



Helping Students Prepare for and Navigate College

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Agenda

- ▶ Challenges
- ▶ Practical Things to Teach
- ▶ What They Should Know (and Do!) Before They Go
- ▶ What They Should Do Once They Get There
- ▶ Questions

Common Challenges I Saw as a High School ESL Teacher

- ▶ Unprepared academically, especially when it comes to reading and writing
 - Knowing the five paragraph structure of an essay is essential
- ▶ Misunderstanding of what plagiarism/cheating consists of and why it is illegal
- ▶ Depending on native country, unfamiliar with U.S. school structure
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Still reliant on L1/translation
- ▶ Unprepared for financial commitment/burden

Common Challenges I Saw as a College Advisor

- ▶ Unsure where/who to go to and for what
- ▶ Afraid to ask for help
- ▶ Stigma around mental health
- ▶ Major/program choice: interest vs. financial safety vs. what's expected of them
- ▶ Students cheated on their English / Math placement exams and overwhelmed themselves in their first semesters
- ▶ Misunderstanding of what plagiarism/cheating consists of and why it's illegal
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Reading and responding to emails
- ▶ Less structure than high school and requires more independence/self-advocacy
- ▶ Still reliant on L1/translation

Practical Things to Teach

Explicit Teaching (If You Have Time!)

- ▶ How to address and write an email, including subject line
- ▶ Five-paragraph essay structure
- ▶ What plagiarism is and *why* it is illegal in the U.S., including the use of AI
- ▶ Researching and what citing and annotations mean - you do not necessarily need to teach them these skills, but it's good for them to have a general idea and know it will be expected of them
 - ▶ Search for "Preparing Students for Research Writing" on our [Resources](#) page to learn more about how to support students in this area

What They Should Know (and Do!) Before They Go

Application Considerations

- ▶ Location
- ▶ Class accessibility (in-person, remote, online)
 - ▶ Remote: The class meets at a specified time via Zoom (or another platform)
 - ▶ Online: The class is entirely online and self-paced; the instructor will post work, etc. each week and students are expected to do their work and get it in on time
 - ▶ I do NOT recommend online courses to any ESOL student entering college in the U.S. for the first time or any student returning to school after a long time off
- ▶ Class timing
 - ▶ Some programs are only offered during the day
- ▶ Program/major & courses: Does the school have the program/major they're interested in and/or will their courses set them up for that major at another school?

Transferring College Credit

- ▶ Speak with your students about:
 - Degrees from other countries
 - Students can get their courses evaluated for credit
 - [World Education Services](#) (WES) is commonly used
 - [ECE](#) is another option
 - Military credit
 - Some colleges/universities offer credit for certain military service
 - [CLEP Exams](#)
 - If a student is strong in a certain subject, they can take a CLEP exam to earn credit for certain courses instead of taking the class
- ▶ The student will want to reach out to Admissions/Transfer Department at the school they're interested in to talk through credits

Transferring College Credit from 2-year to 4-year Colleges

- ▶ If a student is interested in attending community college, then transferring to earn their bachelor's degree, encourage them to think about:
 - Checking out [Transferology](#) to see how their credits will transfer from one school to another
 - Most public schools accept most credits; private universities are a bit pickier
 - Most ESL / Remedial English courses do not transfer (they may or may not receive the number of credits, but it does not replace a course)
 - If a student is interested in STEM, they'll want to take their core math and lab courses at their community college prior to transferring

Financial Aid, Grants, & Scholarships

- ▶ Determine whether or not a student is eligible to fill out the [MAFSA](#) or [FAFSA](#)
 - Some students may not want to have a conversation about their status
 - Recommend students reach out to Financial Aid office about opportunities, keeping in mind that it can be very difficult for non-citizens and residents to get aid
- ▶ Students should know that loans to be paid back; grants and scholarships do not
- ▶ Use Scholarships.com to search for potential scholarships based on criteria
- ▶ Once students are enrolled, they will be eligible to receive more scholarships if they are doing well
 - Students may need to search through scholarships to find ones that they are eligible for; other schools have you fill out one application and it is applicable toward anything a student is eligible for

Student Support Services

- ▶ Each school will have different departments to support students' needs, whether academically or personally i.e.
 - Academic advising (class and major choice)
 - Academic tutoring and coaching
 - Career advising
 - Health services / vaccines
 - Mental health counseling
 - Food / toiletry pantry
 - IT support
- ▶ Students should reach out for support as soon as they need it

How to Compose an Email

- ▶ Explicitly teach students what a subject line is for
- ▶ Teach them the basic format of an email: introduction, body, signature
- ▶ Use of "polite" language/requests vs. making demands

Orientation & Campus Tour

- ▶ Encourage students to attend orientation earlier in the summer
 - Many courses fill up early
- ▶ After students have their course schedule, recommend they take a personal walking tour of the campus to get familiar with it and see whether their classes are

English & Math Placement Exams

- ▶ The majority of students will be required to take a Math placement exam and those with an L1 other than English will probably take an assessment
 - Encourage students to try their best on these exams but not cheat (including getting help from someone else)
 - Many students either do not try and end up in a lower-level math class or cheat and end up in a higher level math class to try to skip out on taking the lower-level courses - it does not go well 99% of the time!

