

HASTINGS-ON-HUDSON SEPTA

PARENT TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR YOUR CHILD'S ANNUAL REVIEW MEETING*

Before your child's meeting:

DO get copies of your child's evaluations and teacher reports. You should have at least a few days prior to the meeting to review the complete set of reports/evaluations. Take notes, highlight questions or things you want to stress or ask about, if you have questions.

- If you disagree with the school's evaluation, you may request (in writing) an independent educational evaluation at the district's expense.

DO make an appointment to meet with your child's teachers and/or providers to discuss their evaluations and thoughts for next school year.

DO complete the Hudson Valley Special Education Parent Center Annual Review Checklist (found at http://www.hvsepc.org/cpse_worksheet.html) – or just a simple list of concerns – and consider whether to share this with the CSE/504 committee in advance, or with your child's teacher(s).

DO consider what methods you have found to be effective in supporting your child's growth and development, including any therapies your child participates in outside of school. Is your child progressing as he/she should be?

DO consider your child's strengths/weaknesses, interests and preferences in general; how best does your child learn? Think about personality types and whether your child learns best from a specific type of teacher. Note: specific teachers are not discussed at the CSE table; this is something that would be discussed with the building Principal.

DO consider whether to invite other professionals or other support (e.g., family or friends) to the meeting; this person could be there just to take notes and/or to provide emotional support.

DO provide copies of private evaluations or reports from private therapists to the CSE or 504 committee in advance of the meeting.

DO consider recording the meeting so that there are no misunderstandings later; if you decide to record the meeting, you must give the district advance notice (at least 24 hours). Recording also allows you to more fully participate in the meeting as you will not be focusing on taking notes.

DO confirm in writing who will attend the meeting; if desired, request in writing that your child's service providers attend – this should be done as soon as you receive notice of the meeting. Note: if the service providers (e.g., speech, OT, PT) attend every meeting, it may result in them missing sessions with the children. If possible, consider reaching out to your child's service providers prior to the meeting. All related service providers will provide written summaries for the meeting.

*

These tips have been compiled from Hastings SEPTA members and are not intended to constitute legal advice. In addition, not every tip will be applicable for each child.

DO review your child's current IEP or 504 Plan, past progress reports, report cards, evaluations and reports; consider whether last year's goals were met.

DO write down any questions or specific concerns you have. Consider sharing those questions and/or concerns in advance of the meeting or read aloud at the start of the meeting.

DO discuss whether Extended School Year (ESY) is necessary given your child's disability, the pattern of regression and difficulty retaining skills over vacations and school breaks. *Ideally, this conversation should be starting well in advance of the meeting*; late January or early February is a good time to speak with your child's teachers if you feel ESY may be appropriate for your child.

DO make sure you understand if your child is expected to attend any or all of the meeting – many HS students are encouraged to participate – and that your preparation may be impacted by their attendance and participation. Questions regarding this should be directed to the Director of Special Education.

During your child's meeting:

DO ask questions, including:

- How will my child's weak skills/areas of challenge be accommodated to increase achievement?
- What types of accommodations are necessary to make effective progress? Which of these will be provided?
- What types of modifications are necessary to make effective progress? How will the modifications address the weak skills outlined earlier?
- Specifically, how will the curriculum be modified?

DO slow the meeting down if it is moving too quickly; ask for clarification of special education jargon. Remember: schools are not allowed to set time limited for annual review meetings; if a meeting cannot be completed in the allotted time, then the team can reconvene to complete the IEP or 504 Plan.

DO ask about transition services if your child is nearing 15 years old; starting at age 15 (and at a younger age, if determined appropriate), the IEP must contain appropriate measurable postsecondary goals and the transition services to be provided.

DO consider how related services can be integrated within the school day and not become a pull-out service.

DO make sure the IEP contains built in ways to communicate with school staff. For example, ask for scheduled planning time each [week/month] so your child's team can meet to discuss your child's modifications and/or special education services. Also consider periodic team meetings to discuss issues and have a communication journal go back and forth daily or weekly.

DO consider asking for support for you as a parent to work with your child. The law allows for parent counseling and training to assist in understanding the individual needs of your child, to provide you with information about child development and help to acquire the necessary skills to support the implementation of your child's IEP.

