



Pelham Public Schools

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# Navigating Disability Services

**in Higher Education**  
From High School to College:  
Ensuring Access and Success

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# Welcome Our Guests

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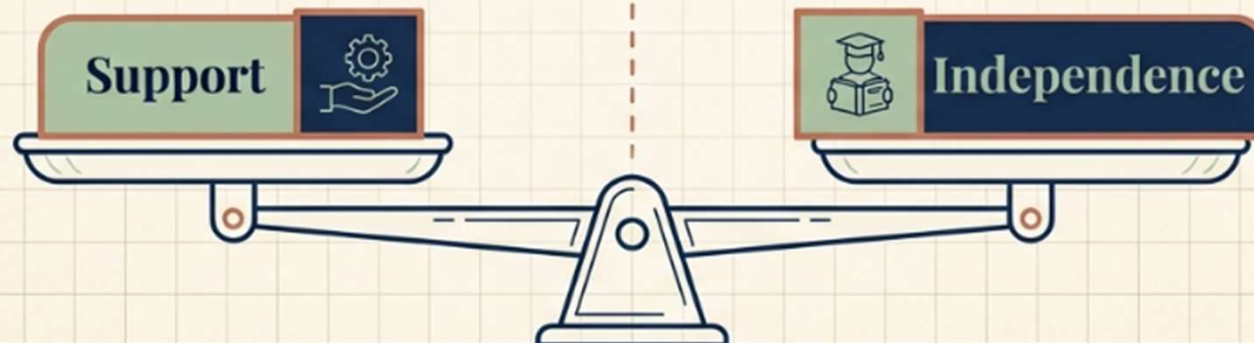
# The Fundamental Shift

## HIGH SCHOOL (IDEA)

- **Law:** Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- **Concept:** Entitlement to Education (FAPE)
- **Mechanism:** Specialized instruction & modifications to ensure standards are met.

## COLLEGE (ADA)

- **Law:** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) & Section 504
- **Concept:** Civil Rights & Anti-Discrimination
- **Mechanism:** Reasonable accommodations to remove barriers; success is not guaranteed.



# **HIGH SCHOOL: IDEA (CSE)**

## **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

Guarantees students with disabilities a free, appropriate, public education.

Emphasizes success by providing specialized instruction and related services to help students meet educational standards.

Schools are required to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities from birth through age 21

# HIGH SCHOOL: 504


Plans are developed by a team that includes parents, teachers, school counselors etc.

Schools are required to ensure that accommodations are implanted and monitored.


Parents have strong involvement

## Student Perspective in High School

Teachers receive a copy of the student's IEP/504 Plan at the beginning of the year.



Teachers are responsible for ensuring they follow the IEP or 504 Plan.



Teachers, parents, and special education teacher might discuss student concerns and work to resolve challenges the student is facing.

# High School Parent Perspective



Parents often take an active role in their student's education.

Parents attend yearly CSE or 504 meetings.

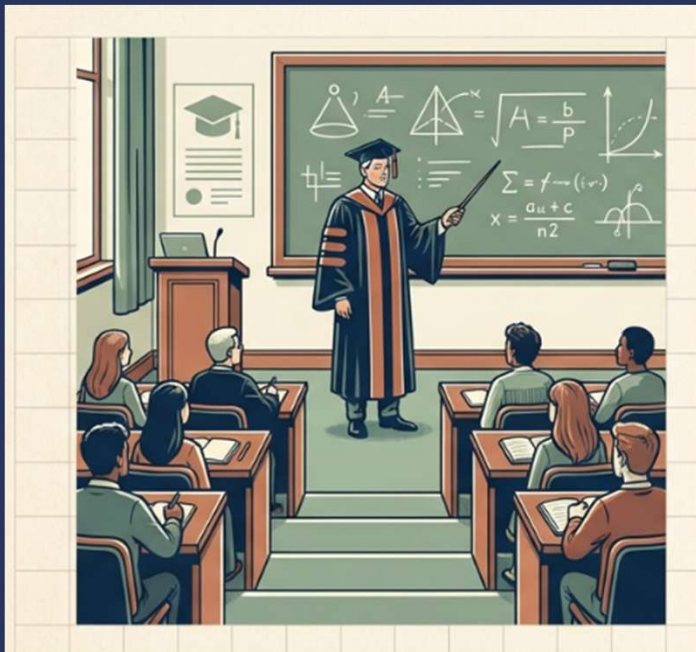
Parents might reach out to teachers with questions or concerns regarding their child.

Teachers might reach out to parents with concerns about the student.

# Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504

- College students with disabilities are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Amendments Act 2008), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Prohibits the discrimination of **otherwise qualified** individuals with a disability.
- Requires colleges to provide **reasonable accommodations** to remove barriers.
- Your institution, regardless of where you go, is required to provide appropriate academic adjustments/accommodations to ensure that it does not discriminate on the basis of disability.

# Breaking Down The ADA: “Otherwise Qualified”



## Definition: “Otherwise Qualified”

An **individual** who, with or without reasonable accommodations, meets the academic and technical standards for admission or participation.



