SELF-ADVOCACY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND/OR ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDERS

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SELF-ADVOCACY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND/OR ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDERS

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By
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Lexington, Kentucky

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2016

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

SELF-ADVOCACY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES AND/OR ATTENTION-DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDERS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of a seven-week self-advocacy intervention on students’ with LD and/or ADHD abilities to self-advocate with college professors and understand their disability. Prior research has indicated that students with LD and/or ADHD must, in order to accomplish their postsecondary educational goals, be skilled at and responsible for accessing and utilizing any accommodations they need to complete their course of study. Despite the amendments to 2004 IDEA specific to transition planning, compared with same age peers, many students with LD and ADHD demonstrate less self-awareness entering college in addition to limited skills in the areas of self-determination and self-advocacy.

This research study utilized an exploratory multiple case studies approach to investigate the effect of a self-advocacy instructional intervention on six college-aged students’ with LD and/or ADHD abilities to advocate with their college professors and understand their disability. This study’s sample was drawn from both the LD and ADHD student populations who were enrolled in an Academic Support Program (ASP) at the university level.

This study extends Merchant’s (1998) work in the following ways: first, by qualitatively exploring student perceptions of self-advocacy and accommodation seeking through pre/post-intervention interviews, secondly by the inclusion of participants with ADHD, and thirdly through the addition of another quantitative measure (Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ)). Students took part in a seven-week instructional self-advocacy intervention. The director of the ASP conducted classes that met weekly for seven consecutive weeks. Students were presented the following topics: goal setting, differences between high school and college, part I and II, learning styles and preferences, knowledge of disability: strengths and challenges, accommodations, self-advocacy and self-determination and putting it all together. Semi-structured pre/post interviews, pretest/posttest questionnaires on the components of self-advocacy, written knowledge pretest/posttests, and pretest/posttest role-play sessions requesting accommodations from a professor were utilized as measures for the study.

Findings revealed that the early disability experiences in K-12 shaped the participants’ capacities to learn and demonstrate self-advocacy skills. Four main themes emerged from the stories and lived experiences of six college students with LD and/or ADHD: (a) interactions between family support and educational experiences; (b) self-advocacy knowledge; (c) self-advocacy experiences; and (d) perceived benefits of the intervention. Students found the intervention curriculum helpful in supporting future self-advocacy behavior. Small improvements were seen in the quantitative measures utilized (role-play scores, knowledge test results, SAQ). Limitations and implications for future research are discussed.

KEYWORDS: self-advocacy, postsecondary transition, learning disabilities, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, instructional intervention
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November 30, 2016
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my younger brother Brian, whose struggle with a LD is the main reason I decided to go into the field of special education and working with individuals with learning differences. He has always worked hard to succeed at whatever he puts his mind to do.

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Imagine being 18 years old, and it is nearing the end of your senior year of high school. You are excited because you have been accepted to a university five hours from home, but you have no idea what to expect once you arrive on campus. You have had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the last six years due to an identified learning disability (LD), but your parents and teachers have taken responsibility for identifying and implementing the accommodations you needed in your classes. Your special education teacher talked to you about your transition from high school and what you wanted to do once you graduated but honestly, as a high school student you had yet to gain much experience in making decisions about your future independently. The high school counselor assisted you with interest inventories and career assessments. You completed activities exploring different types of careers to pursue. However, since transitioning to college seemed so far in the future, you did not pay attention. You only understood that your parents expected you to go to college and that attending college would be fun.

As the time to leave for college approached, you sensed some apprehension as well as a lot of excitement about what the next year would hold. Your parents were experiencing a never ending round of questions. “How will my child make it without me at college? Does he know what he needs to do to succeed in college?” As the student, you were more concerned about your new roommate and what activities you would be involved in rather than about selecting the best classes to take during your freshman year in college. Your main concern was meeting people so that you could enroll in classes with friends and avoid being alone.
Your parents drive you to campus and help you set up your room, purchase your books, and find the locations of your classes. Afterward, your parents tell you to contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) the following day to arrange for and receive accommodations in your classes. They give you a copy of your IEP, a copy of results from your most recent battery of testing, and remind you to make sure to have ODS arrange your accommodations. You tell your parents that you believe you will not need any accommodations, especially given that you graduated from high school with a 3.5-grade point average (GPA). You ask them not to worry and, you promise to find time to study. You are certain that you will succeed in your courses without accommodations. As your parents prepare to leave they say once again, “Make sure you, at least, talk to someone in DS so they can explain what services are offered in college.”

The first week of classes ends and you have loved being away from home and the opportunity it gave you to meet new people. Your classes do not seem too difficult, so you decide to wait to seek out the ODS. You like the idea of trying college without being labeled as having a disability. Mid-terms arrive, and you cannot believe you are halfway through your first semester of college. The work load was a little more than you expected, but after all, it was your first semester. You thought classes would get easier once you settled into a routine. You received three mid-term grades, two D’s and one F but you know you have time to bring them up, and you believe you will finish the semester with better grades. You are relieved that your parents no longer need to know about your grades since you are on your own now. During every phone conversation, your parents still inquire as to when you will go to the ODS, and you always tell them you are managing your coursework just fine without accommodations.
Finals week has begun. You have looked ahead and taken note of the days your final exams have been scheduled. You will take five exams; two one day, none the next, and the last three the following day. However, since you have had three tests on the same day before in High School, you assume you will manage finals week without a problem. You cannot believe you will have your exams and no classes; you are certain this will make it easier to study and bring up your grades. You finish the week. You are aware that you did not get as much studying done as you had planned, but you had so much to do before everyone went home for the holidays.

You get home and crash for the first three days of your Winter Break since you did not get much sleep during finals week. The registrar posted final grades online the following week. You were surprised to learn that you failed two classes, earned a D in another class, and earned a C in your speech class. Your parents asked you about your final grades, and that is when everything fell apart. You explained to your parents that you believed you were doing much better in your courses. You are now feeling unsure as to how you performed so badly. You felt as if you knew the information presented in class and you believed you studied adequately for each course. Your parents then asked you if you ever visited the ODS, and you reply that you did not. You disclose to them that you no longer wanted to feel different and that you wanted to manage your college experience without the assistance of others. You no longer had an interest in having a disability label. Your parents said they understood your feelings, but they knew success in college was not going to be achieved with F’s and D’s. At the end of the conversation, you promised them that you would go to ODS first thing spring semester and tell them that you have a learning disability.
Upon returning for the spring semester, you face a different set of unknowns. What you had not realized was that as a college student you were expected to put forth the effort to self-identify as an individual with a disability. To receive accommodations, you are to notify the ODS and provide the appropriate documentation of your disability. It is the ODS that writes a letter for you to share with your professors stating that you have a disability. The letter does not tell the professors anything personal, just that you are entitled to certain accommodations such as time and a half on tests and quizzes, tutoring in math and reading, and help to access textbooks electronically. These are similar to the types of accommodations you received in high school, but the onus never rested upon you to request assistance in order to receive them. You reflect on the many times your teachers talked about transition, and you remember doing activities your teachers told you would help prepare you for life after high school. Yet, at the time, you did not see the relevance of those transition activities to your future plans to attend college.

The previous scenario is representative of the many stories from college students with LD that I listened to as a former College Disability Service Coordinator. I encountered students who had not self-identified and had experienced a semester or even a full year of failing grades before coming to inquire about the accommodations process.
Chapter One

Introduction

The transition from high school to a postsecondary education environment can be difficult for students with learning disabilities (LD) and/or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They have come from an environment where they were guided by their parents/guardians and teachers in how to request accommodations to a post-secondary education setting where they are expected to achieve on their own. For some, this may be the first time in their life where they are forced to be independent of their parents. With these new experiences, difficulties may arise. This study will examine the role that self-advocacy plays in minimizing the effects of their learning differences during this period of adjustment.

Accessing Accommodations: Self-Disclosure

Why are students with LD or other “hidden disabilities” so reluctant to self-disclose upon enrolling in college? Many students do not want to continue receiving special education services while in college (e.g., Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002; Marshak, Van Wieren, Raeke Ferrell, Swiss & Dugan, 2010). Students have identified some factors that serve to inhibit self-disclosure. For example, students state that they know they can “do it” without accommodations, or they do not want their professor to perceive them as being “dumb” or that they cannot do the work. Getzel and Thoma (2008) found that some students were made to feel that they did not belong in postsecondary programs due to their need to self-disclose and receive special accommodations. Getzel and Thoma also discovered that students shared concerns of being viewed in a negative light by their professors for even needing accommodations.
Faculty attitudes and behaviors coupled with students’ desires to avoid labeling may contribute significantly to students’ avoidance and unwillingness to self-disclose as having a LD or to request any type of accommodation from faculty (Skinner, & Lindstrom, 2003).

Successful transition to college for students with LD often requires that students be prepared to seek out the accommodations they will need to help them compensate for learning deficits in the classroom (Brinkerhoff et al., 2002; Getzel, & Thoma, 2008; Marshak et al., 2010). Conner (2012) maintains that self-disclosure of a disability is a decision that must be made by students with LD as they pursue their college education. The choice of whether to self-disclose or not has consequences. While disclosing one’s disability to a disability services professional can be done at any point in the semester or academic year, making the choice not to disclose can result in the loss of a semester of classes if the realization occurs too late in the semester to receive needed accommodations. Consequently, students with LD need to learn decision-making skills in high school so they can apply these skills upon entering college in ways that will help them facilitate academic success as a college student (Conner). Irrespective of their choice, students with LD need to understand their rights of self-disclosure and what services are available to them at their particular college campus (Marshak et al., 2010).

**Accessing Accommodations: The Process**

Taking the initiative to self-disclose a disability to the University’s ODS is only the first step a student must take towards receiving accommodations in college. Additionally, the student needs to discuss with the ODS any prior use of accommodations, whether during high school or at another postsecondary institution.
Based upon this discussion of beneficial accommodations the student has utilized or other possible accommodations recommended by ODS staff (in addition to any additional required documentation of the disability), the ODS will craft an official letter outlining the necessary accommodations for the student. Finally, students have the responsibility to arrange appointments with professors to share this official letter and discuss how specific accommodations will be implemented for each of their courses (Brinkerhoff et al., 2002; Lindstrom, 2007; Skinner, 1998).

Hadley (2006) examined the skills involved in approaching one’s professor and found that for students with LD taking this step could be one of the most difficult steps taken in college. Approaching a college professor about course accommodations differs from how students might seek support from a high school teacher. During high school years, students have a team of individuals providing support and implementing their needed accommodations. While their high school teachers may be aware of the student’s needs (because of access to the student’s IEP), college professors are not. Once again, this highlights the importance of students needing to understand their disability, knowing what supports are available to them, and self-advocating for these needed accommodations or services. In contrast, high school students do not typically have the responsibility for the specific elements of the accommodation process. The requirements and obstacles of postsecondary education may exacerbate the areas of weakness inherent with LD and having the necessary skills of self-advocacy to approach situations may prove helpful (Brinckerhoff, 1994, 1996; Cano Smith, 2009).
Definitions

Learning disabilities. The National Joint Committee on Learning Disability (NJCLD) defines a learning disability as a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Even though a learning disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g., sensory impairment, mental retardation, social and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g., cultural differences, insufficient/inappropriate instruction, psychogenic factors), it is not the result of those conditions or influences (1991, pp. 18-20).

Education scholars have sought to create a straightforward definition of LD from as early as the 1920’s. The definition has evolved since that time in efforts to identify the population of students who learned differently but were not students with mental retardation (MR) or other disabilities (Bender, 2008). Throughout the decades from the 1930’s to the 1960’s researchers and educators approached the instruction of students with LD from the neurological and/or processing disorders perspective (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003). This is congruent with the perspective put forth by Samuel Kirk (1962), one of the early theorists in the area of teaching students with LD. He
viewed this population of students as a heterogeneous group of children who did not fit neatly into any particular style of learning and had underlying processing difficulties that interfered with their learning; effectively creating a discrepancy for the student. The term \textit{discrepancy} in this context is understood to be the difference observed between an individual’s intellectual functioning when compared with their actual academic achievement and ability to process information (Kosine, 2006; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2003).

In addition to the issue of properly defining LD, the academic concerns students with this hidden disability were often overlooked both by educators and by parents. In fact, it was a commonly held belief that individuals “outgrew” LD by the completion of high school (Brinckerhoff, 1996; Merchant, 1998; NJCLD, 1991; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). The misconception of outgrowing a learning disability was further researched during the 1980’s, and 1990’s in efforts to provide evidence of the disabilities’ existence among individuals after high school (deBettncourt, Zigmond, & Thornton, 1989; Deshler & Schumaker, 1983; Mercer, 1997; NJCLD, 1991). The work of multiple scholars helped to establish the understanding that a diagnosis of LD has lifelong implications (Vogel & Adelman, 1992; Skinner, 1998; Trainin & Swanson, 2005). The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1994) addressed concerns shared by adults with LD and the issues that affect them. A main observation of the committee proceedings was that many students with LD graduated from high school with the mistaken idea that they had outgrown their disability. Practitioners in the field have gained firsthand knowledge of the academic and emotional effects LD has on individuals and how those effects manifest differently in the lives of students. This deeper understanding has led
practitioners to believe that students with LD need to develop an understanding of their disabilities, how the disability affects their learning, which accommodations can assist them in compensating and adapting to their disability, and how to communicate their needs to their college professors (Brinckerhoff, 1996; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003; Timmons, Wills, Kemp, Basha, & Mooney, 2010).

**Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.** Another hidden disability is that of Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Research conducted by Barkley, Fisher, Smallish, and Fletcher (2002), suggests that 19% to 26% of children with LD may also have a diagnosis of ADHD. Although the comorbidity of LD and ADHD has been debated due to the variance of how LD and ADHD are defined, there is agreement that whether the two disorders have a co-occurrence or not, both disorders have negative effects on academics (Barkley et al., 2002; Mayes, Calhoun, & Crowell, 2000).

The definition used most frequently in defining ADHD comes from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition, text revised (4th ed., text rev.; DSM-IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Prior editions of the DSM have framed ADHD as a disorder that primarily affects children (Weyandt & DuPaul, 2008). The recently released DSM-5 (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) addresses specific types of behavior that an individual with ADHD might exhibit and specific examples focusing on children, older adolescents, and adults even though the specific criteria for a diagnosis of ADHD has not changed. Research findings have revealed that evidence of the disorder can be seen in adolescence and adulthood though the symptoms are often present differently over time (Weyandt & DuPaul, 2008). The DSM-5 is written to ensure that children diagnosed with ADHD will
continue to receive treatment throughout adulthood if needed (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The Diagnostic Criteria from the DSM-IV-TR (2000) describes ADHD as encompassing symptoms of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity. Individuals must meet diagnostic criteria for either inattention or hyperactivity-impulsivity for the diagnostic label to be considered appropriate. Also, symptoms must have “persisted for at least six months to a degree that is maladaptive and inconsistent” (p. 92) with a person’s developmental level and symptoms were present prior to age 7. Symptoms must be present in two or more settings (e.g., at school or work and home) and individuals must show evidence of difficulty or impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning (p. 92-93).

A person fits the diagnostic criteria for inattention when six or more of the subsequent symptoms are present:

(a) often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities (b) often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities (c) often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly (d) often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (not due to oppositional behavior or failure to understand instructions) (e) often has difficulty organizing tasks and activities (f) often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort (such as schoolwork or homework) (g) often loses things necessary for tasks or activities (e.g., toys, school assignments, pencils, books, or tools) (h)
is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli, [and] (i) is often forgetful in daily activities (p. 92-93).

A person fits the diagnostic criteria for hyperactivity-impulsivity when six or more of the subsequent symptoms are present:

[Hyperactivity] (a) often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat (b) often leaves seat in classroom or in other situations in which remaining seated is expected (c) often runs about or climbs excessively in situations in which it is inappropriate (in adolescents or adults, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness) (d) often has difficulty playing or engaging in leisure activities quietly (e) is often "on the go" or often acts as if "driven by a motor," [and] (f) often talks excessively (p. 92-93). [Impulsivity] (g) often blurts out answers before questions have been completed (h) often has difficulty awaiting turn (i) often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games) (p. 92-93).

Prior to 1970, numerous physicians and professionals thought ADHD symptoms lessened and often were outgrown during adolescence and by adulthood were no longer an issue (Barkley, Fisher, Smallish, & Fletcher, 2002; Lee, Oakland, Jackson, & Glutting, 2008). More recently, longitudinal research has provided evidence that individuals with ADHD continue to struggle with these symptoms throughout their life (Barkley et al., 2002; Biederman, 2008; Kaminski, Turnock, Rosen, & Laster, 2006). However, an issue with getting an ADHD diagnosis as an adult is that such a diagnosis requires the individual to self-report symptoms that for many have now become part of how they see themselves and do not seem out of the ordinary.
Generally speaking, most individuals who have been diagnosed with ADHD were diagnosed before the age 17. Because of their childhood diagnosis and subsequent treatment and accommodations, these individuals often did not experience academic or social struggles during high school (Barkley, 2005). Important to this discussion, Konold and Glutting (2008) found that although college students with ADHD had experienced academic success in primary/secondary school, to experience this success in college, they first had to fail before they could truly understand how their ADHD affected their academic performance (Brinckerhoff, McGuire, & Shaw, 2002).

Many college students with ADHD arrive at college with a different set of obstacles than those students without a disability (Konold & Glutting, 2008). A diagnosis of ADHD can complicate an already difficult time of adjustment incoming freshman face as new college students. Therefore, proper preparation for this period of transition is needed (Meaux, Green, & Broussard, 2009).

**Self-advocacy.** Providing a single definition of self-advocacy is difficult given that scholars have offered many interpretations of the construct. Reviewing over 50 years of self-advocacy literature and definitions, Brinckerhoff (1994), compiled and defined self-advocacy for college students with LD “as the ability to recognize and meet the needs specific to one’s learning disability without compromising the dignity of oneself or others” (p. 230). Heyward (1993), stated that to self-advocate, it is critical to understand one's strengths, weaknesses, and disability. Self-advocacy requires that an individual can effectively communicate, convey, negotiate or assert his or her interests, desires, needs and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Van Reusen, Bas, Schumaker & Deshler, 1994;
Wehmeyer, 1992). Self-advocacy is one construct that is being consistently cited in literature as an important skill for successful transition from high school to postsecondary education for individuals with disabilities (e.g., Aune, 1991; Brinckerhoff, 1994; Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Kissel, 2006; Merchant & Gajar, 1997; Walker & Test; 2011).

**Self-determination.** Self-advocacy and self-awareness skills are generally subsumed under the umbrella of self-determination skills taught to students with disabilities in high schools (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test & Wood, 2001; Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Getzel & Thoma, 2008). Self-determination has been a skill that is frequently associated with self-advocacy and frequently used interchangeably yet differs in meaning (Field, 1996; Izzo & Lamb, 2003). The salient components of self-determination typically include behaviors such as (a) choice and decision making, (b) problem solving, (c) goal setting and attainment, (d) self-advocacy, (e) self-knowledge and understanding, and (f) self-observation, evaluation and reinforcement (Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Konrad, Fowler, Walker, Test & Wood, 2007; Test, Fowler, Brewer, & Wood, 2005; Wehmeyer, 1996). However, though similar to self-advocacy Test, Fowler, Wood, Brewer, and Eddy (2005) developed a conceptual framework for self-advocacy based on various definitions found in scholarly literature that include four specific behaviors: “(a) knowledge of self, (b) knowledge of rights, (c) communication, and (d) leadership” (p. 45). Self-determination has been defined in different ways across special education literature (Field & Hoffman, 1994; Ward, 1988; Wehmeyer, 1996). Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, and Wehmeyer (1998) summarized the varied definitions by saying:
Self-determination is a combination of skills, knowledge and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior. An understanding of one’s strengths and limitations together with a belief in oneself as capable and effective are essential to self-determination. When acting on the basis of these skills and attitudes, individuals have greater ability to take control of their lives and assume the role of successful adults in our society. (p.2)

**Disability and Education Laws in the United States**

The mandate for parents and guardians to have a voice in educational decisions affecting students has been an important legal provision fought for and won through numerous federal court cases beginning with the landmark Civil Rights Movement case of 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education (BOE) of Topeka* (347 U.S. 483). This court case changed the way future issues about educational equity would be handled within our legal system, and provided constitutional protection (Yell, Rogers, & Lodge, 1998). Almost 20 years after *Brown v. BOE*, two additional federal District Court cases (*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Pennsylvania (PARC)* (343 F. Supp. 279) and 1972, *Mills v. District of Columbia Board of Education*) (348 F. Supp. 866), used the legal precedent set by the 1954 Brown v. BOE rulings to support the argument that the exclusion of children with intellectual disabilities from public education was unconstitutional (Yell et al., 1998). These two court cases required all school districts to provide access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children (Heward, 2009; Wright & Wright 2007; Yell, 2012), and serve as noteworthy examples of the numerous landmark court cases that have influenced the field of special education, individuals with disabilities, and students and parent rights (Yell, 2012).
The Education for All Handicapped Children Act P.L. 94-142. The 1970’s brought about numerous educational changes in the U. S. public school system. The federal government required states to provide a public school education for students who were identified as disabled. Although states were required to provide education for students with disabilities, educational provisions across states were unequal. Some states were only able to enroll students with disabilities in school while others provided considerable opportunities for the students to learn within the school setting (Wright & Wright, 2007; Yell et al., 1998).

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA), which is more commonly referred to as Public Law-94-142 (PL-94-142). P.L.-94-142 became a stand-alone special education law in 1975. Federal legislation transferred the rulings of the numerous legal battles of earlier court cases leading up to 1975 to pass one comprehensive law providing federal funding to states to support them in educating students with disabilities (Yell et al., 1998). The P.L. 94-142 of 1975 put into law the educational rights of all identified students with disabilities. This law introduced four key principles relating to the education of children with disabilities: (a) the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE); (b) the right of every identified student to receive and individualized education program (IEP) nondiscriminatory testing, and evaluation; (c) the right of every identified student to be taught in the least restrictive environment (LRE); and (d) the right to due process (including parent involvement) (Swanson, 2008; Wright & Wright, 2007; Yell et al., 1998). This law became the legislative foundation of special education. It provided strong support that was necessary for students with disabilities to gain access to public schools.
The Reauthorization of Educating all Handicapped Children Act 1986. The need for young children with disabilities and their families to be supported was recognized as a national concern during the 1980s. Public Law 94-142 required programs and services for children 3 to 18 years of age. The 1986 amendments (PL 99-457) to P.L. 94-142 required states to offer programs and services for children birth to 2 with additional federal funding and required services for children ages 3 to 5 (Wright & Wright, 2007; Yell et al., 1998; Yell, Shriner, & Katsiyannis, 2006).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 1990. In 1990, P.L. 94-142 was reauthorized and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (PL 101-476). This amendment included three significant initiatives: (a) person first language was emphasized, thus renaming of the law to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and changing the term handicapped to child/student or individual with a disability; (b) two additional categories were added for students with autism and traumatic brain injury which were previously included in other disability categories; and (c) each student, no later than age 16, was to have an individualized transition plan (ITP) included in their IEP (Wright & Wright, 2007; Yell et al., 1998; Yell et al., 2006).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997. IDEA (P.L. 101-476) was reauthorized, and the amendment signed into law by President Clinton in 1997 (P. L. 105-12). The areas of IDEA 1990 that were addressed focused on the following components: (a) improving the educational performance and achievement of students with disabilities in the special and general education classrooms with an emphasis on students with disabilities participating in the general education classroom with the general education curriculum, and with needed aids and services; (b) students with
disabilities participating in state and district-wide assessments; (c) improving the way initial and re-evaluations are conducted; (d) changing when transition planning should begin from age 16 to age 14; and the last significant change, (e) requiring that behavior problems with students with disabilities be addressed in a proactive manner (e.g. development and implementation of a behavioral intervention plan) (Wright & Wright, 2007; Yell et al., 1998; Yell et al., 2006).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2002 and was the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Smith, 2005; Yell et al., 2006). The main objective for NCLB was to improve the academic achievement of all U. S. children. This legislation gave public schools a mandate to bring all students to proficient levels of performance in the subjects of reading and math - including students with disabilities. Coupled with this mandate, all students were to be taught by highly qualified (HQ) teachers using evidence-based practices (Yell et al.). States were instructed to develop accountability systems to examine the achievement of all students and were awarded federal funds as an incentive for schools to raise the level of achievement (Heward, 2009; Yell et al., 2006). This legislation required states to adopt tests that would determine if students were meeting the state standards and thus holding schools accountable for improving student achievement (Yell, 2012). States were then asked to have standards that demonstrated that students had met a level of proficiency. Public schools were required to assess all students in the subjects of reading and math and report achievement data to establish a schools’ target goal or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (Yell et al., 2006). This act has changed the way educators and schools
work with all students by holding states, schools, and educators accountable for student performance (Yell, 2012).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act 2004.

Congress reauthorized and amended IDEA as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) (PL 108-446) however; the law is still referred to as IDEA. Several of the major changes included in the reauthorization are as follows: (a) all special education teachers are required to meet the “highly qualified” requirement of NCLB; (b) including short-term objectives in student IEP’s is no longer required (in order to reduce IEP paperwork); and (c) schools may use Response to Intervention (RTI) as part of determining eligibility for a diagnosis of LD (the state education agency cannot require use of the discrepancy formula for determining the evidence of LD); and (d) returning the age of when a student’s IEP must include transition goals from 14 to age 16 (Daves & Walker, 2012; Yell et al., 2006). Using RTI instead of the traditional discrepancy formula to determine LD eligibility was a change made in efforts to challenge the wait-to-fail mentality many educators felt was prevalent regarding students with yet to be diagnosed LD. RTI has allowed schools to provide interventions as soon as a concern is noticed, and then increase the frequency and intensity of services as needed (Yell et al., 2006).

The most important goal of IDEA was to support improvements across a broad spectrum of academic outcomes for students with disabilities and for them to receive meaningful educational opportunities implemented from research-based practices (Yell et al., 2006). The goal of educating students with disabilities and closing the achievement gap between students with disabilities and the typical student aligned with the goal of
NCLB (Smith, 2005; Yell et al., 2006). During the reauthorization of IDEA, the federal government worked closely with officials in aligning this legislation with NCLB to provide all students with the best education possible (Yell, 2012).

The 2004 amendments of IDEA included changes in the approach to transition services specifically relating to postsecondary education. According to the legislation, transition goals should be put in place no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually thereafter. The IEP must include:

- Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment and, where appropriate, independent living skills;
- The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and
- Beginning not later than one year before the child reaches the age of majority under State law, a statement that the child has been informed of the child’s rights under Part B, if any, that will transfer to the child on reaching the age of majority under §300.520 [see 20 U.S.C. 1415(m)]. [34 CFR 300.320(b) and (c)] [20 U.S.C. 1414 (d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)]

Sitlington, Neubert, and Clark (2010) recognized that with this amended definition two outcomes had been identified; one for pursuing postsecondary education and one for obtaining employment. The 2004 amendments provided more structure for the crucial components of best practice transition planning, namely defining students’ strengths, needs, interests, and preferences that focus on person-centered planning and outcome
oriented activities. Making the choice of what path to pursue after high school is a difficult one, but transition-planning assists with helping the student decide what they hope to achieve.

**The Rehabilitation Act Section 504 and Americans with Disabilities Act.** The Rehabilitation Act was passed during the civil rights era and reflects an emphasis on access and inclusive participation in publicly funded institutions (Yell, 2012). Since most school districts and postsecondary institutions receive federal funding (e.g. federal aid and student loans), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act ensures that an individual with a disability has equal access to an education and essentially covers all students in public education from discrimination or limited access to services (Cawthon & Cole, 2010; Madaus & Shaw, 2006; P. W. Wright & P. D. Wright, n. d.). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and its reauthorization in 2008 provided protections for individuals with disabilities against discrimination in employment, and public accommodations. The 2008 amendments to ADA broadened the definitions of disabilities and enlarged the population of individuals who qualify for assistance and/or protection (Cawthon & Cole, 2010). Section 504 and the ADA define disability as

\[\text{(1) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity;}\]

\[\text{(2) a record of such an impairment; or (3) being regarded as having such an impairment. 29 U.S.C. § 705(9) (B); 42 U.S.C. § 12102(1).}\]

The 2008 amendments do not alter these three elements of the definition of disability in the ADA and Section 504. However, it significantly changes how the term “disability” is to be interpreted. Specifically, Congress directed that the definition of disability shall be construed broadly and that the determination of whether an individual has a disability
should not demand extensive analysis (Sec. 12102 American with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008).

Institutions are expected to support students with disabilities or risk losing funding or worse face anti-discrimination lawsuits. Institutions of higher education, regardless of whether they receive direct federal funding, must abide by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Acts of 1990 and 2008 which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability (P.W. Wright & P. D. Wright, n.d.). The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 and the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 have also increased the support that is available for individuals pursuing higher education with disabilities (U.S. GAO, 2009).

Following the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and ADA of 1990 and 2008, institutions of higher education are required to create more accessible facilities, and work towards ensuring that students receive the appropriate accommodations they need to have equal access to postsecondary education (Yell, 2012). In response to the increased enrollment of students with disabilities, universities have created disability services programs to facilitate services for students.

