once at the start and again at the end of the semester, independently of their students and outside of coaching sessions. This practice allows us to gain a comprehensive understanding of the student's areas of improvement and their progress by the end of the semester. For guidance on the rating system, please refer to the Executive Functioning Semester Growth Rating Guide.
  - For guidance on the rating system, please refer to the [Executive Functioning Semester Growth Rating Guide](#).
- Check all items off on the "beginning of semester" checklist in the Tracker.
- Record all notes in TutorBird
  - Take attendance and record everything that was completed under "lesson notes". (view the TutorBird, Tracker and Grade Update section below for more details)

NorthBridge Session Procedure

While NorthBridge sessions are completely individualized based on student needs, we adhere to a loosely structured format. Our goal is to foster a warm environment by checking in with the students about personal life updates and interests. The bulk of the session is dedicated to providing academic support, addressing executive functioning needs, and utilizing strategies tailored to each student's unique learning styles. As the session draws to a close, we allocate 5-10 minutes for a structured wrap-up which allows the Coach and student to recap the key takeaways from the session and review upcoming deadlines. Finally, it's always important to recognize student efforts to boost confidence and empower our students to take ownership of their academic journey.

The following is an outline of student sessions on a day-to-day basis.

- Start with a general greeting and life update
  - Take 5 minutes to catch up with your student before officially beginning your session. This is the time to build rapport and talk about shared interests.
- Provide Coaching and Academic Support
  - For the majority of the session you will work on academics and executive functioning (view the Academic Support and Executive Functioning Coaching sections below for more details).
- Wrap-up the session
  - With 5-10 minutes left, inform the student that you will start wrapping up the session.
  - During the last 5-10 minutes, discuss the next steps for completing work and other upcoming assignments.
- Review Upcoming Deadlines
  - Review what is due before the next session so your student is thinking ahead and prepared.
  - Ask your student what **they** plan to work on independently before their next session. It's important to establish accountability by asking them what they will work on as opposed to telling them what to work on.
- End with positive reinforcement.
  - Encourage your student with comments and questions regarding their improvement
    - Ex: "You did an excellent job developing your thoughts!"
    - Ex: "Remember at the beginning of the semester when you needed my help with your citations? I noticed you did it yourself this time! How do you feel about that?"

Coach Expectations

NorthBridge Academic Coaches are essential in helping our students reach academic, career, and life success. They not only provide academic and executive functioning support but also empower students to take an active role in their academic journey. NorthBridge wants to ensure a smooth and productive tutoring experience for our students as well as a supportive and resourceful environment for our coaches. In doing so, it's necessary for all of our coaches to maintain punctuality, excellent written and verbal communication skills, and healthy working boundaries. Academic Coaches can do so by maintaining the following practices:

- Be at least 5 minutes early to each student session.
- Take attendance in TutorBird directly after each session.
- Let students know in advance via Google Chat/Google Voice if there are any changes to the session (sickness, someone substituting for you, etc.).
    - Always inform the Program Director first so she can find coverage.
- Use TutorBird to access your schedule with students.
- Respond to emails Monday-Friday 9 am to 5 pm.
    - In other words, there is no obligation to respond to emails outside of work hours.
- Provide Academic and Executive Functioning Support
- Empower students to reach out to their professors or other school officials (academic advisors, etc.) and use all resources available to them.

Academic Support

NorthBridge addresses a range of critical skills to ensure students can successfully learn from and complete their assignments. These skills include writing, reading, studying, and note-taking. Additionally, students need to ensure that they have grasped assignment concepts, submitted assignments accurately, and that they know how to apply feedback from previous assignments. These are all skills that students are expected to know in their college and vocational programs but have not yet mastered. NorthBridge Academic Coaches can be prepared by assisting students with the following:

- Writing Skills

- - Assist in formatting citations (MLA/APA/Chicago), correcting grammar/punctuation, writing complete sentences, creating essay outlines, etc.
- Study Skills
  - Use note cards/Quizlet
  - Utilize outlines, study guides, study group meetings, etc.
  - Color coding readings, annotating, practice problems, etc.
  - Have the student teach the material.
    - Help students acknowledge their testing anxiety.
      - Discuss coping strategies and remind them the best way to take the anxiety away is to study and be prepared.
- Accurate Assignment Submission
  - Double-check that the student knows how to successfully submit assignments.
- Reading and Note-taking
  - Assist with reading, understanding, and recognizing key points for note-taking.
- Break down questions
  - Sometimes prompts are loaded with academic language. It helps to break questions into simpler and shorter parts.
    - Assist students with answering the question fully and meeting word requirements - "Do you think we could add more?"
    - Do not be afraid to ask the student questions about the task or have the student clarify what he/she wants to say.
- Use Academics as a gateway to improve Executive Functioning Skills.
- Periodically revisit assignment instructions with the student to check for accuracy.
- Utilize feedback to see what they can improve on for future assignments.

