

As the program begins, the host, Jon Schneider, introduces himself and the program. After graduation, he points out, high school students have many options. A common choice is to pursue an academic degree at a traditional four-year or two-year college. But for many students, the traditional college option may not be best. The program will present three alternative paths that are available after high school:

- going into an apprenticeship program
- going into a certificate program at a college rather than pursuing a degree
- attending a college that is specifically geared for students with learning differences such as dyslexia or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD)

## Apprenticeships

The segment on apprenticeships begins with Mike Smith, a 23-year-old bricklayer, talking about his apprenticeship. Mark Wickstram, Mike's apprenticeship supervisor and apprenticeship coordinator for his local bricklayers' union, talks about the goals of the apprentice training program and how it contributes to career development. Dustin Nelson, another apprentice bricklayer, and Mike Smith talk about the things about the program and the profession that appeal to them. Mike describes himself as a hands-on person who likes to build things and dislikes sitting at a desk.

Mark Wickstram notes that apprentices are working paid jobs while they are learning, and their training in the program takes place about once every two weeks. Mike talks about the time commitment amounting to about 18 full days a year for three years. Once you've logged enough hours on the job and in training, you graduate and become a journeyman bricklayer. Dustin points out that being a journeyman means being a professional bricklayer, and you can work anywhere in North America.

Mark describes the basic requirements for the apprenticeship program: You must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or a GED, have reliable transportation and be physically able to do the work, which includes lifting 50 pounds or more repetitively.

Mike and Mark note that bricklayers can get well-paying jobs with benefits without investing a lot of money in an academic degree. Dustin talks about the satisfaction of seeing the concrete structure you've built and the brick and the block and stone that you have laid. Mark speaks of the basic human need to create things that are tangible and lasting.

The host mentions some more of the many trades for which apprenticeship programs are available. He talks about doing research to find apprenticeship programs and questions you should ask about the programs.

Questions to ask include:

- What are the requirements for getting into the program?
- Do you need a high school diploma?
- How long does the program last?
- Do you get paid during your apprenticeship, and, if you do, how much?
- What kinds of opportunities will there be for you after you get out of the program?
- How hard will it be to find a job, and how much will it pay?

### Certificate Programs

This segment of the program opens with Toni Williams, a student at Rockland Community College studying in the Culinary Arts Institution. She speaks about her program and what she is learning. Susan Solomon, Toni's supervisor and coordinator of the hospitality and tourism program, talks about certificate programs in general and the culinary certificate in particular. Toni praises her helpful teachers and discloses her particular ambition: to be a pastry arts chef and develop a catering business designing desserts and cakes for special occasions.

Susan Solomon points out that a student who is considering a certificate program should ask first of all, "How long will I be in school to complete the certificate?" and "What is the fastest time span I can complete it in?" She points out that most certificate programs are designed to get students into the workplace quickly. Second, students should ask what opportunities there will be following completion of the certificate program.

The host mentions a variety of other kinds of certificate programs, and notes that most community colleges will apply earned certificate credits toward an academic degree, if a student should decide to pursue a degree after all. The host also points out that students interested in a certificate program should ask questions similar to those about an apprenticeship.

### College Programs for Students with Learning Disabilities and Students with AD/HD

This segment of the program opens with Sarah Gromoff, a student at Landmark College talking about how hard it was to have a learning disability in high school, and how she was hesitant to reach out for help.

Latisha Davis, another Landmark student with dyslexia, tells how she was attracted to Landmark because it specializes in teaching students with learning differences. Before

coming to Landmark, she explains, she had trouble communicating with people, writing papers, comprehending reading and pronouncing words. Charlie Weeks describes himself as easily distracted, with a short-term memory problem. He came to Landmark for its nurturing environment.

Mac Gander, vice president for academic affairs and the dean of the college at Landmark, explains the college's philosophy—that students with learning disabilities can succeed and learn if given the right environment and the right instructional support. Disabilities are viewed not so much as limitations as they are differences that need to be accounted for in the learning process.

Landmark, a two-year college, is designed for students who want to go for a four-year degree, but who may be denied options because they struggled in high school due to learning differences.

Cierra talks about how Landmark helped her with her issues: keeping a schedule and planning out her life so that she wouldn't be so stressed out. She also has learned skills like active reading. Charlie notes that his previous school, a traditional four-year college, lacked the support that he needed, especially the availability of a distraction-free environment. Cierra talks about the team approach to student support.

Dean Gander says that an important goal is to help students with learning differences “learn how to learn,” giving them the strategies they need in order to be successful. Latisha talks about learning to actively read, margin note and write. Cierra discusses how she used metacognition, or thinking about the way you think, as a way to understand her particular learning style and choose appropriate strategies. Charlie describes how the teachers' friendliness and willingness to offer support enabled him to get over the anxiety of asking for help.

Dean Gander notes that high school students may think that if they have a learning disability, people will think they're slow or stupid in some way. The important thing to recognize is that learning disabilities have nothing to do with intelligence and ability. Many highly successful people have dyslexia or AD/HD. There is no limit to what people with learning disabilities can achieve if they have proper support and the confidence that they can succeed and have a rich and fulfilling life. The key thing, Dean Gander points out, is to know what your rights are and to get the help and the support that you deserve.

The host points out that when considering a program that supports students with learning differences or AD/HD, it is important to visit and to see exactly what kinds of support they offer.

Questions you should ask include:

- What kinds of services do they offer?
- How accessible are the faculty, and how interested are they in supporting students who learn differently?
- What resources are there—e.g., a writing center, a learning center—and who staffs them? Is it just peer tutors, or can you get access to professional help as well?

Latisha advises students to love yourself unconditionally and get the help you need to build on your strengths and overcome your weaknesses. The host closes by noting that every college or university that receives federal money is required by law to provide services to learning disabled students, but the quality of what they provide can vary. To find out how committed they are to helping you, it is important to visit the school and speak to someone in the office of student services. You should:

- Be clear in explaining your particular issues and needs.
- Ask how much and what kinds of support they provide to students with learning issues.
- Sit in on a class. Are you comfortable with the teacher's pace and style? Are the students engaged and responsive?
- Drop into a campus learning center or help center and talk to whoever is around. A brief conversation can give you a lot of insight about the quality of learning support at the school.

The host ends by saying that whatever your needs and choices, it's up to you to do the research and determine what's right for you.