

Transitions to Middle School, High, College and FAQs for Families



1

Objectives

- IEP or 504 plan
- Accommodations/Modifications
- English Class in Middle and High School vs Reading (Structured Literacy) Intervention Class
- School exams
- Standardized Tests



2

IEP (IDEA) or 504 Plan

- IEP written for students who qualify for Special Education Services under both prongs
 - Have one of the 13 qualifying eligibilities
 - Require specialized instruction to access education including related services if necessary
- 504 Plan
 - Students who have a disability but do not require specialized instruction to access their education

3

504 Connections

- **Rio Rancho Public Schools**
 - **Jillian O'Brien, Special Services 504/IEP Compliance Manager**
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- Albuquerque Public Schools
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4

Accommodations vs Modifications

- The purpose of **accommodations** are to level the playing field so that all students can demonstrate what they know on assessments. Accommodations provide ELs and SWDs equity in testing.
- In contrast to accommodations, modifications give students an unfair advantage on assessments. Modifications are changes in student response (i.e., allowing use of a dictionary to look up the definition of a word) or test administration (i.e., paraphrasing a test question) that give students an unfair advantage on the assessment.
- **Modifications** change the construct of what the assessment is intended to measure and will lead to an invalid test result. An assessment administered with appropriate accommodations assigned in accordance with a student's legal plan generates valid test results for the student. If testing accommodations are applied incorrectly, the result can be an invalidation of student test results. Invalidation can result from an accommodation being assigned to a student without a legal plan, or from an accommodation in a student's IEP not being assigned when an assessment is administered.

5

Definitions for Testing

- Universal Tools are available for any student to use, and provide all students with equal opportunities to demonstrate what they know and can do without changing the measured construct or the item's difficulty. Examples: scratch paper, highlighter, calculator.
- Accessibility Features are available to any student, with or without an IEP, but must be designated by a team of educators in response to individual student needs. Examples: color contrast, text to speech (on a math or science assessment).
- Accommodations are available only to students with an IEP or 504 Plan or for ELs, if assigned by a school-based SAT team. Accommodations are changes in procedures or materials that ensure equitable access to instruction and assessment content. Examples: Braille, text to speech (on a language arts assessment), extended time (on timed tests).

6

Accommodations on IEPs or 504 Plans

- Decisions about accommodations must be based on individual student characteristics and needs, not on blanket decisions for groups of students with particular disabilities or at particular language acquisition levels.
- Accommodations should only be assigned on state assessments if they are already being used by students in the classroom.
 - School teams should use the state Accommodations Manual to make their decisions for each student
 - https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/2022_23_Accommodations_Manual.pdf

7

Law around assessments

- Both ESSA and IDEA require all students to participate in state assessments, including students with disabilities and English learners, who must be provided with appropriate accommodations, as determined by their Individualized Education Program teams (ESSA 1111(b)(2)(B)(vii), IDEA 612(a)(16)(A)).

8

Participation in testing

- Section 6: Participation, Exemptions, and Alternate Assessments Participation Requirement All students are required to participate in state assessments. In order to receive Title I, II, III, and IV funds from the federal government, New Mexico must report achievement results for at least 95% of all students and at least 95% of students from each subgroup of students.
- This requirement includes students with disabilities—including students with significant cognitive disabilities—and English learners. 2022-23 NMPED District Test Coordinator Manual 22 Medical Exemption Occasionally, a student will have a medical condition that prevents participation in assessments. Federal regulation allows such exemptions, which should be requested through the PED Test Coordinator Portal. Instructions for completing the form are in the portal and can also be found on the copy of the form included in Appendix F.
- Only a serious illness, injury, or medical emergency, which must be identified and verified in writing by a licensed medical provider and kept on file by the district, will exempt a student from the state assessment. Examples include:
 - a serious car accident, sudden hospitalization, emergency surgery, cancer treatment during the testing window,
 - severe trauma, mental health crisis that is dangerous to self or others, or
 - placement in hospice care. If a student has an IEP, 504 Plan, or EL Plan, the team must formally document the medical exemption in the plan.
- A medical exemption will not be approved if:
 - a student has an unexpected medical condition but is receiving instruction;
 - a student has a short-term minor illness or injury; or
 - a student is identified as medically fragile but is still receiving instruction.



9

Middle School



- Students may still need access to Structured Literacy for acquisition of reading skills. Depending on the school and schedules that may look different.
- Students should be developing skills to being their own advocate. (i.e. letting teachers know that they have challenges and obtaining permission to use word prediction software, digital versions of their textbooks, prereading materials before they are assigned so that there is time to preview, etc).
- Lots of students will need explicit help in developing their calendars so that can stay on top of assignments. Help your child be providing them practice with this skill with home calendars. (Work on executive function skills with your child).
- Comorbidity of other disabilities is common with dyslexia, i.e. ADHD, OCD, Autism, Tic Syndromes etc. (IEP teams should weigh contributing factors to developing accommodations and modifications that makes sense for that student.)
- Throwing everything at them can be just as detrimental. Students need to find what best works for them. (i.e. Knowing that digitally reading the materials before class helps me to stay involved with my peers or I need extra time to produce answers to the questions on assignments).

10

High School



- Expectations are much higher for students. Teachers are trying to get them ready for college and career, so they tend to want students to know their stuff.
- Your student should be very familiar with the accommodations that work for them. They may need to meet with each of their teachers and let them know what they need. Teachers typically appreciate students who speak up for themselves.
- Students should have practiced the skills to keep their agendas current and up to date from their practice in middle school years.
- Know the testing requirements for graduation and credit requirements. Keep checking in with counselors to ensure you're on the right pathway and track.
- Know what accommodations are allowable for college entry exams. (SAT is required in NM)
- If you qualify with a print disability, make sure you obtain all your textbooks in a digital format so that you can use them when necessary.

11

College



- You will no longer fall under IDEA, so special education IEPs will not apply. Many colleges will ask for your latest IEP to see that you have a disability. Always have a copy on hand as evidence of a disability. Colleges typically do not provide 504 plans in the same way as high schools. (Understood.org)
- You will now fall under Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Look for support through the office within your campus. Students must register with that office to get accommodations. (Understood.org)
- You can still seek digital access to your textbooks. Most schools know that students want that type of access to books now. Check with your university to see what levels of support are available. (Understood.org)
- Know how you best learn so that you can find courses that will meet your learning style. (i.e. on-line courses, in-person courses, smaller campuses, community college courses, etc.)
- Typical accommodations include: note-taker for classes, audio recordings of lectures, use of laptop in class, taking exams with less distractions in another room.

12

Assistive Technology and You



- Know what works for you.
- Apps are being developed everyday. Become someone who keeps up with what's out there.
- Remember that there are more folks out there with disabilities than you think, and we are all trying to do our best. You do the best that you can to become proficient in accessing your education.
- Let your professors and/or employers know how you do your best work. Use that text to speech when you need, use that speech to text when needed. People are becoming more aware and more accepting of alternative ways of getting things done. Find out what is acceptable.