DO end the meeting and ask to reconvene if you and the other members of the committee are not able to reach agreement.

DO NOT feel that you have to make a quick decision about the services or accommodations being offered during the meeting; you can ask for time to consider and review the information, and then schedule a follow-up meeting.

After your child's meeting:

DO debrief immediately (or as soon as possible) after the meeting, make notes and list of follow-up questions, concerns and/or action items.

DO put any of your concerns in writing, immediately, to the Director of Special Education and consider sending a copy of your letter or email to relevant school personnel (e.g., Superintendent, Principal). This tip is not just for the annual review process; *if at any time you have a concern regarding your child's special education services or 504 accommodations, you should document the concern in a letter or email and copy any relevant district personnel.*

DO review the final IEP or 504 Plan as soon as possible and notify the district in writing of any errors or concerns.

DO thank your child's teachers and providers, as well as District administrators, for attending your child's meeting and for their support of your child. This is so important!

Resource A: IEP Adaptation and Modification Checklist

The following list includes *examples* of program adaptations and modifications that can be made for a special education student and become part of his/her IEP. The following examples were taken from "A Web Guide to Special Services Partnership," Wilton, CT 2006.

Please note that these are examples. Every special education child is different and has different needs. Knowing possible program adaptations and modifications going into an initial or annual review often helps parents/legal guardians prepare for their meeting.

Finally, this list is not all encompassing. There are other adaptations and modifications that can be made.

Pacing:

- Allow breaks; vary activities
- Omit assignments that require copying in timed situations
- Send home school texts/ materials for summer preview/review
- Give extra cues or prompts
- Allow additional time for assignments and tests
- Assign specific tasks within specific time period

Motivation and Reinforcement:

- Give verbal/ nonverbal reinforcement
- Give positive reinforcement
- Give concrete reinforcement
- Plan motivating sequences of activities
- Reinforce initiation/ self-starting
- Offer choices
- Use strengths/ interests to reinforce
- Use varied reinforcement systems

Environmental/ Physical Accommodations:

- Allow for preferential seating
- Plan seating: classroom, bus, cafeteria, auditorium, specials
- Alter physical room arrangement
- Define area concretely
- Reduce/ minimize distractions: visual, auditory, spatial, movement
- Teach positive rules for use of space
- Provide quiet corner/ room
- Modify equipment
- Adapt writing utensils
- Allow for use of study space
- Provide assistance in maintaining uncluttered space
- Provide space for movements or breaks

Testing Adaptations:

- Allow tests/ projects to be taken orally
- Add pictures/ visuals to test
- Read test to student

- Preview language of test questions
- Give applications in real setting
- Give multiple choice questions
- Modify format (multiple choice, essay, true/ false)
- Shorten length of test/ assignment
- Extend time frame; allow un-timed testing
- Modify grading
- Allow answers to be dictated
- Allow frequent rest breaks
- Allow open book or open note tests
- Provide study guide prior to test
- Highlight key directions
- Give test in alternate site
- Allow calculator, word processor

Assignments:

- Give directions in small, discrete steps (written/picture/verbal)
- Use written back-up for oral directions
- Lower difficulty level
- Shorten assignments (e.g., answering every other question)
- Reduce paper and pencil tasks/busywork
- Read or tape record directions
- Use pictorial directions
- Allow student to record or type assignments
- Adapt worksheets/packets
- Utilize compensatory procedures by providing alternate assignment/strategy when demands of class conflict with student capabilities (e.g. graphic or oral)
- Avoid penalizing for spelling errors/sloppiness/penmanship
- Do not allow classmate review of papers/projects, to avoid embarrassment

Self-Management/Follow Through:

- Prepare visual daily schedule
- Teach use of calendars
- Check often for understanding/ review/ comprehension
- Request parent reinforcement
- Have student repeat directions
- Teach study skills
- Use study sheets to organize material
- Design? Use long term assignment timelines
- Review and practice in real situations
- Plan for generalizations
- Teach skills in several settings/ environments
- Follow routines or schedules
- Teach time, paper and project management skills
- Provide agenda book
- Provide checklists
- Allow daily check-in with case manager, mentor or special education teacher

