

Teacher Resource Guide
UNIQUE LEARNERS



TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (IEP) | 3 |
| THE ABC'S OF ESE – ACRONYM GUIDE | 3 |
| SECTION 504 | 3 |
| BEST PRACTICES – SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTING ROADBLOCKS | 4 |
| INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES | 5 |
| ADDITIONAL STRATEGY GUIDES | 6 |
| RESOURCE GUIDES FOR DESIGNING ONLINE LEARNING | 7 |

FLEXPOINT™ TEACHER RESOURCE GUIDE

Schools serve students with a variety of skills and abilities. This guide, intended to support teachers, includes overviews of current facts and law, recommended best practices, and suggested resources to support your work with a variety of learners.

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INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS (IEP)

Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) are a cornerstone of special education. The IEP outlines the services a student with disabilities will receive, where those services will be provided, and educational goals for the student. The members of the IEP team work together to develop the student's IEP. The IEP team is usually comprised of the special education teacher(s), appropriate general education teachers, appropriate service personnel (occupational therapist, speech-language therapist, etc.), a local education agency representative, the parent, and, if appropriate, the student.

THE ABC'S OF ESE – ACRONYM GUIDE

Below is a list of the acronyms for disabilities you may see on an IEP:

- **ASD:** Autism Spectrum Disorder
- **DHH:** Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- **DSI:** Dual Sensory Impairment (Deaf and Blind)
- **E/BD:** Emotional/Behavioral Disability
- **GT:** Gifted and Talented
- **HH:** Homebound or Hospitalized
- **IND:** Intellectual Disability
- **LI:** Language Impairment
- **OHI:** Other Health Impairment
- **OI:** Orthopedic Impairment
- **SLD:** Specific Learning Disability
- **SI:** Speech Impairment
- **TBI:** Traumatic Brain Injury

SECTION 504

UNDERSTANDING SECTION 504

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. Section 504 applies to recipients of federal funds, including public schools. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) extends the protections of Section 504 without regard to federal funding. The ADA also applies to public schools.

Section 504 regulations prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities and require school districts to provide a free, appropriate public education to students with disabilities. A 504 team decides what supports a student with disabilities needs to "level the playing field" so that the student can access educational opportunities. Some students with disabilities qualify for special education services and supports under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). **Section 504 is not the same as Special Education under the IDEA.**

HOW IS A DISABILITY DEFINED UNDER SECTION 504?

Section 504 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity.

A *physical impairment* is a medical condition or disorder of bodily functions.

A *mental impairment* is a cognitive, learning, or psychological disorder.

A *major life activity* includes seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, bending, learning, reading, concentrating, thinking, working, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, eating, standing, lifting, and other similar types of activities. Major life activities also include bodily functions such as breathing, sleeping, neurological functioning, bowel/bladder functioning, and other bodily functions.

A *substantial limitation* means that the student is significantly restricted as to the condition, manner, or duration under which the student can perform a particular major life activity as compared to the average student population.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A 504 PLAN AND AN IEP?

Students with disabilities who do not need specially designed instruction may be covered under Section 504. Some students covered under Section 504 may be eligible for a 504 Accommodation Plan if they need accommodations or other supports in the school setting to access their education.

For more information regarding ADA, IDEA and/or Section 504, please visit the links below:

<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/the-difference-between-ieps-and-504-plans>

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>

BEST PRACTICES – SUGGESTIONS FOR PREVENTING ROADBLOCKS

ACCOMMODATIONS – THINK: LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD

An accommodation is a service or support that helps a student to fully access the subject matter and instruction and to accurately demonstrate what he or she knows related to the child's disability across the entire general education curriculum.

An accommodation is not:

- A change to the content of instruction or performance expectations for students.
- An interference or major change to the standards specified for students.
- An alteration to the big idea or major learning outcomes expected of the instruction.

ACCOMMODATIONS AVAILABLE IN ONLINE COURSES

Online course providers such as FlexPoint often include features in their courses that may be considered an accommodation on an IEP, however it is important to note that FlexPoint does not offer modified curriculum. Be sure to explore content editing tools available in your learning management system such as adding content or hiding items. Some of the features included in FlexPoint courses may include the following:

- Extended time for assessments or test
- Access to curriculum, course materials, assignments and assessments 24/7
- Guided pacing or reduced pacing
- Read-aloud programs/text-to-speech tools/screen readers
- Speech-to-text tools (accessibility on computer or web programs such as www.naturalreaders.com)
- Alternative forms of presentation/multi-sensory instruction – audio, video, animation, and interactives
- Notetaking guides/outlines
- Individual and proctored testing environments
- Virtual glossaries, some with audio functions
- Chunked content broken into manageable sections
- Graphic organizers
- Text alternatives for videos and graphics

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Instructional strategies are methods that are used in teaching to ensure that the sequence or delivery of instruction aids student learning. Online courses often allow teachers to choose from several strategies in a particular lesson that will best meet the student's needs.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AVAILABLE IN ONLINE COURSES

