more frequent visits to high schools to explain documentation procedures directly to students. High school students also need to know that they may be required to provide medical documentation before receiving support services.

As someone who has made the transition to postsecondary education, I would encourage college-bound students with disabilities to learn about all services available to students with disabilities. In addition, I believe high school counselors should work with college-bound students to help them practice self-advocacy skills. Students who already know how to advocate for their needs are more likely to achieve their postsecondary goals.

In 1978 only 2.6% of full-time first-year college students reported having any type of disability (Henderson, 1995). By 2000, this percentage had grown to 17% (National Council on Disability, 2000). While this appears to be an extraordinary advancement over the last 3 decades, in actuality Blackorby and Wagner (1996) found that 3 to 5 years after graduating from high school only 27% of students with disabilities had attempted postsecondary education compared to 68% of their peers without disabilities. Students with disabilities face many barriers to attending college, including challenging high school coursework, limited accommodations and modifications, low expectations, lack of self-determination skills, lack of role models, and learned dependence. In addition to these barriers, students with disabilities are often less qualified for college based on an index score that includes grades, class rank, National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS) composite test scores, and Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or American College Test (ACT) scores (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1999a).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that transition planning should include postschool goals for pursuing postsecondary education and training. But despite federal legislation ensuring educational supports prior to high school graduation and protecting the civil rights of students in postsecondary educational settings, few students with disabilities pursue a college degree. Obtaining a college degree is important because it can result in increased employment options and financial stability.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

For students who leave high school without a diploma, only about 15.6% obtain employment, compared to 30.2% of students with a high school diploma and 45.1% of students who have had some college. For individuals with disabilities who are able to obtain a 4-year degree, the employment rate rises to 50.3% (Yelin & Katz, 1994). However, a college degree does not guarantee full-time employment, since fewer individuals with disabilities who hold bachelor's degrees work full time than their counterparts without disabilities (National Center for the Study of Postsecondary Educational Supports [NCSPES], 2002).

A college degree is a factor in the salary that can be commanded once an individual is in the labor market. Witte, Phillips, and Kakela (1998) reported that the

annual salaries of a sample of 72 college graduates with learning disabilities (1987–1994) ranged from $20,000 to $40,000 for 49% of the group, while 19% earned $40,000 and more annually. On the other hand, Blackorby and Wagner (1997) reported that 40% of students with learning disabilities who did not attend college earned an annual salary of approximately $12,000. Overall, college graduates can expect to have better health; greater self-confidence; increased career options; higher-level problem-solving skills; improved interpersonal relationships; a higher level of open-mindedness; and more involvement in politics, community affairs, recreation, and leadership activities than nongraduates have. Those graduating from a 4-year educational institution are also less dependent on parents and governmental benefits than individuals who do not pursue postsecondary education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Turnbull, Turnbull, Wehmeyer, & Park, 2003).

FACTORS AFFECTING POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OUTCOMES

Given the significant impact that postsecondary education can have on the life of a student with a disability, it is imperative that transition planning in this area begin no later than middle school. The chance that a student with a disability will pursue a college education can be increased by educators and family members having the expectation that the student will attend college and by establishing college attendance as a postschool outcome on the transition component of the student's individualized education program (IEP'; Wagner, D'Amico, Marder, Newman, & Blackorby, 1992). Two major barriers that affect the possibility of students with disabilities enrolling in postsecondary education are (a) attitudes and expectations and (b) high school curriculum.

Attitudes and Expectations

The attitudes and expectations of parents and teachers can have a powerful impact on the path a student with disabilities will choose after graduation (Morningstar, Turnbull, & Turnbull, 1996). Since 1987 the number of parents of students with disabilities who expect their child to graduate from a 2-year college has increased from 2.6% to 12.7% (Wagner, 2003). However, there is a greater level of skepticism and doubt surrounding the achievement of postsecondary education goals than there is about employment goals among students with disabilities and their families.

