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OPT4College: An Online Educational Transition Curriculum for Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs

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OPT4COLLEGE: AN ONLINE EDUCATIONAL TRANSITION CURRICULUM FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL HEALTH CARE NEEDS

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BACKGROUND

- ❖ Students with disabilities and/or special health care needs are disproportionately under-represented in post-secondary institutions.
- ❖ Making the transition from secondary to post-secondary institutions requires self-determination and self-advocacy.
- ❖ Although other programs help students with this transition, **few focus on both educational and medical transition for students with disabilities and/or special health care needs.**

WHAT IS OPT4COLLEGE?

- ❖ A step-by-step on-line curriculum designed to help students with disabilities and/or special health care needs make the transition from secondary to post-secondary education.
- ❖ Each lesson consists of:
 - ❖ video(s)
 - ❖ guided activities (called Focus on 4)
 - ❖ resource page(s)
 - ❖ quizzes

METHODOLOGY

- ❖ Randomized control design
- ❖ Youth-based participatory research
- ❖ Recruitment of students from more than 20 public high schools in Massachusetts
- ❖ Qualitative and quantitative methods
- ❖ Involvement of youth, families, and community leaders in all components of the research process, including the design of Opt4College

SAMPLE

Characteristic	Number	Percentage
Gender		
Male	14	36.8%
Female	24	63.2%
Race/Ethnicity		
NH White	12	31.6%
NH Black	15	39.5%
Hispanics	8	21.1%
Asian	2	5.3%
Native American	1	2.6%
Grade Level		
10th	11	28.9%
11th	17	44.7%
12th	8	21.1%
1st year College	1	2.6%
Primary Language Spoken		
English	29	76.3%
Spanish	7	18.4%
Vietnamese	1	2.6%
Creole French	1	2.6%
Have an IEP or 504 Plan		
IEP	12	31.6%
504 Plan	4	10.5%
Don't have or Don't know	22	57.9%

Note:
NH = Non-Hispanic
IEP= Individual Education Plan

STUDENTS SAY THAT OPT4COLLEGE HAS HELPED THEM

"The most important thing that Opt4College taught me is to start preparing in high school because if you want to go somewhere, you have to start preparing now. You can't procrastinate and wait until the last minute."

