

# Life After High School: What's Next for Students with Learning Disabilities?

Goegan, L. D., Chazan, D. J. & Daniels, L. M.

## Research Summary

### Purpose and Objectives

- Millions of students begin their postsecondary education each year across the globe.
- For many, the postsecondary journey begins long before they step foot on campus.
- For example, students with learning disabilities (LD) experience challenges with how they acquire, organize, retain, understand and/or use information (LDAC, 2015). As such, these students are often encouraged to begin planning early (Drover, 2015).
- To support early planning, schools can provide transition programs that target students' self-advocacy skills. These programs can help with identifying strengths and challenges related to what accommodations students might need and what services are available.

### School Partnership



- We partnered with a school specifically designed to support students with a formal diagnosis of LD.
- One specific program highlighted on their website is the Transitions Program, where students meet with team members to review their psychoeducational assessment and practice self-advocacy skills.
- Nevertheless, it is unclear how students use the program or their perceptions of their self-advocacy skills in terms of accessing accommodations in the year ahead.

*The purpose of the current research project was to examine the perspectives of Grade 12 students in terms of their participation in the Transition Program, their use of accommodations, and confidence in their self-advocacy skills for their future pursuits.*

### We asked four specific research questions:



- 1) What are students **plans** for after high school?
- 2) Are students accessing the **Transition program** (why /why not)?
- 3) What **accommodations** are students with LD accessing?
- 4) How do students perceive their **self-advocacy skills**?



## Participants and Procedures

- Data was collected from grade 12 students ( $n = 23$ ) who were enrolled at a school specifically designed for students with LD.
- School personnel provided students with a link to the survey online.
- The sample was predominately male (69.6%) and of Caucasian (87%) background. Moreover, the mean age of participants was 17.5

## Results

**87%** of students said they were planning to attend postsecondary education after high school.

- All but one indicated a local postsecondary institution.
- The remaining students indicated they would instead be working or traveling.

**36%** of students said that they accessed the Transitions Program.

- Accessed because they wanted information and thought it would be valuable.
- Others, did not know the program existed, did not feel they needed it, or did not have time.

**100%** of students said they were receiving at least one accommodation.

The **3** most common were:

1. Extra time on tests.
2. Use of assistive technology.
3. Separate space for working/taking exams.

**13%** of students surveyed did not feel confident in their self-advocacy skills.

- Uncertain the professor would be as understanding as current teachers are.
- Nervous when asking for help.
- Social anxiety.

## Conclusion

- Many students with LD plan to attend postsecondary education after high school.
- While only a third accessed the transitions program, students also noted other resources they accessed, such as talking to others and attending open houses.
- Most students felt confident in their ability to self-advocate, which was often linked to practicing advocating for themselves at their current school. Schools may want to look at ways to encourage the development of self-advocacy skills from an early age.