The Half the Planet Foundation (2002) reported that people with disabilities often internalize the low expectations imposed on them by others. The study found that young people with disabilities are learning at an early age that the only two options they have in life are to work in a low-paying, menial job or to collect social security benefits. Maybe this is the reason that students with disabilities are twice as likely as their peers without disabilities to have no plans for pursuing any type of education past high school ("Roles for youth with Disabilities," 2002).

Although students and their parents do understand the connection between advanced training and obtaining a well-paying job, many students with disabilities do not perceive college to be a feasible option (Schuster, Timmons, & Moloney, 2003). Data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (Wagner, 2003) indicated that only about half of the students in the study (47%) had plans to go to college.

High School Curriculum Issues

Another barrier for students with disabilities transitioning into postsecondary educational settings is an IEP that does not include objectives addressing the skills needed to succeed in postsecondary education. As a result, students may not complete a course of study that prepares them for postsecondary education. Efforts to help students obtain the skills needed for success in pursuing advanced training and education should begin in elementary school. Students who plan on attending a 2-year college or 4-year university need to have a sound foundation in academic skills in order to complete the high school classes needed to meet college admission requirements. Figure 6.1 illustrates a sample college preparatory high school curriculum.

Many of the traditional instructional strategies and organizational frameworks common in high school academic programs can have a negative impact on students with disabilities (Gersten, 1998). The ability of students with learning

- **Four credits of English** (e.g., English literature, American literature, English composition, world literature)
- **Three credits of mathematics** (e.g., algebra I, algebra II, geometry, precalculus, trigonometry, calculus)
- **Three credits of science** (e.g., earth/environmental science, biology, chemistry, physics)
- **Three years of social studies** (e.g., United States history, government/economics, world history, world cultures, United States government)
- **Two to four credits of foreign language** (e.g., Spanish, French, German, Latin)
- **One credit of health and physical education**
- **One to three credits of challenging electives** (e.g., economics, computer technology, communications, psychology, statistics)
- **One or more arts education credits are usually recommended** (e.g., dance, music, theater arts, visual arts)
- **Vocational education credits** (appropriate for students pursuing any type of postsecondary education but vital to students entering a 2-year community college or vocational-technical training program)

Figure 6.1
Sample College/University Preparatory High School Curriculum

disabilities to learn effectively can be hindered by instruction delivered primarily through teacher lectures, student note-taking, and rote memorization of disconnected facts that have little or no relevance to their present or future life (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995). For some students with disabilities, failure to achieve a high level of academic achievement is directly related to the high school's inability to plan and deliver an appropriate curriculum (Berliner & Biddle, 1996; Hatch, 1998).

Educators must be careful to avoid pushing students with disabilities toward a general studies curriculum or encouraging course waivers, which might eliminate students from qualifying for admission to the college of their choice. Students with disabilities should be supported and encouraged to enroll in a college-preparatory course of study and, when appropriate, to take advanced placement (AP) courses, which can result in earning college credits while still in high school. For example, admission to a 4-year university usually requires that a student have high school foreign language credits, but data from the National Longitudinal Study-2 (Wagner, 2003) revealed that only 21% of the study's participants enrolled in foreign language courses. Having the expectation that students with disabilities will take challenging academic courses in the general curriculum was the intent of the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA.

Careful planning with active involvement by the student is required to ensure that at the conclusion of a 4-year high school program the student's academic credits, grade point average (GPA), and career exploration are in place for transition to a postsecondary educational institution. Guidance counselors can play a critical role in this process, since advising, schedule planning, and futures planning are typically part of their job responsibilities.

Students with disabilities should be assisted in obtaining the combination of courses that best matches their postsecondary education goals while simultaneously increasing their chances of academic success. Advance planning is needed to provide safety nets for students who might have difficulty in a course and need to make schedule changes or who might need to retake a course due to failure.