One of the important aspects of ADA has been the requirement that “reasonable accommodations” be made to assist individuals with disabilities at all levels of education and employment (Shaw, 2009). Accommodations are required to be made at all points of interaction with a student, including admission, and any services the student may need on campus. Some examples of accommodations offered but are not limited to extended time to complete exams, the use of tutors, note takers, and adaptive equipment (e.g. audio and visual). These accommodations and services are required unless the particular
accommodation or service would essentially change a program or pose an excessive financial burden on the institution. An individual with a disability may choose to attend any postsecondary institution where the individual meets admission criteria (P. W. Wright & P. D. Wright, 2007). Postsecondary institutions use different methods to support students with disabilities (Lindstrom, 2007). Smaller institutions do not have the available resources that a larger college would have, yet smaller institutions may provide more personal interaction and typically have a staff member who works closely with students, and some have disability support programs to support students more individually.

**Transition.** Newman et al. (2011) stated that the key to pursuing successful postsecondary education is to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to receive transition services while in high school. Will (1984) was among the first to define transition as:

. . . an outcome oriented process encompassing a broad array of services and experiences that lead to employment. Transition is a period that includes high school, the point of graduation, additional postsecondary education or adult services, and the initial years of employment. Transition is a bridge between the security and structure offered by the school and the risks of life (p. 1).

Widespread efforts have been made at the federal and state levels of government to increase and improve the post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 and its amendments in 1997 and 2004 show a continued commitment to increasing students with disabilities access to the general education curriculum and preparation for high-stakes testing.
IDEA (2004) defines transition services:
as a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that are designed to
be a results-oriented process, focusing on improving the academic and functional
achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from
school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational
education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing
and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community
participation; based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s
strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes instruction, related services,
community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school
adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and
functional vocational evaluation [34 CFR 300.43 (a)][20 U.S.C. 1401(34)].

However, even with the federal mandates of IDEA, ensuring that transition activities
begin no later than age 16 may be too late for some individuals who plan to attend
college and have not taken the required college-level courses in high school (Cummings,

Compared with same age peers, students with LD and/or ADHD often
demonstrate less career awareness and frequently possess unrealistic expectations for
their future employment. This constitutes another reason for prioritizing transition
activities by age 16, preferably sooner, for youth with LD and/or ADHD (Kosine, 2007).
Beginning transition activities earlier will enable teachers and counselors time to instruct
students with LD and/or ADHD with communicating their needs in educational settings
and developing an understanding of their disability, and how it affects their learning. In
today’s society, there is a spoken and an unspoken expectation that students attend some type of postsecondary training following high school. However, what researchers have yet to focus on are ways students are supported in their efforts to investigate for themselves what is involved in the decision to attend college. Teachers preparing students for the transition to college should incorporate transition activities that stress all factors of being a college student, from admission requirements to the academic demands and how to seek out academic support as a college student.

**Increase in Students with LD and/or ADHD Pursuing Higher Education**

The number of first-year students attending postsecondary institutions with some type of disability more than tripled between 1978 and 1994 from 2.6% to 9.2% (Black, Smith, Harding, & Stodden, 2002; National Council on Disability, 2000). The percentage of college students who self-identified as having a disability increased from 9% in 2000 to 11% in 2004 and remained close to that in 2008 (U.S. Government Accountability Office [U.S. GAO], 2009). The GAO (2009), published a report, *Higher Education and Disability: Education Needs a Coordinated Approach to Schools in Supporting Students* (U.S. GAO-1033) that included data from 2008 indicating an estimated 11% of all students attending postsecondary institutions were students with disabilities. This number represents an increase over the last three decades (U.S. GAO, 2009). However, from 2000 to 2008 the number grew from 1.4 million to 2.08 million in reported disabilities (U.S. GAO, 2009). These data point to the developing trend of increasing numbers of students who self-identify as having disabilities choosing to pursue postsecondary education.
The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) in the U.S. Department of Education requested enrollment data of students with disabilities during the 2008-09 (12-month) academic year, from 2-year and 4-year degree-granting postsecondary institutions. The survey was conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), and they estimate that 1,600 questionnaires were distributed with a weighted response rate of 89 percent (Raue & Lewis, 2011). Approximately 707,000 students with disabilities were reported being enrolled during this academic year. A 2011 report indicated that of the 707,000 reported students with disabilities, 86 percent identified as having LD, and 79 percent indicated a diagnosis of ADHD (Raue & Lewis, 2011).

Research into the reasons for this increase in students with LD and/or ADHD pursuing college educations indicates a number of possible causal factors. Vogel and Adelman (1992) suggested that part of the reason for this increase in students with LD and/or ADHD attending institutions of higher education was due to the federal regulations placed on institutions that receive federal funding. Institutions of higher education whether public or private who receive any federal funds may not discriminate against any person with or without a disability who would otherwise qualify for admission.

Important changes have occurred over the past decade with respect to how students with LD and/or ADHD view themselves and their ability to pursue the same goals as other post-high school students. Individuals with LD are becoming more aware of their legal rights to postsecondary accessibility and are pursuing their dreams of attending college (AHEAD, n.d; Ofiesh, Hughes, & Scott, 2004; Raue & Lewis, 2011).
Brinckerhoff, McGuire, and Shaw (2002), experts in the study of students with learning disabilities pursuing postsecondary education, state that the increase may have been due to the changes in federal regulations requiring students to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). An increase in the numbers of students being educated in the “mainstream” or typical classroom has been seen nationwide (Skinner, & Lindstrom, 2003). The focus on LRE placement has increased even further and is now typically referred to as inclusion. This focus on educating LD students in typical classrooms has resulted in more students having the opportunity to follow a college preparatory curriculum (Levine & Nourse, 1998; Swanson, 2008). This change further highlights the importance of students being able to utilize self-advocacy skills without the direct support of parents and teachers.

**Students’ Dependency on Parents and Teachers**

The changes made to IDEA 04 have continued to support the critical role that parents and guardians have in the lives of their children. They are entitled to advocate for the educational supports that their child needs. This is particularly important for individuals who cannot advocate on their own behalf (e.g. young children with disabilities and individuals with moderate to severe disabilities). However, this provision has been seen by some as encouraging a dependency model of education for students with disabilities, inducing reliance upon parents and teachers to ensure students receive an appropriate education (Shaw, Brinckerhoff, Kistler, & McGuire, 1991). In accordance with the revisions to IDEA 04, students have been encouraged to participate in their IEP and transition meetings. Students often are not familiar with their disability or even that they have one (Conner, 2012; O’Shea, & Meyer, 2016). Throughout their school
experiences, many students with disabilities only focus on what they are unable to do and their specific areas of weakness; they seem completely unaware of any strengths they possess (Vogel & Adelman, 1992). With this being the case for many students with or without a disability, the idea of becoming their own advocate and communicating their needs to a professor in the university setting becomes a daunting task that is commonly avoided. Students with a disability need to develop an understanding of their disability, how the disability affects their learning, which accommodations can assist them in compensating and adapting to their disability, and how to communicate their needs to their college professors (Brinckerhoff, 1996; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003; Timmons, Wills, Kemp, Basha, & Mooney, 2010).

**Problem Statement**

Prior research has indicated that in order to accomplish their postsecondary educational goals, students with LD and/or ADHD must be skilled at and responsible for accessing and utilizing any accommodations they need to complete their course of study (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Gotlieb, E. & Gotlieb, 2009; Izzo & Lamb, 2003; Stodden & Conway, 2003; Walker & Test, 2011; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998). The latest changes to federal law regarding IEP’s for students with disabilities were designed to address such concerns. The intent behind these legislative changes was to provide students with disabilities more direct opportunities to develop the self-advocacy skills necessary for the postsecondary educational experience and/or employment opportunities (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Walker & Test, 2011).

Despite these changes, many students may embark upon postsecondary educational programs of study without having developed such skills. Walker and Test
(2011) noted that although there has been an increase in opportunities for students with disabilities to attend postsecondary education, there are still many students with LD and ADHD entering college with limited skills in the areas of self-determination and self-advocacy. Either a lack of understanding self-advocacy skills or not using them may hinder the student from self-disclosing with ODS. Hence, efforts to access accommodations may further complicate a process that may already be difficult due to a variety of exacerbating issues. Students who have received limited or poor transition planning, or lack decision-making skills, may struggle to communicate their needs to ODS and/or a professor.

Summary

A complex set of federal laws has presented numerous changes to the legal regulations for educating children and adolescents with disabilities in public schools. These federal legislative changes (e.g. IDEA 2004, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the reauthorization of ADA in 2008) have had far-reaching effects on P-12 schools and universities. In particular, the growing trend of students with disabilities pursuing postsecondary education has highlighted areas in which colleges must be prepared to provide an equitable and accessible education for all students. The next chapter will explore in further detail research findings of the major constructs currently thought to contribute to the success of students with disabilities in college and the seven research questions that were explored in this dissertation.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter begins with an overview of the relevant research-based literature on self-advocacy and self-determination strategies for improving educational outcomes for students with LD and/or ADHD, who are transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education. First, a focus on the construct of self-advocacy and brief history is offered. The next sections include a discussion of the literature on model demonstration projects and follow-up studies conducted on self-determination along with an explanation of why self-advocacy is an important skill for students at the postsecondary level with LD and/or ADHD to acquire. This is followed by a review of the literature on possible factors related to the success of students with LD and/or ADHD in college, such as the importance of understanding one’s disability and the need for self-advocacy intervention studies. Finally, an overview and analysis of Merchant’s (1998) work, a study this dissertation study extended, is reviewed in greater depth through looking at the research questions posed by this study.

Procedures Used to Locate Relevant Literature

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using Academic Research Premier, ERIC, PsycINFO (EBSCOhost), and Dissertations and Theses Full Text (ProQuest) databases to collect literature for this study. Search terms utilized either individually or in combination included: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities (LD), transition from secondary to postsecondary education, postsecondary, transition, academic support program, special education law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), self-
advocacy, self-determination, qualitative research and interviews, case-study research, collective case studies and qualitative research. The literature was drawn from peer-reviewed journals, and empirical studies conducted over the past 20 years except for certain landmark articles on the topics of self-advocacy, the transition to postsecondary education and learning disabilities. Several books that thoroughly addressed the topics for this study were included as references.

**Brief Historical Account of Self-Advocacy**

The self-advocacy movement arose from the grassroots efforts of organizations such as the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) as an effort to protect the educational and civil rights of individuals with developmental disabilities (Merchant, 1998). The self-advocacy movement began in Sweden during the late 1960’s with the social clubs that were started by Bengt Nirje. These social clubs provided opportunities for individuals with cognitive disabilities to assemble and apply their self-determination skills (Nirje, 1972; Merchant, 1998). The movement spread to the United States with the initial activities taking place in Oregon in the early 1970’s, and it adopted the name People First, which symbolized the desire of group members to be known and accepted as a person first (Edwards, 1982). People First of Washington held its first national conference in Estes Park, Colorado, in 1990 with the incorporation of the national organization, Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered (SABE) (Caldwell, 2011; Shoultz & Ward, 1996). Currently, there are over 800 self-advocacy chapters in the United States (Caldwell, 2011). Substantial changes within our society have encouraged the self-advocacy movement. Examples of this change can be found in the Independent Living movement that has promoted the move of
individuals from institutional to community-based services, inclusion in education and community settings, and the equal treatment of individuals with disabilities under the law as in ADA (Fiedler & Danneker, 2007; Wehmeyer, Agran, & Hughes, 1998).

**Research Findings on Self-Determination Model Demonstration Projects**

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funded 26 model demonstration projects between the years of 1990 and 1996 specifically targeted for the development of programs, assessments, and interventions utilizing principles of self-determination (Ward & Kohler, 1996). These programs are focused on utilizing curricula such as ChoiceMaker Self-Determination Curriculum (Martin & Marshall, 1995) which incorporated the skills of decision-making, independent performance, self-evaluation, and adjustment along with self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-efficacy (Martin et al., 2006; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

Pocock et al. (2002), through a U.S. Department of Education, OSEP Grant, examined self-determination and ways of promoting self-advocacy with high school students with LD. The high school program developed by Pocock and colleagues entitled Learning and Education About Disabilities (LEAD) focused on understanding the implementation of instruction in self-advocacy and self-determination in high school settings. In addition, the program offered support to students in the application of self-advocacy skills. LEAD began in 1996 when students voiced concerns regarding “perceived lack of teacher receptiveness to their requests for accommodations” (p.210). The program sought to equip students with the skills needed to have self-awareness of their disability and the ability to self-advocate within the context of student educational interests and decision-making for life after high school. The school found that students
were taking more leadership roles in the school as well as seeking to mentor younger students with LD and pursuing opportunities to share their strengths and challenges with having a learning disability. The implications for programs like LEAD are significant, not only for other high school students but elementary and middle school students as well. LEAD members began looking for additional opportunities to educate their community about LD, and be an advocate for other students with LD. In turn, younger students began asking questions about their own ways of learning (Van Dyck, Martin, & Lovett, 2006). Therefore, if students are successfully taught these self-advocacy skills, and supported in their efforts to use them, then it is reasonable to think that they will be better positioned to understand and advocate for their needs. Van Dyck, Martin, & Lovett (2006) suggested that this, in turn, may provide more opportunities to pursue their life goals.

Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1997) conducted a one-year follow-up survey of students receiving special education services for Mental Retardation (MR) or Learning Disabilities (LD) and who would also be graduating or aging out of high school during the 1994-1995 academic year. The survey scores were used to quantify the relationship between self-determination instruction and positive adult outcomes as measured by The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995). Positive adult outcomes assessed in the study included major life areas such as employment or attendance in postsecondary education, financial independence and independent living (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997). It is important to note that in this study the measure of self-determination was self-reported and the findings have been viewed with caution. In addition, the adult outcomes were measured by a parent report. The findings did demonstrate the fact that the students who were a part of the self-determination groups
shared a desire to be living outside of their family home and were earning slightly higher wages than those who scored lower on *The Arc’s Self-determination Scale*. Thus, the higher self-determination scores reflected a better understanding and use of self-determination behaviors

Wehmeyer and Palmer (2003) conducted a three-year follow-up study to continue and extend the initial one-year follow-up study completed by Wehmeyer and Schwartz (1998). The results replicated the findings from the 1995 study, which served to confirm the importance of instructing students while in high school on how to self-advocate and become self-determined individuals. The students with disabilities in this study (those identified with MR or LD) who had received self-determination instruction in high school were more likely to score higher on *The Arc’s Self-determination Scale* (Wehmeyer & Kelchner, 1995) than those who did not receive the self-determination instruction. In the three-year follow-up, these same students were also more likely to have lived independently after data collection occurred for the preceding one-year follow-up study (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003).

Studies have found a relationship between strong self-determination skills and a good academic outcome for students with disabilities (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001; Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Palmer, Wehmeyer, Gipson & Agran, 2012; Parker & Boutelle, 2009). Mithaug, Mithaug, Agran, Martin, and Wehmeyer (2003) established that the individuals with disabilities who demonstrated strong self-determination skills found greater success in adapting to new settings such as the postsecondary environment. Researchers have continued to establish the importance of self-advocacy and self-determination skills to the successful life outcomes of students
with disabilities. However, despite the increasing focus on self-determination and self-advocacy by educators, many students are still finishing high school unprepared to face the major life decisions that are ahead of them (Algozzine et al., 2001; Hamblet, 2015; Mithaug et al., 2003). Students entering college soon realize that even with the resources available, the responsibility to utilize and apply the skills of self-advocacy and self-determination belongs to them.

**Research Findings on the Necessity of Self-Advocacy Skills**

Students with LD and/or ADHD are much like their typical peers when they arrive on the college campus, they must be ready to engage the collegiate environment and make it on their own. However, the difficulties they encounter can be unique as they take on adult-like roles upon entering college. Like their typical peers, many students with LD and/or ADHD have had 12 years of having their parents and teachers serve as their advocates, supporting them academically and socially. Often, this has occurred without helping them engage the common developmental task of gradually taking on higher levels of personal responsibility (Lee, Rojewski, Gregg, & Jeong, 2015; Shaw et al., 1991). Reviewing the last three decades of literature, it is clear that this population of students typically enters the postsecondary setting with little to no self-awareness, knowledge of their disability, or their individual learning strengths and weaknesses (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Vogel & Adelman, 1992). In addition to having an awareness of the available resources on campus, knowledge regarding their rights, and how to locate, access and advocate for their academic needs, students must utilize these skills of planning and organizing without their family or other support systems (Brinckerhoff,

Murray, Goldstein, Nourse, and Edgar (2000), utilized data from The First Decade Project (Levine, & Nourse, 1998; Murray, Goldstein, & Edgar, 1997) to research 1985 and 1990 high school graduates with LD and a sample of students without disabilities by following their postsecondary educational status 10 years post high school. Findings based upon a population of students with LD, provided evidence that considerably fewer students by proportion, attended and completed postsecondary education (Murray et al., 2000). Findings from other studies offered additional supporting evidence that students with disabilities have not been prepared effectively in the areas of postsecondary transition planning (Cummings, Maddox, & Casey, 2000; Grigal, Test, Beattie, & Wood, 1997). Murray et al. (2000), proposed that since pursuing postsecondary education has become the expectation for successful adult outcomes then significant changes are needed in how individuals with disabilities transition out of high school and receive support at the postsecondary level. Using data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), Newman and colleagues (2009) reported the number of students with disabilities accessing postsecondary education to be less proportionately than that of their typical peers. Newman (2005) stated that 76.7 percent of individuals with disabilities professed to have a desire to attend postsecondary education institutions following high school. However, two years following high school, only 19 percent of those participating in the study had enrolled in a college; this is in contrast to the 40.5 percent of their typical peers (Newman). Utilization of self-advocacy skills in conjunction with self-determination have been shown to be a critical component
of successful transition for individuals with disabilities (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Field, Martin, Miller, Ward, & Wehmeyer, 1998; Getzel & Thoma, 2008).

**Factors related to the success of students with LD and/or ADHD in college.**

As noted before, as more students with disabilities enroll in postsecondary education, it is critical for them to have effective transition skills to help ensure a successful student experience (Hamblet, 2015; Test et al., 2009). Cowman (2006) investigated how first-year college students with LD adapted to the academic and social expectations of the college environment. The study involved traditional-aged freshmen who were interviewed periodically throughout their freshman year and it sought to understand more about their academic achievement. The students in the sample consistently shared how important their accommodations were to their transition from high school. However, Cowman asserted that as a whole, they were frustrated with the level of accommodations available at the postsecondary level, and how at times some support was not available.

Although the number of students with LD and/or ADHD participating in postsecondary education has increased, many of these students are not prepared to deal with the demands of college (Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Foley, 2006; Hamblet, 2015; Madaus & Shaw, 2006; Shaw & Dukes, 2013). The students face a new set of challenges without the shelter previously offered by their parents or special education teacher. The more practice the students have encountered in self-advocating in high school, the greater the likelihood they will transition successfully (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002; Gil, 2007).

Many factors have been identified in the literature concerning successful transition of students with LD and/or ADHD to college. For example, Hartman-Hall and
Haaga’s (2002) study of 86 postsecondary students with LD established that “the response a student receives to a request for assistance or accommodation for a learning disability, particularly from a professor, likely affects the student’s willingness to seek help in the future” (p.271). The faculty-student relationship was one of the keys to a student making this transition successfully.

Several previous studies have discovered additional factors that contribute to success in postsecondary education for students with LD and or ADHD (Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Hamblet, 2015; Raskind, Goldberg, Higgins, & Herman, 1999; Skinner, 1998; Vogel, & Adelman, 1992). Skinner and Lindstrom (2003) identified several factors that researchers have recognized as contributing to positive student transitions: (a) extent of student knowledge and nature of disability; (b) ability to manage disability with the use of skills such as (e.g., self-advocacy, goal setting, know of disability law, self-identification); (c) having a support network; (d) the impact of disability on student (e.g., LD and ADHD coexistent); (e) motivation level of student; and (f) ability to endure in stressful situations. Understanding and acknowledging these factors was only the beginning of making a successful transition to postsecondary education. Developing the aforementioned skills and managing them in college also enables students with LD and or ADHD to assume responsibility for their success (Skinner & Lindstrom).

Understanding one’s disability. Possessing knowledge and understanding about one’s disability was typically viewed as being important to the process of seeking accommodations (Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Hadley, 2006; Hamblet, 2015; Lee, Rojewski, Gregg, & Jeong, 2015; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003). How do students ask for accommodations for their disabilities when they are unsure how their disability affects
their learning? The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS-2) revealed a disconcerting issue for postsecondary students with identified disabilities. More than half of the students included in the study who were also enrolled in postsecondary education programs believed they no longer had a disability (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005). Further underscoring the need for students to have knowledge of their disability, Getzel, and Thoma (2008) reported that students believed that learning about oneself and having a clear understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses to understand their disability was critical to their success in college.

**Need for intervention studies.** Prior studies in the areas of self-advocacy and self-determination have discussed the status of college students with LD and/or ADHD, but few have focused on interventions or on college-age samples. Specifically, limited focus has been given to investigating the importance of students understanding their disability, and few researchers have focused on how students practice self-advocating for needed accommodations through actual role-play with professors. Merchant’s (1998) study was foundational to this research. Though not an exact replication, this study extended Merchant’s work, and the following section includes a detailed overview of the study.

**Overview of Merchant (1998) Study**

Merchant sought to understand the effects of self-advocacy instruction to undergraduate students with documented and self-disclosed LD, and their ability to self-advocate within the postsecondary setting. Using “a pretest-posttest two experimental group design” (p. 28) Merchant investigated whether students’ understanding about self-advocacy and their application of self-advocacy skills improved after receiving self-
advocacy training (via a specialized curriculum). Students were given a test before and after the training intervention. In particular, students were asked to describe what they understood about the following topics:

(a) characteristics of students with learning disabilities, (b) academic accommodations provided due to a learning disability, and (c) legal rights and responsibilities of individuals with learning disabilities. The instrument consisted of a 16 item evaluation designed to assess the knowledge component of the self-advocacy program (p. 31).

Students were also asked to demonstrate their understanding of self-advocacy skills by participating in a role-play with a faculty member where they were instructed to ask for needed accommodations.

The Merchant study revealed that students who received the self-advocacy training were better able to communicate effectively with a faculty member the necessity of the requested accommodations, and respond to questions posed by the faculty member regarding their disability. The training students received included both a knowledge component and an application component of requesting accommodations. The findings suggested that receiving only the knowledge component was not enough for the students to demonstrate that they could access accommodations in college.

**Merchant’s research procedures.** Merchant’s study conducted at a large public east coast research institution, and the sample included ten undergraduate students with identified LD (six males and four females) ranging in ages from 20-21. The Office of Disability Services sent a letter to all students who met the criteria of (a) having a documented LD, (b) were enrolled in a degree program, and (c) was an undergraduate
student. Twenty-four students qualified and 10 students agreed to participate in the study and randomly divided into two groups.

**Independent and dependent variables.** Merchant conceptualized the independent variable as being comprised of two components: knowledge about self-advocacy and application of self-advocacy skills as taught and practiced through the self-advocacy training program. The program combined materials on self-advocacy designed by Merchant with resources addressing the topics of communicating effectively, and how to plan to self-advocate when required. The study consisted of eight (twice a week, for four consecutive weeks) 1.5-hour self-advocacy sessions. The first two sessions were held simultaneously for both groups then while Group 1 received the intervention for the following six sessions Group 2 did not receive any intervention. Both groups were asked to complete a pretest/posttest to assess their competence in demonstrating self-advocacy skills – the dependent variable. Students demonstrated self-advocacy skills by requesting accommodations from a faculty member via a pretest/posttest role-play and by completing a written knowledge based pretest/posttest that asked questions about self-advocacy.

**Measures.** Merchant adapted an existing role-play observation developed by Rumrill, Roessler, and Brown (1997) for use in her study. The Role-play Observation Sheet used in the study contained a set of eight observable behaviors that could be demonstrated during the role-play of requesting accommodations from a faculty member and evaluated by an observer scoring a yes/no for each behavior. The rating sheet was scored by yes=5 and no=0 with a total of 19 behaviors. Merchant also included a measure for evaluating the training program that the study participants underwent.
Merchant’s findings and implications. Merchant found a statistically significant difference between the role-play observations scores of students who received self-advocacy training and those who did not “(t=3.850, df=8, p=.005)” (p.48). The role-play pretest scores for both groups were in the 40’s with the highest possible score of 95. Analysis of the rating sheets indicated that the difficulty for both groups was in verbalizing the impact their disability had on their learning, and how receiving accommodations would be beneficial to their individual success. “The role-play posttest scores for Group 1 were 72 and 28 for Group 2” (p.49). Group 1 received the intervention and Group 2 was the control group and did not receive any intervention. An item analysis of the rating sheets for Group 1 indicated that the students were able to articulate the impact their disability had on their learning and how accommodations would be afforded.

The findings of this study support arguments that emphasized the need for students to receive training in self-advocacy either during high school or, during their first semester of postsecondary education. The range of transition services received by students with LD pursuing postsecondary education varies. The Merchant findings provided not only a foundation of the need for further transition and self-advocacy instruction in high school but also, the need for some type of role-play opportunities in which students demonstrate the necessary skills for a postsecondary setting. The high school setting should provide opportunities for students with learning disabilities to practice the skills of self-advocacy throughout their four years of schooling, not only in their IEP meetings but also through engaging with their teachers (Gotlieb & Gotlieb, 2009).
The Merchant study found that the impact of the self-advocacy training was most apparent when students were engaged in the role-play situations. The opportunities to engage with peers and then in a simulated scenario of requesting accommodations from a faculty member provided the student a real-life opportunity to share about their disability. This study provided disability service providers support and evidence for implementing such a program at their postsecondary institutions.

Limitations of the Merchant 1998 study. Merchant stated that the sample size of this study of five students who demonstrated improvement in their ability to self-advocate in a role-play situation gave a limited perspective for the findings to be generalized to other students with LD at other postsecondary institutions. The sample was homogeneous and limited to a large east coast research institution and based on this; these results cannot be generalized to all students with LD.

In an effort to address these limitations, this study extended Merchant’s work in the following ways: first, Merchant sampled only students with LD. This study’s sample drawn from both the LD and ADHD student populations enrolled in an Academic Support Program (ASP) at the University level. Secondly, to address the limitation of the lack of qualitative data on the perceptions of students with disabilities, this study included pre/post interviews with participants to provide and in-depth inquiry into the perceptions of students with LD and/or ADHD.

Self-advocacy is frequently identified as a contributing factor for the success of students with disabilities in postsecondary education. Although, it is not known how providing seven weeks of instruction in the curriculum of Self-advocacy and the Transition to College from the Disability Support Coordinator may affect how students
with LD and/or ADHD request accommodations from a faculty member. If students can articulate their academic needs and receive the needed accommodations, they are in a better position to envision and improve their chances of academic success (Merchant, 1998).

**Narrowing the Gap in Self-Advocacy Research.**

Stodden (2000) found that the skills students needed to transition from high school to college were underdeveloped. In particular, students needed the skills of self-advocacy and the ability to understand and articulate their needs related to their disability, to the appropriate individuals within the postsecondary institution (Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Hamblet, 2014; Izzo & Lamb, 2003). Although several studies have addressed self-advocacy at the postsecondary level, a gap in research exists where students practice self-advocating skills with college professors. Furthermore, studies involving postsecondary students utilizing the skills of self-advocacy and self-determination have commonly overlooked the importance of students understanding their disability in order to self-advocate with their college professors.

It seems to be clear that postsecondary students need to understand their disabilities and the implications of self-advocating, versus, avoiding opportunities to self-advocate with their professors and future employers. This suggests that further study looking more extensively, at the connection between students’ perception of their disability and their ability to effectively self-advocate is needed. In-depth inquiry into the perspectives of first year or recently diagnosed college students with LD and/or ADHD and their transition journey, along with their grasp of self-advocacy, is needed to further the knowledge of transition needs both at the high school level and then in the
postsecondary setting. A strength of the case study methodology lies in the ability to
describe the individual unique ideas and characteristics of each case. Additionally, being
able to focus in on the particular phenomenon (Merriam, 1998), utilizing this qualitative
research method to assist in closing the gap in self-advocacy research provides a greater
depth of understanding to the current literature base.

**Research Questions**

This research study utilized an exploratory collective case studies approach to
investigate the effect of a self-advocacy instructional intervention on the ability of
students with LD and/or ADHD to understand their disability and advocate with their
college professors. This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What influence does instruction in the skills of self-advocacy have on the ability
   of college freshmen and newly identified students with LD and/or ADHD to
   effectively request accommodations from a professor?

2. In what ways does receiving instruction in self-advocacy, influence students’ self-
   reported, self-advocating behaviors as measured by weekly exit slip questions
   administered immediately after and pertaining to each weekly instructional
   session?

3. How do students rate the usefulness of each instructional session regarding the
   information and skills taught as measured by a weekly Likert-scaled lesson
   evaluation?

4. How does understanding one’s disability affect interaction with faculty members
   to request accommodations as measured by a semi-structured pre-intervention
   interview?
(5) What are the experiences of college students with LD and/or ADHD as they advocate for themselves in the college environment as measured by a semi-structured pre/post-intervention interview?

(6) How do the participants describe their own self-advocacy skills as measured through a semi-structured pre/post-intervention interview and pre/post-intervention Self-Advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ)?

(7) What influence does instruction of the skills of self-advocacy have on the abilities of college freshmen/newly identified students with LD and/or ADHD to understand knowledge of the characteristics of LD, federal disability laws, and accommodations as measured by pre/post-intervention knowledge test?