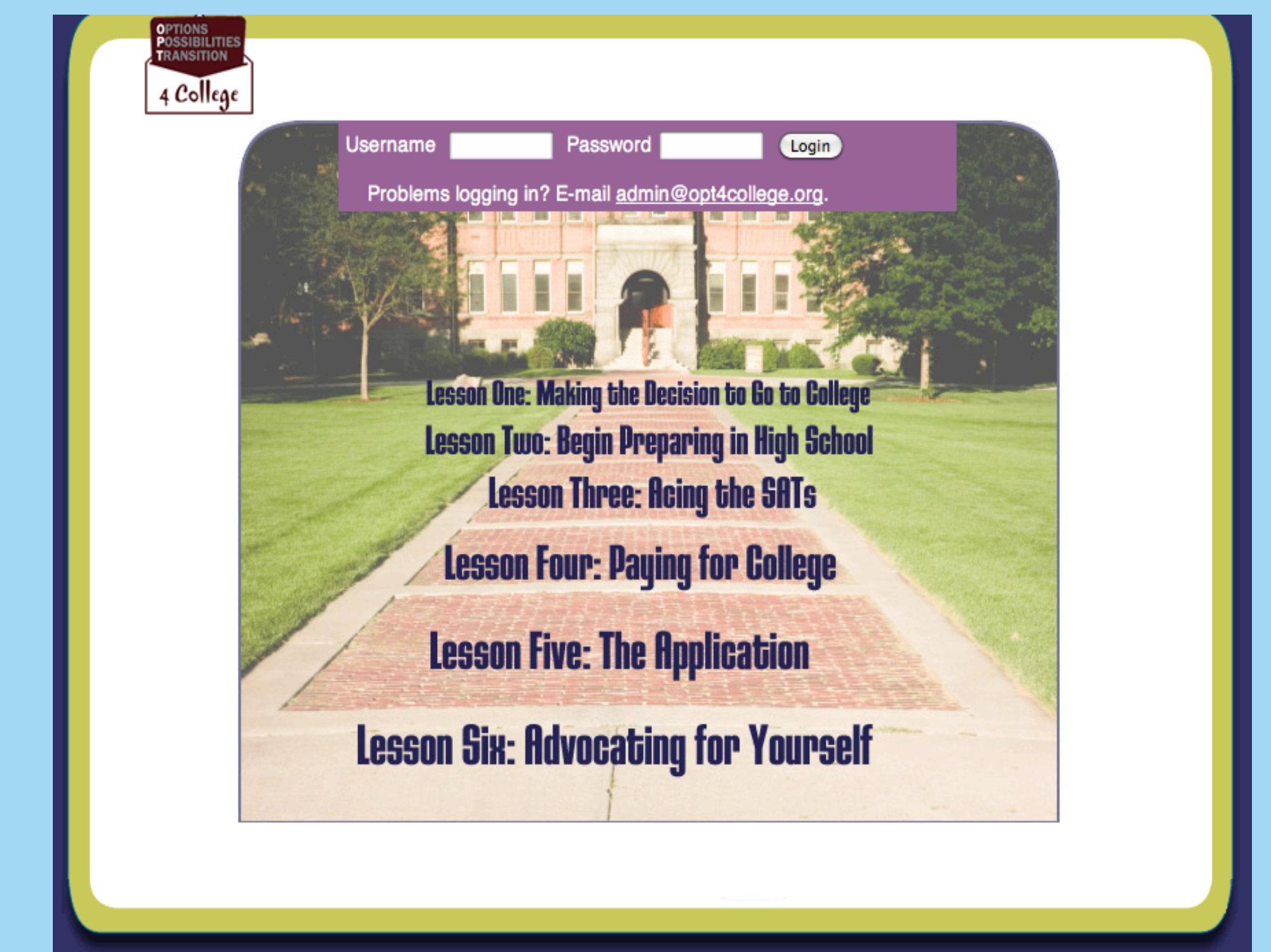
"How to speak up for yourself... because if you don't communicate and talk to people, how would people ever know what you need and stuff. Your parents are not always going to be there for you. You got to be independent and speak up for yourself."

"Taught me a lot about how I can effectively advocate for services I will need when I'm in college. It also explained to me a lot about how to apply for financial aid."

"I now know how to stay healthy."

"It helped me to learn about the different ways to pay for college."

"Made me realize that even though I am totally blind, I can still achieve my goal of attending college. I just need to take a few extra steps in the process; however, it is not impossible."

