

# Preparing for an IEP or 504 Plan Meeting

## A Parent and Child Checklist



*It can be daunting for a parent to go to a school meeting for the first time to discuss your child's IEP or 504 Plan. You know you cannot necessarily rely on the school officials to make the best choices for your child. They do not know him or her as well as you and may also be subject to conflicting motivations – such as what's easiest or least expensive for the school or teacher, rather than what's best for your child.*

### **IEP or 504: What's the Difference?**

Knowing the difference between some of the terminology can be extremely helpful. IEP or Individualized Education Program provides for special education services or help from a special education teacher in the classroom for all or part of the day and contains defined goals that are specific and measurable along with accommodations and modifications. A 504 Plan is a set of accommodations (changes to HOW a student learns) and modifications (changes to WHAT a student learns) without specific stated goals or special education services. Both can contain directives for speech/language therapy, dyslexia training, occupational therapy, emotional/social skill support from social service staff or other services as needed. Whether a child qualifies for an IEP is based on the need for special education services, so often a 504 Plan is the beginning point for intervention unless the diagnosis requires specific teaching protocols.

Individual needs vary greatly so the number of accommodations and modifications available is extensive. Start by making a list of what you and your child think the problems in the classroom are, then look through the following checklist for changes you believe may be beneficial in the IEP or 504 Plan. Check the ones you believe would be most helpful.

### **Textbooks and Curriculum**

#### **Books: Accommodations**

- Provide the student with a list of discussion questions before reading the material
- Allow use of a marker to highlight important textbook sections
- Provide summaries of chapters
- Provide two sets of classroom curriculum materials, one for home and one for school

- Provide audio books for the student to listen to and as they follow along with the text in the textbook
- Explore use of Assistive technology (such as Bookshare or Kurzweil)

**Books: Modifications**

- Provide alternative books with similar concepts but at an easier reading level
- Give page numbers to help the student find answers to worksheets or discussion questions

**Curriculum: Accommodations**

- Provide a vocabulary list
- Substitute alternatives for long writing assignments (clay models, posters, panoramas, collections, electronic presentation, or oral presentation)
- Provide alternatives to reading aloud in front of the class
- Provide alternatives to crossword puzzles or word finds
- Let the student use speech-to-text technology to dictate answers
- Provide access to word processing applications or software, portable note taker, tablet or similar device
- Allow use of voice-to-text software for long written assignments
- Allow student to dictate a writing assignment for a teacher or teacher's aide to transcribe
- Provide a "designated note taker" or photocopy of another student's or teacher's notes (do not expect student to arrange with another student for notes)
- Provide outlines for videos
- Provide partially completed outlines of lectures for students to fill in the blanks

**Curriculum: Modifications**

- Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts
- Shorten spelling tests to focus on mastering the most functional words or the words that clearly demonstrate the spelling rule

**Classroom Environment****Classroom Environment: Accommodations**

- Keep work space clear of unrelated materials
- Keep the classroom quiet during intense learning times
- Reduce visual distractions in the classroom or provide a clean wall space that the student sits near
- Provide a computer for written work
- Seat the student close to the teacher or a positive role model
- Use a study desk with visual shields to prevent distractions (provide extra carrels so that the student will not feel singled out) or for elementary students stand folders or binders to provide visual quiet
- Seat the student away from visual or noise distractions such as windows, doorways, and radiators
- Provide a clear view of the board, teacher, and screen



- Keep extra classroom materials (pencils, paper) on hand
- Provide additional personal space between desks
- Post a visual schedule on student's desk
- Use a pass system for students needing frequent movement breaks
- Provide accessible classroom locations and accessible furniture (such as special desks, tables, chairs)
- Provide headsets to block noise
- Provide adaptive writing tools, pencil grips, slanted surface
- Explore use of alternate keyboard options and writing software
- Provide organizers for lockers/desk

### **Grading: Accommodations**

- Use daily or frequent grading and average into a grade for the quarter
- Weigh daily work higher than tests for a student who performs poorly on tests due to the disability
- Mark the correct answers rather than incorrect ones