**Summary**

Following an extensive literature search and review, the number of studies and peer-reviewed literature on the topic of self-advocacy among college students with LD and/or ADHD and their ability to request accommodations once enrolled in postsecondary education was found to be limited. The existing literature was thorough, and extensive, for LD, ADHD, transition and self-advocacy and sufficient for this study. This review of literature points to the need for more qualitative research studies that specifically consider students’ perceptions of self-advocacy and requesting accommodations in college.

Students with LD and/or ADHD need to be provided instruction in the skills of self-advocacy during high school. The first instance where this becomes apparent occurs while they are choosing a college; they know the questions to ask about what specific services are provided through the ODS. As students pursue postsecondary education, it is
important that they have the skills of self-advocacy when researching where to attend college; such skills will allow the student to take an active and engaged role in their future and choice of college (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002; Foley, 2006). Skinner and Lindstrom (2003) addressed the factors that researchers have identified as contributing to successful student transition to college. An overview which highlights the findings and implications of the Merchant study, in addition, a description of how the current study extended Merchant’s work was presented. Finally, the research questions that were explored are included.

Chapter 3 identifies the chosen methodology for this qualitative study. A collective case study, utilizing multiple methods, was used to investigate the effect of a self-advocacy instructional intervention on the ability of students’ with LD and/or ADHD to advocate with college professors and understand their disability.
Chapter Three
Methods

This chapter provides a detailed description of the multiple methods study designed to answer the research questions listed at the end of the previous chapter. The study utilized a collective case studies approach (Stake, 1995). Subsequent sections contain descriptions of the following methods components: research design, study settings, participants, data collection and analysis (description of the five instruments used), and finally intervention procedures. The case studies were designed to incorporate multiple methods to investigate the effect of a self-advocacy instructional intervention on college students with LD and/or ADHD. The purpose of the study was to address a current gap in the literature as it pertains to students with LD and/or ADHD self-advocating for accommodations with professors in addition to extending Merchant’s (1998) original work by qualitatively exploring student perceptions of self-advocacy and accommodation seeking and the inclusion of participants with ADHD. Tables listed in this chapter are at the end of this chapter.

Research Design

The study used an exploratory collective case studies approach. The case study approach was appropriate for investigating and describing individual experiences in greater detail (Creswell, 2006; Patton, 2002). Using the case study approach allowed for an investigation of the current phenomenon within its real-life environment which as Yin (2009) noted, “allows the researcher to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (p.4).” Merriam (2009) defined the case study approach as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. This study adopted all three features of the case study approach.
The collective case study approach, also referred to as multiple-case studies (Yin, 2009), was beneficial in exploring cross-case comparisons because it provided for an examination of the same research questions and allowed possible generalizations from the group as a whole (Stake, 2006). Yin (2003) noted that multiple case studies: Include two or more cases within the same study. These multiple cases should be selected so that they replicate each other either predicting similar results (literal replication) or contrasting results for predictable reasons (theoretical replication) (p. 5).” This study used qualitative and quantitative methods. In particular, a collective case studies approach with multiple data sources to enrich the data credibility (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2003). The instructional intervention involved many components that addressed both how students understood their disability as well as their effectiveness in self-advocating. For this reason, using multiple forms of data collection to extract the greatest amount of detail about the student’s experience was required.

Due to the small sample size for this study (n=6), a group design was not appropriate. While Merchant (1998) utilized a two-experimental group design involving 10 undergraduate students with LD, she also denoted this as a limitation of her study. The mixed methods used for this study allowed for the use of multiple means of obtaining data with a small sample size (Merriam, 2009). Semi-structured pre/post interviews and informal observations during the pretest/posttest of requesting accommodations from a faculty member provided vital data based on participant experiences over the course of the study. The choice of including qualitative features in the design was driven by a number of the research questions, which focused on the effect of self-advocacy instruction on the ability of students with LD and/or ADHD to
understand their disability and to request accommodations by interacting effectively with faculty members in the college environment.

Creswell and Clark (2007) noted that when trying to gain a more holistic view of comprehensive questions, mixing multiple methods allows the researcher to gain a clearer picture of the underlying issues. The primary goal of this study was to see the effects of a self-advocacy intervention on the ability of students with LD and/or ADHD to understand their disability and self-advocate with college professors. A case study design that takes advantage of multiple data collection sources allows for triangulation of data to support an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

**Settings**

This exploratory study took place at a small independent liberal arts university located in the southeast. The university had approximately 1,300 undergraduate students and had an Academic Support Program (ASP) for students with identified disabilities. The weekly instructional intervention sessions took place in a classroom in the library. The library was located on the main campus and was easily accessible to all students. The classroom itself was an isolated classroom without windows located in the Curriculum Center. This location provided students more confidentiality by not being in the typical classroom buildings where other students might have asked what class they were attending. The classroom included the following: (a) a window in the door, (b) dimensions of approximately 20 x 25 feet, (c) tables that seated two students per table, and (d) an instructor station at the front of the room and included a document camera, desktop computer, and projector. This classroom was the site for all instructional
sessions, as well as for administration of the written questionnaires and written knowledge pretest/posttests.

The role-play pretest/posttest was conducted in the individual professors’ offices, and the individual pre/post-intervention interviews conducted in a library study room. The study room was approximately 10 x 10 and had an outside window and a table that seated four individuals. The rooms were located on the second floor of the library and provided a confidential location for the interviews.

Participants

Participants were recruited through a purposeful sampling method (Merriam, 2009, p. 82) through the ASP, which was part of the Office of Support Services (OSS). The prospective participants were all students with (a) diagnosed LD and/or ADHD, (b) self-identified with the OSS, or (b) were in their first year of school at this institution spring 2014 or had just self-disclosed their disability at the beginning of the spring 2014 semester. The Director of the ASP facilitated contact with all prospective participants, inviting them to an introductory meeting held during the regularly scheduled ASP class. The enrollment of the ASP was 36 students at the time of recruitment for the study. Of those 36 students, 12 met the inclusion criteria noted previously, and six students consented to participate in the study. The following information about each potential student participant was collected:

- ethnicity;
- gender;
- current academic status;
- age of diagnosis (LD and/or ADHD);
• any disability co-existing with LD and/or ADHD;
• public, private or homeschooled for K-12;
• and any formal instruction in self-advocacy K-12.

Descriptors for each participant of the study are listed in Table 3.1.

The director of the ASP had a Bachelor’s of Science in Home Economics and a Masters in Social Work. She was also a Certified Clinical Social Worker. She was in her third year as director of ASP and conducted the weekly instructional sessions. Two faculty members of the institution, one male, and one female conducted the pretest/posttest role-play simulation. The male faculty member was affiliated with the School of Education and was in his 11th year of teaching in higher education. He had a Bachelor’s of Science and Masters in Elementary Education, and his doctorate was in Educational Leadership. He did not teach nor have any contact with student participants. The female faculty member was affiliated with the School of Business and was in her sixth year of teaching higher education. She had a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting and a Master’s in Business Administration. She was concurrently enrolled in a doctoral program in Accounting. She did not teach any of the student participants. A volunteer data collector from the University of Kentucky assisted the researcher with the transcription and coding of pre/post-intervention interview data. She had a Bachelors of Arts in History, a Post-baccalaureate in Secondary Education, and a Master’s in Rehabilitation Counseling. She was concurrently enrolled in a doctoral program in Educational Psychology. She did not teach nor have any contact with student participants. The researcher was a doctoral candidate at the University of Kentucky with a Masters in Social Work and fourteen years public school special education teaching
experience and eleven years as an assistant professor of education. She spent five years employed as Coordinator of the Academic Support Program (ASP) from which study participants were recruited during the years 2005-2010, which was prior to any of the student participants enrolling in the university.

The researcher received approval to conduct this study both from the institutional review board (IRB) of the university in which the researcher is enrolled, as well as the university where the study was conducted. The researcher explained the study and time commitments that participation in the study would require at an introductory meeting to which study participants attended. In this meeting, all potential participants were assured that participation in the study was voluntary and that their privacy was protected by using pseudonyms. The student participants were asked to sign and date a consent form, which identified the provisions of the study and ensured privacy for the participant. A copy of the consent form is attached (Appendix A). These forms were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office to ensure confidentiality of information and will be kept for six years following the completion of the study. The final data from the study, without student participant identifiers, will be retained for six years after the completion of the study.

The primary roles of the researcher were to introduce the study, recruit potential participants, conduct the pre/post-intervention interviews, and gather and analyze data through interaction with the Director of ASP; two role-play faculty volunteers and the volunteer data collector. The researcher served as the primary instrument as described by Merriam (2009) “Because human beings are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research, interpretations of reality are accessed directly
through their observations and interviews” (p. 214). The researcher had familiarity with the setting, content and strong conceptual interests that helped validate the study.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

Data analysis involved utilizing five different instruments to collect data and gain further meaning among the topic of self-advocacy.

- A written pretest/ posttest, developed by Merchant (1998), assessed knowledge gains about disability-related information from an instructional self-advocacy intervention (Appendix B).
- A written pretest/ posttest self-advocacy questionnaire, developed by Kosine (2006), assessed gains in participants understanding of self-advocacy in three areas; help-seeking, self-determination, and confidence in academic and social skills (Appendix C).
- A direct observation pretest/ posttest developed by Merchant and Dintino (2011) assessed the participants abilities to request accommodations from a faculty member. A role-play observation rating sheet was used by the faculty member to assess the participants (Appendix D).
- Pre/post-intervention semi-structured interviews were conducted to facilitate a deeper understanding of participants’ perceptions of self-advocacy, the transition to college, and the intervention experience (Appendix D).
- Finally, the Director of the ASP distributed an exit slip probe (i.e. a question to check student understanding of the lesson distributed at the end of class) to the participants that pertained to each week's instructional session/curriculum (Appendix E).
Table 3.2 depicts the schedule for administration of each instrument.

**Written self-advocacy pretest/posttest.** The first measure of the study was administered during the class session in week 1. Students completed a written self-advocacy pretest a 16-item multiple-choice evaluation that measured students understanding of the skills associated with self-advocacy and disability related information (Merchant, 1998; Appendix B). The identical 16-item multiple-choice evaluation was used as the self-advocacy posttest and administered during the final instructional session that occurred week 7 of the intervention.

**Self-Advocacy questionnaire pretest/posttest.** The second written measure was administered during the class session in week 1. Students completed a self-advocacy questionnaire pretest a 14-item questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale consisting of the following levels of agreement/disagreement: strongly agree, agree, unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. Students were asked to show their level of agreement by selecting one of the levels (5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree) for each statement (Kosine, 2006; Appendix C). The identical 14-item questionnaire was used as the self-advocacy posttest and administered during the final instructional session that occurred week 7 of the intervention.

**Role-play measures.** Students participated in a role-play session that required them to request accommodations from a professor as a pretest/posttest measure of accommodation-seeking skills. The rating sheet (Appendix D) identified observable behaviors needed for requesting accommodations and self-advocacy, and the faculty member who served as the participants role-play partner scored the participant according to which behaviors they demonstrated. The behaviors included were: (a) give an
appropriate greeting, (b) disclosure of disability, (c) use of functional terms, (d) communicate the needed accommodations, (e) communicate how those accommodations were to be provided or needed resources, (f) pursue agreement of specific accommodation requested, (g) summarize accommodation request, and (h) close the conversation. The rating sheet enabled the faculty member and researcher (through an audio recording) to rate each student on their ability to demonstrate the skill of self-advocacy. The audio-recorded role-play along with the researcher verifying scoring provided the likelihood of a higher degree of reliability in the scoring of the role-play. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested viewing reliability from the perspective of “dependability or consistency of the results” (p.288).

Students received a rating of “1” for skills they demonstrated and a rating of “0” for skills they did not demonstrate (yes = 1, no = 0). This rating sheet evaluation was adapted from the rating sheet used in Merchant’s (1998) study. Merchant adapted the rating sheet used in her study from a rating sheet developed by Rumrill, Roessler, and Brown (1997). Merchant (1998) changed the scoring on the rating sheet to yes=1 and, no=0, since no partial scores could be given to participants and because rating sheet scores would not be used for statistical analysis. The pretest role-play was scheduled during instructional session one by the director. The posttest role-play was scheduled the week following the completion of the intervention. The posttest role-play session was conducted with a different faculty member from the pretest to simulate a more realistic scenario.

**Exit slip probe and lesson evaluation.** The fifth written measure was comprised of exit slips provided to participants at the end of each lesson of the intervention.
Each exit slip contained a question about the topic of the lesson and a rating scale that the participant used to indicate how useful he or she found the information presented in the lesson. The rating scale consisted of a Likert scale ranging from values 1 to 5 (1 = not at all useful to me, 2 = somewhat useful to me, 3 = useful to me, 4 = very useful to me, 5 = most useful to me). The director distributed the weekly exit slip probe at the end of each instructional session. The director used the students’ responses to the question for further analysis of their understanding of the week’s topic. The director evaluated the exit slip as follows: a score of 2 = “student’s response demonstrated a good understanding of the topic discussed,” 1 = “student’s response did not clearly address the topic covered,” and 0 = “not observable because the student did not attend class or complete an exit slip.” Every student who was present in class completed an exit slip. This information was collected and used for a review to start the following session. The scores from the exit slips were not used for statistical analysis due to the small sample, though; the data were used during analysis of each case specific to research questions listed in Table 3.3. A script of directions was included with the instrument (Appendix F).

**Pre/post-intervention semi-structured interviews.** The researcher conducted the pre/post-intervention semi-structured interview (Appendix E). The pre-interview was used to gain information from the students regarding their prior experiences using self-advocacy strategies either in high school or college, how or if they self-advocated for accommodations during Fall 2013 semester, and their understanding of their disability and how learning about self-advocacy may assist them while in college and beyond (Appendix E). The pre-interview allowed the researcher flexibility to ask follow-up
questions for clarification and to adjust questions for the following interviews. Stake (1995) promoted the use of a short list of issue or research specific questions, conceivably giving the participant a copy of the questions, but specifying that these are a guide without any particular agenda for the interview. The post-interview solicited the students’ impressions of the 7-week intervention and any other opportunities they had to utilize the skills of self-advocacy. The researcher conducted the post-interview the week following completion of the 7-week intervention.

Patton (1989) suggested that an interview guide was beneficial to utilize so that the same information was gathered from each interview conducted by the researcher. An interview guide was used with a list of possible questions for the pre- interviews. Field notes were written following each interview to ensure that students’ thoughts were retained correctly, and adjustments were made to questions for use in subsequent interviews. The field (observational) notes were taken subsequent to each interview, to note specific actions and behaviors the participants demonstrated throughout the interview. The post-interview had an interview guide that contained a list of guiding questions and included three to five of the questions from the self-advocacy questionnaire (Kosine, 2006; Appendix C). The self-advocacy questions were included in order to investigate possible changes in students’ behaviors by eliciting their descriptions of how their understanding of self-advocacy had changed and how those changes had affected their behavior. The pre/post-intervention interviews were audio-recorded to assist with analysis of data.

**Data analysis.** A case study approach was used to identify findings both within each case and across cases. Each case (student) was analyzed individually based on the
research questions and data from all students analyzed for emerging themes. Table 3.3 includes the seven research questions and the methodology used to answer each question. Each participant was identified using a researcher assigned pseudonym that was provided on the Self-Advocacy Study Intake Form (Appendix I). Each data source was labeled with the appropriate pseudonym, and this allowed the researcher to access relevant data during analysis. The researcher engaged in an iterative process to data analysis throughout the course of the study. The analysis was conducted in an ongoing manner as data were collected. The researcher used simultaneous data analysis, detected emerging themes by listening to each interview before the next participant was interviewed and was able to refine interview questions, a procedure suggested by Merriam (2001). Field notes were collected throughout the study, but the information did not add to analysis and were not used to influence any of the themes or conclusions for the study. The researcher generated field notes from preliminary analyses of data generated from each of the data collection instruments: pretest/posttest written evaluation, pre/post-intervention role-play evaluations, pre/post-intervention interviews, and 7-week instructional sessions weekly exit slip probes and lesson evaluation. Begeny, Upright, Easton, Ehrenbock, and Tunstall (2013) suggested that the researcher listen to the weekly instructional sessions to assess implementation integrity of the lessons.

The interviews were transcribed from audio recordings and the field notes taken immediately following each interview were used to supplement each transcript. This approach allowed the researcher to identify themes and categorize findings. Marshall and Rossman (2006) examined the different methods of qualitative analysis and suggested
identifying themes that could be organized together as a helpful step in the process of looking for connections.

The coding process consisted of three stages: expansion of the data, categorization of units of information, and simplification of the identified units of information into codes. Each interview was examined for discrete units of meaning related to the research questions. The identified units of meaning were then grouped into descriptive categories that were generated by the researcher. Each category was assigned a descriptive code. Codes generated from each interview were analyzed for the purpose of identifying common themes emerging across cases. These themes were refined throughout the analysis by discerning how the categories were alike or different and establishing relationships (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In the final analysis, themes and concepts were evaluated alongside concepts from other research that relate to college students with LD and/or ADHD and their perception of self-advocacy. Yin (2003) recommended organizing each case’s materials as a case study database to enable the researcher to access the specific data during the analysis. This study utilized the computer software program Microsoft Word and Excel to organize and categorize data.

**Triangulation of data.** Triangulation of data was established within each case and across case interviews. This was addressed specifically during the one-on-one interviews by repeating back responses to questions to verify words and intent which Stake (1995) referred to as Member Checking. Additionally, triangulation of data was strengthened between cases by repetition of questions and topics from the multiple data sources. Denzin (1984) suggested that to gain credibility in the interpretation of case study research the researcher must utilize several protocols within a study. Denzin
(1989) identified the utilization of other co-observers or reviewers as *theory triangulation*. This study incorporated different observers and reviewers, including the director of ASP, who implemented the instructional intervention, and two volunteer professors who provided direct observation during the pretest/posttest role-plays. A volunteer data collector not affiliated with the study site assisted with the transcription of the audio-recorded interviews along with the researcher to verify content, thus providing a higher degree of reliability in transcription. Following the transcription of the data, the volunteer data collector, and the researcher coded the data based on themes that emerged. Merriam (1998) stated that based on literature and expertise, the strategies of triangulation, member checks, and peer examination will enhance the internal validity of the study. A constant comparative method was employed to analyze the data from all data sources: (a) pre/post intervention interviews, (b) pre/post role-play, (c) pre/post knowledge test, (d) pre/post SAQ, and (e) exit slip probes and lesson evaluation.

**Reliability.** Qualitative researchers in the social sciences continually discussed the problems with reliability in qualitative research since human behavior is always changing. Qualitative researchers have found no consensus on addressing the topic of reliability in qualitative studies (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The concept of reliability in research was based on the idea that a single reality exists, and by repeatedly studying that reality, the same results will be produced (Merriam, 1998). Given that each participant uniquely experienced the group instructional intervention, efforts were made to use additional data sources mentioned previously to aid the researcher in reliably capturing each participant’s experience.
Morse et al., (2002) suggested the importance of focusing on the process of verification throughout the study to avoid the risk of threats to reliability and validity. Reliability related to study implementation was bolstered through the training and practice provided to the director of the ASP and the role-play faculty volunteers by the researcher. The researcher met numerous times with the director of the ASP to discuss each lesson of the curriculum and any procedural questions that she had about the lessons. Training for the two faculty members occurred prior to each faculty member participating in the direct observation of students requesting accommodations. Additionally, the researcher practiced using the interview guide with three college students not enrolled at the university and who did not have a disability in order to rehearse skills used in the study.

Seminal qualitative research conducted by Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed thinking about reliability from the perspective of “dependability or consistency of the results” (p.288). Their perspective was not that the qualitative research can be replicated but that the results are believable and make sense with the data that were collected. This study utilized multiple data sources, analysis, and triangulation, all of which supported reliability and internal validity as suggested by Merriam (1998).

**Intervention Procedures**

The director of the disability services office at the University was contacted and informed about the research study and data collection procedures. The researcher, the director of OSS, and the director of ASP discussed the feasibility of the study before the researcher formally proposed the study to her doctoral advisory committee. Two universities’ Internal Review Boards (IRB) reviewed the research study and curriculum.
Approval was requested from the institutional review boards (IRB) of the university of the researcher as well as the university where the study was conducted.

Upon receiving IRB approval from both universities, the researcher asked the director of ASP to sign a consent form that indicated the following (a) the study could take place at the university, (b) the instructional intervention could be implemented in the ASP, and (c) the researcher had permission to meet with the ASP students to request their participation in the study (Appendix H). The meeting introducing the study occurred following IRB approval the first week of classes spring semester 2014, during the regularly scheduled ASP class time 10:50 – 12:00 p.m. Students returned the consent forms the next day, and the instructional sessions began the following week. Upon signed consent, students were assigned pseudonyms on the Self-Advocacy Study intake form (Appendix G) to ensure confidentiality of information.

The researcher and the Director of ASP provided prospective participants an overview of the 7-week study. Participants were given consent forms immediately following the overview of the study and were given an opportunity to ask any questions they had about the study and/or the time commitment involved over the course of the 7-week study (Appendix A). Students were informed about an honorarium of a $25.00 gift card in appreciation for their commitment of time for completing all components of the study. Students were instructed that while they may drop out of the study at any time, the only time they may join the study was at the beginning. The $25.00 gift card was given to those students who began and completed the study and completed all required measures. The researcher requested permission to audio-record each instructional session, pretest/
posttest role-play, as well as the pre/post interviews on the consent form to participate in the study.

The director of the ASP conducted classes that met every week from 10:50-12:00 p.m. The director reviewed the curriculum from the intervention (http://nextsteps-nh.org/wp-content/uploads/Self-advocacy-and-the-Transition-to-College-12-13-2011.pdf) before the start of the study to ensure that it covered the material that they would normally cover during the spring semester of ASP classes. The director agreed to use the study curriculum for the seven weeks of the study (Appendix H). The students who did not consent to be a part of the study still attended the weekly ASP classes but did not participate in any of the additional measures specific to the study (pre/post written knowledge evaluation, pre/post self-advocacy questionnaire, pre/post role-play, and pre/post interviews). The students who did not consent were not assigned a pseudonym nor was any of their information collected for the study. The director kept track of who was and was not a part of the study because she worked closely with all the students.

The instructional sessions began the week following the introductory meeting and occurred weekly for seven consecutive weeks. Classes were canceled due to inclement weather on week 2 of implementing the intervention. Therefore, two weeks existed between week 2 and week 3 of the intervention. Each session lasted one hour and was held in the same classroom in the library. The instructional intervention, Self-advocacy and the Transition to College (Merchant & Dintino, 2011) was comprised of seven lessons:

1. Goal setting.
2. Differences between high school and college, part I and II.
Each lesson addressed a different topic of self-advocacy and understanding of one’s disability. Lesson activities created within each session provided an opportunity for students to engage in the topic for the week. At the end of each class, participants were asked to complete an exit slip probe and lesson evaluation.

The first instructional session on the topic of goal setting involved the director reminding the students that the class marked the start of the instructional intervention for the dissertation study and that the lesson was being audio-recorded for the researcher. Students took a self-advocacy pretest (Appendix B) over the Merchant (1998) curriculum that covered understanding their disability and skills of self-advocacy. Second, the students completed a self-advocacy questionnaire (Kosine, 2006, Appendix C). The outcome of lesson one for the instructional intervention was to understand the importance of goal setting. This topic was also covered during the fall semester of the class. The director briefly reviewed this lesson by going over Question 3 of the lesson on page 3 of the curriculum (Merchant & Dintino, 2011). Students were asked to share with a partner what progress they had made on their short-term goals. At the end of class, students scheduled their pretest role-play session. This information was given to the first of two faculty members who consented to conduct the pretest role-play.
Class 2 began with the director conducting a short review of goal setting, the topic of the first class meeting, and discussing any specific questions that arose from the exit slip probes. Lesson 2 was about the differences between high school and college part I, and II. Lessons 2 and 3 were combined to avoid repeating the material on this same topic that students were presented with in ASP programming during fall 2013. Lesson 2 followed the Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 5-16) curriculum and highlighted the key questions (2011, p. 9) specific to the legal differences between high school and college. The researcher met with the director of ASP before the start of the study and decided exactly which parts of lessons 2 and 3 would be addressed so as not to take away from the key points of the lessons. The changes or omissions were specifically noted in the curriculum the director used. The main topics that were omitted pertained to the students being asked to identify the social and academic differences between high school and college. This material had been taught fall semester 2013.

Class 3 began with the director reviewing the differences between high school and college disability laws from the previous class. Students had the opportunity to discuss any specific questions that arose from the exit slip probes. Lesson 4 focused on the student’s learning styles and preferences. The lesson followed the Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 17-18 curriculum). The curriculum included a link for an on-line learning styles inventory for students to complete during class. The purpose of the inventory was to provide the students an opportunity to see which learning modalities or styles they most closely align. The link did not work during class, so a replacement link on learning styles was emailed to the students by the director later that day, and the students were asked to complete this inventory before the following class.
The director reminded the students to print out their results for a discussion of their specific learning style the following week.

Class 4 opened with a short review of learning styles and preferences. Students had an opportunity to discuss any specific questions stemming from their learning styles inventory results that they had completed independently through the on-line link that week. Students were given the opportunity to ask any specific questions that surfaced from the exit slip probe presented at the end of the previous class. Lesson 5 focused on students understanding of the nature of their disability and knowledge about strengths and challenges associated with their learning differences. The lesson followed the Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 19-24 curriculum).

Class 5 began with the director conducting a short review of the material presented in the last class session. Students also discussed questions stemming from exit slip probes from Class 4. Lesson 6 focused on accommodations and students understanding what was meant by a reasonable accommodation. The lesson followed the Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 25-26 curriculum).

Class 6 started with a short review of class five’s topic of accommodations and a discussion of any specific questions that arose from the exit slip probes. Lesson 7 focused on self-advocacy and self-determination. The lesson followed the Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 27-30 curriculum).

Class 7 began with a review of the material presented in class six. Students discussed any specific questions that arose from the exit slip probes submitted at the end of class six. Lesson 8 focused on putting all the information from classes two through six together and being able to apply it in everyday life. The students took time during this
class to review the specific components of requesting accommodations from a professor. The lesson followed the Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 31-38 curriculum) and allowed students ample time to practice this new skill. The director reminded the students that this class was the last instructional session of the intervention for the dissertation study. Class ended with the students taking another copy of the self-advocacy posttest (Appendix B), followed by a copy of the self-advocacy questionnaire as a post-intervention test of their self-advocacy knowledge (Kosine, 2006; Appendix C). Students were then directed to complete an exit slip probe where they also listed their availability for scheduling the posttest role-play. Students were contacted by the researcher to set up their post interview prior to the university’s Spring Break 2014.

**Summary**

This chapter presented an overview of the methodology used in this multiple methods study designed to answer seven research questions. The collective case studies approach chosen for this study allowed for a closer examination of students with LD and/or ADHD and their understanding of utilizing self-advocacy skills for requesting accommodations from professors. The case studies were designed to incorporate multiple methods to investigate the effect of a self-advocacy instructional intervention on college students with LD and/or ADHD. The purpose was to address a current gap in the literature as it pertains to students with LD and/or ADHD self-advocating for accommodations with professors in addition to extending Merchant’s (1998) original work by qualitatively exploring student perceptions of self-advocacy and accommodation seeking and the inclusion of participants with ADHD.
Table 3.1

Descriptors of student participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic Status</th>
<th>Age of diagnosis (LD and/or ADHD)</th>
<th>Public, Private or Home School</th>
<th>Formal Instruction in Self-Advocacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 1 (Steven)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2 (Casey)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Private/ Home schooled</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3 (Kevin)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 4 (Haeli)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Private/ Home schooled</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 5 (Janelle)</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 6 (Michael)</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.2

*Instruments and week assessment was completed*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Week 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Pretest/Posttest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire of Self-advocacy Pretest/posttest</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretest/posttest Role-play</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post-intervention Semi-structured interview</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit slip probe with Lesson evaluation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.3

**Research Questions with Methodology**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) What influence does instruction in the skills of self-advocacy have on the</td>
<td>Pre/post-intervention role-play rating sheet,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abilities of college freshmen and newly identified students with LD and/or ADHD</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to effectively request accommodations from a professor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) In what way does receiving instruction in self-advocacy influence students’</td>
<td>Exit slip probe, post-intervention interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-reported, self-advocating?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) How do students rate the usefulness of each instructional session regarding</td>
<td>Exit slip probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the information conveyed and the skills taught?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) How does understanding of one’s disability affect a student’s interaction</td>
<td>Semi-structured pre-intervention interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a faculty member when requesting accommodations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) What are the experiences of college students’ with LD and/or ADHD as they</td>
<td>Semi-structured pre/post-intervention interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advocate for themselves in the college environment?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) How do the participants describe their self-advocacy skills?</td>
<td>Semi-structured pre/post-intervention interview, Pre/post-intervention SAQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) What influence does instruction in self-advocacy skills have on the abilities</td>
<td>Pre/post-intervention knowledge test, exit slip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of college freshmen and newly identified students’ with LD and/or ADHD to</td>
<td>probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand the characteristics of LD, federal disability laws, and accommodations?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four

Results

This chapter presents the findings from this exploratory multiple case studies investigation of the effects of a seven-week self-advocacy intervention on students’ with LD and/or ADHD abilities to understand their individual disability and to self-advocate with college professors. The chapter is organized into three sections in order to give context to the perspectives and experiences of the student participants. The first section introduces each participant with a brief case summary. The second section presents the themes that emerged in a cross-case analyses of the qualitative data. The third section includes summaries of the results for each quantitative measure. Tables and figures listed in this chapter are included at the end of this chapter. Additional individual case results are available in Appendices J - 0.

