



# NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL

Admissions Office

1540 Ralston Avenue | Belmont, CA 94002-1995  
650.595.1913, ext. 315 or 320 | FAX 650.595.2643

## SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM

Special Needs at Notre Dame High School are defined as cognitive, medical, psychological, or physical conditions that may interfere with academic performance. The majority of students who are identified as having Special Needs have learning differences which have been fully documented by appropriate professionals, although a few have Attention Deficit Disorders, visual impairments, auditory impairments, or minor physical barriers. The focus of the Special Needs Program is to support students with learning differences throughout high school in order to prepare them to succeed in college and in life.

The Notre Dame High School Special Needs Program is not a special education program, a "pull-out" or resource program, or a remediation program. Notre Dame does not have a program to meet the needs of students with severe learning disabilities. Instead, we offer an opportunity for a few highly-motivated, intelligent, young women with clearly documented learning differences to enter a school in which the "playing field" will be leveled as much as possible and where they will be challenged to reach their fullest potential.

Each year a limited number of applicants with identified Special Needs are accepted into the Freshman Class. Comprehensive documentation, combined with a clear definition of each student's strengths and weaknesses, enables our Admissions Committee to evaluate whether a student will be able to succeed in our academically challenging environment. The Educational Consultant for Special Needs Students carefully reviews each applicant file to determine if the student meets Notre Dame High School's baseline academic criteria and how well the Special Needs Program can adequately serve the applicant. Knowing that report card grades and standardized test scores may not accurately reflect the true potential of a Special Needs Student, we place emphasis on teacher recommendations and the interview process. Students who are not accepted into the Special Needs Program, but qualify for admission, are placed on a separate waiting list.

The type of student who is best served in Notre Dame High School's Special Needs Program can most easily be described as being both gifted and challenged. She must have the ability to complete a rigorous college-preparatory program with no curricular modifications and must be willing to work as hard as is necessary to meet our academic expectations. To succeed she will need to have the full support of her parents, which may include professional tutoring and additional specialized testing.

The Educational Consultant for Special Needs Students reviews all available information and prescribes Instructional Adaptations for each student based on her specific learning style. These Instructional Adaptations may include strategies such as notetakers, tutors, extended time on tests, and the use of tape recorders. At the beginning of each year, these adaptations are presented to the student's teachers through a program that gradually transitions the student toward maximum autonomy and self-awareness. Freshmen and sophomore-level program members participate in these Accommodations Meetings as soon as possible after the documentation process has been completed or as early as possible in the school year. At the junior level, students compile an autobiographical fact-sheet outlining their academic strengths and weaknesses. They request appropriate accommodations in each course. As preparation for college-level learning differences support, Special Needs seniors are expected to advocate for themselves, calling in the Educational Consultant for Special Needs Students as an ombudsman when needed.

At any point, individual meetings can be held at the request of student, parent, counselor, or administrator to help the student learn to identify learning barriers and develop solutions, not only for the issue at hand, but for the future. Special Needs Students are encouraged to develop strong connections with their teachers, which will enable them to identify potential problems as soon as possible and establish strategies for avoiding them. While the demands of our curriculum are not reduced for students with learning differences, our faculty is dedicated to enabling students to accept and meet academic challenges and to achieve their personal best. Throughout the student's years at Notre Dame High School, the Educational Consultant for Special Needs Students maintains close contact with the student, her parent(s) and her teachers, to ensure that appropriate strategies are in place to support her academically and personally.

Students who participate in the Special Needs Program have access to cognitive, inter-personal, and material tools which enable them to solve problems on all levels. Technological assistance is available through specialized computer programs that help students organize thoughts more effectively using a wider variety of learning modalities. "Books On Tape" are frequently utilized, and a range of computer programs are provided to help students prepare for standardized tests, choose appropriate colleges, and conduct research.

Study and organizational skills are introduced throughout the curriculum to enhance each student's ability to control her own academic progress. Our grading policy ensures that all students have constant online access to information about their academic performance. This practice encourages students to track and take responsibility for their own achievements.

Meeting with students and their parents, the Educational Consultant for Special Needs Students ensures that the class schedules of special needs students keep them on track to meet our graduation requirements. Students are encouraged to strike a balance between aiming for realistic achievements and embracing personal challenges.

The Counseling and Guidance Center maintains a library of resources for addressing both personal and academic needs. Many of these resources are of particular interest to the student with Special Needs and her parents. Information on different types of learning differences and academic barriers is available, as well as resources for the identification and provision of accommodations and other support systems. Tools for working with difficult daughters, difficult mothers, difficult teachers, and difficult decisions are available for use in the Guidance Center or at home.