The type of scheduling used by a high school (e.g., block, six-period, A-B, seven-period), the number of course offerings, the state's pathways to a high school diploma, and the amount of time needed for special education support are all issues that must be considered when determining a 4-year high school plan. Certainly high schools that have classrooms, curriculum, courses, and programs that are universally accessible to all students and that provide the support staff needed for comprehensive planning will be more successful in graduating students prepared for continuing their education.

Additional issues that affect the ability of students with disabilities to transition successfully to postsecondary education include (a) the high drop-out rate of students with disabilities (NCSPES, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 2002a), (b) the increased emphasis on high-stakes assessment (deFur, 2002; Langenfield, Thurlow, & Scott, 1997; Thurlow, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2002), and (c) students' possible confusion with the multiplicity of exit document options (e.g., certificates,

diplomas) available (Guy, Shin, Lee, & Thurlow, 2002). For a more detailed discussion of these issues, see Chapter 2.

CHOOSING A POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OPTION

The first step for a student in the transition process from school to postsecondary education is to decide between available options.

Colleges and Universities

It is the responsibility of the IEP/transition team to assist the student in getting ready for postsecondary education and training. This includes making decisions regarding the postsecondary educational setting most appropriate to the student's needs and future career goals, supporting the student through the process of choosing a college, and making necessary arrangements to attend the college of his or her choice. Traditionally, students focus on two types of postsecondary education—community colleges and 4-year universities—although there are other options such as vocational-technical schools, special training programs, and Internet-based learning. There are more than 3,000 colleges and universities in the United States (Reamer, 1997), and since services for students with disabilities vary widely among institutions, choosing an appropriate educational setting can be an enormous task for a student. The key is to ensure a good match between the student's unique needs, his or her career goal, and the characteristics of the college (McGuire & Shaw, 1987; Navicky, 1998).

One area that must be investigated when searching for an appropriate college is the level of services provided to students with disabilities. Although there are federal mandates covering issues related to postsecondary education of students with disabilities, there are still vast differences among institutions. Students and their families must be provided with information about what to expect at the college level regarding the delivery of special services. Figure 6.2 includes a list of questions that students can ask when choosing a college or university.

Community Colleges

The majority of students with disabilities who pursue postsecondary education enroll in 2-year **community colleges** or for-profit vocational training programs (NCES, 1999a). A community college setting is attractive to students with disabilities for a variety of reasons. Although community college standards vary from state to state, in general they have an open enrollment admission policy, meaning that any student with a high school diploma or general education diploma (GED) will be accepted. Community colleges typically require applicants to take a placement test such as the Assessment of Skills for Successful Entry and Transfer

(ASSET), but even if a student scores below the cut-off on admission tests they can still enroll in remedial classes or in vocationally oriented programs leading to a license, certificate, or credential (e.g., child care, food service, automotive repair, computer-assisted drafting) instead of pursuing an associate of science or associate of arts degree. Many community colleges have programs that are linked with local high schools (e.g., tech-prep, school-to-career, 2+2 programs) allowing students to take classes in a specific career pathway during the last 2 years of high school to better prepare them for college success. In some cases they allow students to obtain college credit prior to high school graduation.

Community colleges are usually located close to a student's home, and in many cases courses are offered at accessible times, with classes scheduled from 7:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. and some offered on weekends. Tuition costs are much lower at community colleges than those found in 4-year colleges and universities (Ignash, 1994). Students who experience difficulty obtaining sufficient financial aid may choose to attend a community college for 2 years, then transfer to a 4-year college or university, since community colleges typically have articulation agreements with 4-year colleges and universities. Students may also find the community college setting less threatening, since class sizes tend to be smaller, the student population is more reflective of the local community, and it is not unusual for community college students to attend college part time. Finally, some students may want to enter the workforce as soon as possible and feel that a 2-year degree or certification program is a more expedient path to a career (Cocchi, 1997).