Case Summaries

Case 1: Steven. Steven was a second-semester college freshman studying business. He received a Learning Disability (LD) diagnosis while in elementary school and self-identified as a student with LD in college. He attended public schools for his elementary and secondary education. He recalled becoming aware of learning differences between himself and his peers during his first-grade year. “I could see others breezing through a page of reading and it would take me twice as long, and I could not remember what I had read.” Steven began seeing a specialist for eye-tracking difficulties and by the fifth grade he had accessed additional supports to help his reading fluency and comprehension. During the fifth grade, he started a reading program that sought to attain gains of two to three years in reading fluency and comprehension. The program was
successful but the extra hours of work every night were difficult for him. Steven reminisced “It was a constant reminder that I was behind… I was behind.”

Steven noted that he had to work harder than his siblings when it came to school, “my oldest brother, is a bookworm and would stay up all night reading the “Harry Potter” series and I struggled [just] to read.” Steven expressed that going to high school was a big step for him. Prior to high school, his parents had helped him at night with his homework, but in high school, he did it himself, even if it took longer. He stated, “it was just me, myself doing it.”

Steven’s perspective about his disability included a strong belief that he should see himself just like any other typical college student, “it is not a thing like poor you…in my own eyes, I see I’m dyslexic; it’s not an excuse.” He stated that as an elementary student, he found that doing the work associated with the extra supports fueled a growing sense of resentment within him about his learning differences. Throughout both interviews, Steven verbalized the importance of setting high goals and not allowing himself to procrastinate.

Steven was asked how he managed his learning challenges in high school. He expressed that he was self-aware and knew when or if he needed assistance or some accommodation; “... I have no self-pride or problem talking to my professors.” Another example of his awareness about his disability came from an experience during high school that involved learning how to send text messages using his cellular phone. “I couldn’t text because I couldn’t write a complete sentence, but I wasn’t aware that my sentences didn’t make sense… I would get a text back asking what in the world I was trying to say”? Through this experience, Steven became aware of his need to review his
text messages twice before sending them. Additional results for Steven appear in Appendix J.

**Case 2: Casey.** Casey, a 19-year-old female math education major, was in her second semester of college. She received an LD and ADHD diagnosis while in the third grade, and she self-identified as a student with ADHD in college. She portrayed herself as an introvert and someone who understood the importance of utilizing self-advocacy skills in an academic setting. However, she expressed that she needed to practice being assertive when requesting accommodations from professors.

Casey attended a private school from kindergarten through the third grade. “When I was in third grade, I was struggling, and I remember going to this room with a lady, she was really nice. I answered some questions, and she gave me a picture to write a story about, she gave me an hour, and I couldn’t finish it.” Following this testing, and the private schools’ concern about being able to continue teaching Casey, her parents decided to continue Casey’s education through homeschooling.

After completing the sixth grade, Casey re-enrolled in the private school she formerly attended to complete her middle and high school years. Throughout middle and high school, the main challenge she encountered was trying to get her homework done. “I’m a perfectionist… it’s hard enough being a perfectionist, but also having a disorder…. I would have to go back and [say,] ok, can you explain this to me?”

Casey recalled feeling that her disability made her “different.” When asked if there were times that having a LD upset her, she responded yes. “I remember in high school getting extra time and stuff like that. I remember really long nights doing
homework and being frustrated. I would vent…to my fellow basketball players while crying…. Why is this happening to me? This is dumb. I just want to be normal.”

Casey described how she first learned she had a disability. She remembered the doctor and her mom trying to make it clear to her that she had learning differences. “Being nine years old, it didn’t make sense, and my parents didn’t share everything, just that there were changes to make.” Casey stated that she used strategies she had learned to help her compensate for her areas of weakness. She explained how she dealt with weaknesses in the area of reading; “I make outlines, highlighting facts, and making them look like graphs and chart.” She explained how for a math test last semester, “I took a piece of paper and made a ‘T-chart’ if this happens it converges if this happens it diverges when I am studying my mind is very compartmentalize these things help me study.”

Casey’s perspective on her disability incorporated a belief that she wanted to be fully aware of her strengths and weaknesses. She shared that when she thought of having a disability, she wanted to remember, “Hey I have this [disability], but not to just focus on the areas that need work, but to focus on the areas I am good at as well.” Additional results for Casey appear in Appendix K.

Case 3: Kevin. Kevin was a 21-year-old male, majoring in media communications (audio production emphasis) and was in his sixth semester of college. He received an ADHD diagnosis prior to starting the spring semester of his sophomore year. During his fifth semester of college, Kevin self-identified to the Academic Support Program (ASP) as a student with ADHD. Kevin described himself as an extrovert and someone who enjoyed spending time with friends. He noted that he was someone who
understood the struggle of going through 13 years of school wondering, “Why is it so difficult for me to learn?”

Kevin attended a private school for his elementary and secondary education. When asked how he managed his academic work during his years in school, he replied, “I have no clue.” He shared that learning was difficult during high school, “I had tutors and friends that helped me out with my classes and studying. I made it by the skin of my teeth I guess.”

When asked to share his understanding of the concept self-advocacy, Kevin stated, “…that this included understanding his disability and being able to approach professors with this understanding when asking for accommodations.” Kevin communicated an experience he had with one of his professors this semester. He talked to the professor before class and told him about his “test anxiety.” He shared that once people started leaving their seats during the exam, he, “began to worry. Man I don’t want to be the last [one to finish,] and I don’t want to leave too soon.” Kevin expressed how pleased he was with how the professor handled the situation and provided his accommodations. He stated, “I didn’t really know that you could ask for accommodations for test anxiety and have the professor actually believe you.” Additional results for Kevin appear in Appendix L.

Case 4: Haeli. Haeli was in her second semester of college as a full-time student. At that time, she was undecided about her major, although she had taken classes part-time at the university over the previous year. She received an LD diagnosis at age 9 and a medical diagnosis of Neurocardiogenic Syncope, “a syndrome that triggers a brief loss of consciousness that leads to falling” (Grubb, 2005, p. 2997), at age 12. In college, she
self-identified with the Academic Support Program (ASP) as a student with a LD and a medical diagnosis in college. She described herself as someone who enjoyed people and learning new things. Haeli stated that she had been utilizing self-advocacy as well as self-efficacy skills, which refer to “a person’s belief in his or her ability to succeed at a task” (Kozacek & Specht, 2014, p.6), since middle school even prior to having a good understanding of either term.

Haeli’s education had been varied. She was a part of a homeschool co-op from kindergarten through twelfth grade and received instruction to address her eye-tracking difficulties through a vision program until fourth grade. She attended her local public school part-time beginning in fourth grade where she was evaluated for having a LD. Haeli remembered being evaluated for her English and reading skills due to her “reading very slow and not being able to spell.” She attended the public elementary school for her reading and English classes each day but otherwise continued in her homeschool co-op.

It was during seventh grade that Haeli received her diagnosis of Neurocardiogenic Syncope. She recalled “waking up on the floor of the bathroom with paramedics around me [trying to help me regain consciousness].” Haeli also recalled the struggles of not only having a LD in middle school but also having a medical condition that involved fainting multiple times a day. School became a place that Haeli no longer enjoyed due to the effort she expended in trying to deal with the typical pressures of adolescence as well as having a medical condition.

Haeli felt that being homeschooled was the right decision for her; it allowed her parents to monitor not only her education but also her medical condition. Haeli reflected upon high school and said, “My parents helped me a lot, they would read things to me or
find a movie that related to the book I needed to read….Being homeschooled allowed me to do more project-based learning…I loved it. We didn’t do many tests; it was mainly focused on the learning and [some type of presentation] of what we learned.”

Haeli shared about how she was managing her workload in college “I take a reduced course load each semester due to my medical condition and the amount of sleep I require each night. I can’t do quite as much each day, and this course load seems to work.” When asked if there were times that having a LD and a medical condition upset her, she replied, “Yes, I wish I could read and write like everyone else and not worry about fainting, but that’s not how God made me.” Haeli communicated that she understood her learning differences and how to handle her health better now than in high school. However, “It’s still a little difficult to explain it [how I learn and what to do when I faint] to people and especially my professors.” She explained that she understood the importance and necessity of self-advocating in addition to utilizing the strategies and accommodations to address her areas of weakness. Additional results for Haeli appear in Appendix M.

**Case 5: Janelle.** Janelle was a 19-year-old female in her second semester of college as an Equine Management major. Educated in a private school from kindergarten through the twelfth grade she received a diagnosis of ADHD, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Dyslexia at age 10. Later that school year, during fourth grade the doctors diagnosed a persistent (chronic) motor and vocal tic disorder. Her doctor suggested that she begin taking medication, and her mom agreed that medicine might help. Janelle began fifth grade in addition to starting on medication. She recalled that her teacher stated, “You came in, sat down and could do the work and pay attention. There’s
a different child sitting at this desk!” She explained how good it felt to function well in
the classroom and complete her schoolwork without being frustrated with herself.

Throughout middle and high school, the main challenge Janelle encountered was
the doctors trying to regulate her medications. She recalled feeling that her disability was
a “new obstacle in which to navigate.” When asked if there were times that having
learning differences and other disorders upset her, she responded yes. “I remember in my
junior year we finally figured out what medications I needed, and I felt ‘normal’ again
and able to function.” Janelle was asked if she believed her high school education
experience left her well-prepared her for college. She replied that her high school had
done a great job. The workload was heavy, and all the teachers had very high
expectations of the students. Discovering ways to manage her learning differences in
high school was a challenge for her, but she related that she found the support she
received from her teachers and guidance counselor important for her success.

Janelle self-identified as a student with multiple disabilities in college but
primarily sought support services for her ADHD. She described herself as an outgoing
person and someone who loved working with horses. Janelle found work with horses to
be “very therapeutic” as it provided a place where she would not tic or experience
obsessive thoughts. In contrast, she voiced that the classroom is a space where she
needed to focus on being assertive – particularly when it came to requesting
accommodations from professors.

Janelle described that she was self-aware and knew the importance of scheduling
a time to meet with each of her professors the first week of classes to review her
accommodations. During those meetings, Janelle shared that she explained her
disabilities and the types of behaviors associated with her diagnosis. She reported that by having these meetings early in the semester, it set her up for a more successful interaction with her professors.

Janelle described a few of her frustrations with having a disability. “There were things like my OCD, where I went down stairs, and I had to land on a certain foot,” She recalled talking with her mother about how odd she felt and saying “Nobody else does the things I do.” While discussing Janelle’s understanding of her multiple diagnoses, she shared that “Sometimes I look around, nobody else [has vocal or motor tics or obsesses over the number of steps,] there’s something wrong with me.” Janelle’s perspective about her differences included a belief that she should view herself with a little humor. “I always feel a little bit different from other people, but in a good way. I’m pretty open, all my friends know what I deal with, and they’re cool with it.” Additional results for Janelle appear in Appendix N.

**Case 6: Michael.** Michael was a second-semester college freshman studying media communications. He received a diagnosis of ADHD from his pediatrician at age 8. Michael attended public schools for his elementary and secondary education. He remembered being aware of differences between himself and his peers during fifth and sixth grade. “I remember struggling socially and being frustrated… I guess you could say that I wished that I was able to concentrate like everyone else.” Michael mentioned just being frustrated by “seeing others finish their work and not being distracted by everything.” He mentioned that he had a 504 plan, and “I think I had accommodations in high school I got extended time on tests, so that was the only thing in place.” Michael voiced “I pretty much had no time management. It was just something my parents were
continually telling me, ‘Michael, homework done before doing anything else.’” He described himself as an introvert and at times socially awkward during his years in high school, but good at self-advocating when needed.

Michael did not self-identify as a student with ADHD in college until his second semester. “Time management and actually concentrating on what I am supposed to be doing is definitely my weakness; I guess that is why I was diagnosed ADHD Inattentive type.” Michael’s perspective about his disability involved a belief that he “never really wondered about it. I was just kind of like this is how I am. I have a hard time concentrating; that’s how it is.” He remarked, “I have everything I need available to me. What I need to do is to take hold of it.” In describing his first semester at college, Michael stated: “Managing college has not been what I expected.” He stated “I know since I have ADHD Inattentive Type, that most of my distractions are internal… If I get distracted, I’ll start something and then get bored, my brain will go somewhere else, and I will forget what I was doing.”

Michael commented that his family was involved and provided a supportive environment where he learned how to self-advocate. Michael stated that he received the services and accommodations he needed. His parents demonstrated for him how to be a self-advocate and provided the encouragement he needed to ask his teachers for assistance. Additional results for Michael appear in Appendix O.

Themes Across Cases

The previous sections explored a brief summary of the participants’ various stories and unique experiences to provide a context for the themes that emerged from the collective interviews. While each of the students’ experiences learning and utilizing self-
advocacy was different, four main themes emerged from the pre/post-intervention interviews: (a) interactions between family support and educational experiences; (b) self-advocacy knowledge; (c) self-advocacy experiences; and (d) perceived benefits of the intervention. Subcategories were identified within each theme in an attempt to capture the diversity found among the students’ stories. See Figure 4.1 for a complete list of the four themes and nine subcategories.

**Theme 1: Interactions between family support and educational experiences.**

Three subcategories emerged from the data to construct this theme: accessing P-12 accommodations, observing their parents modeling how to self-advocate, and the demands of college. Students were asked during the pre-intervention interview, *How were your parents involved in your K-12 education?* All six participants reported high levels of parental involvement during their K-12 education. Casey, Haeli, and Janelle each commented on how their parents offered support in working with the school personnel and requesting the specific accommodations needed either during an IEP meeting or just by talking with their teachers. Kevin remembered his mother thinking that his elementary teachers were assigning too much homework for a fourth grader when he would come home with a full backpack of assignments. “My mom called my teacher and asked why I was given so much homework? She responded by stating that this was all the work I hadn’t finished during the day.”

Five of the six participants except for Kevin, mentioned observing their parents interacting with teachers and other significant adults (doctors, guidance counselors and principals) to ensure that they received the services and assistance needed. Steven noted that his family was his support system and that he learned how to self-advocate by
observing his parents who modeled for him how to be a self-advocate. Michael attributed his success with self-advocating to his parents’ involvement in his life. “They helped with talking to teachers and told me, ‘Michael, this is your job to advocate for what you need.’”

Adjusting to the demands of college without the direct parental support was different for each of the six participants. Casey Haeli, Janelle, and Steven shared that they felt prepared academically for college, but each knew that they would experience different types of struggles. Haeli commented that she had been taking one or two college classes each semester for the previous year and a half, “so my main adjustment is taking a heavier course load this semester.” Although for Steven, he described his adjustments more along the lines of knowing the difficulty of a class or professor and how to prepare for an exam. “I try to find a few people in class who are studying together and meeting with them has helped tremendously. Everything else is don’t procrastinate, even when I don’t want to study.” Michael stated, “Managing college has not been what I expected. First semester was dreadful; I didn’t adjust well.” He commented that he was one of two students to receive a full-tuition scholarship. “Due to doing so horribly last semester, I will probably lose my scholarship… I started off ok, and then there were always things that I had not accounted for coming up. Being bad with time management just added to things going downhill quickly.” Michael reiterated this during the post-interview that this was one of the reasons he signed up for the ASP this semester was to assist him in staying on top things. “Accountability is the main thing that has helped me. Meeting weekly in the ASP class as well as meeting one-on-one with the director has reminded me that this is why I am here [at college].”
Kevin had difficulty handling his collegiate studies prior to his diagnosis. “The first two semesters were rough, and I was told I needed to enroll in a strategies class that helped students learn how to study in college,” Kevin remarked that he would do whatever anyone suggested, to assist himself with focusing and getting his assignments done before his diagnosis of ADHD. He met on several different occasions with his academic advisor to talk about his inability to focus and his failing grades. His advisor encouraged him to see a physician following his third semester. Following his diagnosis Kevin began taking medication; he remembered commenting to his mom, “it’s like I was blind, and now I see.” He was now able to focus and complete the tasks he knew he had the intellectual ability to do, whereas before he had struggled to stay focused long enough to finish. “I wish I would have known that there are special accommodations, that are able to be used, and I wish I would have known like to meet with professors, talk with them, build a relationship with them.”

**Theme 2: Self-advocacy knowledge.** Two subcategories emerged from the data to create the second theme of self-advocacy knowledge: insight into self and understanding one’s disability. Five of the participants indicated having an understanding of their disability and how it affected them growing up. The sixth, Kevin, having had a more recent diagnosis than the others, was still learning the implications of his disability and the strategies to use to deal with it.

During the pre-intervention interview, the student’s were asked to define the term *self-advocacy*. Interestingly, they all had varying but similar definitions to share. Steven stated that a quality of a good self-advocate is “persistence.” Casey explained that “it is someone who is good at sticking up for themselves and are confident in themselves.”
Kevin defined it as “knowing what is best for oneself…like knowing and applying the strengths you have and utilizing them.” Haeli shared that, “It is asking for help when you need it…. So being comfortable with myself.” Janelle described it as “Speaking up for yourself saying ‘this is who I am, this is what I deal with, and this is how I deal with it, and this is what I need from you, and what you can expect from me.’” Michael explained it by saying “it means asking to help yourself and not needing anyone else to ask anything for you.”

The students were then asked to follow their definition of self-advocacy with examples of how they had used it in the past. Here are their responses. Steven became aware of his learning differences between himself and his peers during his first-grade year. He expressed extreme confidence in knowing what he needed to do to be successful beginning in high school. He stated “I’ve always been pretty independent, I haven’t needed to be walked through things…I would do it myself first then ask for help.” Consequently, Steven had not needed nor requested accommodations in college up to the time of the study; he felt that he was “testing the water to see what he needed and what he didn’t.”

Michael’s perspective on his learning differences involved a belief that he “never really wondered about it. I was just kind of like this is how I am. I have a hard time concentrating; that’s how it is.” He remarked, “I have everything I need available to me. What I need to do is to take hold of it.” For example, Michael recognized that time management was something he had always struggled to manage. He commented that the accountability he received through the ASP had been essential to his success. He shared, “I think knowing will obviously [help] if you know what your problem is, and then you'll
be able to figure out better ways to handle it. That's kind of what I'm currently doing, figuring out that I might need to do my homework alone instead of in a large group environment." He stated “I know since I have ADHD Inattentive Type, which most of my distractions are internal. If I get distracted, I’ll start something and then get bored, my brain will go somewhere else, and I will forget what I was doing.”

In like manner, Janelle expressed that she was self-aware and had learned the importance of speaking up for herself. Consequently, she made it a priority to schedule a time to meet with each of her professors during the first week of classes to review her accommodations. She stated that “even when I look for summer jobs, most are working with animals which don’t require me to self-advocate for specific accommodations.”

As has been noted, Haeli was homeschooled, yet, attended the public elementary school for her reading and English classes. It was here that she first became aware of her learning differences when she was evaluated for her English and reading skills due to her “reading very slow and not being able to spell.” During her elementary school years, her mom did a lot of tactile learning activities that involved movement while learning. Haeli expressed that, “being home schooled allowed my parents, who are both teachers, to plan lessons that fit my learning styles and work around my health condition.” At the time of the study, she commented on having a good understanding of her disability and how she learns best. She asserted that she understood her learning differences and how to handle her health better now than in high school. With regards to her health condition, she explained, “Well, my knowing how it works and knowing what's going on helps people not panic as much… However, “it’s still a little difficult to explain it, how I learn and what to do when I faint to people and especially my professors.” She explained that she
understood the importance and necessity of utilizing strategies and accommodations to address her areas of weakness. She commented that “I know I cannot accomplish as much each day that a full course load would require, so I have requested and received a reduced course load which has been helpful.”

Casey first became aware of her learning differences when her private school informed her mother that they did not have the resources to “teach her anymore.” As to her current understanding of her learning differences, she communicated that she understood them better now, but added, “it’s still a little fuzzy, like how to describe it. But especially in high school, I was ok; it’s there. Now I’m like, ok, it’s there.”

Casey indicated that she knew some of her weaknesses were reading, being organized, and completing multiple assignments in a timely manner. She felt that perfectionism and time management played a role in this but that she had implemented strategies that she had learned to help her compensate for her areas of weakness. Casey’s perspective on her disability incorporated a belief that she wanted to be fully aware of both her strengths and weaknesses. She discussed that to self-advocate required a combination of being self-aware, letting people know what she needed, and knowing her educational rights.

Kevin explained how relieved he was to be diagnosed with ADHD. “I always wondered why it was so difficult for me to focus and learn.” When asked if he felt that he learned differently than other students, he replied,

Oh yeah. I knew something was different because I would be so aggravated… whenever someone would be like, ‘Oh man a 92, one more point and I could’ve had an A!’ Over here, I was like, a D-, sweet, I passed it! Then, I would ask
them, ‘How long did you study?’ They would respond, ‘Oh, twenty minutes’ and I would be like, oh cool, I studied for four hours.

Having an awareness of his disability and his personality was something Kevin stressed as being important when talking with his professors, and he wanted them to know that even though he had accommodations, he worked hard and wanted to be successful in class. Kevin shared “now that I have an understanding of my ADHD, it has allowed me to make the needed changes in my life and has given me the courage to ask for accommodations to help me be successful. He expressed that now he did not have to spend time wondering, “Why is this going on? Am I just stupid?” At another point in the interview, he added, “I wish I would have known I had ADD.”

**Theme 3: Self-advocacy experiences.** Two subcategories emerged from the data to create the third theme of self-advocacy experiences: self-disclosure of disability to professors and an awareness of what one needs and how to ask for assistance. Five of the six participants indicated that as in the semesters before the intervention, they had disclosed needing accommodations to their professors and at the beginning of spring semester during the intervention. The sixth, Steven, commented that he had self-identified by enrolling in the ASP, asking for accommodations was a resource he had access to but that he had not found it necessary so far. All six participants stated that they had an awareness of knowing what types of accommodations they needed or when or if they needed to ask for assistance. Steven expressed confidence in his ability to determine when accommodations would be helpful, “…if I need anything, I will self-advocate, but it has just turned out that I do not….”
Casey related how her experiences in high school athletics led to how she self-advocated in college. She referenced her coaches who were continually telling her “speak up on the court; be a leader.” She commented on being an introvert and how learning to speak up on the court helped her gain more confidence with speaking up for herself with professors. She further stated later in the interview that to be a good self-advocate, “one must have confidence… you are confident in who you are, and what you’re asking for, this is what I need.” Casey commented on how her school and home experiences helped to shape her understanding of self-advocacy and gave her opportunities to practice being her own advocate. Casey stated that it was important to strike a balance between letting people know what you need, being self-aware, and knowing your educational rights. “Mom would get on me all the time in high school to self-advocate… she wanted me to talk to my teachers and ask for more time when I was taking a test, or [to have] the door shut, or if I could leave [the room] to take my test.”

Kevin discussed how understanding his disability had helped him when he approached his professors to ask for accommodations. He related one particular experience he had one semester. He talked to the professor before class and told him about his “test anxiety.” He shared that “once people started leaving their seats during the exam, I began to worry, ‘man I don’t want to be the last [one to finish,], and I don’t want to leave too soon.’” Kevin expressed how pleased he was with the professor allowing him to take the exam in a separate environment and how the professor handled the situation. He stated, “I didn’t really know that you could ask for accommodations for test anxiety and have the professor actually believe you.”
Haeli discussed that with her current medical condition (fainting) and LD that it was best that everyone around her understood what may happen. She explained, “if I explain, you know I'm going to black out at some point, don't worry about it, it's ok, it happens all the time.... This is what my body’s doing. My heart it slows down, it's not going to stop. I mean as long as you don't try to hold me upright, it's not dangerous. I think that just knowing how it works, calms them down.” Consequently, she was very open about her disabilities in general. She expressed that the more people know about her medical condition and learning, the less they are likely to panic when something happens.

Janelle also had a medical condition in addition to her LD. She remarked on the importance of talking with her professors. Regarding her medical condition, she explained, “I usually make sure I tell them because I wrinkle my forehead a lot and stuff which is a tic, and I want them to know I’m not confused, and I’m not upset... I feel like if I try to hide things, it gets suspicious.” An example of her self-advocating was when she mentioned, “As a test is coming up, I talk with the professors about my extended time and sometimes I have to remind them. They will hand out a scantron, and I will say ‘I don't use one: and they are always really good about it.” Janelle reflected on times when she had a need to self-advocate to other students. “I have had occasional times when the students will be like ‘why do you get to use your computer or, why do you get these things, you do just fine?’ She commented that she was fine telling people about her learning differences or behaviors.

Michael remarked, “I have no problem informing professors of my disability. I did that even before I started going to this academic support group. Just saying ‘hey I
have ADD, and if you see me staring off into space, you can call me out. It’s not because I'm bored.” However, on another level, he stated, “I think honestly the best conversation I can have is none. I'm trying to go about impressing them as a regular student, ask questions in class, and be proactive about, just being a good student and getting things done on time.” When questioned further about not self-advocating with his professors, Michael commented, “It's not that I'd rather not have them know. I just think that it would be more beneficial if they don't know. Because it may mean that they might hold me to a higher standard. And when I'm called to a certain standard, I will rise to meet that standard.”

**Theme 4: Perceived benefits of the intervention.** Two subcategories emerged from the data to create the fourth theme of perceived benefits of the intervention, and these themes are: understanding disability laws and the importance of understanding the skills of self-advocacy. All six participants reported a new or renewed understanding of the laws that pertain to an individual with a disability and indicated varying levels of interest in utilizing this knowledge of the laws in the future.

Kevin commented that the lessons on the laws made the biggest impression on him, “this is the first time I realized I had legal rights to receive accommodations.” He had attended a private school for his elementary and secondary education and explained that his teachers worked closely with him in grades K-12. “I wish I had known I had ADD and could have been evaluated.”

Haeli recognized the importance of knowing the law by stating, “I know I have rights, but people are less likely to take advantage of you if you know the rights you have.” Casey shared the same perspective, “learning about the laws and what my rights
are is cool… It is my responsibility to self-advocate and to let people know what I need.”

Michael stated similar view, “So far I haven’t had any trouble, or need to say ‘this is the law,’ but I suppose knowing might be useful for me in the future.”

Two participants remembered individuals in their past who had instructed them about the law. Steven expressed that due to his mother being a teacher, “I was drilled with this information beginning in middle school.” Janelle also described how her mom and her high school guidance counselor had worked with her during high school to make sure she understood her rights. She commented, “I was re-tested my junior year to update my accommodations. The lady who tested me recommended I receive double-time for my exams. She said, ‘I’ve never recommended double time before,’ I was glad to know my rights for accommodations.”

A second subcategory of this theme was the importance of understanding the skills of self-advocacy. Five out of the six participants indicated that they had received instruction on self-advocating by their parents; however, Kevin was able to describe how he had survived during his P-12 school years and the first two years of college just by seeking out any type of assistance he could find. He shared that he can transfer this knowledge to future employment. He stated that “I feel like it’s really important for my boss to know what I need to be successful. As an audio production major, I’m a hands-on learner if you show me how to do something, I will be able to do what you are asking faster than if I have to read how to do it.”

Michael commented that he had self-disclosed his disability this semester in order to learn how to manage and utilize self-advocacy skills. He explained that he wanted “to make sure my GPA didn’t do the same thing it did fall semester….. Meeting weekly for
accountability and reminding me to use my self-advocacy has really made a difference this semester.”

In contrast, Steven indicated that even though he had used the skills of self-advocacy in high school, he did not want his professors thinking he was using his disability as “an excuse…. It’s a disadvantage, but I want to try it on my ‘own’.” He reiterated that although he thought knowing the skills of self-advocacy was important, he did not need to receive accommodations at this point. “The program was good, the first lesson on goal setting is something that is extremely simple, but you have to do it in order to succeed in the future.”

The three male participants had mixed perceptions of the instructional intervention as it relates to self-advocacy. The three female participants indicated that they had utilized and continued to value the skills of self-advocacy now that they were in college and looking to their future. Casey voiced while describing her first semester at college and now having completed the self-advocacy curriculum, that “even though I knew to self-advocate in high school, it would have been nice to have been [taught this curriculum] in high school. I feel like high school was when I really started to need accommodations.” She reported that the lessons on knowing and understanding her strengths and learning styles will help make her more successful as a student, and will help her become a better teacher. Janelle remarked that “the lessons on understanding your disability where we had to mark specific subjects where we struggled, was very helpful. I hadn’t ever considered the other skills I struggled with except reading.”
Summaries of Quantitative Results

The previous sections provided a brief summary of the six participants in addition to presenting the four themes that emerged from the pre/post-intervention interviews. Descriptive statistics were obtained from the following quantitative instruments: a pretest/posttest role play with a professor, knowledge pretest/posttest, a pretest/posttest self-advocacy questionnaire, and finally an exit slip probe following each instructional session.

The descriptive statistics found in Table 4.1 includes the class by class exit slip data and weekly attendance for the seven-week intervention. The scores from the exit slips were not used for statistical analysis due to the small sample, however, the individual exit slip responses were used to guide instruction for the following week and provide case analysis.