**1. Merit-Based:** Must meet same GPA and test standards.



**2. Self-Identification:** Burden of proof shifts to the student.



**3. No “Special Ed”:** Standard is Access, not Success.

# Breaking Down The ADA: Reasonable Accommodations

**Reasonable accommodations** must be provided to eligible students with disabilities in order for them to **access** essential course content and essential learning activities.

Adjustments created to provide students with access to programs.

Accommodations must be directly linked to a functional limitation posed by a disability.

A reasonable accommodation cannot pose a fundamental alteration to a course or program of study

Accommodations are determined on a case-by-case basis

# The Great Comparison: Modifications vs. Accommodations

High School Accommodation	College Expectation
Study guides provided by teachers	Students create their own study guides
Spelling mistakes ignored/not counted	Students use spell-checkers; grading standards remain
Teacher/Aide explains test questions	Instruction in test-taking strategies only
Modification of assignment length	Accommodations (e.g., extended time) provided, but course requirements are not altered
Teacher prompts student to pay attention	Student sits in front; uses technology to refocus

# FUNDAMENTAL ALTERATION

## An accommodation can be denied if...

- If it is not related to the disability
- If it fundamentally alters a program
- If it is unreasonable
- If it poses an institutional burden

**\*Decisions are made on a case by case basis**



## Common Accommodations

- Use of digital recorders
- Extended Time
- Separate Location
- Close Captioning
- Use of AT for reading and notetaking

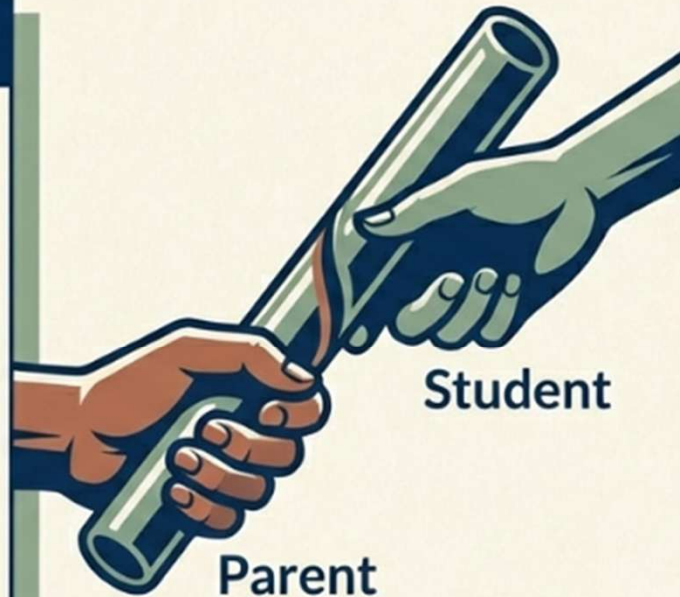
## Assistive Technology

- Any tool used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of person w/ a disability
- Use of AT at colleges varies
- Includes programs for speech to text and text to speech

# Passing the Torch: FERPA and the Parental Role

## The Legal Wall


- FERPA rights transfer to the student at age 18 or upon matriculation.
- No automatic access to grades or professors without a written "Proxy Waiver".



## The Role Shift

- High School: Parent as Case Manager (*Advocating, scheduling, intervening*)
- College: Parent as Coach (*Mentoring from sidelines, encouraging the student to act*)

# Names of Disability Offices



Center for Student  
Accessibility

Disability  
Resources Office

Disability Services

Accommodations  
Office

# Role of the Post Secondary Disability Services Provider

**\*\*\*Please note services vary from college to college. These are some potential examples.\*\*\***

- Institutions may have one or two staff members who attend the needs of students w/ disabilities
- The disability coordinator evaluates documentation, works with students to determine appropriate services, assists students in arranging services or testing modifications, and helps student problem solve
- May connect with a student during the semester
- Usually does not provide direct academic support or tutoring



# Requesting Accommodations in College

Students are responsible for self-identifying by reaching out to the college office that handles disability accommodations/accessibility (please note that office names vary widely).

Students will likely need to complete a short intake application and attend a meeting with a representative from the office.


The student should come to this meeting prepared to discuss their disability, previous accommodations they have received, and what they are requesting.

Student should come with documentation (if this has not already been uploaded).

# Common Questions

- What is your disability or disabling condition?
- How does your disability impact your academics?
- How does your disability impact your daily life?
- What previous accommodations have you received?
- What accommodations are you requesting and how do these accommodations remove barriers posed by your disability?





# Documentation Requirements

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- The student is responsible for providing documentation.
- Institutions may set their own requirements for documentation as long as they are reasonable and comply with Section 504 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Specific standards often vary between institutions.
- The primary purpose of documentation is to establish the presence of a disability and the functional limitations it imposes.

Is a student's  
IEP Plan or 504  
Plan sufficient  
documentation?

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Often times these documents are insufficient because they do not provide enough information to support the existence of a current disability and the need for academic adjustments.

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Information can still be helpful when paired with documentation that explains the disability, the process through which the disability was diagnosed, and the functional limitations posed by the disability.