Vocational-Technical Schools and Other Postsecondary Education Options

Not all students with disabilities will choose to attend a traditional educational or training program at a community college or 4-year university. Some students will desire educational opportunities such as a vocational-technical school or a specialized training program to obtain a better job. Options may include programs resulting in certification in areas such as child care, nursing assistance, cosmetology, secretarial work, or truck driving. Other students may want to take courses through adult education programs at community colleges aimed at improving a specific skill area (e.g.. reading, math), or they may wish to pursue an area of interest (e.g., cooking, gardening, computers) through continuing education courses offered in the community by various agencies. For students who are

DID YOU KNOW?

Two-year degrees in technical and occupational areas can result in high-paying careers and jobs equal to or greater than those obtained by graduates from 4-year colleges and universities (Gray, 1996).

eager to obtain employment immediately following graduation, programs offered through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), designed to increase employability through training and education, might be an option.

The transition planning process should be used to ensure that students understand the wide variety of postsecondary educational options so that even those who feel that after high school graduation they "never want to go to school again" can begin to view adult learning in a different manner.

High School Diploma Alternatives

There may even be situations in which students decide to leave high school prior to completing the criteria for a high school diploma (e.g., no desire to remain in school past age 18) and want to enter the GED program or the adult high school diploma program at the local community college. A GED examination consists of six test sections: social studies, science, math, literature, arts, and writing. Passing scores for the GED are established by each state; however, all GED graduates must meet a standard that exceeds the performance of at least 33% of students receiving a high school diploma through the traditional high school route (American Council on Education, 2000). An adult high school diploma is earned through instruction offered cooperatively with local public school systems, usually follows a course of study identical to the high school curriculum, and results in the student's receiving a real high school diploma. Students who choose to pursue either of these paths toward a graduation credential should be well informed of the rigor involved in passing these tests—including the time commitment—and the skill levels that will be required so that they can make an informed decision regarding high school completion.

Postsecondary Education Programs for Students with Significant Disabilities

The disabilities most frequently reported by young people enrolled in postsecondary institutions are learning disabilities (LD) and/or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD; NCSPES, 2000a). Postsecondary education has only recently become an option for students with significant disabilities such as mental retardation, autism, or multiple disabilities. Some school systems are implementing programs to allow students who require educational services past the age of 18 to "graduate" with their peers and continue educational programming on the campuses of community colleges, universities, or vocational-technical schools. These programs are designed to provide a more age-appropriate learning environment in which students with significant disabilities can increase their independence through employment; community involvement; friendships with other college students; recreational activities; and the development of communication, social, and self-determination skills. Most programs offer a combination of college classes, basic or functional skills classes, and job experiences (Grigal,

Neubert, & Moon, 2002). See Chapter 2 for more information on programs for students ages 18 to 21.

PREPARING FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

To prepare students who choose to pursue postsecondary education, high schools should (a) provide rigorous programs designed to adequately prepare students, (b) promote self-determination skills, and (c) provide comprehensive and effective transition planning that begins early and focuses on the steps needed to successfully enroll in postsecondary education. In addition, students, families, and teams need to consider such issues as college admission tests, financial aid, differences between high school and postsecondary education environments, civil rights, accommodations and modifications, and technology.

Provide a Rigorous High School Program

Providing a rigorous high school program for students with disabilities that encompasses all of the experiences and instruction needed to ensure that they will achieve their desired postschool educational outcomes requires comprehensive instruction in a variety of areas, including self-determination, career awareness/exploration, core academics, social skills, and study skills. It also requires student and family involvement, interagency collaboration, and the provision of supports students need to succeed in the least restrictive environment.

Regular academic course enrollment in high school is a significant predictor of future participation in postsecondary education (Baer et al., 2003). About 70% of students with disabilities who enroll in postsecondary education spend at least 75% of their time in general education classes while in high school (U.S. Department of Education, 1995). Enrollment in general education courses can result in students' being held to higher academic standards, similar to those they will experience at the postsecondary education level (Rojewski, 1996), and prepare them for an environment where they will be expected to participate in a regular course of study (Stodden, Galloway, & Stodden, 2003).

