

IEP vs. 504 Plan

Information for Parents

Both an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and a 504 plan help students with disabilities get the support they need to succeed in school. IEPs and 504 plans have a number of similarities, but there are also some significant differences.

If your child has a condition that adversely impacts his/her education, a well-written, well-implemented IEP or 504 plan will help ensure that your child gets the support and services he/she needs.

	IEP	504 Plan
Legal Basis	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)	American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Purpose	To provide individualized special education services for eligible students	To modify a student's educational program in the regular classroom setting
Eligibility	Students must have one or more of the 13 disabilities listed by IDEA as eligible to receive services. The disability must also adversely impact a child's educational performance and requires specialized instruction.	Students must have a disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities (e.g., learning). Section 504 has a broader definition of disability than IDEA.
Contents	An IEP is a written document developed by an IEP team. It details a student's current educational performance, services, goals, accommodations, modifications, placement, and more.	Hartland Consolidated Schools uses a specific 504 evaluation process. Please contact your child's building principal for more information.

The Right Choice for Your Child

When an IEP is appropriate

- An IEP is the best choice if a student requires specialized instruction.
- Examples of services provided may include, but are not limited to: speech therapy, occupational therapy, explicit instruction in academic areas.
- If the student is below grade level in achievement, an IEP may be an option, though there are many other factors to consider as well.

When a 504 plan is appropriate

- A 504 plan is appropriate when students generally function well in the regular classroom, but need extra supports (accommodations) to perform at their best.
- Examples of accommodations include, but are not limited to: extra test time, audio textbooks, a specific seating assignment, peer assistance with notetaking, extra time on projects, oral tests.
- While rare, 504 plans can provide modifications such as alternative testing (fewer or different questions) and less demanding assignments that still meet grade level content expectations.

Many accommodations offered by 504 plans (e.g., extra test time, adaptive tools, extra breaks) may also be offered by IEPs, so it's important to focus on the whole child rather than individual problems and solutions when making a decision.

Regardless, if your child is eligible for an IEP, a 504 plan or neither, educators at your child's school will do everything in their power to help your child succeed. If you have any concerns, ask questions, and get clarification by contacting your building principal.