

# “Don’t Let Your Child Be Saddled with Band-Aid Accommodations”

BY [SCOTT LUTOSTANSKI, LPC](#)

An [IEP meeting](#) evokes a variety of reactions — some positive, some negative, and, sometimes, a combination of the two. It can be productive, positive, uplifting, and fun. It can be gloomy, combative, tense, and frustrating. No matter which feelings are present in the room, there is one thing that must exist in all meetings: attention to the details. Language and wording are vital to a successful IEP meeting and to ensuring all of the stakeholders — students, parents, teachers, administrators, and other providers — have a full understanding of the services that will be provided to your student.

IEPs are meant to provide support and address the needs of students while fostering growth and development. [Accommodations](#) should not be stunting your child’s growth or limiting his forward progress. Before heading into an IEP meeting, parents must be aware of the difference between accommodations that promote a child’s independence and advancement, and those that will only get students through the day but will not be pushing them in the right direction.

In other words, students need accommodations that are solutions, not Band-Aids. Kids wind up with band-aid accommodations for a variety of reasons. Sometimes student input leads to over-extended accommodations, sometimes teachers reference accommodations that they have used for other students, and other times accommodations are merely glossed over and do not receive as much thought as other portions of the IEP.

*[\[Quiz: How Well Do You Know Special Ed Law?\]](#)*

Band-aid accommodations may minimize behavior infractions, boost grades, or provide students with substantial support, but they don’t encourage or foster the long-term progress of the student. Below, I give a few examples of common band-aids and suggest replacements that will support students’ growth.

## **Band-Aid: Extended time on assignments**

### **Go for Growth: Shortening assignments**

“Extended time on homework” is the most common accommodation given to children with ADHD. This accommodation is often the result of students missing [homework assignments](#) and not completing work at home. This can be due to the fact that students are overwhelmed and exhausted once they get home from school. The student often lacks the focus or energy to get through a full assignment, so he is given an extra night to complete the work. This

accommodation eliminates the need for students to plan out work at home, initiate a task, and sustain attention and avoid distractions. It also can turn into a great excuse for not doing work, particularly as students get older.

Instead, parents should opt for a “shortening an assignment for homework.” This will address the same need: struggling to complete work at home. As opposed to the former, shortening an assignment will require the student to engage and practice the skills of planning, initiating, and sustaining attention, while still receiving the appropriate amount of homework and staying on-track with his or her peers.

## **Band-Aid: Providing a note-taker or teacher notes**

### **Go for Growth: Guided notes**

Students with ADHD often receive an accommodation that provides them with a copy of notes after class, usually done by an exemplary student in the class. Alternatively, some teachers choose to print out a full copy of his or her notes. These accommodations are intended to address a student’s difficulty with staying focused, taking notes, avoiding distractions, and possibly handwriting difficulties. In reality it creates a classroom environment where the student does not have to be focused, does not have to take notes, and can be distracted.

*[Free Downloadable Card: [Easy ADHD Accommodations](#)]*

Instead, “guided notes” is an effective accommodation that scaffolds students as they build up these skills. Guided notes are ones that are partially filled out, and have some fill-in-the-blanks for the student to complete. This accommodation pushes the student to improve his ability to maintain his attention in a classroom setting, while also demanding much less from him in terms of recording the information being presented in class. In place of providing students with notes and a free pass, guided notes require students to pay attention, do some note-taking, and develop their ability to function more effectively in class.

## **Band-Aid: Checking a student’s planner**

### **Go for Growth: A homework checklist**

When students struggle with [organization](#), homework completion, and executive function skills, checking their planner before they go home is a common accommodation. This usually consists of asking students to produce their planner to a teacher or staff member, who gives it a quick glance to see if the students’ homework is written down (or telling them to write it down). If students struggle with their executive functions, this accommodation provides only the *appearance* of “planning.”

A better accommodation that will facilitate behavioral and cognitive growth is “a homework checklist.” This usually contains such categories as which class the homework is for, details of the assignment, when it is due by, materials needed, whether the materials are in the student’s backpack, the difficulty of the assignment (rated from 1-10), and how long the student thinks the assignment will take. These elements of the checklist are themselves the components of planning, so guiding students through these steps with the checklist will help them develop the skill of planning, rather than having them haphazardly or thoughtlessly record assignments in a planner.

It is important for parents, teachers, and administrators not to lose sight of the long-term goal for the student: academic, social, and emotional growth, *as well as* a shift toward independence. In order to accomplish these goals, parents must be well prepared for the meeting and well versed in the fine line between accommodations that are band-aids and those that promote growth.