Exclusion from the general curriculum can result in lower expectations and stigmatization within the general student body (Rea, McLaughlin, & Walther-Thomas, 2002), and it does not promote mastery of academically challenging coursework (NCSPES, 2000b) such as algebra and geometry, which can increase the likelihood of postsecondary education attendance (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Students who are enrolled in general education classes are generally viewed as more capable in all areas, including their personal decision making and goal setting, and this results in higher levels of self-determination.

It is unfortunate, but due to variables such as the shortage of financial and professional resources and conflicting philosophies, many high schools continue to use some form of tracking or ability grouping, resulting in unequal levels of

curriculum (Oakes & Wells, 1998; Vough, Schumm, & Brick, 1998). If a high school focuses on students' academic weaknesses, using special education classes and modified curriculum to address individual learning needs instead of providing the general curriculum in a manner that addresses multiple learning styles and needs, students with disabilities will not only be ill-equipped academically, but will also be unprepared to meet the drastically different educational environment they will encounter on a college campus (Stodden & Jones, 2002).

High school special education programs must be open to incorporating a variety of innovative instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction, problem-based learning, metacognitive approaches, technological support, curriculum modifications, and graphic organizers into routine service delivery to support students in the general education program and facilitate their comprehension of course content (MacArthur, Schwartz, Graham, Molloy, & Harris, 1996; NCSPES, 2000b; Rose & Meyer, 2000; Tomlinson, 1999). High schools must take responsibility not only for expanding students' academic ability but also for ensuring the development of students as mature young adults capable of taking on the social challenges associated with the college experience.

Promote Self-Determination Skills

Self-determination is one of the most important skills for students with disabilities who wish to pursue postsecondary education. It is an area that permeates a young person's high school years, providing avenues for participation in planning, decision making, and self-advocacy. There must be sustained efforts by educators and family members to provide students with specific instruction in self-determination skills and opportunities for generalization (Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Zhang, 2002). Simply enrolling students in an isolated self-determination course is not sufficient. The high school environment must provide opportunities that allow students to practice self-determination skills on a daily basis. These practical application experiences should be reinforced with individualized instruction delivered through a structured self-determination curriculum (Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998).

Many researchers have noted that students can benefit from self-determination training (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001). Involvement in self-determination training can increase a student's knowledge of available services, clarify future goals, and improve self-concept (Phillips, 1990). Students who have received self-determination training are able to generalize self-advocacy skills to a variety of school settings (Durlak, Rose, & Bursuck, 1994). Various curricula can be used in conjunction with individualized instruction and generalization opportunities to ensure that self-determination becomes a part of a student's repertoire of skills. Special educators should take advantage of curricula such as *TAKE CHARGE for the Future* (Powers et al., 2001) and *Whose Future Is It Anyway?* (Wehmeyer & Lawrence, 1995).

In addition to using commercial curricula, teachers should be encouraged to infuse self-determination training into the general curriculum. High-stakes testing has caused educators to struggle with the logistics of how, when, and where

to teach self-determination skills due to what often appear to be conflicting academic expectations and pressures. Teachers should be trained to take advantage of routine events within the high school (e.g., scheduling, requesting accommodations and medication), augment curriculum, and infuse self-determination into classroom lessons. For example, increased self-awareness can result from the use of journaling in which students investigate and write about their own disabilities (Eisenman & Tascione, 2002), Instead of special education teachers' making all the arrangements for accommodations for students who are taking general education courses, students can participate in this process to improve their self-advocacy skills. Students can improve their decision-making skills by taking a lead role in managing their time for homework.

Although significant advancements have been made in increasing the self-determination of students with disabilities, research indicates that there is still work to be done by teachers and parents. For more information on self-determination, see Chapter 2.