Executive Functioning Support

Being proactive, communicating effectively, and managing time are crucial executive functioning skills that pave the way for academic and career success. NorthBridge is here to empower our students to nurture these skills, setting them on a path to lifelong achievement. Beyond skill development, we understand the importance of personal check-ins to ensure our students' basic needs are met, creating the foundation for their prosperity. Building strong partnerships is at the heart of our approach, creating a collaborative environment where

students know that while their coach may not have all the answers, they are wholeheartedly dedicated to supporting them throughout their academic journey. Help students by working on the following areas of Executive Functioning:

- Time Management skills
  - Utilize Google Calendar or other organizers for due dates, study time, and development of time management skills.
    - Consult planner/calendar every session to ensure they are recording due dates correctly/ following their agenda.
- Planning Ahead
  - Record due dates, tests, appointments, and NorthBridge sessions.
  - Look ahead to plan for significant assignments and exams.
- Communication with Instructors
  - Encourage students to email instructors or attend office hours when directions are unclear or if they're confused about due dates.
    - Help students draft emails if they are unsure how to format emails/ask questions.
- Prioritization
  - Help students plan out what assignments take priority.
    - Ex: If a student is doing very well in class A, then work on another class where the student is having more challenges.
- Self-Advocacy
  - Encourage students to voice their needs, and concerns, use available resources, etc.
  - Make sure they are receiving their accommodations through DRS.
    - This may include a note taker, a private testing room, extra time on online tests, etc.
    - Accommodations must be requested each semester.
- Organization
  - Help students organize their backpacks, emails, Google Drive, etc.
    - Ex: Have separate folders for each class.
  - Ensure they know where to find assignments/ how to access them.
    - Have them write directions down so they can access it on their own.
- Stress Management
  - Periodically check in to see how students are doing.

- Check that they are getting enough sleep and share resources and methods to reduce stress.
- Take breaks during sessions, especially if they are more than 2 hours.
- Help students break overwhelming tasks into smaller ones to create an action plan.
- Student/Coach Partnership
  - Your relationship with your student is essentially a partnership as you will learn from each other. This means:
    - Building rapport with your students and working alongside them to assist them in finding success.
    - Practicing compassionate curiosity and empathy while trying to understand your students' experiences.
    - You may not know every answer, but the willingness to collaborate will show students that they are not alone.
- Record all notes in TutorBird

TutorBird, Grade Updates, and the Tracker

TutorBird, the NorthBridge Tracker, and weekly Grade Updates are the key to guaranteeing that everyone remains on the same page including the student, their parents, potential VR counselors, and NorthBridge managing staff. TutorBird is used for scheduling and session management and maintaining detailed session notes. These notes are taken after every session and condensed into the Grade Update which is sent weekly. Finally, we use the Tracker to contain important student information including the Executive Functioning Semester Growth Survey which gathers valuable insights and tracks semesterly improvements in growth. These tools and practices collectively support our mission of nurturing student success:

- TutorBird
  - Used for scheduling all sessions.
  - After each session, take attendance in TutorBird and complete lesson notes for the student.
  - Include the student's class and the assignment(s) they worked on (every task should be entered in a separate row).
  - Include the following notes:
    - Objective of the assignment (purpose)

- ■ The actions that the student took to complete the assignment
- ■ What the student agreed to complete on their own.
- ● Grade Updates
  - ○ In the final session of the week, please copy and paste the notes from the previous sessions of that week into the notes section of the last session. These notes will be the **Grade Update (GU)**.
  - ○ The GU should be emailed to students, parents, the VR counselor, the Program Director, and the Lead Academic Coach.
    - ■ To ensure it is emailed to all individuals above, check the boxes of parent/counselor/program director/lead academic coach names at the bottom of the notes.
  - ○ Include in the GU:
    - ■ What student needs to do on their own over the weekend.
    - ■ Identify what the student did well and where they need help.
    - ■ Emphasize what is being done or not.
    - ■ List any late/missing assignments the student may have and highlight them in red for easier visibility.
    - ■ Always do a grade check during the last session of the week and include the grades in the GU for each class even if they remain the same from week to week.
  - ○ Grade Updates are sent out every Friday or alternatively, can be sent out after the last session of the week.
- ● NorthBridge Tracker
  - ○ The tracker is useful as it contains detailed information about each student such as their challenges, helpful strategies, and contact information.
  - ○ It is used to hold other important information about the student including:
    - ■ Student class schedules
    - ■ Checklist for beginning of semester and end of semester tasks
    - ■ Student goals
    - ■ Projected graduation dates
    - ■ Record of Unexcused Absences
    - ■ Executive Functioning Semester Growth Survey results
      - ● Used to collect student and staff ratings in regard to Executive Functioning skills and to track improvements and growth from beginning to end of the semester and from semester to semester.