

ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL WITH FASD

As expectations increase, the gap between demands and capacity may grow

High school often requires more independence, organization, judgment and self-advocacy just as supports become less consistent.



FASD MAY NOT BE OBVIOUS

A student may have age-appropriate vocabulary, knowledge or IQ while still needing substantial support with:



Executive functioning



Working memory



Processing speed



Attention



Emotional regulation



Adaptive functioning



Social communication



Judgment



Generalizing new skills

Strength in one area does not predict independence in another.

WHAT HIGH SCHOOL EXPECTS

- Manage multiple teachers, classes and routines
- Track assignments, materials and deadlines independently
- Complete more homework and independent work
- Handle increasingly abstract academics
- Recognize when help is needed and ask for it
- Apply previously learned skills in new situations
- Navigate more complex social situations and greater independence
- Sustain increased academic output, both in class and at home

WHERE THE MODEL CAN BREAK DOWN

- Many teachers, no single picture: Each teacher may see only one piece of the student's functioning.
- Participation may look like understanding: Sitting in class, agreeing or copying notes does not establish comprehension.
- Skills may not generalize: Learning something in one class does not mean it can be independently applied with another teacher or task.
- Self-advocacy should not be assumed: Students may not recognize or explain their problems.
- The burden can shift home: Families may end up teaching work, contacting teachers and tracking lessons.
- Fatigue and overload accumulate: Access to learning, regulation and executive functioning may decline as the day or week progresses.

WHAT SOME STUDENTS MAY NEED

- One consistent adult who sees the whole picture across classes
- Daily executive functioning oversight for assignments, deadlines and follow-through
- Frequent check-ins with active monitoring, not just reminders
- Supervision matched with functional need
- Supported work completion during the school day
- Reduced or modified homework when workload exceeds capacity
- Smaller classes and fewer teachers
- Strong, consistent relationships with adults
- Support with transitions and schedule changes



FASD-INFORMED ASSESSMENT MATTERS

Understanding need depends on accurate interpretation. A thorough neuropsychological evaluation by an FASD-informed practitioner can clarify strengths, challenges, and support needs. Training in FASD for school staff, including assessors, is critical because effective support will look different from standard practice.



TRANSITION PLANNING MUST START EARLY

For students with FASD, transition planning needs to begin as early as possible.



Education or training



Employment



Transportation



Daily living



Community participation



Safety



Adult services



Ongoing support needs



WHEN MORE ACCOMMODATIONS ARE NOT THE ANSWER

Sometimes the problem cannot be fixed within the existing school. When accommodations and supports become overwhelming and ineffective, a more naturally supportive educational setting may be necessary.