Table 4.2 includes the results of the pre/post role play scenario ratings. There was little change in the participant's median pretest to posttest scores (11.5 to 12.5). Overall this represented approximately one additional correct item on the posttest average for the group. Of the six students, three students’ scores decreased from pre- to post role play, and three students’ scores increased, one student by four points. The results of the pre/post-intervention role-play illustrate that the students did exhibit the basic skills of requesting accommodations from their professors. The inter-rater reliability for the pretest and posttest were 0.67 and 0.98 respectively. Inter-rater reliability for ratings of role-play sessions was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of agreements plus disagreements.
Table 4.3 includes a summary of the percentage correct on the pretest to posttest knowledge test scores. In two of the three categories (Characteristics of LD and Federal Disability Laws) the mean scores increased slightly, however, on the third category (Accommodations) the mean score decreased marginally.

Table 4.4 includes a summary of the Likert-scaled scores for each of the three categories of the Self-advocacy Questionnaire (SAQ): Help-seeking, Confidence in Academic and Social Skills, and Self-determination. In two categories (Confidence in Academic and Social Skills and Self-determination) both the mean and median scores increased slightly. In the Help-seeking category, there was no change.

Table 4.5 includes a summary for the exit slip data where participants rated the lesson usefulness of each lesson using a Likert-type rating scale. Table 4.1 includes the weekly ratings of the usefulness of the lessons. Across the lessons, the average score given by the participants was a 2.58 which falls between somewhat useful to me and useful to me. The group averages by lesson ranged from 2.16 for (lesson four) to 3.0 for (lessons five and eight).

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative findings and quantitative results of the six participants. While each of the students’ experiences learning and utilizing self-advocacy was different, the four themes that emerged from the collective pre/post-intervention interviews showed similarities. All participants had strong family involvement throughout their educational experiences. Five of the six demonstrated a good understanding of self-advocacy knowledge. All participants shared their understanding of their individual learning differences, even the one participant who was only recently
diagnosed was able to talk with his professors about his specific academic needs. Finally, all participants rated the intervention as *somewhat useful to useful to me*.

In addition to their personal accounts, the three measures of role-play, knowledge test, and SAQ on average the scores showed a slight increase pretest to posttest. The next and final chapter contains a cross-case analysis for each of the research questions that guided this study, followed by a discussion of the limitations, conclusions, and implications for future research.
Figure 4.1

Themes and Subcategories in Case Interviews

Theme 1: Interactions Between Family Support and Educational Experiences

Subcategories: Accessing K-12 Accommodations

Parents modeling how to self-advocate

Demands of College

Theme 2: Self-Advocacy Knowledge

Subcategories: Insight into self

Understanding one’s disabilities

Theme 3: Self-Advocacy Experiences

Subcategories: Self-disclosure of disability to professors

Awareness of what you need and how to ask for assistance

Theme 4: Perceived Benefits of Intervention

Subcategories: Understanding disability laws

Using disability knowledge

Importance of understanding the skills of self-advocacy

Changes to make for future use of program
Table 4.1

Exit slip data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Support Program Participants</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 1 (Steven)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2 (Casey)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3 (Kevin)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 4 (Haeli)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 5 (Janelle)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case 6 (Michael)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. MU: Make up session; √ denotes attended class; + denotes understood class information; - denotes no information
1 = not at all useful to me; 2 = somewhat useful to me; 3 = useful to me; 4 = very useful to me; 5 = most useful to me - (1 2 3 4 5)
Table 4.2

Summary of Role-play Scenario Ratings 15 Points Possible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role-play scorer</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor scored role-play</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher scored role-play</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note. Researcher scored posttest was based upon five participants due to a defective recording of one participant role-play.
Table 4.3

*Summary of Percentage Correct on Pre/Post Knowledge Tests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of knowledge test</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of LD</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>72.2%</td>
<td>50-100%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>50-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Disability Laws</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>47.2%</td>
<td>16.7-83.3%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>33.3-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>75-100%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
<td>75-100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.4

*Summary of Pre/Post Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Likert Scaled Scores, 1-5*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Advocacy Categories</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th></th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Median</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Range</td>
<td>Median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help seeking</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.5-5.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in academic and social</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>2.71-4.71</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>2.33-5</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The SAQ is a 14-item questionnaire utilizing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from values 1 to 5 (1 = not at all useful to me, 2 = somewhat useful to me, 3 = useful to me, 4 = very useful to me, 5 = most useful to me)
Table 4.5

*Summary of Exit slip Likert Scores, 1-5*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Setting goals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/3: Differences between High School &amp; College/ Legal rights</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Learning preferences</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: Understanding of their disability</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: Accommodations</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7: Self-advocacy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8: Requesting accommodations</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. A Likert scale ranging from values 1 to 5 (1 = *not at all useful to me*, 2 = *somewhat useful to me*, 3 = *useful to me*, 4 = *very useful to me*, 5 = *most useful to me*)
Chapter Five

Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings through examining the research questions used in this study, and provide conclusions across themes. The chapter concludes with limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings: Research Questions

Research question 1. *What influence does instruction of the skills of self-advocacy have on the abilities of college freshmen/newly identified students with LD and/or ADHD to effectively request accommodations from a professor?* Research Question 1 was addressed by looking at the pre/post-intervention role play questions, and how the participants responded to interview questions related to the instruction on the skills of self-advocacy and requesting accommodations from professors. Based on the results, the intervention had a mixed and uncertain influence on the participants’ abilities to request accommodations.

The results indicated that half the participants increased their scores pre/post-intervention and half decreased, and there was no apparent pattern in these changes. This lack of a consistent pattern does not necessarily suggest that the intervention would not be beneficial for a different sample of students. However, this study had several factors that may have contributed to these results.

First, this group of students came into the study with an unexpectedly high level of self-advocacy skills. They all generally reported being aware of how to go about advocating for accommodations with their professors prior to the intervention. All six
shared various experiences about being a student with a disability and how self-advocacy skills were taught and/or modeled for them by their parents. The students shared current and past experiences of self-advocating and their beliefs about the purpose it served in their lives. The students not only affirmed that the purpose for self-advocacy was to access accommodations, but also that someone who is skilled at being a self-advocate can present his/her case in a way to persuade faculty/staff to go above and beyond their requested accommodations to assist the student in being successful.

A second factor was the relatively low-reliability score of the pre-intervention role play. This led to uncertainty regarding pre/post changes in role play scores. Error analysis of the role play questions and scores revealed that while some participants conveyed confidence in their self-advocating abilities, they failed to demonstrate some of the key elements in the accommodation-seeking process. The role-play behaviors the students did not exhibit were as follows:

- Mentioning to their professor that he/she should have received an accommodation letter from the Academic Support Program (ASP),
- providing further explanation of how the specific accommodation helped them minimize the effects of their disability and allowed them to demonstrate what they had learned,
- indicating that they were registered with ASP, and
- reviewing the details stating how the accommodations should be provided or what the respective roles of students and instructors should be.

Of these behaviors, one is essential, and that is the verification of the student’s disability from the ASP.
A third factor was that the intervention curriculum lacked a strong focus on teaching the students to perform the behaviors in the role play. The only lesson directly aligned to the role play observation guide was the final lesson of the curriculum. This may potentially be an area of weakness in this implementation of the intervention that can be targeted for improvement. It might be helpful to revise the curriculum to include a focus on key accommodation-seeking behaviors throughout each of the planned eight lessons, rather than leaving that explicit instruction for the eighth and final lesson. Also, an intervention curriculum that incorporated feedback on pretest scores with error analysis and clear goals for the posttest would give the student an opportunity to become aware of his or her results. In addition to discussing the specific behaviors they did not demonstrate, it would provide an opportunity for the director or staff member to make the students aware of why these behaviors are important. Coupled with the other recommendations, it is important to have the self-advocating behaviors modeled for the students by the director or staff member during the initial lesson on requesting accommodations from faculty/staff. In learning a skill such as self-advocacy, it is important to acknowledge that many students will not have been taught these self-advocating behaviors. A revised intervention may show higher percentages of those key behaviors being exhibited in the post-intervention role play.

Research question 2. In what ways does receiving instruction in self-advocacy influence students’ self-reported, self-advocating behaviors? To provide evidence to answer Research Question 2, the participants’ responses to each exit slip question were examined. The lack of a pre-test for the exit slip questions prevented the researcher from
making any conclusions that the intervention caused any changes in the student’s understanding of the particular topics addressed.

Their responses reflected their levels of understanding of those topics post intervention. In some instances, the students did comment in the exit slips on information that was new to them and those points are described below.

The exit slip responses indicated that the students all understood the key points after each lesson. Exit slips from several lessons showed that participants did gain new knowledge from the intervention. The differences between high school and college, including differences in academics, social experiences, and their legal rights and responsibilities as they pertain to having a disability were topics that the students were not aware of before the intervention. All six students listed various rights that they had in college of which they were not aware. Equal access to jobs was mentioned as one of the rights that two students shared as new information. One student shared that she had a K-12 school experience where she was denied access to an activity due to her disability. She stated that “knowing this information now, allows me to be more informed and able to advocate for my rights.” Another student stated that “I was not aware that I do not have to tell my professor I have a disability unless I want to utilize accommodations.”

In the lesson that highlighted learning styles and preferences and the students being able to articulate their learning preferences. Five of the six students noted on their exit slips that they planned to be more intentional in utilizing their specific learning style as they study. The use of more “hands-on” kinesthetic learning was mentioned as something that four of the six students would begin incorporating as they studied. While all six students stated their preferred learning style and noted that they planned to utilize
that learning style more, it should be noted that recent studies have raised questions about the validity of commonly held beliefs about learning styles and teaching to specific learning modes (Newton, 2015; Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2009). The learning styles instruction was included as a part of this study due to the specific lesson included in the curriculum (Merchant & Dintine, 2011) being utilized. Learning styles was a part of the curriculum used in this study, but the researcher was not validating this concept because of the lack of research to support for it.

Another lesson addressed how the students understood the nature of their disability and learning differences. The lesson focused on having the students identify their strengths and challenges and how these might impact them in an academic setting. Three of the six students stated that they would use this information to remind themselves of their strengths as opposed to always focusing on their individual challenges. Haeli mentioned that she would seek out additional assistance in the area of reading in order to strengthen this area that was a challenge for her. The participants reiterated that they would incorporate this information on their specific learning styles more in order to use their time more efficiently. Self-awareness is essential when a student prepares to self-advocate for any type of academic assistance or accommodation. This skill is frequently discussed in research on self-advocacy. For example, Test et al. (2005) addressed the importance of students having an understanding and knowledge of themselves so that they would be able to self-advocate effectively. Summers et al. (2015) similarly highlighted self-awareness as a critical skill in self-advocating at the postsecondary level.

In addition, the students identified the accommodations they thought they may need in the college setting together and how these specific accommodation relate to their
disability. All the participants listed extended time as being the most helpful in college. Stodden & Conway (2003) identify this as an accommodation utilized by many students with LD and/or ADHD.

The last lesson focused on having the students role-play with a peer in order to practice requesting accommodations. The lesson gave the students the opportunity to practice articulating their needs in relation to their disability and requesting accommodations in an appropriate manner. All six participants shared a specific example of how they had self-advocated this semester and were surprised with how easy it had been to approach their professors. At the same time, these feelings may be due to being in the class receiving instruction on self-advocacy.

Reflecting on this group of participants, the director of the ASP remarked that they demonstrated stronger self-advocacy skills than any other group of incoming students with whom she had the opportunity to support. Her perception resonated with the feedback students gave each week concerning their comfort level in the use of self-advocacy skills.

**Research question 3.** *How do students rate the usefulness of each instructional session regarding the information and skills taught?* Research Question 3 focused on student feedback from each lesson gleaned from exit slips which were completed in each lesson. Further corroboration came from comments made by the students during the post-intervention interviews as well as from the director during a debriefing of the intervention curriculum following Lesson 8. These data were collected to evaluate the perceived benefits of the Merchant and Dintino (2011) self-advocacy curriculum as
viewed by the participants. The participants and the director expressed predominately favorable views about the curriculum.

The mean ratings for each lesson were in the range of *somewhat useful* to *useful*. The one student who had only recently been diagnosed with a learning difference rated the lessons as more useful when compared to the other five students. These scores support the results from research question one which suggests that their prior knowledge of self-advocacy influenced their perceptions of the usefulness of the intervention.

Lesson 4 on learning styles and preferences had the lowest mean score of all seven lessons, which may be a reflection of the participant's previous instruction in learning styles, coupled with prior exit slip comments such as when Casey said, “I already know my learning style and how to use it.” This point was also mentioned by the director during the debrief following Lesson 8. The lower scores may also have mirrored the recent research pointing to a lack of evidence supporting learning styles as an effective method of instruction (Newton, 2015; Pashler, McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2009).

Lesson 5, “Knowledge of Disability: Strengths and Challenges,” which had the widest range of scores, focused on the importance of students understanding the nature of their disability and how knowing their specific strengths and challenges may affect them in the academic setting. This result was not surprising considering that they came into the study with varying levels of understanding about their disabilities. This conclusion was further supported during the participants’ pre/post-intervention interviews where they shared specific stories of how understanding their disability enabled them to pursue their goals and accept their learning differences.
The students also commented how this lesson influenced their approach to their academics. It was this awareness that allowed them to accept the challenges associated with the specific diagnosis while at the same time recognizing the strengths that may offset them. Recent research has identified self-awareness and being able to articulate an understanding of one’s learning needs as two critical skills that are needed for a postsecondary student with a disability to be successful throughout college and in life (Summers et al., 2015).

The lesson the participants and director found most beneficial was Lesson 8, “Putting it All Together.” The entire lesson revolved around having the students role-play requesting accommodations from a professor and being able to articulate their needs about their disability. Merchant and Dintino’s (2011) curriculum identified the skill of requesting accommodations as the most valuable for students to understand. The authors also recommended using this lesson for multiple weeks to allow the students time to work on the skills of requesting accommodations from their professors. Given this study’s timeline of a seven-week intervention, it was only utilized one week, and that was the last week of the study. The director of the ASP remarked that she would be using this curriculum in the future and planned to utilize Lesson 8 during several lessons throughout the semester.

Although the range of lesson ratings of the curriculum ranged from not at all useful to me, to most useful to me, the overall participants’ ratings of the curriculum that found that the curriculum provided information that they could use to further their understanding of how to self-advocate in the college environment. The director remarked
that she liked the format of the lessons and would plan to use the curriculum each fall semester with new students to the program.

**Research question 4.** How does understanding one’s disability affect interaction with faculty members to request accommodations? To provide evidence to answer Research Question 4, individual transcripts were analyzed to identify additional common themes that emerged across the participants’ pre-intervention interviews. Data from the interviews suggest that there seemed to be a close relationship between the students’ understanding of their disabilities and how they reported their interactions about requesting accommodations from professors.

All the students reported during the pre-intervention interview that they knew what accommodations they might need, but not all of them had met with their professors to request accommodations for the spring semester. The three participants who had described interacting with professors about accommodations, interestingly all female, stated that they used their understanding of their disability to ask their professors for needed accommodations. Among the other three, all male, two of them had not registered with the ASP fall semester however, once they perceived they were at risk of failing classes they approached their professors informally and requested assistance. Michael, reported that his understanding of his disability had been helpful when discussing his concerns about failing with his professor and his need for some type of accommodation. The other, Kevin, had not been diagnosed at that time and was not aware of the nature of his disability and although he self-advocated for assistance, his requests were not as focused on the specifics of what he needed. The third student, Steven, had identified with the ASP but had not felt the need to use his accommodations.
Michael related, “…I wouldn’t explain much about ADD; I’d simply explain to them with the changing environment of college, having ADD and Depression, and not seeking out aid… I haven’t been able to put a system in place that would allow me to do the best, to my full potential. When I explained to them that I have ADD... I didn’t even have to go to the academic support center, most professors were like, hey, I can give you an extra 15 minutes on the test if you need it.”

Kevin explained how he advocated to be allowed to stay in school after completing his freshman year with poor grades. At this point, Kevin had yet to be diagnosed. He was aware that his academic difficulties were beyond his ability to successfully address, but he was open to accessing every support that was offered to him. “Like if I hadn’t gotten diagnosed, I wouldn’t have been able to come back [to school after freshman year].”

Janelle’s case also illustrated the common theme of using the understanding of one’s disability to ask for accommodations. She shared that with the understanding of her disability; she felt empowered to ask her professor for the accommodations she was eligible to receive, even when questioned about the accommodations she was requesting.

The three cases discussed above exemplified how some students utilize disability awareness and understanding to advocate for needed academic supports and accommodations. The importance of students having an understanding of their strengths and needs is supported by research on self-advocacy (Brinckerhoff, 1994; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Test et al., 2005).

**Research question 5.** *What are the experiences of college students with LD and/or ADHD as they advocate for themselves in the college environment?* To provide
evidence to answer Research Question 5, individual transcripts were systematically reviewed and compared identify additional common themes that emerged across the participants’ pre/post-intervention interviews. Five of the students described experiences utilizing self-advocacy with their professors since being enrolled in college. The sixth student, Steven had not seen the need to request an accommodation so far, though he was anticipating needing to do so in the semester following the study.

Three of the students shared that they had met with their professors to discuss their accommodations for the semester. Kevin, Haeli, and Janelle identified themselves as being proactive in terms of scheduling a time to meet with each of their professors. Across the five participants who had described interacting with professors about accommodations, each student discussed how they had explained in more detail their specific need for the accommodations. Kevin, Haeli, and Janelle described that their first meeting with their professors was intimidating, yet, subsequent meetings were much easier.

Additionally, Michael’s experience of informally self-advocating as referenced in Research Question 4 was another example of a positive experience meeting with a professor to discuss specific academic needs. Similarly, Casey’s experiences also illustrated a common theme of interacting with professors to ask for the accommodations students are eligible to receive. She shared that “I need to become a better self-advocate and be willing to speak up when my professor doesn’t remember I have extended time… I’ve had the same math professor for two semesters now, and he always remembers my accommodations….I’m planning to meet with each of [my new professors] at the end of this semester just to introduce myself.” In making this comment she was recognizing that
self-advocacy is a learned behavior and that the more she self-advocates the better she will become with the skills involved in advocating.

The narratives in the preceding paragraph illustrate what research has already documented that many students with disabilities are often hesitant to approach their professors concerning their need for accommodations (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Hartmann-Hall & Haaga, 2002). The interaction with a supportive professor has been noted as one of the strongest factors for students with LD sensing that they can approach and work with their professor (Goldberg, Higgins, Raskind, & Herman, 2003).

In contrast to the support received by the student's experiences mentioned above, Janelle stated, “There was a time when a professor said he would choose which of my approved accommodations I could use in his class. I was like, ok, and didn’t know what to do so I contacted the director of the ASP to support me in receiving all of my accommodations; the director said she would take care of it for me.”

Janelle’s experience is not uncommon for postsecondary students to experience when approaching a professor. This type of situation can discourage students from seeking out assistance from their professors. Research has documented that many students with disabilities are often reluctant to disclose their need for accommodations, particularly if they feel that it will elicit a negative response from their professor or if they lack knowledge about their legal rights (Cummings, Maddux, & Casey, 2000; Hartmann-Hall & Haaga, 2002; Stodden & Conway, 2003).

Occasionally, a student’s disability can be disruptive to a class or a distraction to the professor who is teaching. Often the process of self-advocating can assist in alleviating this situation. Two such examples were identified in the interviews. Haeli
shared “I know that since I have a medical condition and a learning disability, it is important for me to make sure all my professors know that I may pass out in their class. I’ve learned that it’s better if people know what’s going on medically, so they don’t panic or think I’m faking it if I pass out.” Similarly, Janelle explained that “having specific visible behaviors like tics, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and ADHD, I usually tell my professors that I wrinkle my forehead a lot and stuff which is a tic, and I want them to know I’m not confused, and I’m not upset especially since that’s the most obvious.”

The collective statements of the six students made it clear that they viewed self-advocacy as a form of communication. They disclosed various ways that they had utilized the different aspects of self-advocacy since coming to college. Steven shared that “growing up having a mom who is a teacher, I have been drilled with the importance of understanding what I need and asking for it when I need it….I’m actually planning on talking to a teacher that I’m taking a test in soon and saying ‘hey, I have this accommodation, I was wondering if I could use it if I need it.’ ‘I am forewarning, that I may not need it.’” Michael described how in his major (Media Communications) “most assignments are very time sensitive due to preparing us for our profession. The professors are willing to work with us, but they will not make accommodations in giving us extensions on our projects.” His comments reflected an understanding of limits on the accommodations that could be applied due to the expectations of his intended profession.

The cases discussed above provided additional experiences of how some students who participated in this study utilized self-advocacy skills to request academic supports and accommodations from their professors. The six students involved in the current study described experiences that underscored the importance of students having the skills
of self-advocacy when entering the postsecondary environment (Brinckerhoff, Shaw, & McGuire, 2002; Test & Cease-Cook, 2012).

**Research question 6.** *How do the participants describe their own self-advocacy skills?* To provide evidence to answer Research Question 6, individual transcripts were systematically reviewed and compared to identify additional common themes that emerged across the six participants pre/post-intervention interviews. Additionally, the pre/post-intervention SAQ scores of the six students were analyzed for the purpose of looking at the three areas of self-advocacy behaviors: help seeking, confidence in academic and social skills and self-determination.

During the post-intervention interview, Haeli discussed the importance of knowing and utilizing the skills of self-advocacy. “If I didn’t know how to self-advocate, it would be harder to get accommodations. People are less likely to want to give you accommodations you need if you do not understand your disability and are able to explain your need for specific accommodations.” Steven reflected on growing up and having his parent’s model self-advocacy for him all throughout his K-12 school experience. Although Kevin was able to define his perspective on self-advocacy during the pre-intervention interview, he struggled to describe any specific self-advocating experiences. However, during the post-intervention interview, he described how beneficial his knowledge of self-advocacy and knowing how to incorporate the specific skills of self-advocacy was for him. He laughed and stated, “I feel like it’s really good to know all the ins and outs and everything about it so that you can remind people of your rights and needs.”
All six students communicated the importance of understanding their learning differences and being able to articulate exactly how their LD and/or ADHD affected them. Having this understanding was the one skill of self-advocacy most often mentioned during their interviews. Each of the students described how developing an understanding of self-advocacy and the weekly lessons reminded them of the need to utilize these skills in college and was beneficial. Michael shared that having this understanding was how he knew what accommodations would help him to be successful.

The Likert-scaled SAQ mean scores for the group from pre- to posttest stayed the same in help-seeking; however, the means rose slightly for confidence in academic and social skills and self-determination. The mean SAQ ratings pre- and post were positive, in the range of “useful” to “very useful”. Overall, the change in scores pre- to post-intervention on the SAQ were positive but very small, although for individual students change pre- to posttest was quite large. For example, Steven’s scores in self-determination went from disagree to agree pre- to post. Once again this result supports the speculation that five of these students came in with strong self-advocacy knowledge and skills could have reduced the effectiveness of the intervention. Even Kevin, who had only recently been diagnosed, had the opportunity to acquire a working knowledge of self-advocacy before the intervention.

Secondly, the SAQ was not designed to align with the intervention curriculum. Kosine (2006) developed the SAQ for her dissertation, and it was adapted from other self-advocacy questionnaires. The self-advocacy intervention curriculum (Merchant & Dintino, 2011) was developed to discuss a variety of topics involved in the transition to college and learning how to self-advocate.
The students’ statements corroborated the claims found in the literature that proposed that having an understanding of their disability or diagnosis and how it affects their learning can assist them in compensating and adapting to their disability. This along with knowing how to communicate this understanding of their needs to their professors adds to the likelihood that these students could self-advocate effectively (Brinckerhoff, 1996; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003; Timmons, Wills, Kemp, Basha, & Mooney, 2010).

It was significant that all six participants in this study viewed self-advocacy as a positive means of communication. They emphasized the benefits of knowing and utilizing the skills of self-advocacy. Notably, all six students responded positively and did not discuss any perceived negative aspects of employing these skills.

**Research question 7.** What influence does instruction of the skills of self-advocacy have on the abilities of freshmen or newly identified college students with LD and/or ADHD to understand knowledge of the characteristics of LD, federal disability laws, and accommodations? To provide evidence to answer Research Question 7, the pre/post-intervention knowledge tests of all six participants were analyzed for the purpose of looking at the three categories of questions addressed on this test (characteristics of LD, federal disability laws, and accommodations). An item analysis of the students’ understanding of self-advocacy pre- to post-intervention was conducted.

Even though the average score increased slightly pre to post, the results were mixed with three students’ scores increasing, two remaining the same and one decreasing. Yet again, this supports the speculation that the students’ previous knowledge and experiences in self-advocating may have reduced the effects of the intervention as there was not much room for growth.
The students scored the highest in the category of accommodations. This high level of knowledge of accommodations was quite understandable as not only had they either requested them or had seen their parents request them in the past, they had also benefited from them. Further analysis of the questions showed that the category of federal disability laws had the most missed questions of the three categories on both the pre and post-test. The question missed by all six students on the pretest and by four of the six on the posttest interestingly was the federal laws that apply to individuals with LD and/or ADHD in college settings. The other question missed by all the students on the pretest and by four of the six on the posttest pertained to the principle of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) that is most applicable to students with LD and/or ADHD in college and university settings.

Overall these scores did illustrate the six students improved understanding of self-advocacy pre- to posttest as evidenced by the posttest mean scores showing improvement in two of the three categories. Although the students’ scores showed overall improvement there is no reason to infer a causal effect of the intervention. These findings of the pre/post-intervention knowledge test should be viewed with caution because the number of questions varied between categories and the small sample size magnified the effect of small changes. There was also evidence of inconsistency pre- to posttest. For example, Steven’s scores went down pre- to posttest. However, he missed two questions on the posttest that he had correct on the pretest.

The study showed the students came in with strong self-advocacy skills and this was accompanied by some knowledge of self-advocacy and this supports what previous research (Brinckerhoff, 2002; Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Merchant & Gajar, 1997;
Shaw et al., 2009) suggested that students with LD and/or ADHD need an understanding of the three categories evaluated through the knowledge test to support their understanding of self-advocacy skills. The instruction sought to improve the knowledge component which according to this research should help with the students self-advocacy skills. However, due to their prior knowledge base, there was little room for growth, though it did serve to remind them of the various behaviors of good self-advocating and also to increase their confidence when they practiced self-advocating.

**Conclusions Across Themes**

This section provides a synthesis of, the findings regarding the learning and implementation of self-advocacy skills described by the six participants of this study, and provides general conclusions across the four themes found in the qualitative data. Poor self-awareness about one’s disability has often been discussed in the literature as a major barrier to successful transition into college (and through to graduation) for students with disabilities (Janiga & Costenbader, 2002; Skinner, 2004), and as such is viewed as an appropriate target for interventions and disability support services programming. However, the participants in this study provided a stark contrast to the narrative that is often presented in the literature. These data suggest that the participants demonstrated that they each had developed some level of disability self-awareness that they were able to use to inform their self-advocating behavior. The level of skill demonstrated by this particular group of students was above what the researcher initially expected to find based on the extant literature and upon five years of experience as a disability services coordinator.
It is also important to remember that all six of the participants reported that their main source of support and understanding about self-advocacy came from having it taught and modeled by their parents during their K-12 school experiences. Hadley’s (2006) research findings support this idea and stress the importance of high school students with disabilities having increased opportunities to observe individuals practicing self-advocacy skills prior to going to college.

Self-advocacy knowledge had two subcategories that emerged from the data to create this theme: insight into self and understanding one’s disability. Five of the participants indicated having an understanding of their disability and how it affected them growing up. These findings support the need for students to receive instruction in understanding their disability and the rights and responsibilities that they have as individuals with a disability. One student explained that to self-advocate required a combination of being self-aware, letting people know what you need, and knowing your educational rights. Other students discussed how understanding their disability had helped them when they approached their professors to ask for accommodations.

Just as the original study by Merchant (1998) found, the skills that resulted from the role-play indicated that students had difficulty verbalizing to professors both the impact their disability had on their learning and how receiving accommodations would be beneficial to their individual success in the course. Research confirms the importance of possessing knowledge and understanding of one’s disability throughout the process of seeking accommodations (Farmer, Allsopp, & Ferron, 2015; Hadley, 2006; Hamblet, 2015; Lee, Rojewski, Gregg, & Jeong, 2015; Skinner & Lindstrom, 2003).
In learning a skill such as self-advocacy, it is important to acknowledge that many students may not use this skill effectively without specific and repeated instruction. All six participants shared that they thought the intervention curriculum was beneficial, and one student stated, “I wish I would have had this instruction in high school.” While this group of students entered college with a remarkably high level of self-advocacy skills, they still found the instruction in self-advocacy skills helpful; indicating the importance of teaching and strengthening these skills. Research has evidenced that the more specific instruction and practice that high school students have encountered in the skills of self-advocacy, the greater likelihood they will transition successfully to postsecondary education (Brinckerhoff et al., 2002; Brinckerhoff, 1994; 1996; Gil, 2007).

