WHAT’S NEXT FOR ME?
COLLEGE AND / OR CAREER READINESS

CREATOR
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SUBJECT: COUNSELING / HEALTH

LESSON TIME: 50 MINUTES

LESSON OBJECTIVES
Students examine the impact of pre-conceived, low expectations for disabled students.

Students learn about non-degree programs that are in place for career readiness for disabled individuals (Extensions).

Students re-examine personal expectations and goals through self-reflection.

MATERIALS

- “A college counselor told Michelle Obama she wasn’t ‘Princeton material’ — but she applied to the Ivy League school anyway and got in” (Insider, 1/17/19).


INTRODUCTION (5 MIN)

Ask students if they know that Michelle Obama, former First Lady of the U.S., was told by her high school counselor that she “wasn’t Princeton material” (she applied anyway and got in!) (Insider, 1/17/19).

- These limited expectations were driven by her race and/or gender

- The same limited expectations apply to students with disabilities, especially to those who are BIPOC and/or female.

Introduce this lesson with a quote from Dr. Donna Walton, a disabled educator, author, and founder of The Divas with Disabilities Project: “I am more–so much more than you can imagine. Don’t limit me by your limited expectations.” (Excerpt from her poem, “Don’t Put me in a Box”)

Invite students to weigh in with what they think she meant by this.
TEACHING (5 MIN)

“The National Center for Learning Disabilities analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Education and found that students with learning disabilities drop out [of college] at nearly three times the rate of students overall” (NPR, 4/23/17).

Ask students why they think this is?

• Low expectations?

• Lack of preparation?

• Lack of soft skills required to advocate for oneself?

• Lack of support once in college?

We are going to learn about disabled students who have faced low expectations; about disabled students who face double discrimination; about students who opt for (or are directed to) alternative routes or programs; and we’ll then take some quiet time to examine and reflect on our own personal expectations.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT (20 MIN)

Divide students in four groups, ensuring that each group has access to a computer and Wifi. If this is not an option, conduct this engagement as a class.

Tell each group they will need a volunteer scribe to take notes of key takeaways.

Tell the group they will need a speaker who will report back to the rest of the class during the Share and Reflect time.

Provide each group with the URL for the online article:

• Group 1: “The vast majority of students with disabilities don’t get a college degree” (The Hechinger Report, by Mader & Butrymowicz, 11/11, 2017).

• Group 2: “His Teacher Told Him He Wouldn’t Go to College, Then He Did” (NPR, 4/23/17)

• Group 3: “From ‘Flat On My Face’ to Cap and Gown: One Disabled Student’s Journey Through College” (Hidden Curriculum, by Jill Replogie, 4/26/22).


Direct the four groups to take turns reading the content aloud. (Students can opt out of reading aloud.)

Encourage students to discuss the content amongst themselves.
WHAT IS DISABILITY?

WHAT’S NEXT FOR ME?
COLLEGE AND / OR CAREER READINESS

SHARE AND REFLECT (15 MIN)

Bring the four groups back together, inviting a member of each group to summarize key takeaways from their group in ~4 minutes.

Suggest that each student – regardless of whether they are disabled or nondisabled – take some time later to reflect on their own personal expectations, through self-reflection.

Offer them these prompts:

• What are your personal expectations or goals or dreams?

• How do you plan to achieve them? (You don’t need an exact game plan to do so!)

• Do you have someone in your corner, telling you: “I believe in you!” or “You can achieve anything you set your mind to achieve!”

• Has someone told you that you will never achieve what you set out to achieve?

• Whose voice do you choose to listen to and follow?

• Who has been – or is – your champion or cheerleader or mentor?

• Do you need a champion or cheerleader or mentor?
  • What trusted adult could you turn to, asking for this support?

• Try to list a few names – you only need one to say ‘yes’!

• When will you ask for this support?

Let the students know that should they wish to discuss this personal reflection, your door is open (only if you have the bandwidth).

RESOURCES

• AHEAD: Association on Higher Education And Disability

• Auxiliary Aids and Services for Postsecondary Students with Disabilities (U.S. Dept. of Education)

• “7 things to know about college disability services” [for parents/guardians] (Understood.org)

EXTENSIONS

Invite the same four groups to visit one of the four website below, that focus on non-academic, post-high school programs for disabled individuals.

• Group 1: Bridges From School to Work Program

• Group 2: State Vocational Rehabilitation (“VR”) Services Program
WHAT IS DISABILITY?

WHAT’S NEXT FOR ME?
COLLEGE AND / OR CAREER READINESS

• Group 3: Ticket to Work Program
• Group 4: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (“WIOA”, The Arc)

Direct the four groups to take turns reading the content aloud. (Students can opt out of reading aloud.)

Encourage students to discuss the content amongst themselves:

• With the motto “presume competence,” how do we balance setting aspirational, motivational goals that are achievable for disabled students, just like for anyone else?
• What about these different programs seem appealing?
• What about these programs seem to segregate disabled individuals even more?
• Are dignity, respect, and encouraging independence the foundations of each program? If not, why not?

Bring the four groups back together, inviting a member of each group to summarize key takeaways from their webpage in ~4 minutes.

Suggest that they each student take some time on their own to reflect on their own personal expectations through self-reflection.

ADAPTATIONS

Educators: Please utilize adaptations based on the composition and needs of your participating students.

• These are supplements to IEPs and 504 plans.
• Please Remember: Do not single out the student in front of other students in an obvious manner.
• We recommend meeting with each of your student(s) with disabilities prior to teaching, to a) establish rapport that will help alleviate miscommunications about accommodations, and to b) learn about personal preferences for accommodations.
• Some adaptations that may have worked with a prior student with the ‘same’ or similar disability are not necessarily the adaptations that will work for each student.

Visit APPENDIX: ADAPTATIONS for options to best support your students as needed. Categories are listed alphabetically:

- Ambulatory
- Auditory
- Cognitive
- Dexterity
- Sensory
- Speech and Language
- Visual