

Are Teachers Required to Provide All Accommodations & Modifications Listed in the Child's IEP?

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"Your site has been useful in my legal research and in my day-to-day work as an regular education inclusion teacher."

"My question concerns accommodations and modifications in the the IEP. If an accommodation or modification is marked in the IEP, is the regular ed teacher required to include that accommodation on every test or activity they create? For example, if "word bank" is marked, does the teacher have to include a word bank on everything? And what about a calculator - can the teacher make an assignment where students are not allowed to use calculators?"

Pete Answers

You will not find a clear answer to your question in the statute, regulations, or caselaw (all three are in our book, *Wrightslaw: Special Education Law*). IDEA 2004 does include new language about accommodations guidelines and accommodations on state and district tests.

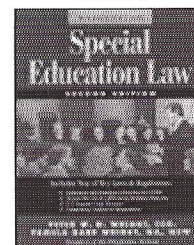
Your question goes to the specific skill or content area that is being taught and how the child's learning (mastery of the skill or content area) will be measured. For example, assume the child is studying history. The school will measure the child's knowledge of history on an essay test. Assume that this child has severe dysgraphia (a learning disability in writing). An essay test is also a test of penmanship. On essay tests, the child must produce information by putting pen to paper.

Will an essay test measure this child's knowledge of history? Or will this essay test measure the child's disability (inability to write)? In this case, an appropriate modification may be to allow the child to write answers using a computer. The purpose of testing is to find out what the child has learned.

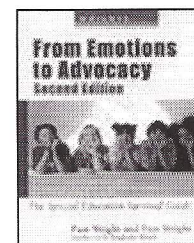
When teachers read an IEP and did not have input into the document, they often have reasonable and logical questions about how the IEP is to be implemented. If you need additional information about a student's needs (and you probably do) and what the IEP requires you

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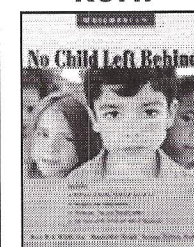


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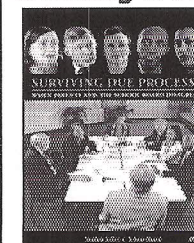
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to do, you need to take your questions to the IEP team and ask for their guidance.

My Big Gripe About Special Education

Children with disabilities are often not taught how to write, read, spell or do arithmetic in special education. Because special educators want to help, they often try to make things easier for the child by lowering the bar with modifications and accommodations. Special educators often erroneously believe that if a child has a disability, the child cannot learn these skills. In most cases, they are wrong.

This is my big gripe about special education.

Pete Will Have to Work Harder - and So Will His Teachers!

Some people know that I was diagnosed with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and ADD/ADHD in the early 1950s. I was lucky. My parents arranged for me to be tutored by Diana King. She used Orton-Gillingham methods to teach me how to read, write, spell and do arithmetic. Later, Diana King founded the Kildonan School in Amenia, New York.

Diana King is an iron lady. She told my parents, "Peter has a disability. Mom and Dad, this means Peter will have to work much harder to acquire these skills (reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic). His teachers will have to work harder to make sure we teach him the right way so he acquires these skills."

"We will not accept anything less than hard work because this is what is necessary for Peter to master these skills. If we lower the bar for Peter, he will never be able to make it in the real world."

If you turn to the dedication page of Wrightslaw: Special Education Law, you will see that we dedicated the book to Diana King and to Roger Saunders (my counselor). Because they did not lower the bar for me, I learned how to read, write and do arithmetic.

Give Calculators or Teach Math Skills?

You asked about using calculators on a math test. Children must learn math skills - calculators are tools but they are not a substitute for the need to learn math skills.

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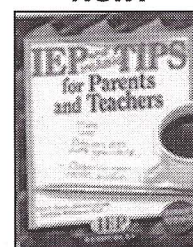
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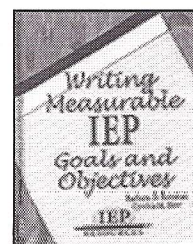
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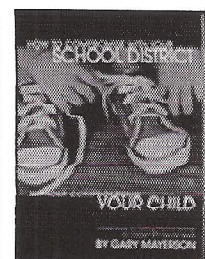
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Children must learn (memorize) the times tables up to $12 \times 12 = 144$. This means repetition, repetition, repetition, over and over, using flash cards, multi-sensory approaches, hands on. The child must master the times tables so their responses are automatic.

The child may still have problems - he may rotate the + to an x or write columns of numbers that look like a leaning Tower of Pisa. These errors are not because the child is ignorant of basic math skills (multiplication tables) but are often due to dysgraphia. The child should be taught how to correct for these errors.



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Children with Memory Problems

Memory is another skill that can and should be taught – teaching memory skills is essential for those of us who have terrible memories. We need to learn how to strengthen our memories. This is why we put memory books by Harry Lorayne in our bookstore.

Children with Communication Deficits

Shifting again – Children with more severe disabilities like autism have deficits in communication. If the child cannot communicate, the child appears to be retarded. If the child appears to be retarded, the child's teachers will lower their expectations.

Low expectations are bad for children. As people lower their expectations, they don't learn. Their test scores drop. Finally, the child may test out as retarded. Why? The child's brain was not used - abilities were untapped.

Helen Keller

Shifting - How did Helen Keller go from being an unruly "retarded" child who was blind and deaf to a sophisticated woman who traveled, wrote books, and spoke before groups?

Helen Keller learned to communicate. She had intensive remediation from Annie Sullivan. Annie Sullivan's work with Helen Keller was very much like today's ABA-Lovaas therapy programs for young children with autism – Helen received intensive, individualized, one-on-one remediation for **several hours a day**.

Shifting – I represented a child who had cerebral palsy and was also

diagnosed as retarded. The child's mother wanted him out of the self-contained program for "severe and profound children." But he always tested below 70 on IQ tests so the school refused to change his placement.

We got new evaluations by an experienced psychologist who was aware of his communication problems. This child ended up scoring around 110 on an IQ test. With this new data, his mother was finally able to get him out of the self-contained program.

Later, he joined forces with a designer of equipment for people with disabilities. They designed a new, improved, less expensive head pointer system that could be used with a keyboard.

Once a year or so, I read a well-written "Letter to the Editor" from him.

You got answers to more questions than you asked. But your email was the first one I saw this beautiful morning. The coffee is hot and it tastes good.

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