As part of our college and career services at Notre Dame High School, resources are provided for students and parents to research the academic support services of private and public colleges and universities, and to compare collegiate costs and academic programs.



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## EXTENDED TIME TEST DOCUMENTATION

**To the Applicant:** Students with documented learning differences may be eligible for extended time on the High School Placement Test (HSPT). The extended time test will be administered on **Saturday, January 12, 2008** beginning at 8:30 a.m. at Notre Dame High School. Fill out the Application for the Extended Time Test and submit it with the required documentation to the Admissions Office. All reports will be held in strict confidence. Families will be notified of eligibility for the extended time test after the report is reviewed by the Notre Dame High School Educational Consultant for Special Needs.

In order to qualify for the extended time test one of the following documents must be submitted to the Admissions Office by **December 7, 2007**. No exceptions can be made in place of one of the three reports listed below. An additional seventy (70) minutes will be granted to qualified students. No untimed tests will be administered.

- A current IEP that states the need for Extended Test Time accommodations.
- A current 504 Plan that states the need for Extended Test Time accommodations.
- An evaluation prepared within the last three years by a qualified professional that states the need for the Extended Time Test.

**In order for the evaluation to be considered it must:**

- be current, i.e. has been completed within the past three years;
- state the specific learning differences as diagnosed by a qualified professional that necessitates accommodations;
- provide a thorough relevant educational, developmental, and medical history;
- describe the tests and techniques that were used to arrive at the diagnosis (including evaluation date(s) and test results with subtest results from measures of cognitive ability, current academic achievement, and information processing);
- state why the learning difference qualifies the student for such consideration;
- describe the specific accommodations requested, such as extended time;
- establish the professional credentials of the evaluator.

Testing must be comprehensive. It is not acceptable to administer only one test in making a diagnosis. Minimally, the domains to be addressed must include, but not be limited to the following:

1. **Aptitude** - The Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-IV) subtest scores and/or the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Test Battery (WJ-III) Test of Cognitive Ability are the preferred instruments.
2. **Achievement** - The student's current levels in reading, mathematics, and written language must be assessed. Acceptable instruments include 1) the Wechsler Individual Achievement Tests (WIAT) or 2) specific achievement tests like the Woodcock Reading Mastery Tests and the Nelson-Denny Reading Test. The Wide-Range Achievement Test (WRAT) is not a comprehensive measure of achievement and therefore, is not suitable by itself. Additional formal and informal tests, such as timed and un-timed administrations and a writing sample are recommended to corroborate underachievement in specific areas.
3. **Information Processing** - Specific areas, e.g. short and long-term memory, reasoning, listening, sequential memory, auditory, and visual processing, and processing speed must be assessed. Use of subtests from the WISC-IV and/or the cognitive portion of the WJ-III is acceptable. Additional testing designed to corroborate the existence of processing disorders identified by the WISC and the WJ are recommended.
4. **Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without hyperactivity)** - The diagnosis must be provided by a qualified professional, a clinical psychologist or physician with appropriate education, training, and experience with ADD. Documentation must include a psycho-educational evaluation which outlines the ways in which the student's condition impacts her ability to perform academically and must describe the hallmarks of her condition per the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV).
5. **Other Disabilities (visual, auditory, or physical impairments, psychological/emotional disabilities)** - Diagnosis from a qualified professional (ophthamologist, audiologist, psychologist, etc.) must be provided which indicates any restrictions placed on the student's participation in school-related activities. The documentation should specify the type of disability, date of onset, and prognosis.

Documentation requirements are established to ensure that we have sufficient information about how a student's learning differences impact her academic performance to enable us to prescribe appropriate academic accommodations. Our intention is to provide for students the opportunity to perform at their full potential by reducing the negative impact of their learning differences.



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## EXTENDED TIME TEST APPLICATION

**To the applicant:** Please complete this form to apply for extended time on the High School Placement Test (HSPT). Include a copy of the required documentation. In order to qualify for extended time you must submit one of the documents listed below to the Admissions Office by **5:00 p.m. on December 7, 2007**. No exceptions can be made in place of one of the three types of documentation.

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Current School: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of documentation submitted:

- Current active IEP
- Current active 504 Plan
- Evaluation prepared within the last three years by a qualified professional

Indicate below when and where you are planning to take the High School Placement Test (HSPT). Please send your documentation to all Catholic secondary schools in the Archdiocese of San Francisco and the Diocese of San Jose where you have filed an application for admission.

- Notre Dame High School - Saturday, January 12, 2008
- Other Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Send to:

Director of Admissions  
Notre Dame High School  
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