Limitations

Several limitations should be considered when reviewing the results of this study. First, the site characteristics should be considered as a limitation. Participants were obtained from one small liberal arts faith-based university. Although the case-study design is intended to provide the researcher with rich and in-depth information, the boundaries imposed by site choice can also be viewed as a possible limitation, as the researcher was precluded from making choice of other sites that also might have been suitable for the planned study. Secondly, the sampling method employed (i.e., purposeful sampling) can be viewed as a limitation to this study. Again, case-study design encourages the researcher to select cases based on distinct characteristics that are deemed to be central to the research questions of the study. While the researcher develops a rationale for case selection, this can inherently exclude selection of attributes and qualities potential participants may possess that are not deemed to be as important
towards meeting the aims of the study. In a sense, this limits the amount of information that could be obtained in the study. For example, cases were selected from students who were diagnosed with either LD and/or ADHD, and who had registered with the Academic Support Program. Thirdly, a small sample size was obtained for this study. This limitation impacts the generalizability of the results to all college students with LD and/or ADHD, who are in their first year of college or newly identified. A fourth limitation to be considered is the homogeneity across certain characteristics of study participants (e.g. socioeconomic status, ethnicity, two-parent homes, and similar faith-based backgrounds). The case-study design enables the researcher to delve deeply into participants’ experiences surrounding the phenomena of interest in the study. The homogeneity across certain participant characteristics could serve to restrict the breadth of information gleaned from the cases as a whole.

A few limitations related to the implementation of the study merit discussion. The study took place spring semester, four of the six students were enrolled in the ASP program the previous semester and had received support from the director of the ASP. Therefore, the study participants had been given general instruction designed to support student success prior to being exposed to the study intervention. Another limitation related to implementation is that participants had previous exposure to accommodation seeking experiences in the fall semester, prior to the beginning of the study in the Spring semester. This could have potentially shaped the nature of certain self-advocacy experiences shared by participants over the course of the study.

An additional limitation was the relatively low inter-rater reliability for the role-play pretest. As noted in the methodology, both the professors and the researcher were
trained in scoring the audio-recorded role-plays, however the inter-rater reliability for the pretest role-play was 0.67. In future replications of this study, the practice scoring training could be done by listening to an audio-recording with both professors and the researcher all scoring simultaneously and then, measure inter-rater reliability and continue practice scoring until agreements are at 0.9 or higher. This would provide all scorers with a better understanding of the specific behaviors being scored and allow for greater confidence in these scores. An additional limitation related to the Likert scale ratings for the exit slip. Four of the five ratings of the Likert scale were positive which was disproportionate which can consciously or subconsciously affect the students’ ratings of the items. Future ratings should revise this Likert scale to have a more balanced scale.

**Implications for Future Research and Practice**

This study was designed to address the gap in the literature as it pertains to college students with LD and/or ADHD self-advocating for accommodations with professors and understanding their disabilities. The findings from this study can be used as a starting point for future investigations and to support findings from other studies. Future research could include extending this study, however, conducting it with freshmen or students newly identified, beginning the first week of classes fall semester. Additionally, including students with disabilities other than LD and/or ADHD would provide a greater understanding of the current college-age population receiving services through the Office of Disability Services. Furthermore using pre-intervention measures similar to the knowledge and SAQ pretest in addition to the pre-intervention role-play data to craft intervention curriculum based upon the results and the specific skill gaps would provide a more individualized instruction. Future research that looked at the self-
advocacy behaviors that students are utilizing with their actual professors following the intervention would provide a generalization measure for a pre/post-intervention study.

Prior research has indicated that students with LD and/or ADHD must, in order to accomplish their postsecondary educational goals, be skilled at and responsible for accessing and utilizing any accommodations they need to complete their course of study (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Gotlieb, E. & Gotlieb, 2009; Izzo & Lamb, 2003; Stodden & Conway, 2003; Walker & Test, 2011; Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998). This sample of students with disabilities was well-versed in self-advocacy at the start of the study which according to literature suggests that this is not the experience for many students with disabilities entering postsecondary education (Newman et al., 2011). The latest changes to federal law regarding the transition component of the IEP’s for students with disabilities were designed to address such concerns. Despite these changes, many students may embark upon postsecondary educational programs of study without having developed such skills. Further investigation should address the importance of providing age appropriate self-advocacy instruction to all students throughout their K-12 school experiences--in particular those students with identified disabilities.

Implications for practice can be derived from the findings of this study. Although there are curricula available to address career, life skills, and secondary transition, there are limited research and curricula on the specific aspects of self-advocacy and self-determination for the K-12 population of students who may be resistant to acknowledge and understand their disabilities. The skills of self-advocacy need to be developed naturally throughout the process of development. Students need to be taught to
understand their learning differences at an early age as opposed to hiding their differences to protect them from feeling different.

The Offices of Disability Services (ODS) on college campuses are providing individuals with the needed resources and accommodations to aid in their success at the postsecondary level. However, research on existing ODS programs showed a lack of specific training and supports for professors. Providing specific training modules that offer professional development for professors in addition to providing an opportunity for them to understand the various categories of disabilities would open the doors to communication and collaboration. The training modules would focus on how providing specific accommodations to students’ levels the playing field and allows them to perform commensurate with their peers by utilizing the specific accommodations.

These findings represent the perspective of six students enrolled in college and the ASP. Five of the six students who participated in the study had been taught the skills of self-advocacy from a young age by their parents. Although the students stated that they did not utilize these skills much until high school, they observed their parents modeling these skills as they worked with their teachers. The current emphasis on inclusion and educating students in typical classrooms has resulted in more students having the opportunity to follow a college preparatory curriculum (Levine & Nourse, 1998; Swanson, 2008). Providing these types of opportunities affirms the importance of providing academic courses paired with self-advocacy instruction to provide a pathway for students investigate postsecondary educational options. This study highlights the need for even more research concerning the voices of students with LD and/or ADHD, who are transitioning from high school to postsecondary education.
Summary

The findings from this study suggested that the intervention had a mixed and uncertain influence on the participants’ abilities to self-advocate. Nevertheless, all the participants reported a perception of the intervention as being beneficial. This was supported by all reporting they had learned something that they did not know before and had been reminded of strengths and weaknesses associated with their particular learning differences.

However, the main takeaway from this study was that although past research has indicated that students entering college are not well prepared to self-advocate (Getzel & Thoma, 2008; Vogel & Adelman, 1992) this particular group of students was. The director commented that this group was by far the most adept at self-advocacy than any other in her experience. The researcher concurs from her own past experience with this population. Despite varying K-12 educational backgrounds, the participants all cited the reason for their strong self-advocacy skills came from their parents’ involvement in their schooling. This seems to support the conjecture that consistent and supportive parental involvement in teaching and modeling self-advocacy skills during K-12 years may be the most important component of preparing students for the transition from high school to postsecondary education.
Appendices

Appendix A

Consent Form to Participate in Research Study

Purpose
My name is Lynn Gagle Roper, and I am a doctoral candidate in Education at the University of Kentucky. I am currently in the process of collecting data for my doctoral dissertation, and I am asking for your help and participation. I hope that the information gained by this study will help educators at the high school and college levels better prepare college students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD for the challenges of taking classes at a university.

You are invited to participate in a research project designed to examine the experiences that college students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD have as they advocate for themselves in college. You have been selected because you meet the criteria for a student with a diagnosed learning disability and/or ADHD during or prior to high school or while in your first year of college and participate in some type of academic support services in college.

This study was reviewed by Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. The researcher received approval to conduct this study from the institutional review boards (IRB) of the University of the Researcher, as well as the university where the study was conducted.

Your participation in this study is important because self-advocacy skills contribute to the academic success of students with these disabilities. Educational professionals need to know more about what it is like to be a self-advocate so that future students can be better prepared for college.

Participant Requirements
This study will take place during your weekly Academic Support Program class with (insert name of Director here). This study will utilize a 7-week Self-advocacy Curriculum. Students will learn the essential skills that will enable you to advocate effectively for your needs here at the University. Each class session will be tape-recorded to learn how the instructor taught each lesson of the program, not your specific answers.

You will be asked to participate in all 7 class sessions as well as 2 role-play sessions and two interviews, one after week one of class and one at the end of the study (the role-play and interview will be audio-recorded to ensure correct data collection). As mentioned, all class sessions will be held during your regular Thursday class and role-play sessions will be scheduled to accommodate as many student’s schedules as possible and will last no more than twenty minutes each. The interviews will take place during the two weeks following week one of instruction. The post interview will be scheduled during the week following the class session and will last no more than 1 hour.

Confidentiality
ALL audio recordings will be kept confidential without student participant identifies in a locked cabinet and kept on file for six years following completion of the study. Names will be changed on all written copies to protect your privacy.
Participants will not be identified in the results. Only summarized, anonymous results of this study will be available to my dissertation committee and students in the study.

**Incentive for Participation**
Learning valuable information on the skills of Self-Advocacy and understanding one’s disability.

**Benefits and Risks**
Benefits to participation in this study include an honorarium of a $25.00 gift card for completion of all study components. If a student discontinues participation in the study, no honorarium will be given. Another benefit will be the opportunity to learn about self-advocating for your academic needs.

Taking part in this study is not expected to involve any significant risks to you. I respect your right not to answer any question or to end your participation in this study at any time.

**Participant Rights**
Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there will be no penalty. If you are unable or unwilling to address a question in class sessions or during the pre/post interviews, you are not obligated to do so.

**Consent**
I understand that there are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. If information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this is reported to the proper authorities. In addition, should any information contained in this study be subject to a court order or lawful subpoena, the University might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena.

I have read the above paragraphs and understand the conditions of participation in this study. I understand that it is not possible to identify all possible risks in a research study, and I believe that reasonable care has been taken to minimize both the known and unknown risk in this study. I have asked for and received a satisfactory description of any language I did not understand. I understand that I may withdraw at any time with no penalty. I have received a copy of this consent form. I understand that the final data from this study will be retained for six years following the completion of this study.

(Please circle)
Yes  No  I agree to participate in this study.
Yes  No  I agree to be audio-recorded.
Yes  No  I agree to share my phone number to schedule pre/post interviews.

Participant’s signature _________________________________ Date _____________________
Phone Number ____________________________ Date _____________________
Primary Researcher _______________________________ Date _____________________
Contact Information:
This study is being completed by Lynn Gagle Roper, (859-533-2219) lynn.gagle@uky.edu as part of the requirements for the doctoral degree at the University of Kentucky under the supervision of (insert name of advisor). Please feel free to contact us with any questions about the study. If you have complaints, suggestions, or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the staff in the University of Kentucky Office of Research Integrity at (859-257-9428) or toll-free at (866-400-9428).
Please fill out and sign the form and return it in the envelope provided to the University ASP Director (insert name of Director here).
Appendix B

Written Pretest/Posttest

The following pretest/posttest was based on one developed by Merchant (1998, pp. 103-116). It was used with permission from the author, and some items were adapted to fit this study utilizing students with ADHD.

Script to be read prior to students completing the pretest: the Director of the ASP began instructional session one reminding student’s that today’s class was the beginning of the study on self-advocacy. The director began class reminding the students that part of the study required them to complete a pretest/posttest associated with the skills of self-advocacy. The director assured the students that their scores would in no way affect them or a grade. The information and scores from the pretest/posttest were only used in the doctoral study for this study. The written pretest was distributed along with a pencil or pen to those in need of one. One student required enlarged print as an accommodation for the pretest, the director supplied that accommodation. Students were told that this is a multiple-choice pretest so if they do not know an answer they were asked to circle their best guess and move on. The students were told that there is a fifteen-minute time limit, and they proceeded with class. The director began class and referred to the script in the curriculum for class session one.

Script to be read prior to students completing the posttest: the Director of the ASP ended instructional session seven reminding student’s that today’s class was the last class of the study on self-advocacy. The director ended class reminding the students that part of the study required them to complete a posttest associated with the skills of self-advocacy. The director reminded the students that their scores would in no way affect
them or a grade. The information and scores from the posttest were only used in the doctoral study. The written posttest was distributed along with a pencil or pen to those in need of one. One student required enlarged print as an accommodation for the posttest; the director supplied that accommodation. Students were told that this was the same multiple-choice test as the pretest, so if they did not know an answer they were asked to circle their best guess and move on. The students were told that there was a fifteen-minute time limit; they would be taking the Self-advocacy Questionnaire posttest following this test
1. The most widely accepted characteristic of individuals with learning disabilities is
   a. academic learning problems
   b. attention problems
   c. hyperactivity
   d. perceptual motor problems

2. Academic learning difficulties of individuals with learning disabilities are most common in the area of
   a. Mathematics
   b. Reading
   c. Spelling
   d. Written expression

3. Which of the following is not a characteristic of an individual with a learning disability
   a. language disorder
   b. metacognitive deficits
   c. below average IQ
   d. memory deficits

4. Difficulties with oral expression and listening comprehension can be associated with
   a. metacognitive deficits
b. Academic learning difficulties

c. Language disorders

d. Motor disorders

5. As individuals with learning disabilities grow older
   a. the learning disability goes away
   b. many individuals develop strategies and coping mechanisms to compensate for their weaknesses
   c. some accommodations may still be required
   d. B & C
   e. none of the above

6. Individuals with learning disabilities
   a. have the same characteristics
   b. require the same accommodations
   c. have different characteristics
   d. all of the above
7. Which federal laws apply to individuals with learning disabilities and/or ADHD in college settings?
   a. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act 2008 (ADA).
   b. The Americans with Disabilities Act 2008 (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
   c. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504).
   d. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the Americans with Disabilities Act 2008 (ADA).

8. Accommodations are provided to students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD in College and University settings.
   a. when students provide documentation and request needed accommodations from appropriate personnel (faculty and/or staff)
   b. after staff from the office for disability services determines appropriate accommodations and notifies students’ instructors
   c. automatically upon receipt of documentation from high school
   d. according to IEP goals and objective
9. Which of the following statements refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973?

a. prohibits employment discrimination against individuals with disabilities and requires affirmative action in federal employment

b. requires architectural and transportation accessibility in buildings/transportation systems built with federal assistance

c. prohibits discrimination in employment by federal contractors or subcontractors: requires affirmative action by contractors or subcontractors

d. No “otherwise qualified” individual with disabilities in the United States, shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance
10. Which of the following statements refers to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act 2008 (ADA)?

a. Employers, employment agencies, labor organizations, joint labor-management committees may not discriminate against any qualified individual with a disability in regard to any term, condition or privilege or employment.

b. Extends coverage against disability discrimination to privately operated public accommodations and prohibits discrimination in public transportation services provided by private entities.

c. Prohibits discrimination against a qualified individual with a disability with respect to services, programs, or activities or a public entity, regardless of whether or not it receives federal financial assistance.

d. Provides services for hearing and speech impaired individuals that are functionally equivalent to those provided by private entities for the telecommunications industry.

11. Which of the following principle(s) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is/are most applicable to students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD in College and University settings?

a. zero reject

b. least restrictive setting

c. individualized and appropriate education

d. all of the above

e. none of the above
12. Reasonable accommodations in a university setting may include
   a. extended test time
   b. use of an audio recorder to record lectures
   c. use of a computer for written exams
   d. textbooks on tape or CD
   e. all of the above

13. The following are general requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act 2008 (ADA) **EXCEPT**
   a. no exclusion on the basis of disability
   b. modifications in policies, practices, and procedures
   c. pre-admission inquiries as to the presence of a disability
   d. accessibility of examinations and courses

14. The following rights and responsibilities apply to college students with learning disabilities and/or ADHD **EXCEPT**
   a. the opportunity to participate and compete with peers without disabilities
   b. be free from discrimination within the college or university setting
   c. provide appropriate documentation of your learning disability and/or ADHD
   d. different academic standards because of a learning disability and/or ADHD
15. An appropriate accommodation for an individual with a reading disability would be

   a. concrete examples related to lecture material provided by the instructor

   b. textbooks on tape or CD

   c. a note taker for classes

   d. none of the above

16. An individual who has difficulties with organization would benefit from

   a. obtaining a schedule of assignments for the semester from the instructor at the beginning of the semester

   b. requesting a peer tutor to assist with reviewing important points of class discussions and textbooks to help highlight important information

   c. requesting to audio record lectures

   d. obtaining books electronically or on CD
Appendix C

Self-Advocacy Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is based on one developed by Kosine (2006, pp. 129-131). It is used here with permission from the author, and some items have been adapted to fit this study utilizing students with ADHD.

Script to be read prior to students completing the pretest: the director followed this script during class 1: This questionnaire followed the activity of students sharing with a partner about their short-term and long-term goals. The director ended class with the students completing an exit slip and administering the second pretest self-advocacy questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed and the rating scale explained. Students were asked to read the statement and circle their level of agreement with the statement and how it applied to them. One student required enlarged text and this accommodation the director supplied this accommodation. Students were told that this is a questionnaire pretest, so if they did not understand or know how the statement applied to them, they were to answer unsure to that question and move on. The students were told that there was no time limit, and that class was over once they completed the questionnaire and turned in their exit slip and questionnaire to the director.

Script to be read prior to students completing the posttest: the Director of the ASP ended instructional session seven by giving the students the Self-advocacy Knowledge posttest and then reading this script for the Self-advocacy Questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed and the rating scale explained. Students were asked to read the statement and circle their level of agreement with the statement and how it applied to them. One student required enlarged text and this accommodation the director supplied
this accommodation. Students were told that this was the same questionnaire given to them as a pretest so if they did not understand or know how the statement applied to them, they were to answer unsure to that question and move on. Students were told that there was no time limit, and that class was over once they completed the questionnaire and turned in their exit slip and questionnaire to the director.

**Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: _____________**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeping in mind your educational experiences as a student with a learning disability and/or ADHD, read each item and then indicate your level of agreement for the item by circling one of the following:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. I typically recognize when I need help with my schoolwork.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. I am embarrassed when asking questions in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. I am willing to ask my professor for help with my schoolwork.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
4. I inform my professors about my learning disability and/or ADHD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. I would be willing to seek tutoring services, if I need to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. I am willing to ask questions in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. I am aware of the types of accommodations that can be made for me within the university setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. I’m afraid to talk in class discussions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. I feel comfortable talking to my professors about my disability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. I typically do all of my schoolwork without any assistance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. It bothers me to ask for academic help, even if I need it.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. When I encounter a problem that I cannot immediately solve, I keep going until I can find a way to solve it.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I don’t anticipate having too many problems handling the work in my courses.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have confidence in my academic skills.</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Role-Play Observation Rating Sheet

The following rating sheet was based on one developed by Merchant (1998, pp. 117-118). It was used here with permission from the author, and some items were adapted to fit this study utilizing students with ADHD and scoring was adjusted due to no partial scores being given. The following script was read to the student: the faculty member introduced themselves and reminded the student that this is only a role-play scenario and that they should act as though it is the beginning of the semester and they have to request an accommodation from a professor for one of their classes. The faculty member asked the student to leave the room and enter as if the scenario was now beginning. The faculty member responded to the student’s questions and statements as appropriate and asked follow-up questions as appropriate for a meeting with a student who is requesting accommodations. The faculty member did not lead the student in prompting a question that should be asked but responded only to the questions and statements the student initiated. The role-play ended when the student felt that the meeting was over. The faculty member completed the rating sheet as indicated below.
Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ___________

Indicate whether the student included the following areas in role-play in meeting with a professor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greeting: Student introduces self</td>
<td>Yes (+1) No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference why you are there: Student states why they are meeting with faculty member and which class they are in (references the reason they are there)</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation: Student states that Professor should have received an accommodation letter from Academic Support Program Office</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosure: Student states that they have a disability or need for accommodations.</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Disability Impacts Learning: Student states how disability impacts learning (because of my Learning Disability I have difficulty with reading comprehension)</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations: Student talks about accommodations used in the past and how they have helped.</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Requests accommodation needed (e.g. taping lectures, copies of notes, extended time on test and quizzes, etc.)</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student articulates how disability relates to Accommodation (I need extra time because…)</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student further explains that accommodations are designed to give equal chance to learn, demonstrate what has been learned, minimizes the effect of disability</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources for Receiving Accommodations: Student indicates that they are registered with Academic Support Program (ASP)</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student explains how accommodation will be provided</td>
<td>Yes No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student asks if accommodations are acceptable:
Student asks if arrangements are acceptable

Yes   No

Summarize Meeting:
Student reviews accommodation requested and how it is to
be provided

Yes   No

Student reviews responsibilities (what the
student will do, and what the instructor will do)

Yes   No

Closing:
Student thanks faculty member for their time

Yes   No

Total Score – Possible 15 pts.________
Appendix E

Exit Slip Questions & Lesson Rating

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________
Please share your thoughts on the following questions. Then use the following scale to rate today’s lesson and its usefulness to you.

1 = not at all useful to me  2 = somewhat useful to me  3 = useful to me
4 = very useful to me  5 = most useful to me

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________
Lesson One: List at least one way that you are or have been pursuing your short-term and long-term goals? List one way you are currently pursuing your short-term and long-term goals?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________
Lesson Two/Three: List at least one way you have had to adjust your study habits from high school to college? List at least one adjustment you have had to make since coming to college?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________
Lesson Four: Now that you know that “every student with a documented disability has the right to” (Merchant & Dintino, 2011, p. 13)… List at least one right you were not aware you had prior to today’s lesson?

Now that you know that “every student with a documented disability has the responsibility to” (Merchant & Dintino, 2011, p. 14)… List at least one responsibility you were not aware you had prior to today’s lesson?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me
Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

Lesson Five: Now that you have an idea of how you learn best, list at least one way you will approach studying differently?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

Lesson Six: Now that you have discussed your strengths and learning challenges, list at least one way you will use this information to help you succeed in college?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

Lesson Seven: List at least one accommodation you feel is the most helpful for you to be successful? List at least one way this accommodation helps you?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

Lesson Eight: Now that you have had the opportunity to practice your role-play for requesting accommodations, list at least one area that you think will be the most difficult to discuss with your actual professor?

List at least one situation over the last week or month where you had to self-advocate? Explain how it went?

1 = not at all useful to me 2 = somewhat useful to me 3 = useful to me 4 = very useful to me 5 = most useful to me

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Appendix F

Pre-Interview Guide

These are just a few questions that were utilized to facilitate the student talking about their understanding of their disability and self-advocacy.

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

1. What memories do you have about your initial diagnosis of LD and/or ADHD?

2. How were your parents involved in your K-12 education (teachers, sports, church activities, etc.)?

3. How did you manage your disability or learning challenges in high school?

4. What types of strategies or supports did you have in place in high school?

5. Are you utilizing those same strategies in college?

6. How did you prepare to come to college in relation to high school transition, perceptions about college prior to attending, beliefs about how your learning challenges/disability would be managed in college?

7. How would you describe your understanding of your learning disability or ADHD?

8. How would you describe the term self-advocacy?

9. What memories do you have of times that you had to self-advocate for yourself?

10. What qualities do you see are necessary to be a good self-advocate?

11. What types of activities or experiences do you feel have prepared you to be a good self-advocate in college?
Post-interview Guide

These are just a few questions that were utilized to facilitate the student talking about their experiences during the seven-week self-advocacy study.

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

1. The curriculum that was used the last seven weeks was called Self-advocacy and the Transition to College. The lessons focused on many different skills associated with self-advocacy. The lessons started with goal setting, differences between high school and college, specifically your rights and responsibilities, learning styles and preferences, knowledge of your disability, different strengths and challenges, accommodations and how they relate specifically to your disability, self-advocacy and self-determination and role-playing with actual professors to ask for accommodations. What stands out as the most memorable or beneficial from the last seven weeks?

2. Depending on how the student responds will determine the next question.

3. How do you think knowing this information will help you or will it help you as you continue through college and then into the workforce?

4. Do you feel like you understand more about your disability and how it affects your everyday life?

5. What benefits if any, do you see from developing the skills of self-advocacy? Do you have any examples of ways you have utilized these skills in the past and ways to use them in the future?
Appendix G

Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College Curriculum

The following curriculum is the one developed by Merchant and Dintino (2011, pp. 3, 5, 9, 17, 19, 25, 27, & 31). It is used here with permission from the author.  

http://nextsteps-nh.org/wp-content/uploads/Self-advocacy-and-the-Transition-to-College-12-13-2011.pdf will link to the full curriculum. Lesson two and three were combined in this study due to the material being covered the previous semester. A review of this material will occur during the first lesson.

The curriculum is included on the subsequent pages.
SELF-ADVOCACY AND THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE

A Curriculum for Practitioners

By
Deborah Merchant
Maria Dintino

Part of a series of resources for increasing work-based learning opportunities and transition skills for students with disabilities. MCST is funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CFDA 93.768).
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Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College

A Curriculum for Practitioners

Deborah Merchant, PhD
Assistant Professor, Education Department
Keene State College

Maria Dintino, MALS
Associate Director, Aspire Program
Keene State College

Keene State College, Keene, NH
2011

Part of a series of resources for increasing work-based learning opportunities and transition skills for students with disabilities. MCST is funded by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CFDA 93.768).
This document was developed by the Keene State College site of the Monadnock Center for Successful Transitions (MCST).

MCST is a training and technical-assistance center that provides support to individuals, especially individuals with disabilities, as they transition from high school to adulthood. MCST also works to improve the employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities by creating and supporting different projects that encourage employment. Website: www.mcst-nh.org

MCST is a project of Monadnock Developmental Services, and is made possible under an Agreement with the State of New Hampshire, Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Developmental Services, with Medicaid Infrastructure Grant funds provided by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services under CFDA 93.768.

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***

This curriculum is part of a series of resource guides from the Monadnock Center for Successful Transitions. All are available for viewing or download at no charge at www.mcst-nh.org or www.transitions.keenecommons.net. Other available resources are:

- **Build Partnerships for Career Exploration** – a guide for partnering with an employer and offering a Job Shadow Day for students.
- **Create Approved Work-Based Learning Experiences** – a guide to meeting NH Department of Labor requirements for work-based learning experiences.

Keene State also hosts a Transition and Career Development Resources website, www.transitions.keenecommons.net, which includes a multimedia training and reference tool about IEP transition requirements and indicator 13.
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Deborah Merchant

Dr. Merchant is an assistant professor of education at Keene State College in Keene, New Hampshire. She has worked with individuals with disabilities for 28 years in both K-12 and postsecondary settings. She serves as a member of the documentation review board for the Educational Testing Service and is a member of the Editorial Board for the Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability. Her main area of interest and research is the transition of students with disabilities to postsecondary settings.

Maria Dintino

Maria Dintino is the associate director of the Aspire Program (a TRIO program funded to serve students who are first generation college students, meet income guidelines, and/or have a documented disability) and a coordinator of the Link Program (a summer program for first-time college students) at Keene State College in Keene, New Hampshire. Maria taught in public high schools, and for the past 19 years has worked with college students at Keene State College.
Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College is an eight-lesson curriculum designed to address the specific needs of students with disabilities entering college.

The lessons focus on the skills associated with self-advocacy, which include:

- knowledge of their disability
- how it impacts their learning
- what accommodations are needed
- how to communicate those needs
- their rights and responsibilities under the law

The curriculum was initially designed for use with the Link Program at Keene State College and has been revised for use in an expanded variety of educational settings.

It’s designed for teachers and/or service providers working with students with disabilities who are getting ready for postsecondary education. Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College can be taught at the high school or college level. Materials have been compiled from a variety of sources and are cited in the reference section.

SUCCESS IN COLLEGE

In order to be successful in postsecondary settings, many students with disabilities must utilize academic accommodations and are required to request those accommodations from college personnel. The numbers of students with disabilities entering postsecondary educational settings has increased over the past decade; however, there is evidence to suggest that students are entering colleges with little knowledge of their disabilities, how disabilities impact their learning, what accommodations are needed, how to communicate those needs, and their rights and responsibilities under the law; these are skills associated with self-advocacy. Self-advocacy skills are also essential for individuals with disabilities who are graduating from postsecondary educational settings and entering the work force.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Self-determination and self-advocacy skills have been identified as being critical to the successful transition from secondary to postsecondary education for students with disabilities. There appears to be agreement in the field that there are several skills and characteristics underlying self-determination. Self-advocacy is among the most frequently cited (Abery, 1994; St. Peter, Field & Hoffman, 1992; Ward, 1988; Fiedler & Danneker, 2007). Martin, Marshall & Maxson (1993) state that “self-determined people know how to choose. They know what they want and use their self-advocacy skills to get it” (p. 53). Self-advocacy is defined as “an individual’s
ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions” (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker & Deshler, 1994, p. 1). Trainor (2002) states “in order to be self-determining, one must advocate for one’s own needs” (p. 714). To advocate for yourself means to speak up and ask for what you need on your own behalf. Schreiner (2007) states that in order to advocate for oneself effectively, a student must recognize his or her own likes, dislikes, wants, needs, strengths, and limitations, be able to express those, and be given many opportunities to do so in authentic settings.

**LINK PROGRAM AT KEENE STATE COLLEGE**

*Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College* was initially developed for use in the Link Program at Keene State College. Link has been a transition program offered at Keene State since 1980. It is a six-week summer program designed for first-time college students. The purpose of Link is to expose students to the academic and social expectations of college in a supportive learning community. Each year, approximately one-half of the students who participate in the Link summer program have a documented disability.

**CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

The curriculum is divided into the following lessons. All handouts are included in the text of the lesson itself and also in reproducible format in the Handouts section.

Lesson 1: Goal setting

Lesson 2: Differences between high school and college, both academically and socially

Lesson 3: Differences between high school and college, including legal rights and responsibilities

Lesson 4: Learning styles and preferences

Lesson 5: Knowledge of disability: strengths and challenges

Lesson 6: Accommodations, specifically what are they and how they relate to your disability

Lesson 7: Self-advocacy and self-determination, including what it means to self-advocate and practice through communication skills

Lesson 8: Putting it all together – role-play. Note: this lesson may be taught over several sessions.
LESSON 1: GOAL SETTING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:
1. Understand the purpose and value of setting goals.
2. Set goals for themselves, keeping the goal-setting guidelines in mind.
3. Monitor and report progress toward achieving their goals.

