

2. Health & Wellness are Critical

THINKING & LEARNING. If you are not well you can not think well, and you will not be in school learning. You may not be able to participate in life's activities. Students with known medical issues sometimes need accommodations in the school setting. Being able to "fit in" and not be seen as different is important.

Think ahead about issues that may interfere with learning and socializing. Find ways to minimize problems, by asking mentors or trusted others for advice.

STAMINA. Have you and your educational team reviewed your class schedule to ensure there is enough time and less distance in changing classes to avoid being fatigued?

Is homework geared toward mastery learning rather than quantity of exercises that may be too labor-intensive to complete? Example: Instead of doing a page of multiple math problems, the student is assigned to complete 10 with an accuracy rate of at least 80%. The point here is whether the student has learned the lesson and can demonstrate the skill.

Are these types of time-efficiency skills being taught to the student so he/she can better assess situations and make smarter choices?

MEDICATION. Do you, your friends, and selected teachers know what medications you are using and the side effects? Do they know to whom they should report unusual behavior, i.e., behavior that may be caused from a drug side effect or that may indicate a health problem? Has an effort been made to not schedule medication times during school?

STAY IN THE KNOW. Students should create and carry with them a one-page portable medical summary to share with new medical providers and school personnel (without violating the student's privacy).

While schools have their own emergency forms, these one-pagers can help in the emergency room. Also, students should carry their insurance cards or a photocopy of it with them at ALL times.

HEALTH STATUS. What does wellness look like when someone has a chronic health condition? What behavior and moods are due to hormones, depression, or change in health? It is important that staff members who will be around the student be advised what "usual" behavior is for that student and report when something seems a little off. A student who suddenly starts falling asleep in the classroom may not be board, and maybe having a problem with oxygen intake.

Friends can also be part of the circle of support. (i.e. Friends of a student who has diabetes often carry sugar candy to assist their friend when their sugar is low, and in some cases have permission to obtain a beverage that may help their friend avoid a serious episode.)

Teachers do not need to be in a crisis mode when a student has a chronic health issue, but it is good for them to be observant, be informed, and do what they can for the student to avoid a serious health problem - and - also know when to get help if needed.