Once a student is enrolled in college, self-determination skills will give him or her the foundation needed to handle social situations, obtain needed accommodations and modifications, and persevere through the many difficult situations that will be encountered on the path to an advanced degree. One of the major factors in succeeding in higher education is a student's inner strength (NCSPES, 2000c). Directors of postsecondary education disability support services report that students who have realistic goals, self-advocacy skills, and appropriate academic preparation have greater success in college programs than those who do not have these attributes (Kurtz & Hicks-Coolick, 1997).

Students who aspire to a postsecondary education and who want to be equipped to navigate the postsecondary educational environment must participate in self-determination activities that provide support in the following areas:

1. Investigating future career options and making decisions regarding the level of postsecondary education needed for a chosen career.
2. Using effective decision-making strategies regarding coursework, schedules, assignment completion, career training, postsecondary education, and employment.
3. Setting realistic and attainable short-term and long-term goals and accomplishing the goals by breaking them down into smaller objectives, establishing timelines, and identifying resources for helping them achieve the goals.
4. Solving problems by eliciting advice and assistance, alternating plans, demonstrating flexibility, and devising additional options for accomplishing goals or solving problems.
5. Conducting ongoing self-evaluation and monitoring of progress, which should include acknowledging ongoing problems, reflecting on past successes and failures, and devising solutions (Guillory, Brown, & Everson, 2001).
6. Fully understanding the impact of having a disability but viewing it as only part of what makes a person unique.

7. Being willing to take reasonable risks, trying new things, and disengaging themselves from dependent relationships with family members.
8. Effectively using emotional coping and stress-reducing strategies such as early identification of stress-producing situations, seeking counseling, seeking assistance when needed, using peer supports, developing a mentor, and planning ahead for difficult situations (Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 2003).
9. Practicing conflict resolution skills when needed to work out differences with friends, family, and college personnel.

Get the Family and IEP Team Involved

It is important for educators and parents to assist students in understanding the importance of using their high school years to accumulate experiences that can help them in choosing and being successful in a future career. Students should be encouraged to take elective courses in many disciplines, master basic academic skills (e.g., writing composition, keyboarding, public speaking), join school clubs, do volunteer work, and, if possible, obtain a paid job while still in high school. To choose the proper course of study for postsecondary education, students must have access to career counseling supported by career awareness and career development activities that will provide realistic information about employment trends, educational requirements, and possible job accommodations (Hartman & Baker, 1986).

Although many students with disabilities are consumed with completing the academic credits needed for high school graduation and have little time leftover for elective courses and employability activities (Guy et al., 2002), participation in career-related experiences such as internships can be an asset in choosing the best match in both postsecondary education and future employment. Exposure to actual work settings allows students to understand the potential impact of their disability, practice self-advocacy related to disability issues, and test various accommodations and modifications (Stern, 2002). In general, students with disabilities who have access to vocational and occupational skill training will experience more positive outcomes associated with postschool employment and postsecondary education than those who do not have such access (Wagner, Blackorby, Cameto, & Newman, 1993).

As part of the transition planning process beginning in the late middle school and early high school years, educators and counselors should involve students in assessment activities and goal planning to assist them in making decisions regarding the types of postsecondary educational settings appropriate for their abilities, interests, and career goals. Pursuing postsecondary education and training must be the student's decision. Although family members and educators should ensure that students fully understand the career opportunities associated with a college degree and the other benefits of continuing their education, ultimately it is the student's choice to attend college.

DID YOU KNOW?

First-generation college students with disabilities face greater challenges since many are less academically and psychologically prepared for college than their peers from college-educated families (Mitchell, 1997).

The role that family members play in a young person's life also changes drastically as the young person advances from being a high school student to a college student. The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) requires that postsecondary educational institutions treat all student information as confidential and maintain all disability-related information on separate forms in a secure location. Disability information is to be shared only on a limited basis with faculty and staff who have a compelling reason for accessing the information, such as planning accommodations or modifications. Since college students have reached the age of majority and are considered adults by legal standards, postsecondary educational institutions are unable to share information with a student's family or anyone else outside the college environment unless the student signs a release allowing the college to do so (Association on Higher Education and Disability [AHEAD], 1996).

