The transition to college is always tough for students and their families. Those with ADHD, dyslexia and other diagnosed learning differences – no matter how bright they are – usually have additional anxieties. More and more of these students are addressing their concerns head-on by making Landmark their college of choice.

Three students in their final semester at Landmark agreed to share their perspectives. Their stories will give you a better idea of what transitioning to Landmark might be like.

Sydney’s Story
Sydney Ruff, Waterville, ME
Career Goal: Public Speaking & Communications

Part I: Background
I was originally diagnosed with an auditory processing disorder. As far as I could tell, that just meant I couldn’t have a lot of noise in the background. So I had to use some accommodations throughout high school, but I made very strong grades. When I took the SATs, it was kind of a test for me to see if I still needed some accommodations. Honestly, I got a poor score and it was devastating. Suddenly I was faced with a difficulty getting into college that I didn’t expect.

Part II: Choosing Landmark
My parents found Landmark and basically insisted that I go on a tour. I didn’t like anything – the tour, the interview, nothing. There was no way I was going to go to a school that was like a big resource room. But my parents kept urging me, so I gave in and told my dad I would go for one semester.

Part III: The Transition
Like I said, I was pretty reluctant to go to Landmark. At move-in, I thought, “I can’t believe I’m actually doing this.” I only took two weeks’ worth of stuff with me, thinking I would find some excuse to go home. After the first week of school, I started to feel I could see myself at Landmark. Then, the next week I got sick and had to go home for awhile. But I went back. At the end of every semester, I said “just one more semester.”

During the first semester a lot of people get put into the noncredit program. You hate paying so much and the fact that you don’t seem to be making progress towards your degree. But it was that first semester that made all the difference for me and I learned techniques that I use every day.
Part IV: Getting Into It

You grow up with a stereotype of what a learning disability is and you have to worry that people are judging you. Here, everyone knows you have a learning disability, so it’s not something you have to explain. It leads to greater openness – and even a lot of joking – but you have to stay aware and keep your confidence level up. I’ve gotten a lot more comfortable.

Landmark has so many tools. If you’re only here for a year or two, there’s no way to use them all. I often go down to the reading and writing center for help. They use different study approaches that really work. This is important for me, because the “quizzing” style of studying just makes me anxious. My favorite source for support right now is Coaching Services. Change is a big thing for me – and I don’t like it. They’re preparing me for what comes next in ways I wouldn’t do on my own.

Also, Dr. Katz [Landmark’s President] retested me and found that I was originally misdiagnosed. That rediagnosis has been one of the best things I’ve done in a long time.

Part V: Words of Advice

The main thing I would say is that you have to come here with an open mind. I started off expecting everything to be negative and it turned out far more positive than I could have imagined. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I’d come in with a more open attitude.

The other thing I have to stress is that people looking at going to Landmark should view it as part of their college education. You take two or three years here and then you transfer. People transfer all the time and this is just like another transfer.

Joe’s Story

Joe Templin, Hinesburg, VT
Career Goal: Middle School Math Teacher

Part I: Background

My issues are language-based. I had a fair amount of trouble with reading and writing, but my high school only offered help with the reading part. I didn’t know what I needed to do to be a better writer. In looking at colleges I was sure I had to find one that had strong support.

Part II: Choosing Landmark

I had an advantage because my brother attended Landmark, so I already knew what the College could do. We all saw that he could do it, and he pushed me to at least try it to see if I could do it, too. I did look at a couple of other small colleges with LD support, but I just wasn’t sure that I had the skills to go to them and be successful. So I picked Landmark.
Part III: The Transition
From the beginning I wanted to be at Landmark, so I didn’t have some of the issues other people have. But it was hard to be away from home, get to know a new environment and try to meet new friends. I guess that would be the same no matter what college you go to. It was also tough to adjust to what’s expected. The class loads are pretty tough; you’re in class every single day. And you have homework for each of those classes that they actually expect you to do. That’s so much different from other colleges. Also, at least in the beginning, you’re expected to attend office hours at least once a week. It’s a lot to get used to.

Part IV: Getting Into It
The staff has been really helpful. The teachers are wide open and they’re just great with students. And Residence Life was very useful, helping you plan ahead in case you get sick or something happens. Aside from the people, the program itself is cool. I wanted to gain a better understanding of my learning disability and what parts of the brain are impacted. I got just that – and I got tools that I’ve learned to use.

It was also important for me to get involved. I was on the soccer team. I’ve also been a resident assistant, so I get to help people who are struggling with the transition. I’ve seen students struggle with not liking the school initially. And I’ve also seen many students not trying as hard as they should.

Part V: Words of Advice
I would say this to anyone thinking about coming here: “If you’re motivated and you want to try very hard to succeed in your goals in life, Landmark is probably the best choice for you. Plan to give it 110% each and every day.”

Chris’ Story
Christopher Revill, Meriden, CT
Career Goal: Uncertain

Part I: Background
I was diagnosed with AD/HD in the first grade. Then, in my second or third year of high school, I found out I also had central auditory processing disorder. Partly because of this, I didn’t initially plan to go to college right away. So I was going to take a year off, but my mother kind of insisted that I do something. The initial solution was community college. I actually went for two years, taking courses part time and working with a private tutor. I wanted to stop, but my mother kept after me.

Part II: Choosing Landmark
A breakthrough came when my parents found out about the summer college skills program at Landmark College. I thought, “why not?” so
I went and really liked the program – and did well. That experience convinced me that I could actually succeed in college; it gave me the confidence to go to school. And of course my choice was Landmark.

**Part III: The Transition**

Since I already knew Landmark, it wasn’t as hard for me as it is for some other people. Getting used to a rural environment wasn’t easy. I grew up in Connecticut and it always pretty easy to get to New York or Boston. Putney isn’t exactly a thriving metropolis – or close to one. It was also tough to have a roommate. My first semester roommate was a lot different than me. But it worked out well and was a great experience.

**Part IV: Getting Into It**

I took different kinds of courses and was surprised by what I liked. I got really into social science and I also liked the visual arts. The big surprise, though, was literature and reading. It wasn’t even the fact that I could read, but that I was reading and liking the books. I read anything I could get my hands on, from *The Color Purple* to *The Bell Jar*. I loved *Nickel and Dimed* so much, I read it in a single weekend. I was falling in love with learning all over again.

As for getting involved, I got an opportunity to be an RA, and I took it. It’s probably going to be my short-term career through college and graduate school. It’s not easy; you see a lot of roommate issues, overwhelmed people, people who are homesick, etc., but I like being able to help out.

**Part V: Words of Advice**

If you’re thinking about Landmark, you should definitely check it out in person before you come here. Make sure you know yourself well enough, including what you want. You have to be fully ready to come here. Nobody is going to force you to do anything, but if you’re determined, you can achieve.

“I was falling in love with learning all over again.”