College-Specific LMS

- ▶ Students should get to know their college's Learning Management System (LMS)
 - Massachusetts K-12 students typically use Google Classroom, but most colleges use Blackboard, Canvas, Moodle, etc.
 - This is a challenge for many students - they are not used to needing to check the LMS or where anything is
 - It's important that they get familiar with the LMS early on so that they're checking what work is posted/graded, any chat forums, etc.

GPAs

- ▶ Teach students what the U.S. GPA system is and an overview of how it works
- ▶ They should look at their school's GPA requirements for probation, suspension, and graduation

Grade Point Values

A = 4.0	C = 2.0
A- = 3.7	C- = 1.7
B+ = 3.3	D+ = 1.3
B = 3.0	D = 1.0
B- = 2.7	D- = 0.7
C+ = 2.3	F = 0.0

What They Should Do Once They Get There

Read the Syllabi and Plan

- ▶ Make sure students read the syllabus for each class carefully at the beginning of the semester
 - They should ask the instructor if they don't understand something
- ▶ Students should use an agenda or calendar to mark important test and due dates ahead of time

Where to Go and For What

- ▶ **Academic Advisor** - questions about programs/majors, choosing the right courses, discussing whether or not to withdraw from a course or take it P/F, if they want to ask about tutoring
 - Some schools also have "Faculty Advisors," which are only used for choosing courses
 - Many students hear "advisor" and think "counselor" -- these are not the same!
 - Advisors do not have access to any health-related or financial information
 - Advisors typically do not reach out to professors/instructors on the student's behalf
- ▶ **Bursar's office** - all questions related to tuition, fees, and financial aid
- ▶ **Career services** - all things related to resumes, internships, job search, etc.

Where to Go and For What (Cont.)

- ▶ **Disability services** - if a student has a physical or mental disability, they will want to speak with disability services to get the accommodations needed
 - They will need to provide documentation from a doctor
 - These can be added for a short period of time, as well i.e. a student breaks their arm and needs extra time to complete a paper
- ▶ **Counselor** - any issues related to mental health; most colleges offer services for free up until a certain point
- ▶ **Health Services** - general care and vaccinations
- ▶ **Dean of Students** - any "issues" outside of finance and basic course questions i.e. to report an issue with another student, professor, or staff member, to appeal a grade (this could be a different office depending on the school); to seek medical or religious leave, etc.

Read Emails!!!

- ▶ Let students know they should not use their student email account for anything other than school - no personal emails or store/marketing emails
 - This will only clog up their already clogged inbox
- ▶ They will receive a dozen+ emails a day from the school, different campus groups/activities, instructors, etc.
- ▶ Students need to learn quickly to assess which emails they need to read immediately
 - Any emails from the bursar/financial aid, their advisor, or their instructor/professor should be read and responded to immediately
 - The excuse of "I didn't see the email" doesn't work with every instructor

Meeting with Their Advisor

- ▶ Let students know they should meet with their advisor at least once a semester to find out which classes to take next semester
- ▶ They can reach out to or meet with an advisor any time they have a question about their academic goals
- ▶ If students are attending a community college and planning on transferring to a four-year college after, they should let their advisor know that and what they plan on studying

One Person a Semester

- ▶ Encourage students to find one person on campus (instructor/professor), advisor, mentor, etc. that they feel comfortable building a professional relationship with
 - Encourage the student to reach out to this person a few times a year to keep in touch
 - If it's an instructor, attend office hours or speak after class
 - Great for networking and future references/recommendations

No Shame in Needing Support

- ▶ Many students feel ashamed if they are not doing well academically or mentally
 - Some cultures have a large stigma around mental health
- ▶ Let students know that the transition to college can be difficult for anyone, and they should not be afraid to ask for help
- ▶ If they decide to seek counseling, it is 100% private and will not be shared with anyone else
- ▶ Seek academic help (tutoring, coaching) at the first sign of trouble - they should not wait until it's too late
- ▶ Many students feel intimidated speaking with instructors/professors about their grades, but they are the ones who know their academic progress best

Scholarships

- ▶ Once students are enrolled, more scholarship opportunities open up for them to continue their studies
 - Students will want to make sure they're doing well (generally 3.0+)
 - Some do not require/ask about legal status
 - Some schools ask students to apply to scholarships individually; others accept one application and designate it toward any scholarship they're eligible for
- ▶ Students should ask their advisor when these scholarships open so they're prepared
- ▶ Will need to make sure they have a relationship with someone on campus for a recommendation letter
- ▶ Even if they have FA/scholarships, it doesn't hurt to apply for more