During transition planning, activities and strategies should be developed that will help a student make the transition to a learning and social environment that is quite different from the one to which the student has been accustomed. A comprehensive transition component developed by a team that clearly establishes a postschool goal of postsecondary education can serve as the roadmap from high school to postsecondary education and/or training. The use of student surveys, interviews, and questionnaires can assist in determining the readiness of a student who desires postsecondary education and provide a systematic approach to identifying an overall picture of the student's strengths and needs (Babbit & White, 2002). Transition teams should work to discover answers to the following questions:

1. What knowledge and skills are needed to make the transition to a postsecondary academic or vocational-technical program a successful experience?
2. What knowledge and skills does the student possess at the present time?
3. What knowledge and skills does the student need to acquire? (NICHCY Transition Summary, 1993).

The key is to devise a plan that is holistic. It is true that a student must be academically successful to enter postsecondary education, but a narrow focus on academics can result in other transition need areas being overlooked or receiving limited attention (Hasazi, Furney, & DeStefano, 1999).

Finally, having a student take a lead role in the transition planning process can contribute to independence and development of self-determination by allowing the student to describe his or her strengths, needs, and desires to the IEP team. Careful consideration should also be given during planning meetings to targeting goals that develop learning strategies related to studying, note-taking, test-taking, scheduling, communication, negotiation, assertiveness, memory, organization, time management, and assistive technology (Izzo & Lamb, 2002).

Many high school special education programs focus on remediation and/or maintenance in the general education program (e.g., assistance with homework, studying for tests, catching up on class assignments) and do not provide sufficient instruction in compensatory strategies needed for academic independence in a postsecondary setting. For example, students with learning disabilities report that they learn the majority of compensatory and learning strategies needed for postsecondary success after enrolling in college, even though they received special education services while in high school (Reis, Neu, & McGuire, 1997).

Teach Learning Strategies

Although many high school students have full schedules, time must be allotted to teach learning strategies that will transfer throughout the curriculum and assist in preparing for increasingly demanding academic tasks. Many learning strategies can easily be infused into general education classes. Learning strategies instruction can also be delivered in special education resource classes, during tutoring sessions, in after-school workshops, or in summer seminars. One approach that can be used by teachers at the high school or college level is the spontaneous teaching of skills in a structured format to help a student understand a strategy, its purpose, and how to use it. This process assists the student in internalizing the strategy, thereby increasing the likelihood that it will be added to the student's repertoire of learning techniques. Following is an outline for teachers to use when presenting a new strategy to students:

1. *What is the strategy?* The strategy is described or a definition is given in a manner that outlines the specific features of the strategy.
2. *Why should the strategy be learned?* Students are informed of why the strategy is being taught so they can develop an awareness of its importance in the learning process.
3. *How can the strategy be used?* The application of a strategy to a particular learning situation is outlined for students in a manner that provides a chronological, step-by-step breakdown of how the strategy should be applied.
4. *When and where should the strategy be used?* Students are given examples of situations in which the strategy could be used in an effective manner. This can involve verbal scenarios, role playing, and/or testimonials from students who have used the strategy effectively.

5. *How can the strategy be evaluated to determine its effectiveness for a student?* Students are taught how to judge the effectiveness of the strategy in relation to their specific needs (Seidenberg, as cited in Brinckerhoff, Shaw, & McGuire, 1993)

Take the College Admission Tests

Four-year universities look at several academic factors when determining admission, including GPA, rank in high school senior class, and **college admission test** (**SAT** or **ACT**) scores. A student's GPA and class rank can serve as indicators of consistency and performance over time. Test scores for the SAT or ACT serve as a measure of academic potential or aptitude and can serve as a predictor of success in a postsecondary education setting (Lissner, 1999). The majority of colleges and universities in the United States use one of these tests when making an admission decision.