INTRODUCTION

Goal setting is powerful in maintaining motivation and being successful. Students benefit from setting realistic, meaningful goals for themselves and checking in with someone periodically to assess their progress toward achievement.

ACTIVITY

Have students ask themselves the following questions:
1. Why did I choose to go to college?
2. What am I most excited about as I begin this new chapter in my life?
3. What are my concerns at this point? (Adjust questions to reflect a specific group.)

Give students a few minutes to write their responses to these questions and have them share with the large group. (There's typically a lot of overlap in the responses.)

These are some of the reasons/purposes why you're here and some of your feelings at this point. Now, let's talk about goals.

Why set goals? How does goal setting benefit students? What are some things to keep in mind when you set goals? Brainstorm a list of guidelines. (The list may include these guidelines: realistic and achievable goals in the time frame; goals important to you; why the goal matters; set the bar high so you challenge yourself, but keep goals attainable; realize goals can change as time unfolds; identify and plan for obstacles; strategies and steps to achieve goals.)
Hand out the goal-setting exercise outlined below:

**All-Important Goal-Setting Exercise**

“What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.” – Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker, writer, and trainer

1. Keeping your eye on the prize can be very motivating. Consistently reminding yourself of why you’re doing what you’re doing and what your goals are can assist you in staying focused and on task from day to day.

2. Take a few minutes to think about your long-term and short-term goals and thoughtfully answer the questions below, outlining three top goals for yourself. Remember: these are your goals, no one else’s.

3. What are my two top academic goals for the first semester? (short-term)

4. What is one of my top overall goals for my first year in college? (long-term)

**KEY INFORMATION**

Most study skills books have chapters and information on goal setting, and there’s a lot of information online. It’s important to schedule periodic sessions with individual students to discuss goals, whether they should adjust any goals, and how they’re doing toward achievement.
LESSON 2: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE, PART I

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will identify the social and academic differences between high school and college.

INTRODUCTION

Ask students the following questions and write answers on an index card:

What do you:
- know about college?
- want to know about college?

Set index card aside.

ACTIVITY

Think, Pair, and Share

Have students consider the general differences they expect to encounter from high school to college and write some of these down. Pair them up and have them discuss what they came up with. Finally, in the large group, share ideas and generate a list on the board.

Compare the list students generated with what is listed on the charts on the next pages.
### DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>COLLEGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal freedom</strong></td>
<td>Less freedom; student lives at home with parents</td>
<td>More freedom; student lives in a dorm with a roommate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>More structure; student has classes all day long</td>
<td>Less structure; student sets up schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classes</strong></td>
<td>Smaller size</td>
<td>Varies but classes can have 100 to 200 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>Frequent contact; student may see teachers every day</td>
<td>Less frequent contact; student may only see professors one to three times a week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study time</strong></td>
<td>Student may be able to get studying done in a study hall or spend minimal time outside of class on studying</td>
<td>More rigorous demands with more readings and independent work; student may need to study two to four hours a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tests</strong></td>
<td>More frequent tests on less material</td>
<td>May have only a few tests a semester; tests may cover many chapters or be cumulative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grades</strong></td>
<td>Total grade for the class may be based on many grades</td>
<td>Total grade for the course may be based on only a few grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical environment</strong></td>
<td>All classes are in one building</td>
<td>Classes are spread throughout the campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal protection</strong></td>
<td>IDEA: entitled to services through a Free and Appropriate Public Education</td>
<td>ADA: must be eligible for services; reasonable accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Special education classes</strong></td>
<td>Classes are specifically for students with disabilities</td>
<td>Classes include students with and without disabilities; some colleges may offer specialized programs, but they could involve additional fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AREA</td>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL</td>
<td>COLLEGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation</td>
<td>School evaluates the student and provides the student with documentation</td>
<td>Student must provide the college with updated documentation of the disability in order to receive accommodations; student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) is generally not considered documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating</td>
<td>Teacher and parent advocate for services</td>
<td>Student must advocate for accommodations and services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving accommodations</td>
<td>Accommodations are set up through the IEP process</td>
<td>Student must start the accommodation process by contacting the person/office on campus in charge of accommodations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course modifications</td>
<td>Course content or curriculum is modified, e.g., student is allowed to complete 15 math problems instead of the 25 math problems required</td>
<td>All students are required to complete all coursework as outlined on the syllabus; no modifications are provided</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.going-to-college.org](http://www.going-to-college.org)
# LESSON 2: DIFFERENCES, PART I

## Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HIGH SCHOOL</th>
<th>COLLEGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class time:</strong> 6 hours per day, 180 days, total=1,080 hours</td>
<td><strong>Class Time:</strong> 12 hours per week, 28 weeks, total=336 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study time:</strong> 2 hours per day; frequent tests and quizzes, variety of assignments, including worksheets</td>
<td><strong>Study Time:</strong> two hours of study for every one hour of class; four-plus hours per day; infrequent tests and quizzes, mostly papers assigned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grades:</strong> “D”=passing; report cards sent to parents and student</td>
<td><strong>Grades:</strong> “C”=passing; report cards sent to student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers:</strong> Active role in your progress</td>
<td><strong>Teachers:</strong> Passive role, may not know your name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure:</strong> High; limits set by teachers, parents, or other adults</td>
<td><strong>Structure:</strong> Low; limits set by you – no one will come to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal protection:</strong> IDEA, ADA, Section 504</td>
<td><strong>Legal protection:</strong> ADA, Section 504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identifying students with disabilities:</strong> School</td>
<td><strong>Identifying students with disabilities:</strong> Student initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Obtaining disability documentation and supporting need for accommodation:</strong> School</td>
<td><strong>Obtaining disability documentation and supporting need for accommodation:</strong> Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Providing accommodations:</strong> School</td>
<td><strong>Providing accommodations:</strong> College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning course of study:</strong> School</td>
<td><strong>Planning course of study:</strong> Student/College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advocating to obtain services:</strong> Parent and student</td>
<td><strong>Advocating to obtain services:</strong> Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deciding on coursework:</strong> IEP team, including student</td>
<td><strong>Deciding on coursework:</strong> Student</td>
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Source: [www.vacollegequest.org](http://www.vacollegequest.org)
LESSON 3: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE, PART II

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:
1. Demonstrate their understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities in a college setting.
2. Demonstrate their understanding of the legal differences between high school and college for students with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to the social and academic differences between high school and college, there are legal differences to be considered. In high school students are served under IDEA, while in college the ADA and 504 apply. Before discussing with students, have them take the quiz below.

ACTIVITY I

Understanding the Differences Between High School and College Rights and Responsibilities (true/false quiz handout)

1. My IEP goals and objectives will be continued when I am in a college setting. T F
2. Disability Services will contact me regularly once I am on campus. T F
3. I will be responsible for notifying my professors of my disability if I want to receive accommodations in their class. T F
4. I may or may not receive the same services in college that I received in high school. T F
5. I do not have to disclose my disability to anyone if I don’t want to. T F
6. When I disclose my disability to the college, I will automatically receive all of the accommodations that I request. T F
7. It doesn’t matter when I disclose my disability. T F
8. My IEP can serve as documentation of my disability in a college setting. T F
Answer Key

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. F
7. F
8. F

Discuss the quiz together.

DIFFERENCES IN LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN SECONDARY AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the law?</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Postsecondary</th>
<th>Practical Application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDEA</strong>: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</td>
<td><strong>504</strong>: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973</td>
<td><strong>504</strong>: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, particular reference to Subpart E</td>
<td><strong>Section 504(e) and ADA aren’t about special education services; they’re about nondiscrimination and access for eligible individuals with disabilities.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>504</strong></td>
<td><strong>ADA</strong>: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990</td>
<td><strong>ADA</strong>: Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>504/ADA</strong>: Ensures that no otherwise qualified person with a disability is denied access to or benefits of, or is subject to discrimination solely on the basis of disability.</td>
<td><strong>IDEA</strong>: Provides free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to identified students with disabilities, including special education and related services.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>What is the intent of the law?</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Postsecondary</th>
<th>Practical Application</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IDEA</strong>:</td>
<td><strong>504/ADA</strong>: Ensures that no otherwise qualified person with a disability is denied access to or benefits of, or is subject to discrimination solely on the basis of disability.</td>
<td><strong>IDEA</strong>: meets the specific special education needs of the student and modifies the program accordingly; IEP written.</td>
<td><strong>504(e) and ADA allow eligible individuals with disabilities the same access to programs, activities, and services as their nondisabled peers; no IEP.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>504/ADA</strong>:</td>
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### LESSON 3: DIFFERENCES, PART II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is covered under the law?</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Postsecondary</th>
<th>Practical Application</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IDEA: All children and youth requiring special education services until age 21 or graduation from high school.</td>
<td>504/ADA: All qualified persons with disabilities who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meet the college’s admissions requirements and the specific entry-level criteria for the specific program, and can document the existence of a disability as defined by Section 504.</td>
<td>Not every student who received special education services under IDEA will be a qualified individual with a disability under 504(e) or ADA. And once admitted, not every request for accommodation will be deemed to be reasonable.</td>
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</table>

| Who is responsible for identifying and documenting need? | School districts are responsible for identifying and evaluating potential students with disabilities. When such a determination is made, the district plans educational services for classified students at no expense to the family. | Students are responsible for self-identification and for obtaining disability documentation from a professional who is qualified to assess their particular disability; cost of the evaluation must be assumed by the student, not the postsecondary institution. | Just because documentation is sent on behalf of students, does not mean the students will receive services without the student coming in to specifically request them. |

| Who is responsible for initiating service delivery? | School districts are responsible for identifying students with disabilities and providing special education programs and services, including related services and transition services as delineated in an IEP. | Students are responsible for notifying the disability support services staff of their disabilities and their need for reasonable accommodations. Accommodations (not special education) are provided on a case-by-case, as-needed basis in order for students with disabilities to have | Students must request accommodations in a timely manner. Resource rooms are not a typical service in college. |
### LESSON 3: DIFFERENCES, PART II

#### Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College

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<th>Secondary</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is the parents’ role?</strong></td>
<td>Parents have legal responsibility and can request changes to IEP, etc., up until rights transfer at age 18.</td>
<td>Parents no longer have legal responsibility or access to service providers without the student's permission.</td>
<td>It's the student’s responsibility for requesting accommodations and services. Service providers cannot talk with parents unless the student gives permission.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What about advocacy?</strong></td>
<td>The parent or guardian is the primary advocate. Students with disabilities from age 14 on must be invited to participate in the IEP process. If the student does not attend, the district must ensure that the student's preferences and interests are considered.</td>
<td>Students must be able to self-identify and discuss their disabilities and needs in order to work with the disability support staff to implement reasonable accommodations. The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act guarantees student confidentiality.</td>
<td>Students must become self-advocates at the college level. Conversations with parents regarding confidential information without written consent from the student are illegal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the purpose of documentation?</strong></td>
<td>Documentation is a result of evaluations that determine whether a category of disability is present, which results in an IEP or a 504 plan. There is a re-evaluation every three years at no cost to families.</td>
<td>Documentation must provide information on specific functional limitations due to disabilities and on support the need for accommodations. If updated documentation is needed, the student is responsible for the cost.</td>
<td>Must meet college or university guidelines and typically be within the past three to five years. Provision of accommodations is based on the documentation submitted.</td>
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(Modified from materials prepared by Kay McVey, PROJECT CONNECT, Henderson State University)
### ACTIVITY II

**Know Your Rights and Responsibilities Under the Law (handouts)**

Have students fill in the charts from the choices under the charts, indicating which rights and responsibilities belong to the student or the college. Discuss after completion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every student with a documented disability has the <strong>right</strong> to:</th>
<th>Colleges and universities have the <strong>right</strong> to:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities offered at the college.</td>
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<td>2. Information, reasonably available in accessible formats.</td>
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<td>3. Maintain essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.</td>
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<td>4. Request current documentation by an appropriate professional and supplied by the student that confirms disability status and supports the need for appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.</td>
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<td>5. Reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services determined on a case-by-case basis.</td>
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<td>6. Select among equally effective accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services as judged by the college with consideration for cost and/or availability.</td>
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<td>7. Deny a request for an inappropriate or unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid or service, including any that poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, imposes a fundamental alteration to a course or program, or poses an undue financial or administrative burden on the college.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding a disability and the choice to whom a disability is disclosed except as required or permitted by law.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if documentation does not support a need for the requested service, or if the documentation is not provided in a timely manner.</td>
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### LESSON 3: DIFFERENCES, PART II

Every student with a documented disability has the **responsibility** to:

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Colleges and universities have the **responsibility** to:

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1. Meet qualifications and essential standards as determined by the college for courses, programs, jobs, services, and facilities.
2. Evaluate students on the basis of their abilities and not their disabilities.
3. Identify yourself as an individual with a disability to the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in a timely manner when you are seeking an accommodation.
4. Ensure that college courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, when viewed in their entirety, are offered in the most integrated and appropriate settings.
5. Provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities in accessible formats on request.
6. Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication regarding students with disabilities, except where permitted or required by law.
7. Inform students when requested accommodations are not available or beyond the college’s ability to provide them.
8. When seeking accommodations, provide documentation of the disability from an appropriate professional, including information about the functional limitations of the disability.
9. Follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.
10. Provide or arrange reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and/or services for students with disabilities on request.
11. Communicate requests for accommodations to instructors by providing a letter of identification describing the reasonable accommodations recommended by ODS as early in the semester as possible.
LESSON 3: DIFFERENCES, PART II

Answer Keys

Rights and Responsibilities of Students

Every student with a documented disability has the **right** to:
- equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities offered at the college
- reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services determined on a case-by-case basis
- appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding a disability and the choice to whom a disability is disclosed except as required or permitted by law
- information, reasonably available in accessible formats

Every student with a documented disability has the **responsibility** to:
- meet qualifications and essential standards as determined by the College for courses, programs, jobs, services, and facilities
- identify as an individual with a disability to the ODS in a timely manner when seeking an accommodation
- when seeking accommodations, provide documentation of the disability from an appropriate professional, including information about the functional limitations of the disability
- follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services
- communicate requests for accommodations to instructors by providing a letter of identification describing the reasonable accommodations recommended by ODS as early in the semester as possible

Rights and Responsibilities of Colleges and Universities

Colleges and universities have the **right** to:
- maintain essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.
- request current documentation by an appropriate professional and supplied by the student that confirms disability status and supports the need for appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services
- deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if documentation does not support a need for the requested service, or if the documentation is not provided in a timely manner
- select among equally effective accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services as judged by the college with consideration for cost and/or availability
- deny a request for an inappropriate or unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid or service, including any that poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, imposes a fundamental alteration to a
course or program, or poses an undue financial or administrative burden on the college.

Colleges and universities have the **responsibility** to:

- ensure that college courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, when viewed in their entirety, are offered in the most integrated and appropriate settings
- provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities in accessible formats on request
- evaluate students on the basis of their abilities and not their disabilities
- provide or arrange reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and/or services for students with disabilities on request
- maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication regarding students with disabilities, except where permitted or required by law
- inform students when requested accommodations are not available or beyond the college’s ability to provide

**Why Is This Important?**

Discuss with students the importance of knowing what they can expect for supports from a college or university and what their own rights and responsibilities are in order to gain access to supports and services.
LESSON 4: LEARNING STYLES AND PREFERENCES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:
1. Demonstrate a general understanding of learning styles.
2. Articulate their own learning preferences, outlining both strengths and challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Ask students what they already know about learning styles in general.
1. What are the various learning styles? (They should come up with visual, auditory, and tactile/haptic/hands-on styles.)
2. Why do you think it’s important to know thyself, to understand yourself as a learner?

ACTIVITY

Have students complete the exercise below (from Your College Experience, Gardner and Jewler, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2000).

Your Learning Style: A Quick Indication (handouts)

Answer the following questions by listing three or four of your favorite courses from high school:
1. What did these courses have in common? Did they tend to be hands-on, lecture, or discussion type courses?
2. What were the exams like: multiple choice, true or false, essay exams? Did the exams cover small units of material or larger chunks of material?
3. Were there papers and other projects for these courses?

Now answer the following questions by listing your least favorite three or four courses from high school:
1. What did these courses and their exams have in common?
2. How did these courses tend to differ from the courses you liked?
3. What does this exercise say about your learning preferences? Discuss in small groups, then share discoveries and ideas with the large group.
LESSON 4: LEARNING STYLES AND PREFERENCES

Next have students complete a learning styles inventory. There are many out there. One we recommend is an online survey that can be found at: www.metamath.com/multiple/multiple_choice_questions.html

Discuss what they discover about themselves from this survey.

1. Any surprises? Any concerns?
2. Did this survey reinforce what they already knew or suspected?

Important to Discuss
What to do if your learning style does not match an instructor’s teaching style and/or the way you’re being evaluated in a course? How do you bridge that gap?

KEY INFORMATION

It’s important for students to know that there is no right or wrong way to learn, but we often have to adapt to meet instructor and course expectations. Students can always speak with instructors if they have a concern and perhaps work with an educational counselor to explore ways to be successful in various courses.
LESSON 5: KNOWLEDGE OF DISABILITY: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the nature of their disability, including strengths and challenges, and the impact in academic settings.

INTRODUCTION

In order for students to be able to ask for what they need, they have to know what they need and why! Start with a discussion about students’ previous educational experiences and their involvement in their own educational planning.

Ask the following questions:
1. Did you participate in your IEP meetings?
2. To what extent did you participate? Explain.
3. Do you know what your transition goals are/were?

Segue into strengths and challenges related to disability. How do you define disability? Generate input from the whole group.

Disability, according to the World Health Organization, is “an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; and a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Thus, disability is a complex phenomenon, reflecting an interaction between features of a person’s body and features of the society in which he or she lives.” (Wikipedia, 2010)
LESSON 5: KNOWLEDGE: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

ACTIVITY I

Celebrity Quiz (handout)
All kinds of people have various forms of learning disabilities. Match each description to the personalities listed below:

a. Albert Einstein  f. Tom Cruise  j. Cher
b. Winston Churchill  g. George S. Patton  k. Whoopie Goldberg
c. Ludwig van Beethoven  h. Bruce Jenner  l. Woodrow Wilson
d. Thomas Edison  i. Walt Disney  m. Hans Christian Anderson
e. Agatha Christie

1. ___ As a lad of nine, he did not know the letters of the alphabet. He finally learned to read at age 11. He was thought to be dull and backward. He entered Davidson College, but withdrew because of illness. Yet, he eventually became president.

2. ___ This famous singer and movie star has a math disability. Not only can she not remember phone numbers, she says she is incapable of balancing her checkbook. Yet, that checking account is full as a result of her success in the entertainment field.

3. ___ His head was very large at birth. His mother did not agree with those who said that the child was abnormal. He was sent to school, but thought by a teacher to be mentally ill. The mother withdrew the child from school and taught him herself. She must have done a decent job, because he went on to create the electric light bulb and the phonograph.

4. ___ This composer was deaf when he composed his Symphony no. 9.

5. ___ When he was 12 years old, he could not read and remained deficient in reading all his life. However, he could memorize entire lectures, which was how he got through school. He became a famous general during World War II.

6. ___ He was slow in schoolwork and did not have a successful school experience. He later became a well-known movie producer and cartoonist.

7. ___ This noted Englishman had much difficulty in school. He later became a national leader and an English Prime Minister.

8. ___ This Sister Act actress has dyslexia but has succeeded in a movie career.

9. ___ This boy had difficulty reading but was able to write some of the world’s best-loved stories.

10. ___ This boy could not talk until age four. He did not learn to read until he was nine. His teachers considered him to be mentally slow, unsociable, and a dreamer. He failed the entrance examinations to college, but finally passed them after an additional year of preparation. He lost three teaching positions. He became a patent clerk. Ultimately, he developed the theory of relativity.

11. ___ He was a decathlon winner in the 1976 Olympics. He had difficulty reading and with other school subjects.

12. ___ He is currently a famous movie star. He learns his lines by listening to a tape. His movies include Risky Business, Top Gun, and Mission Impossible. He has been diagnosed as dyslexic.

13. ___ This famous female was a prolific writer of mystery stories and novels. None of her manuscripts are available in her own handwriting. Her learning disability prohibited her
from being able to write fluently, and so from the time she began her career, she dictated all her material to a secretary/transcriptionist.

**Answer Key to Celebrity Quiz**

1. Woodrow Wilson (l)
2. Cher (j)
3. Thomas Edison (d)
4. Ludwig van Beethoven (c)
5. George S. Patton (f)
6. Walt Disney (i)
7. Winston Churchill (b)
8. Whoopie Goldberg (k)
9. Hans Christian Anderson (m)
10. Albert Einstein (a)
11. Bruce Jenner (h)
12. Tom Cruise (g)
13. Agatha Christie (e)

You are in excellent company! If they can do it, imagine the possibilities!

Source: [www.doe.in.gov/exceptional/speced/independence/2005-09/CELEBRITY%20QUIZ.pdf](http://www.doe.in.gov/exceptional/speced/independence/2005-09/CELEBRITY%20QUIZ.pdf)

**ACTIVITY II**

**Understanding My Disability (handout)**

Have students complete the following activity, filling in all of the sections. Upon completion, discuss:

1. What was it like to fill this out?
2. Which questions were easy to answer?
3. Hard to answer?

My disability is: ________________________________

_____________________________

________________________________________

My disability affects my ability to learn in the following ways: ____________________________

_____________________________

________________________________________
LESSON 5: KNOWLEDGE: STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

My disability affects my ability to live in the following ways: ______________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

My disability affects my ability to work in the following ways: ______________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

I learn best when: __________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Documentation of my disability supports the use of the following accommodations:
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________


ACTIVITY III

Learning Strengths: Think, Pair, and Share

Have students take a few minutes individually and answer the question:
What are your strengths? (E.g., Which academic tasks are easy? What are you good at?)

Turn to a partner and share strengths. Share as a large group.

During sharing, list student strengths on the board. Take a minute and review. Remind students how they can and do use these strengths in academic settings. These will also help them in college.
ACTIVITY IV

Learning Challenges and Needs (handout)

Now that students have identified their learning strengths, ask them to think about their learning challenges and/or needs. (Which academic tasks are difficult? What are your challenges?)

Have students fill out the Learning Needs Checklist. See the Handouts section for a reproducible copy.

Learning Needs Checklist
Put a check mark by the statements that reflect your learning needs.

1. Reading Skills
   - slow reading rate and/or difficulty in modifying reading rate in accordance with the material's levels of difficulty
   - some difficulty understanding and remembering materials read
   - difficulty identifying important points and themes
   - incomplete mastery of letter recognition, confusion of similar words, difficulty understanding and using new vocabulary
   - skips words or lines of printed material
   - difficulty reading for long periods

2. Written Language Skills
   - difficulty planning a topic and organizing thoughts on paper
   - difficulty with sentence structure such as incomplete sentences, run-ons, poor use of grammar, or missing endings (e.g., -ed, -ing, -s)
   - frequent spelling errors (e.g., omissions, substitutions, transpositions), especially in specialized and foreign vocabulary
   - difficulty proofreading written work and making revisions
   - compositions are often limited in length
   - slow written production
   - poor penmanship (e.g., poorly formed letters, incorrect use of capitalization, trouble with spacing, overly large handwriting)
   - inability to copy correctly from a book or blackboard

3. Oral Language Skills
   - inability to concentrate on and comprehend spoken language when presented rapidly
   - difficulty in orally expressing ideas that seem to be understood by others
   - difficulty following or having a conversation about an unfamiliar idea
   - trouble telling a story in the proper sequence
   - difficulty following oral or written directions
4. Mathematical Skills
- incomplete mastery of basic facts (e.g., mathematical tables)
- reverses numbers (e.g., 123 or 321 or 231)
- confuses operational symbols, especially + and x
- copies problems incorrectly from one line to another
- difficulty comprehending word problems
- difficulty understanding key concepts and applications to aid problem-solving

5. Organizational and Study Skills
- difficulty with organizational skills
- time management difficulties
- slow to start and complete tasks
- repeated inability, on a day-to-day basis, to recall what has been taught
- lack of overall organization in taking notes
- difficulty interpreting charts and graphs
- inefficient use of library and reference materials
- difficulty preparing for and taking tests

6. Attention and Concentration
- trouble focusing and keeping attention on academic tasks, fluctuating attention span during lectures
- easily distractible by outside stimuli
- difficulty juggling multiple task demands and overloads quickly
- hyperactivity and excessive movements may accompany the inability to focus attention
- trouble meeting people or working cooperatively with others

(Adapted from Sitlington and Frank, 2008)
LESSON 6: ACCOMMODATIONS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to identify what accommodations they may need in a college setting and why.

INTRODUCTION

What Are Accommodations?

Reasonable accommodations enable qualified students with disabilities to have equal opportunities by making adjustments or modifications to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, or facilities. Therefore, accommodations are determined in the spirit of removing, to the greatest extent possible, barriers to students’ abilities that are created by the interaction between their disabilities and the environment of the college, while maintaining essential standards for courses, programs, jobs, services, and facilities. The college is obligated to provide accommodations only to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability.

Accommodations do not require instructors to adjust evaluations of academic performance. Rather, they enable students with disabilities to access the material presented and they enable instructors to fairly evaluate students’ comprehension of the material.

The ODS staff will work with otherwise qualified students with disabilities to provide their preferred accommodations. However, in the event that documentation does not support a student’s request, or the request is deemed unreasonable, inappropriate, or an undue burden to the institution, the ODS will seek appropriate alternatives in consultation with the student and/or the documenting professional(s) and other appropriate professionals as released by the student.

Common Accommodations

Reasonable accommodations are determined on an individual basis and are flexible based on individual disability needs and the campus environment. The following is a partial list of common accommodations:

- accessible location/classroom/furniture
- adaptive technology (e.g., magnifier, screen readers, speech to text software)
- campus housing access/adjustments
- priority registration
LESSON 6: ACCOMMODATIONS

- priority seating in classroom
- alternative formats for text materials (E-text, Audio CD’s, Braille)
- note takers
- copies of overheads or lecture notes
- extended time on exams
- separate testing area
- readers/scribes for exams
- enlarged print on notes or exams
- use of computer/assistive technology for taking exams
- sign language/oral interpreters/CART services

(Keene State College Office of Disability Services)

ACTIVITY

Accommodations in a College Setting

Have students review their Learning Needs Checklist and brainstorm, with the group, a list of accommodations that they may need in a college setting.

In small groups or with a partner, have students indicate what they anticipate needing in a college setting and why they think these accommodations might be helpful for them.

Come back together in a large group, have students share, and identify areas where they were stuck or had difficulty identifying and/or explaining to their partner or small group what it is they might need.
LESSON 7: SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:
1. Demonstrate their understanding of the concept of self-advocacy
2. Identify their strengths, challenges in relation to their learning, and accommodations needed.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to self-advocate?

First, “what does it mean to advocate?”
(e.g., speak up for a cause, convince others that the cause is right)

Ask students if they belong or have belonged to any groups in which you advocate for something? (e.g., children, animal rights, environment)

Definition of self-advocacy – what is it?

• Self-advocacy is part of the larger concept of self-determination “in order to be self-determining, one must advocate for one’s own needs.” To advocate for yourself means to speak up and ask for what you need on your own behalf (Trainor, 2002, p. 714).
• “An individual’s ability to effectively communicate, convey, negotiate, or assert his or her own interests, desires, needs, and rights. It involves making informed decisions and taking responsibility for those decisions” (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker & Deshler, 1994, p. 1).
• “In order to advocate for oneself effectively, a student must recognize his or her own likes, dislikes, wants, needs, strengths, and limitations, be able to express those, and be given many opportunities to do so in authentic settings” (Schreiner, 2007).

ACTIVITY I

Group Brainstorm

Ask students to think about self-advocacy in relation to a college setting. Why do you think it’s important to advocate on behalf of yourself in a college setting?

Some examples:
• change in the laws in which you are covered
• get information clarified that you don’t understand
LESSON 7: SELF-ADVOCACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

- questions for professors
- to gain needed accommodations

There are some basic things that students need in order to be an effective self-advocate, some of which have been reviewed already:
- know the nature of your disability (strengths and weaknesses)
- know the accommodations you need in relation to your disability
- know your rights and responsibilities under the law
- be able to communicate your needs to faculty and service providers, and eventually employers

ACTIVITY II

Student Inventory (handout)

Students have been exploring the differences between high school and college, their learning styles, strengths and challenges, and accommodations. Next, have students fill out the inventory sheet shown below. Ask the following questions upon completion: How did you do? Do you feel that you were able to fill in all of the sections of the inventory? The next step is communicating this information.

Student Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of disability:</th>
<th>Impact on learning:</th>
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<tr>
<th>Academic skills/areas of strength:</th>
<th>Areas to work on:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodations needed:</th>
<th>Why accommodations are needed:</th>
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</table>

Self-Advocacy and the Transition to College 183
Communicating your needs in a college setting.

Ask the following question:

What are some situations where you think it would be helpful to provide your inventory information?

Examples:
- requesting extended time for an exam
- negotiating another time to take an exam due to back-to-back courses and the need for extended time for exam
- assistance in obtaining a note taker
- requesting a copy of the instructor’s notes and/or overheads
- requesting instructor to slow down during a lecture
- requesting permission to record lectures
- requesting information regarding assigned texts and other reading prior to the beginning of the semester to obtain books on tape

When do you provide inventory information?

Ask: When do you think it's best to provide inventory information? (e.g., during office hours or an individual appointment with the professor)

When do you think it is not a good time? (e.g., right before class starts or right after class).

