

Differences between High School and College

Laws and Responsibilities

	High School	College
What law tells the school system what to do for students?	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities in the K-12 educational system . The ADA and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act also apply.	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act protect college students with disabilities from discrimination by providing equal access to programs and services.
Who is this law for?	Students whose disabilities impact their ability to do well in school.	Any student with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
Who is responsible for helping students with disabilities?	Parents and teachers identify students needing assistance. Schools pay for needed accommodations and testing.	Students are responsible for disclosing their disability and providing current documentation of a disability for each accommodation being requested. They must be self-advocates. Accommodations are not made without the student revealing their disability and planning with the appropriate College staff member.
What type of plan is made for a student who has a disability that impacts their performance?	Individual education plans are developed and updated throughout the student's school years.	Reasonable accommodations may be made to provide equal access and participation. They are determined through an interactive process between the student and the College. Accommodations tend to remain in place while the student is enrolled.
What support is provided to me?	Individual students' needs based on the IEP may be addressed by program support for school personnel.	No formal program support for school personnel is provided. Colleges do not provide personal care or support personnel. The Accessibility Resource Center will help students in the accommodations process at TCNJ.

Accommodation Process

	High School	College
Who starts the process?	Once a disability is documented, services are provided to the student. The school is ultimately responsible for identifying a student's educational needs.	Once accommodations are approved, students are responsible for requesting them each time they are needed while following established processes.
Does a student's family know about the accommodations?	Until the child reaches age of majority, families must be invited to meetings to discuss support for their child.	Parents are not notified unless the student grants written permission that information may be released.
Who is responsible for helping the student obtain what they need in school?	Teachers, Principals, and other school staff.	Students must advocate for themselves and request what they need. The College will provide any approved accommodations thereafter.
Are course outcomes modified?	Assignments and tests may be changed as a modification. A student may have a different standard of course mastery.	Students have the same assignments and generally take the same exams as their peers unless a make-up is required. Modifications will not be offered.

Academic Expectations

	High School	College
How much of a student's time is spent in the classroom?	Approximately 30 hours per week is spent in class. The students' time is monitored and structured.	Approximately 12 to 15 hours per week is spent in class. Additional time will be spent studying outside of class. Students are responsible for managing their own time.
What is the attendance policy?	School attendance is mandatory and monitored carefully.	Students decide to attend and pay tuition per class. Attendance policies may vary with each instructor and lack of attendance can negatively impact a student's grade.
Will a student be informed of changes to the class?	Teachers are responsible for informing students about changes and updates to class content or schedule.	Students are responsible for checking email or online course content system for changes and updates from instructors.
Will a student be informed of important school dates?	Important dates are typically provided on the school calendar.	Students are responsible for knowing important dates such as deadlines for dropping classes, paying bills, etc.

Can a student make up work and obtain class notes when they miss class?	Teachers are required to provide students with missed assignments and notes.	Assignments and exams are allowed to be made up according to the professor's course policy as established in the syllabus.
Do students have to read the textbook?	Students are usually assigned short and frequent readings. Students are told what they need to know.	Generally, students are assigned readings from the textbook and are expected to read and comprehend material on their own time.
How will the instructor teach?	Teachers will present material to help students understand what is in the textbook. They often write information on the board to be copied for notes. Instructors teach knowledge and facts leading students through the thinking process.	Professors may not follow the textbook and may supplement assigned readings with lectures. They may lecture nonstop and only write on the board to support the lecture, not summarize it. Instructors expect students to think independently and connect seemingly unrelated information.
What if I don't understand what my teacher is teaching me?	Teachers may approach you if they believe you need help.	Professors expect you to come to them if you need assistance. They usually have office hours each week and students can stop by for assistance or request an appointment.
Will there be homework assignments?	Homework may be frequent, and assignments are usually checked, or turned in. Students are reminded if assignments are missing.	Course assignments are frequent and students are expected to complete them by the established deadline. Reminders are sometimes provided.
How often are students tested on the material?	Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.	Testing is usually infrequent and may cover large amounts of material.
How often do students need to study?	Study time outside of class may vary (may be as little as 1-3 hours per week). Instructors may review class notes and material regularly in classes. Students are expected to read short assignments that are discussed and retaught.	Students generally need to study at least 2-3 hours outside of class for each hour in class. Students show review class notes and text material regularly and substantial amounts of assigned reading and writing may not be directly addressed in class.
Will there be review sessions?	Teachers frequently conduct review sessions emphasizing important concepts prior to tests.	Professors rarely offer review sessions. If a review session is offered, students are expected to be prepared and actively participate, or find study groups.
How are students graded?	Grades are given for most assigned work. Good homework grades may assist in raising your overall grade when test grades are lower.	Grades may not be given for all assigned work. Tests and major papers make up the majority of your grade. Typically, first tests are often "wake-up" calls to let you know what is expected.