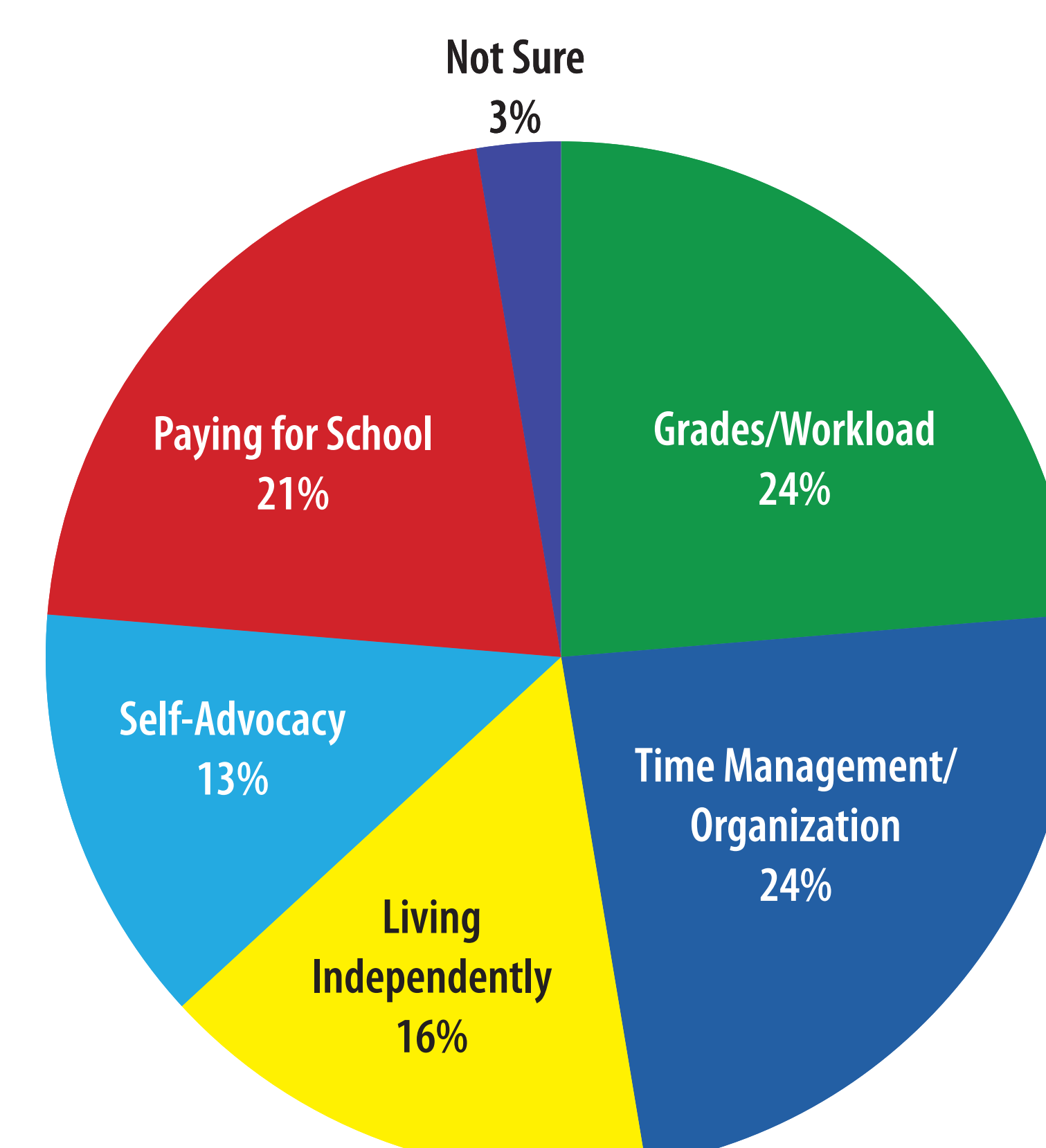


EXAMPLE OF STUDENT WORK (FROM FOCUS ON 4)

Hello Mr. Brandon,

I'd like to thank you for taking the time today to meet with me. I'm a student who is in your English class. As you may know already, I am blind. Because of this, I need longer time to complete tests and assignments because I 1. need to get them read to me, or 2. have to read them in braille or via audio, which takes a bit longer than normal. I am very strong in writing and reading, but as I said before, this takes a bit more time than usual. I'd like to give you my accommodation letter, which shows the types of things I need extra help with or take more time on.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES WILL BE IN TRANSITIONING TO COLLEGE?



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ADDITIONAL PARTNERS INCLUDE:

- ❖ HAPHI-Haitian American Public Health Initiatives
- ❖ BCNC-Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
- ❖ ECC-Eritrean Development Center
- ❖ SDC-Somali Development Center
- ❖ ECEAA-Ethiopian Community Mutual Assistance Association
- ❖ Bottom Line
- ❖ ACCESS-Action Center for Educational Services & Scholarships