You want to make sure the professor has time for you. This can happen by either scheduling an appointment or going to his or her office during scheduled office hours.
LESSON 8: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will articulate their needs in relation to their disability and request accommodations in an appropriate manner.

This lesson may be taught over several sessions.

INTRODUCTION

Communicating Your Needs to Faculty and Requesting Accommodations

It’s important to think about how you approach your professor. Talk about passive vs. assertive vs. aggressive.

Have students take this short assertiveness quiz at: http://www.headinjury.com/assertquiz.htm

Read the introduction to the quiz together and tell students this quiz is a way for them to gauge where they’re at in terms of assertiveness.

- **Passive**: “Passive individuals are not committed to their own rights and are more likely to allow others to infringe on their rights than to stand up and speak out.” If you approach a professor in a passive manner, what kind of a message do you think you might send?
- **Aggressive**: “Aggressive persons are likely to defend their own rights and work to achieve their own goals, but they are also likely to disregard the rights of others. Additionally, aggressive individuals insist that their feelings and needs take precedence over other people’s. They also tend to blame others for problems instead of offering solutions.” What message might that send? Do you think professors would willingly give you what you are asking for?
- **Assertive**: “Assertiveness is a way of thinking and behaving that allows a person to stand up for his or her rights while respecting the rights of others.” Benefits of this approach may be nonconfrontational, informative, and matter of fact responses.
LESSON 8: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Other Tips to Consider When Talking with Faculty

**Listen** – While you’re engaged in conversation with your faculty member, it’s important to listen to what they’re saying to you. It’s easy to get caught up in your own agenda and not hear what the other person is saying.

**Ask questions** – Oftentimes we are, once again, set on our agenda and sometimes intimidated by the perceived power of the other person. Remember that while you’re listening, if someone says something you don’t understand or makes a statement that you need clarification for, ask questions. For example, you could use the opportunity during your meeting with a faculty member to find out what the test format is going to be like. Believe it or not, faculty members really like students to ask questions about their classes. It helps them to know you really care about their classes and are interested in doing well.

**Note:** Accommodation letters are provided at most colleges and universities. Typically, students deliver the letter to the faculty member and discuss needed accommodations for the class.

**ACTIVITY 1**

**Putting Skills to Work: How to Approach Your Professor (handout)**

It’s a good idea to talk with your professors the first week of class about your accommodations. It’s also recommended that you set up an appointment. You can take one of the following approaches:

1. Ask your professor right after class if he or she could set up an appointment with you.
2. E-mail your professor to set up the appointment.
3. Go to your professor during his or her posted office hours (usually listed on the syllabus).

Possible scenarios:

1. If your professor asks you what your disability is, it’s your choice as to how much information you want to share. If you don’t want to state your specific disability, one option is to describe some of your learning challenges and how the accommodations will help. For example, you might say, “I will need extended time on tests because it takes me longer to read the information and process it.”

2. Your professor may believe he or she cannot provide the specific accommodations on your letter. It’s important that ODS is notified that the professor is unclear about providing your accommodations. One option is to explain to the professor that “these are the accommodations that are approved by the university, and if you need more information about the accommodations, I can have the ODS coordinator contact you to discuss this with you, or you can contact them at __________________________(provide phone number).”
List four things Jerry does right and four things that he does wrong in a meeting with his professor, Dr. John Bagel:

Jerry walks in to the professor’s office a few minutes after their scheduled appointment. “Hi, John, sorry I’m late. I do appreciate that you are willing to meet with me.” Jerry looks for his list of questions for Dr. Bagel that he wrote up before the meeting. He opens his notebook and his papers fall on the floor. He then looks in his textbook and finds the folded paper. Then Jerry’s cell phone rings. Jerry apologizes to the professor and looks to see who is calling him. Since it’s Jerry’s roommate, he decides to take the quick call. After the phone call, Jerry explains to his professor that he missed class last week, and he has heard from his classmates that he missed a pop quiz. Jerry asks Dr. Bagel when he can retake the quiz. Dr. Bagel informs Jerry that he does not let students make up pop quizzes, and he’ll have to accept the zero as his quiz grade. Jerry then asks if he missed anything else important that day. Dr. Bagel informs him that all of his lectures are important and should not be missed. Before Jerry leaves, Dr. Bagel tells Jerry that after he gets the missed class notes from a classmate and reads the related chapter, he should come back to his office if he has any specific questions about the material, as he’d be happy to clarify the information. Jerry thanks the professor for his help and leaves, saying, “I am really enjoying your class.”

Have students share their list with the larger group and discuss.
ACTIVITY 11

The Actual Meeting – Role-Play (handout)

Directions
Fill in the blanks with your information. Read through the completed script out loud. Next, practice with a partner.

Introduction

“Hi, Professor __________________, my name is __________________, and I’m in your __________________ class. Thank you for meeting with me today.”

Accommodation Letter

“I want to give you my accommodation letter, which explains the accommodations that I will need for your class. I am strong in ___________________________ (fill in with one or two academic skills or abilities that come easy for you), but the accommodations really help me to ___________________________ (identify one of your learning challenges).

As you can see by my letter, I’m a registered student with a disability, and the Office of Disability Services authorized the following accommodations for your class”:

1. _______________________________ __________________________________________
2. _______________________________ __________________________________________
3. _______________________________ __________________________________________
4. _______________________________ __________________________________________
5. _______________________________ __________________________________________

Remember to discuss with your professor any specifics about how to work with the accommodations in his or her class. Clarify responsibilities. For example, some professors may want reminders from you about your accommodation needs one week before a test, or, if you need a note taker, determine how you will get the notes (by email, photocopy, accessing Blackboard).

Closing

“Thank you for meeting with me and working with me to provide my accommodations. I’m looking forward to your course.”

Have students practice providing the above information, taking turns being the student and the faculty member. The person listening (playing faculty member) fills out the Role-Play Observation Sheet. Discuss as a group what it was like sharing your information. Practice makes perfect, or pretty close to it!
Role-Play Observation Sheet

Indicate whether the student exhibited the following behaviors while requesting an accommodation from a faculty member.

**Greeting:**

The student introduces him- or herself. Yes No

**Reference:**

The student tells a faculty member which class they are in (references the reason they are there). Yes No

**Disclosure:**

The student states he or she has a disability. Yes No

**Functional terms:**

The student states how is or her disability impacts learning (e.g., “Because of my slower processing, I have difficulty reading quickly.”) Yes No

**Accommodations:**

The student talks about accommodations used in the past and how they’ve helped. Yes No

The student requests the accommodation needed. (e.g., tape lectures, extended time for exam) Yes No

The student articulates how his or her disability relates to the accommodation (e.g., “I need extra time because …”) Yes No

**Resources for Accommodations:**

The student indicates they are registered with ODS. Yes No

The student discusses how the accommodation will be provided and what the instructor will do. Yes No

**Closing:**

The student thanks the faculty member for his or her time. Yes No
ACTIVITY III

Communicating Through Email (handouts)

Your correspondence with your professors tells a lot about you. Properly written emails convey respect and show your writing abilities. You need to be aware of and use proper email etiquette with college personnel.

When emailing your professors, consider these points:

- Use your college email when emailing professors.
- Avoid using slang, text message abbreviations, and acronyms.
- Keep your tone positive and professional.
- Avoid emoticons (such as 😊).
- Use an appropriate greeting such as “Dr.” or “Professor” and then their last name.
- Include an appropriate subject line.
- Include your class name and time it meets at the end of your email.
- Proofread your email before you send it.
- Use spell and grammar checks.
- Refrain from using all upper case letters – this implies that you are shouting.
- Use appropriate punctuation.
- Avoid using too many exclamation points.
- Thank the professor for his or her time and consideration in responding to your email.
Example of what not to do:

To: professor@college.edu
From: lovetodance@yahoo.com
Subject: Class!
Cc: mymom@hotmail.com
Attached: agoodjoke.doc; lateassignment.doc; mydog.jpg

WHEN CAN I MEET WITH YOU? I SENT YOU AN EMAIL YESTERDAY. DID YOU GET IT?
THANX!!! :)

Your email should look like this:

To: professor@college.edu
From: bsmith@college.edu
Subject: PSYC 101 – textbook
Cc:
Attached:

Professor Rosenblum,

I am enrolled in your PSYC 101 class this fall and need to get the textbook in an alternative format. If you have decided on the textbook for the course, could you please send me the title and ISBN number so I can purchase the book and have it available in an alternative format in time for the class to begin?

I appreciate this information very much, and I look forward to meeting you in class.

Sincerely,
Bob Smith
Introduction to Psychology
MWF 10-11
My practice email to a professor

Write a short email to a professor asking to set up an appointment to discuss your exam results or accommodations. Refer to the tips on this worksheet.

To: __________________________________________________________
From: ________________________________________________________
Subject: _______________________________________________________
Cc: ___________________________________________________________
Bcc: __________________________________________________________
Attached: ______________________________________________________
Message:______________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
HANDOUTS
TO BE COPIED
UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

True/False

1. My IEP goals and objectives will be continued when I am in a college setting. T F
2. Disability Services will contact me regularly once I am on campus. T F
3. I will be responsible for notifying my professors of my disability if I want to receive accommodations in their class. T F
4. I may or may not receive the same services in college that I received in high school. T F
5. I do not have to disclose my disability to anyone if I don’t want to. T F
6. When I disclose my disability to the college, I will automatically receive all of the accommodations that I request. T F
7. It doesn’t matter when I disclose my disability. T F
8. My IEP can serve as documentation of my disability in a college setting. T F
Know Your Rights and Responsibilities Under the Law

Student name: ___________________________  Date: _________________

Every student with a documented disability has the **right** to:

<table>
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<th>Colleges and universities have the <strong>right</strong> to:</th>
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1. Equal access to courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities offered at the College.
2. Information, reasonably available in accessible formats.
3. Maintain essential standards for courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities.
4. Request current documentation by an appropriate professional and supplied by the student that confirms disability status and supports the need for appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.
5. Reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services determined on a case-by-case basis.
6. Select among equally effective accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services as judged by the College with consideration for cost and/or availability.
7. Deny a request for an inappropriate or unreasonable accommodation, adjustment, and/or auxiliary aid or service including any that poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others, imposes a fundamental alteration to a course or program, or poses an undue financial or administrative burden on the College.
8. Appropriate confidentiality of all information regarding a disability and the choice to whom a disability is disclosed except as required or permitted by law.
9. Deny a request for accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services if documentation does not support a need for the requested service, or if the documentation is not provided in a timely manner.
Know Your Rights and Responsibilities Under the Law (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every student with a documented Disability has the responsibility to:</th>
<th>Colleges and universities have the responsibility to:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Meet qualifications and essential standards as determined by the college for courses, programs, jobs, services, and facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Evaluate students on the basis of their abilities and not their disabilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Identify yourself as an individual with a disability to the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in a timely manner when seeking an accommodation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ensure that college courses, programs, services, jobs, activities, and facilities, when viewed in their entirety, are offered in the most integrated and appropriate settings.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provide information regarding policies and procedures to students with disabilities in accessible formats on request.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Maintain appropriate confidentiality of records and communication regarding students with disabilities, except where permitted or required by law.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Inform students when requested accommodations are not available or beyond the college’s ability to provide them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When seeking accommodations, provide documentation of the disability from an appropriate professional, including information about the functional limitations of the disability.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Follow specific procedures for obtaining reasonable accommodations, academic adjustments, and/or auxiliary aids and services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Provide or arrange reasonable and appropriate accommodations, academic adjustments, and auxiliary aids and/or services for students with disabilities on request.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Communicate requests for accommodations to instructors by providing a letter of identification describing the reasonable accommodations recommended by ODS as early in the semester as possible.</td>
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</table>
Your Learning Style: A Quick Indication

Student name: ___________________________ Date: __________________

List three or four of your favorite courses from high school.

1. _______________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________

4. _______________________________________________________

Answer the following questions:

1. What did these courses have in common?
   _______________________________________________________

2. Did they tend to be hands-on, lecture, or discussion type courses?
   _______________________________________________________

3. What were the exams like: multiple choice, true or false, essay exams?
   _______________________________________________________

4. Did the exams cover small units of material or larger chunks of material?
   _______________________________________________________

5. Were there papers and other projects for these courses?
   _______________________________________________________

Now list your **least favorite** three or four courses from high school.

1. _______________________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________________

4. _______________________________________________________

Answer the following questions:

1. What did these courses and their exams have in common?
   _______________________________________________________

2. How did these courses tend to differ from the courses you liked?
   _______________________________________________________
Celebrity Quiz

All kinds of people have various forms of learning disabilities. Match each description to the personalities listed below:

- Albert Einstein
- Winston Churchill
- Ludwig van Beethoven
- Thomas Edison
- Agatha Christie
- Tom Cruise
- George S. Patton
- Bruce Jenner
- Walt Disney
- Hans Christian Anderson
- Cher
- Whoopie Goldberg
- Woodrow Wilson

1. As a lad of nine, he did not know the letters of the alphabet. He finally learned to read at age 11. He was thought to be dull and backward. He entered Davidson College, but withdrew because of illness. Yet, he eventually became president.

2. This famous singer and movie star has a math disability. Not only can she not remember phone numbers, she says she is incapable of balancing her checkbook. Yet, that checking account is full as a result of her success in the entertainment field.

3. His head was very large at birth. His mother did not agree with those who said that the child was abnormal. He was sent to school, but thought by a teacher to be mentally ill. The mother withdrew the child from school and taught him herself. She must have done a decent job, because he went on to create the electric light bulb and the phonograph.

4. This composer was deaf when he composed his Symphony no. 9.

5. When he was 12 years old, he could not read and remained deficient in reading all his life. However, he could memorize entire lectures, which was how he got through school. He became a famous general during World War II.

6. He was slow in schoolwork and did not have a successful school experience. He later became a well-known movie producer and cartoonist.

7. This noted Englishman had much difficulty in school. He later became a national leader and an English Prime Minister.

8. This Sister Act actress has dyslexia but has succeeded in a movie career.

9. This boy had difficulty reading but was able to write some of the world's best-loved stories.

10. This boy could not talk until age four. He did not learn to read until he was nine. His teachers considered him to be mentally slow, unsociable, and a dreamer. He failed the entrance examinations to college, but finally passed them after an additional year of preparation. He lost three teaching positions. He became a patent clerk. Ultimately, he developed the theory of relativity.

11. He was a decathlon winner in the 1976 Olympics. He had difficulty reading and with other school subjects.

12. He is currently a famous movie star. He learns his lines by listening to a tape. His movies include Risky Business, Top Gun, and Mission Impossible. He has been diagnosed as dyslexic.

14. This famous female was a prolific writer of mystery stories and novels. None of her manuscripts are available in her own handwriting. Her learning disability prohibited her from being able to write fluently, and so from the time she began her career, she dictated all her material to a secretary/transcriptionist.
Understanding My Disability

Student name: ___________________________ Date: __________________

My disability is: ________________________________________________

_______________________________

My disability affects my ability to learn in the following ways: _________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

My disability affects my ability to live in the following ways: _________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

My disability affects my ability to work in the following ways: _________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

I learn best when: ________________________________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

Documentation of my disability supports the use of the following accommodations:

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

Learning Needs Checklist
Put a check mark by the statements that reflect your learning needs.

1. **Reading Skills**
   - slow reading rate and/or difficulty in modifying reading rate in accordance with the material’s levels of difficulty
   - some difficulty understanding and remembering materials read
   - difficulty identifying important points and themes
   - incomplete mastery of letter recognition, confusion of similar words, difficulty understanding and using new vocabulary
   - skips words or lines of printed material
   - difficulty reading for long periods

2. **Written Language Skills**
   - difficulty planning a topic and organizing thoughts on paper
   - difficulty with sentence structure (e.g., incomplete sentences, run-ons, poor use of grammar, missing endings (e.g., -ed, -ing, -s))
   - frequent spelling errors (e.g., omissions, substitutions, transpositions), especially in specialized and foreign vocabulary
   - difficulty proofreading written work and making revisions
   - compositions are often limited in length
   - slow written production
   - poor penmanship (e.g., poorly formed letters, incorrect use of capitalization, trouble with spacing, overly large handwriting)
   - inability to copy correctly from a book or blackboard

3. **Oral Language Skills**
   - inability to concentrate on and to comprehend spoken language when presented rapidly
   - difficulty in orally expressing ideas that seem to be understood by others
   - difficulty following or having a conversation about an unfamiliar idea
   - trouble telling a story in the proper sequence
   - difficulty following oral or written directions

4. **Mathematical Skills**
   - incomplete mastery of basic facts (e.g., mathematical tables)
   - reverses numbers (e.g., 123 or 321 or 231)
   - confuses operational symbols, especially + and x
   - copies problems incorrectly from one line to another
   - difficulty comprehending word problems
   - difficulty understanding key concepts and applications to aid problem-solving
5. Organizational and Study Skills
- difficulty with organizational skills
- time management difficulties
- slow to start and complete tasks
- repeated inability, on a day-to-day basis, to recall what has been taught
- lack of overall organization in taking notes
- difficulty interpreting charts and graphs
- inefficient use of library and reference materials
- difficulty preparing for and taking tests

6. Attention and Concentration
- trouble focusing and keeping attention on academic tasks, fluctuating attention span during lectures
- easily distractible by outside stimuli
- difficulty juggling multiple task demands and overloads quickly
- hyperactivity and excessive movements may accompany the inability to focus attention
- trouble meeting people or working cooperatively with others

(Adapted from Sitlington and Frank, 2008)
# Student Inventory

Name: ___________________________  
Date: ________________

Nature of disability:  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  

Impact on learning:  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  

Academic skills/areas of strength:  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  

Areas to work on:  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  

Accommodations needed:  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  

Why accommodations are needed:  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________  
__________________________
List four things Jerry does right and four things that he does wrong in a meeting with his professor, Dr. John Bagel:

Jerry walks in to the professor’s office a few minutes after their scheduled appointment. “Hi, John, sorry I’m late. I do appreciate that you are willing to meet with me.” Jerry looks for his list of questions for Dr. Bagel that he wrote up before the meeting. He opens his notebook and his papers fall on the floor. He then looks in his textbook and finds the folded paper. Then Jerry’s cell phone rings. Jerry apologizes to the professor and looks to see who is calling him. Since it’s Jerry’s roommate, he decides to take the quick call. After the phone call, Jerry explains to his professor that he missed class last week, and he has heard from his classmates that he missed a pop quiz. Jerry asks Dr. Bagel when he can retake the quiz. Dr. Bagel informs Jerry that he does not let students make up pop quizzes, and he’ll have to accept the zero as his quiz grade. Jerry then asks if he missed anything else important that day. Dr. Bagel informs him that all of his lectures are important and should not be missed. Before Jerry leaves, Dr. Bagel tells Jerry that after he gets the missed class notes from a classmate and reads the related chapter, he should come back to his office if he has any specific questions about the material, as he’d be happy to clarify the information. Jerry thanks the professor for his help and leaves, saying, “I am really enjoying your class.”

Things Jerry does **right:**

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  

Things Jerry does **wrong:**

1.  
2.  
3.  
4.  
Role Play

Fill in the blanks with your information. Read through the completed script out loud. Next, practice saying the script without reading with a partner.

Introduction

“Hi, Professor __________________, my name is __________________, and I’m in your __________________ class. Thank you for meeting with me today.”

Accommodation Letter

“I want to give you my accommodation letter, which explains the accommodations that I will need for your class. I am strong in ______________________ (fill in with one or two academic skills or abilities that come easy for you), but the accommodations really help me to ____________________________ (identify one of your learning challenges).

As you can see by my letter, I’m a registered student with a disability, and the Office of Disability Support authorized the following accommodations for your class”:

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________

Remember to discuss with your professor any specifics about how to work with the accommodations in his or her class. Clarify responsibilities. For example, some professors may want reminders from you about your accommodation needs one week before a test, or, if you need a note taker, determine how you will get the notes (by email, photocopy, or accessing Blackboard).

Closing

“Thank you for meeting with me and working with me to provide my accommodations. I’m looking forward to your course.”
Role-play Observation Sheet

Indicate whether the student exhibited the following behaviors while requesting an accommodation from a faculty member.

Greetings:

The student introduces him- or herself. Yes No

Reference:

The student tells a faculty member which class they are in (references the reason they are there). Yes No

Disclosure:

The student states he or she has a disability. Yes No

Functional terms:

The student states how is or her disability impacts learning (e.g., “Because of my slower processing, I have difficulty reading quickly.”) Yes No

Accommodations:

The student talks about accommodations used in the past and how they’ve helped. Yes No

The student requests the accommodation needed. (e.g., tape lectures, extended time for exam) Yes No

The student articulates how his or her disability relates to the accommodation (e.g., “I need extra time because …”) Yes No

Resources for Accommodations:

The student indicates they are registered with ODS. Yes No

The student discusses how the accommodation will be provided and what the instructor will do. Yes No

Closing:

The student thanks the faculty member for his or her time. Yes No
Example of what not to do:

To: professor@college.edu
From: lovetodance@yahoo.com
Subject: Class!
Cc: mymom@hotmail.com
Attached: agoodjoke.doc; lateassignment.doc; mydog.jpg

WHEN CAN I MEET WITH YOU? I SENT YOU AN EMAIL YESTERDAY. DID YOU GET IT? THANX!!! :)

Your email should look like this:

To: professor@college.edu
From: bsmith@college.edu
Subject: PSYC 101 – textbook
Cc: 
Attached: 

Professor Rosenblum,

I am enrolled in your PSYC 101 class this fall and need to get the textbook in an alternative format. If you have decided on the textbook for the course, could you please send me the title and ISBN number so I can purchase the book and have it available in an alternative format in time for the class to begin?

I appreciate this information very much and I look forward to meeting you in class.

Sincerely,
Bob Smith
Introduction to Psychology
MWF 10-11
My practice email to a professor

Write a short email to a professor asking to set up an appointment to discuss your exam results or accommodations. Refer to the tips on this worksheet.

To: ________________________________________________________________

From: ______________________________________________________________

Subject: ____________________________________________________________

Cc: ________________________________________________________________

Bcc: ________________________________________________________________

Attached: ____________________________________________________________

Message: ____________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

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____________________
Students may want to keep this information on hand for reference when communicating with faculty.

**Keep this information for reference**

(If you are planning to fill this worksheet out electronically, double click on the line to fill in the break.)

Course name and number: ____________________________________________

Professor name: _____________________________________________________

Phone number: ______________________________________________________

Email address: _______________________________________________________

Office hours: _________________________________________________________
REFERENCES


Appendix H

Consent Form for Academic Support Program to Participate in Research Study

Dear Director of the Academic Support Program:

I am examining the topic, “Self-advocacy Among College Students with Learning Disabilities and/or Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorders,” for my dissertation study. My Committee Chair at the university endorses the topic for my study, and I will be submitting my proposal to my committee prior to the beginning of the study. I appreciate your willingness to meet and discuss the study. I am soliciting your assistance by asking for your involvement in the study. I would like to research the implementation of a self-advocacy intervention to college students with LD and/or ADHD.

You will review the proposed curriculum (http://nextsteps-nh.org/wp-content/uploads/Self-advocacy-and-the-Transition-to-College-12-13-2011.pdf) prior to the start of the study to ensure that it covers the material that the class would normally cover during the first semester of ASP classes. I am requesting your agreement to continue to lead the weekly classes by teaching the 7-week self-advocacy curriculum, collect participant consent forms, and assist with scheduling pre/post interviews as well as agreeing to have weekly classes’ audio recorded to assess implementation integrity of the lessons. Audio recordings will be kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed upon completion of the study.

(Please circle)

Yes  No  I agree to participate in this study.
Yes  No  I agree to be audio-recorded.

Director’s signature ________________________________ Date __________________

Primary Researcher_____________________________ Date __________________

Contact Information:

This study is being completed by Lynn Gagle Roper, (xxx-xxx-xxxx) lynn.gagle@uky.edu as part of the requirements for the doctoral degree at the University of Kentucky under the supervision of (name removed to protect confidentiality). Please feel free to contact us with any questions about the study.
Appendix I
Self-Advocacy Study In-take Form

Researcher Assigned Pseudonym: ______________

Please answer the following questions:

Phone number to schedule pre/post interview _________________________

What is your gender (circle): Male Female

What is your age? _________

What is your year in school? _______________

How old were you when you were first diagnosed with a learning disability or ADHD? ______________

What type of learning disability do you have (circle all that apply):

Math Reading Writing Language

If you have another type of disability not listed above, please explain:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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Appendix J: Steven’s Quantitative Results

Table J.1

Steven’s Summary of Pre/Post Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role-play rated by professor</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-play rated by researcher</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Test</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy Questionnaire</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure J.1

*Steven’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help Seeking</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in Academic and Social Skills</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Determination</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure J.2

*Steven’s Percentage Correct for the Three Categories of Questions on Knowledge Test*

- **Characteristics of LD**
- **Fed. Disability Laws**
- **Accomodations**

![Graph showing percentage correct for three categories of questions on knowledge test](image)
Appendix K: Casey’s Quantitative Results

Table K.1

Casey’s Summary of Pre/Post Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by professor</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by researcher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy Questionnaire</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure K.1

*Casey’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories*
Figure K.2

Casey’s Percentage Correct for the Three Categories of Questions on Knowledge Test
### Appendix L: Kevin’s Quantitative Results

#### Table L.1

**Kevin’s Summary of Pre/Post Measures**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by professor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by researcher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy Questionnaire</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure L.1

Kevin’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories
Figure L.2

*Kevin’s Percentage Correct for the Three Categories of Questions on Knowledge Test*
### Appendix M: Haeli’s Quantitative Results

**Table M.1**

*Haeli’s Summary of Pre/Post Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by professor</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by researcher</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy Questionnaire</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure M.1

Haeli’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories
Figure M.2

*Haeli’s Percentage Correct for the Three Categories of Questions on Knowledge Test*
Appendix N: Janelle’s Quantitative Results

Table N.1

Janelle’s Summary of Pre/Post Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by professor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by researcher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy Questionnaire</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure N.1

*Janelle’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories*

![Graph showing Janelle’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories.](image-url)
Figure N.2

*Janelle’s Percentage Correct for the Three Categories of Questions on Knowledge Test*
Appendix O: Michael’s Quantitative Results

Table O.1

*Michael’s Summary of Pre/Post Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by professor</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role play rated by researcher</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Advocacy Questionnaire</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure O.1

*Michael’s Self-Advocacy Questionnaire Averages for Three Categories*

- Help Seeking
- Confidence in Academic and Social Skills
- Self Determination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help Seeking</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in Academic and Social Skills</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Determination</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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</table>
Figure O.2

*Michael’s Percentage Correct for the Three Categories of Questions on Knowledge Test*

- **Characteristics of LD**
- **Fed. Disability Laws**
- **Accomodations**
References


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twenty-year longitudinal study. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice,* 14,
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Lynn Gagle Roper  
Assistant Professor of Education  
Cedarville University

**EDUCATION**

2000  
Masters in Social Work  
University of Kentucky School of Social Work,  
Lexington, Kentucky

1990  
5th year Certification Special Education  
University of Kentucky School of Education,  
Lexington, Kentucky

1988  
B.S. in Education – Physical Education and Health  
Asbury College,  
Wilmore, Kentucky

**CURRENT CERTIFICATION**

Kentucky Teaching Certificate  
Area of Specialization:  
Physical Education (Grades K-12)  
Special Education (Grades 5-12)

**PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

August 2010-present  
Assistant Professor, Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH

2005-2010  
Assistant Professor, Asbury University, Wilmore, KY

2005 – 2010  
Director of Support Program for Students with Learning Disabilities

2007 – 2010  
Developed and Coordinated Undergraduate Learning and Behavior Disorder Program

2005-2007  
Director of Asbury Academy, Asbury College, Wilmore, KY

1990- 2005  
Educator, Crawford Middle School, Lexington, KY

2001-2005  
Part-time Instructor, Asbury College, Wilmore, KY

1999-2000  
Student Therapist, University of Kentucky Department of Psychiatry

1989-1990  
Full-time Graduate Assistant  
Special Education Department  
University of Kentucky
PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIPS

Association on Higher Education and Disability
Council of Exceptional Children
Council of Exceptional Children Specific Learning Disabilities
Council of Exceptional Children Teacher Education Division
Southeastern Region Association of Teacher Educators

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

April, 2010  Co-Presenter Poster Session: Melinda Ault, Margaret Bausch, *Use of Assistive Technology by Students with Learning Disabilities*

October, 2009  Co-Presenter: Rebecca Oswald, Tim Crook, *ACHIEVE Undergraduate Teacher Education Program* 
Southeaster Regional Association of Teacher Educators (SRATE), Louisville, KY

March, 2009  Co-Presenter: Jason Gibson, *Engaging all students: The use of Guided Notes in K-12 and Post-secondary classrooms* 
American Council on Rural Special Education (ACRES), Denver, CO

November, 2007  Co-Presenter: Verna Lowe, *Differentiated Instruction* 
Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), Lexington, KY

September, 2007  Co-Presenter: Rebecca Oswald, *Dispositions* 
Kentucky Association of Teacher Educators (KATE), Georgetown, KY

November, 2006  Co-Presenter: Rebecca Oswald, *Dispositions* 
Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators (SRATE), Baltimore, MD

November, 2005  Co-Presenter: Rebecca Oswald, *E Portfolios* 
Southeastern Regional Association of Teacher Educators (SRATE), Nashville, TN