- Discussion-based assessments (see below)
- Individualized feedback
- Reading strategies taught across subjects
- Individualized one-on-one instruction
- Teacher availability via phone, text and/or email
- Appropriate wait/think time
- Peer tutoring groups
- Online tutoring: <http://bjpinchbeck.com/> (homework helper); www.algebra.com/tutors/ (free algebra tutoring); <http://learntobe.org/> (underserved youth)
- Resubmission of work

Teachers can consider the following instructional strategies when appropriate for a student or a particular lesson:

- Group students according to courses they are taking
- Create study groups with facilitator
- Build in time for technology frustrations
- Set small goals (i.e. Finish lesson 2, as opposed to finish the unit/module)
- Supplement verbal instructions with visual instructions
- Incorporate differentiated instruction based on all learning types
- Consider an online learning styles quiz
- Use educational songs to inhibit help with memorization
- Provide supplemental material for extra practice (i.e., outlines, study guides.)
- Give both oral and visual instructions for assignments, such as Jings or Xtranormal videos
- Provide oral testing or testing in an alternate language
- Provide options for presentation of assignments, such as podcasts or videos
- Simplify instructions for classwork and assessments
- Ask students to repeat directions/assignments to ensure understanding
- Provide recorded lessons

DISCUSSION-BASED ASSESSMENTS WITH YOUR STUDENTS

FlexPoint courses include Discussion-based assessments (DBAs) which allow students and teachers to talk regularly about what the student has learned, encouraging students to show their mastery. DBAs give teachers many opportunities, and we recommend the following best practices for students with IEPs:

- Build relationships and find out about student interests
- Provide a list of discussion topics ahead of time if possible
- Disguise the conversation
- Start off by asking about what you already know such as their interests. "How is your underwater basket weaving class going at the community center?" Then go into your DBA. You may save time in the end.
- No matter how busy or stressed you are, don't let it "show" in your voice. Lessen the student's anxiety.
- Rephrase your questions if needed
- Have the student log into the course so that they have access to the lessons

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES (CONT'D)

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Encourage online students to set up their work space to encourage success such as the following:

- Designated workspace environment in the home (recommended to be in a central location in the home)
- Workspace that is free of distractions
- Appropriate desk/chair
- Use of laptop or desktop computer vs. tablet

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Help students think intentionally about organizational components in the course or online learning platform to plan for success:

- Course pacing guides
- Course calendars – virtual and/or printed
- Designated folders for each course with printed materials/notes
- Designated folder on computer for each course in Documents/Desktop and backed up on USB drive
- Daily schedule with designated time set aside for each course

BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES FOR ONLINE LEARNING

- Consider use of weekly progress report or learning contract
- Conduct monthly calls between instructor and student

ADDITIONAL STRATEGY GUIDES

STRATEGIES TO ASSIST WITH RETAINING AND RETRIEVING INFORMATION

- Use cues and prompts
- Use graphic organizers, lists and/or outlines
- Use a matrix to organize information
- Use frequent repetition of key points
- Break down instructional units into smaller steps
- Use multi-modalities (visual, auditory, tactile) to teach the same concept
<http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/teachingwithmultiple-modalities-30101.html>
- Teach vocabulary in context http://www.readingcomprehensionconnection.com/reading_lesson.php
- Show relationships among concepts through graphs, outlines, and webbing
<http://www.chartgo.com/>
- Use color coding to show concepts and relationships
<http://cacoo.com/>
<http://www.mindmeister.com/>
- Teach mnemonics as a memory tool
http://www.eudesign.com/mnems/_mnframe.html
- Teach visual imagery
- Use pictographs

CURRICULUM CONSIDERATION GUIDES

Types of curriculum adaptations (one-page guide): <http://www.grandviewlibrary.org/CurriculumAdaptations/NineTypes.pdf>

Universal Design for Learning (UDL): <http://www.cast.org/our-work/about-udl.html#.XGcmnuJKiu4>

RESOURCE GUIDES FOR DESIGNING ONLINE LEARNING

WEB CONTENT ACCESSIBILITY GUIDELINES (WCAG)

Web Accessibility Guidelines: <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/>

Use this resource when designing alternative assignments or other personalized lessons in your online course.

“Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 covers a wide range of recommendations for making Web content more accessible. Following these guidelines will make content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photo sensitivity and combinations of these. Following these guidelines will also often make your Web content more usable to users in general.” (WCAG)

Section 508 (<https://www.section508.gov/>) federal guidelines are part of the Rehabilitation Act and require technology accessibility for individuals with handicaps. Make sure you learn about the law and resources available to meet the law.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Several national organizations provide guidance and standards for best practices in online and blended learning design.

ISTE Standards for Teachers: <http://www.iste.org/standards>

National Standards for Quality Online Learning: <https://www.nsqol.org/>

ADDITIONAL DISABILITY INFORMATION

FACT SHEETS

Developmental Milestones

- Typical stages and milestones used to measure children’s growth and progress: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/milestones/>

Categories of Disability under IDEA Law

- IDEA includes 14 primary terms under the main definition of “a child with a disability” visit the following link to review Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) categories: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/categories/>

For more information on specific disabilities, visit the Parent Center Hub at <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/specific-disabilities/>