For many students with disabilities, obtaining a satisfactory score on one of these tests serves as a major barrier to postsecondary education because the tests are time limited and require considerable reading. Without encouragement and support, some students with disabilities may avoid taking a college admission test due to test anxiety and/or a history of bad experiences in testing situations. The National Longitudinal Study-2 (Wagner, 2003) reported that only 26% of 11th- and 12th-graders in all disability categories take college entrance exams.

Determine the Need for Accommodations. It is imperative that high school students with disabilities receive accurate and up-to-date information regarding testing accommodations for the SAT and ACT. About 2% of the 2 million students who take these tests each year receive accommodations. The majority of students requesting additional time have learning disabilities. As of fall 2003, the College Board stopped "flagging" the scores of students who take the test with extended time (Lewin, 2003). Both the SAT and ACT have specific rules for accommodations, referred to as the College Board's Eligibility and Documentation Guidelines. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act require that testing accommodations be made available to students with disabilities unless the area of impairment is what is going to be measured, the test modification will fundamentally alter the assessment of the targeted skill, providing the accommodation will create undue hardship for the testing service, or the test applicant refuses the accommodation that is offered (Hishinuma, 2000).

Appropriate documentation regarding the student's disability is necessary not only to receive accommodations for admission tests but also, as will be discussed later, for the process of receiving accommodations once enrolled in a postsecondary education institution. The primary reasons for rejection of a requested accommodation by the College Board is the failure of documentation to accurately describe the testing and techniques used to determine the student's diagnosis or the functional limitations arising from the disability ("The SAT: Where It's At," 2004). Therefore, it is important for high school staff to assist students and their

families in obtaining appropriate documentation of disability to secure accommodations in both college entrance examinations and college-level courses in order to prevent duplication of effort.

In general, a student must have a diagnosed disability, have documentation of the disability on file at the school (e.g., IEP, Section 504 plan, or appropriate evaluation), and have at least a 4-month history of receiving the same or similar accommodations in the high school program in order to receive accommodations on major college admission examinations (Fuller & Wehman, 2003).

Request an Accommodation. All tests have similar guidelines and procedures for requesting accommodations. When requests are being reviewed, the student's prior academic performance, based on the specific accommodation being requested, will be considered. Also, approval of any request for testing accommodations will be based on the specific limitations of the student's disability, which makes the provision of supporting documentation regarding the disability very important. Test applicants requesting accommodations will need to provide a diagnostic testing report prepared by an appropriate professional that is based on reliable, valid, and standardized testing. It must address the functional limitations of the disability and how the accommodation being requested can alleviate the affect of the disability during a testing situation (American College Test [ACT], 2001).

Prepare for the Test. Support and advice from high school guidance counselors and special education professionals as a student gets ready to take college admission tests can help the student become familiar with testing design, format, instructions, and general tips for obtaining higher scores. Ideally, a student should be provided with guidance in choosing testing accommodations that best fit the unique complexities of his or her specific disability and should have received extensive experience in using the accommodations during a variety of testing situations.

High school guidance counselors are an excellent source of information since they are knowledgeable about upcoming changes in test design and policies governing the administration of the tests. Inclusion of the guidance counselor on the IEP team can ensure that the student is informed in advance of issues that may impact test scores. For example, in 2005 an essay section was added to the SAT, which may pose an additional challenge for some students with learning disabilities ("The SAT: Where It's At," 2004).

To increase their likelihood of success, students can participate in a variety of activities prior to the college admission testing session. It has been noted that students who have practiced test-taking skills, learned relaxation strategies, and acquired techniques for dealing with test anxiety can obtain better scores than those who have not (Foster, Paulk, & Dastoor, 1999). It is also helpful for students to take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) during the early high school years to get a sense of how prepared they are to apply to a postsecondary education institution and to become familiar with the testing environment, test expectations, and test format. High school support staff should encourage students to