### **Grading: Modifications**

- Provide partial grade based on individual progress or effort
- Permit a student to rework missed problems for a better grade
- Use a competency based grading without letter grades (pass-fail)
- Average grades out when assignments are reworked or grade on corrected work

### **Tests: Accommodations**

- Go over directions orally
- Permit extended time to complete tests
- Allow test to be taken in a room with fewer distractions
- Have test materials read to the student and allow oral responses (for tests that don't measure reading or writing)
- Divide tests into small sections of similar questions and problems
- Allow the student to complete an independent project as an alternative test
- Provide study guides and study questions that directly relate to tests
- Provide a sample or practice test

### **Tests: Modifications**

- Use recognition tests (true-false, multiple choice, or matching) instead of essays
- Grade spelling separately from content
- Provide the first letter of the missing word
- Allow take-home or open-book tests
- Provide a vocabulary list with definitions
- Provide possible answers (word bank) for fill-in-the-blank sections

### **Instructions and Assignments**

#### **Directions: Accommodations**

- Use both oral and printed directions
- Highlight key words in directions



- Give directions in small steps using as few words as possible
- Number and sequence steps in a task
- Have the student repeat directions to check for comprehension
- Provide visual aids
- Show a model of the end product (such as a completed math problem or finished quiz)
- Provide print copy of any assignments or directions written on the board or allow phone camera to be used
- Stand near the student when giving directions
- Allow use of an Assistive recording device to record lectures or directions

### **Time/Transitions: Accommodations**

- Alert student several minutes before a transition from one activity to another
- Provide additional time to complete a task
- Allow specified amount of extra time to turn in homework without penalty
- Provide assistance when moving between classrooms or around the building
- Allow student to leave classroom 2-3 minutes early to avoid crowded hallways
- Increase wait time for oral responses
- Provide a visual timer

### **Handwriting: Accommodations**

- Use worksheets that require minimal writing
- Use fill-in questions with space for a brief response rather than a short essay

### **Math: Accommodations**

- Allow the student to use a calculator without penalty
- Group similar problems together (such as all addition in one section unless testing to see if student can determine which function to use)
- Provide fewer problems on a worksheet (e.g., 4 to 6 problems a page rather than 20 or 30 but the same level of difficulty of problems)
- Use enlarged graph paper to help the student keep numbers in columns
- Provide a table of math facts for reference (unless testing math facts)
- Tape a number line to student's desk
- Read and explain story problems or break problems into smaller steps
- Use pictures or graphics
- Circle math computation signs
- Require the student to complete fewer problems to focus on mastery of concepts

### **Math: Modification**

- Focus on mastery of more functional math concepts

### **Behavior: Accommodations**

- Pair student with students modeling good behavior for classwork, projects, and mentoring
- Reward positive behaviors
- Issue a pass the student can use to leave the classroom without asking permission



- Use non-verbal cues or code word to communicate inappropriate behavior
- Establish plan to manage side effects of medication (such as water bottle for thirst, extra bathroom breaks)

### **Other Accommodations**

- Check progress and provide feedback often in the first few minutes of each assignment
- Introduce an overview of long-term assignments so the student knows what is expected and when it is due
- Provide structured assignments with lists for the student to cross off when finished
- Break long-term assignments into small, sequential steps with daily monitoring and frequent grading
- Have the student practice presenting in a small group before presenting to the class
- Give student worksheets one at a time
- Sequence work with the easiest parts first
- Allow use of sensory tools (fidgets)
- Establish a form of communication between home and school and set schedule for communication
- Reward student for recording assignments and due dates in a notebook
- Draw arrows on worksheets or the board to show how ideas are related, or use other graphic organizers such as flow charts
- Provide locker accommodations (such as a key versus a combination lock)
- Explore use of memory organization aides (smart phones, cell phones, tablet, calendar task list, visual schedule) or pens that record spoken words as the student writes to allow review of material for completion of notes
- Use color coded materials for each class

*Feeling overwhelmed? HomeworkCoach offers Advocacy services, including IEP and 504 Planning and Review. In a few cities, including Atlanta, Orlando and Hartford, we have trained advocates who could accompany you to a school meeting.*

Credit: this list was adapted from one provided by a partner who has her own advocacy service, which she in turn adapted from public sources, including [Pacer Center](#).