# Decisions About Accommodations

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Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

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There are no blanket accommodations tied to specific diagnoses because the same disability can present differently from one student to another.

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Providers look for a clear connection (not “nexus”) between the functional limitation posed by a disability and the requested accommodation.

# I Have Been Approved For Accommodations: Now What?



This may vary from institution to institution, but generally, your college will generate a letter for you. On this letter, it will have your name, ID#, and a list of all accommodations you've been approved to utilize.



You then can provide this letter to any, all, or none of your instructors for the semester. Remember: the responsibility to disclose always lies with you.

# College: Student Perspective

- Student needs to disclose their disability to their university's disability services office.
- Student will likely need to give their professor an accommodation letter or grant the disability services office permission to do so.
- Student might need to schedule exams for which they will be using their accommodations.
- Student must reach out to get support if they are struggling.



# College: Parent Perspective

- As an adult, your child is protected by the Family Educational Records Privacy Act (FERPA).
- Staff will likely communicate directly with students when issues arise and are generally not required to interact with students' parents
- Parents cannot speak with anyone from campus about their child's grades or academic progress unless they receive explicit permission from their child in the form of a proxy waiver.

I N D E P E N D E N C E

# Transition Preparation

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Students should be familiar with their disability and its functional impact on their daily lives

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Students should be familiar with their IEP or 504 plan and other documentation

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Students should have copies of all documentation

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Students should discuss independent methods for accommodation with CSE Team\*\*

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Students should be prepared to advocate for themselves

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Plan to meet disability service offices when you visit college campuses – no two offices are the same

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Ask if they offer additional fee-based programming (Executive Functioning, Social Communication, Tutoring...)

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Academic support programs may require additional application

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College admissions should not ask you about disabilities



# Self-Advocacy

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- Encourage your child to start advocating for themselves.
- Get your student used to checking their email.
- Encourage your student to become familiar with technology.



## How Can I Help Prepare my Student

- Encourage your student to participate in their IEP or Section 504 meetings.
- Have your child email their teachers when they have questions or concerns about class material.
- Make sure your student is comfortable speaking with others about their needs.

# Accommodations can Go Beyond the Classroom

If the college offers it, it most likely needs to be accessible

- Residence halls.
- Events.
- Clubs.
- Dining Services.
- Facilities.
- Student Services
- Etc.

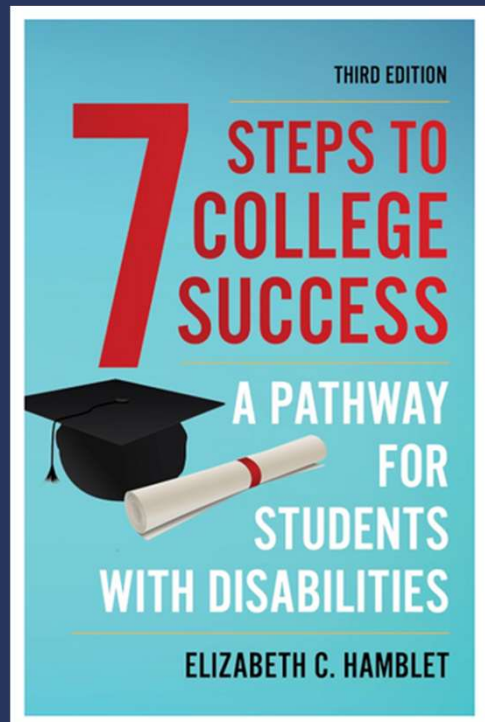


# Beyond Accommodations

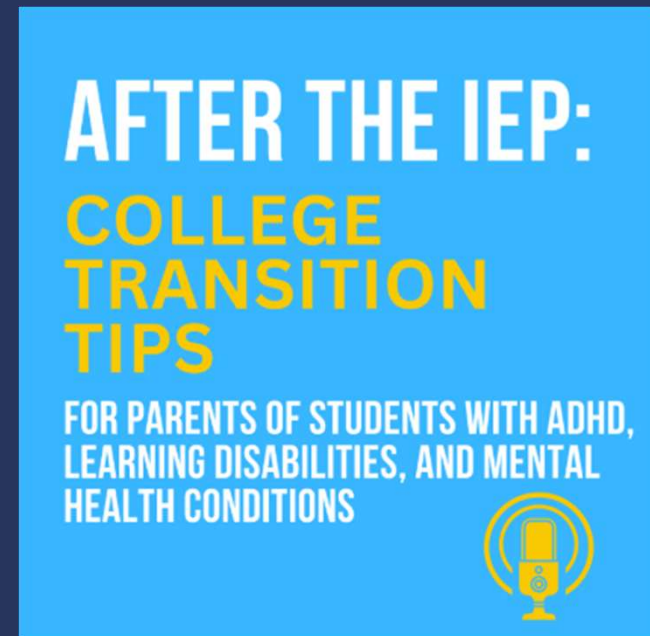
- **Paid Programming**
- **Summer Transition Programs**
- **Additional Campus Resources**
- **Disability Clubs and Activities**



# Useful Resources



Available on  
Amazon



Available on  
Spotify