Social/ Behavior Supports:

- Train and use peer tutors
- Structure activities to create opportunities for social interactions
- Focus on the social process rather than on the activities /end product
- Use cooperative learning groups
- Teach friendship and negotiation skills
- Teach sharing
- Teach social communication skills, greetings, conversational turn talking
- Alternate quiet and active time
- Provide immediate feedback
- Conduct functional behavioral analyses
- Develop and implement behavioral intervention strategies
- Develop and implement behavior modification plans
- Develop crisis intervention plans
- Provide circle of friends
- Provide peer buddies
- Provide counseling
- Provide verbal and visual cues regarding transition
- Provide verbal and visual cues regarding directions or staying on task
- Adjust assignment timelines
- Give notice, warning before change in activities
- Provide management skills instruction

Presentation of Subject Matter:

- Teach to student's learning style: linguistic, logical/ math, musical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal, interpersonal and/or model experimental learning
- Utilize specialized curriculum
- Have teacher tape lectures/ discussions for replay
- Have teacher provide notes
- Allow peers to provide notes
- Teach functional applications of academic skills (e.g., making change at a shop or restaurant)
- Present demonstrations/ model
- Utilize manipulatives
- Emphasize critical information
- Pre-teach vocabulary
- Make/ use vocabulary files
- Reduce language levels or reading levels of assignments
- Use total communication
- Use facilitated communication share activities
- Use visual sequences
- Provide resources room instruction
- Provide one-on-one instruction
- Vary methods of instruction
- Vary content of lessons
- Provide alternate assignments
- Provide visual and verbal cues and prompts
- Conduct an assistive technology (AT) evaluation
- Provide note taker

- Use hands –on activities
- Provide highlighted materials

Materials:

- Rearrange material on the page
- Use taped texts and/or other class materials
- Highlight texts/ study guides
- Provide supplementary materials
- Provide note taking assistance
- Use large print
- Use special equipment, calculators, assistive technology devices, computers, homemade devices, electronics, video recorders
- Modify materials
- Provide augmentative communication devices

Staff Supports/ Collaboration:

- Enhanced staffing
- Provide one-on-one aides
- Institute co-teaching arrangements
- Designate adult staff member to listen and provide support
- Provide small group instruction
- Use cooperative learning groups
- Provide staff development

Resource B: IEP Adaptation and Modification Checklist

Additional Options and Updated Terminology

While the “Web Guide to Special Services Partnership” (“Resource A”) is an excellent resource, the following list breaks down modifications and accommodations a bit differently. Some of the terminology is more current and reflects language used by *IEP Direct*, the program Hastings on Hudson Special Education uses to generate IEPs. Thus, you will find some overlap between the two resources. Like “Resource A”, this list is not all encompassing – there are other adaptations and modifications that can be made – and not every modification or adaptation will necessarily be appropriate for your child.

Service/Modification:

- Additional set of books
- Allow wait time
- Assignment book checked daily
- Assist with organization
- Behavior intervention plan
- Breakdown tasks/directions
- Communication notebook
- Copy of class notes
- Cue attention
- Directions/questions clarified
- Extra time to complete tasks
- Frequent breaks
- Flexible due dates
- Modify curriculum
- Modify grading
- Modify homework assignments
- Modify written materials
- Note taking assistance
- Pacing
- Preferential seating
- Preview materials
- Prioritize tasks
- Refocusing and redirection
- Repetition of skills and concepts
- Scribe
- Study guides
- Visual cues

Testing Accommodations:

- Administer in small group
- Administer individually
- Answers in text book
- Answers recorded
- Braille format
- Calculator
- Check for understanding
- Directions/questions clarified
- Directions/questions read
- Extended time
- Flexible setting
- Flexible scheduling
- Frequent breaks
- Grammar check device
- Large print format
- Modify format
- Questions on auditory tape
- Revise test directions
- Revise test format
- Special location
- Spell check device
- Test signed
- Visual magnification device
- Word bank
- Word processor

Assistive Technology:

- Books on tape/cd
- Calculator
- Spell check device
- Word processor
- Visual magnification device