

## K-12 Academic Resources Guide

*This guide is intended to provide students and parents with a broad range of academic resources in both public and private education. It covers 504 plans, individualized education plans (IEPs), assistive technology (AT), school vouchers, charter schools, online schools, homeschooling, and alternative education models within public education.*

### Please Note:

- **Parent Advisory Council (PAC):** Parents are encouraged to contact their local school district's special education parent advisory council. State Departments of Education will have access to information; see also the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools (<http://www.sedl.org/connections/>) and The Center for Parent Information and Resources (<http://www.parentcenterhub.org>).
- The **school nurse** is the medical practitioner in a student's daily life. That practitioner needs to be (1) informed about the student's medical diagnosis of idiopathic hypersomnia (IH); (2) provided information about the diagnosis ([www.hypersomniafoundation.org](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org)), including the IH Standard Characteristics document ([www.hypersomniafoundation.org/IHSummary](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/IHSummary)) and the K-12 Education Essentials Guides (<http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/ed-essentials>); (3) informed about the student's needs in a school setting, including but not limited to possibly dispensing medication and providing a space for necessary naps and exercises; and **(4) invited to participate in all school meetings (504/IEP) for the student.**

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## **PUBLIC EDUCATION**

### **504 Plan**

“504” refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, an amendment to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which states that a student’s access to education cannot be limited due to a disability. A 504 plan outlines accommodations that will ensure a student’s quality of education is not hindered by their disability. This typically consists of *changes to the current learning environment*.

- **Definition of Section 504:** “Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Section 504 provides: ‘No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States . . . shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance . . .’” (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>)
- A **Section 504** plan is designed to ensure equal opportunity and equal treatment by providing meaningful access to the educational program
- **“REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS”** may include physical accommodations, instructional accommodations, and special education and related services
- **Eligible individuals** have a “physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more . . .major life activities.”
- **More information:** <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>

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### **IEP**

The **INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)** is a federal law designed “... to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed **to meet their unique needs** and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living ....”

An “individualized education plan” (IEP) is a highly personalized plan for a student’s education. It will most likely include *accommodations to the environment, modifications to the material, additional services, and specialized instruction*, such as special education services not offered in the general classroom. An IEP is more involved than a 504.

- **Definition:** <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/d/300.320>
- An IEP is designed to **ensure the student receives a free, appropriate, public education** by providing special education and related services.
- Eligible individuals have one of **14 specified disabilities** that adversely affects the student’s educational performance.

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/categories/>

- **More information:**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html>

**What's the difference between a 504 and an IEP?** A student can receive EITHER a 504 plan OR an IEP, not *both*. The main difference is that the eligibility requirements for an IEP are more stringent. More specifically, the IEP provides modifications to the *curriculum*, whereas the 504 provides modifications to the *context* (conditions/environment) of the learning. The difference is determined by the student's academic needs, with the IEP affect *what* and the 504 affecting *how* a student learns.  
<http://www.washington.edu/doit/what-difference-between-iep-and-504-plan>

### 504/IEP Workshop, 2015 Hypersomnia Foundation Conference

- ***Accommodations with Teeth: Pursuing a 504 Plan for Students with Hypersomnia*** (Kate Pece, MEd, Educational Consultant, <https://www.katepece.com/>)
  - [http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/School-Accommodations-for-Students-with-Hypersomnia-K.Pece\\_.pdf](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/School-Accommodations-for-Students-with-Hypersomnia-K.Pece_.pdf)

### 504/IEP publications, *SomnusNooze*

- ***Crash Course: Public School Accommodations for Children with Hypersomnia*** by Kate Pece, MEd, Educational Consultant, <https://www.katepece.com/>
  - **Part 1 (504 Primer)** 9/15/15  
[www.hypersomniafoundation.org/crash-course-public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia/](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/crash-course-public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia/)
  - **Part 2 (Understanding 504 vs. IEP)** 10/6/15  
[www.hypersomniafoundation.org/crash-course-public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia-part-2/](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/crash-course-public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia-part-2/)
  - **Part 3 (Developing Stellar Accommodations)** 11/17/15  
[www.hypersomniafoundation.org/public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia-part-3/](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia-part-3/)
  - **Part 4 (Squeaky Wheel Strategies)** 12/15/15  
[www.hypersomniafoundation.org/crash-course-public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia-part-4/](http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/crash-course-public-school-accommodations-for-children-with-hypersomnia-part-4/)

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## **Assistive Technology**

### **Assistive Technology Act (1988)**

- **Overview: *Assistive Technology & K-12: A Walk on the Tech Side***  
*During the 2015 Hypersomnia Foundation Conference held in Atlanta, GA, two workshops focused on assistive technology (AT) in education. A discussion of AT follows and includes links to the PPPs of those workshops.*

Often referred to as the Tech Act for short, the Assistive Technology Act was first passed as the Technology-Related Assistance Act of 1988. It is *"intended to promote people's awareness of, and access to, assistive technology (AT) devices and services."* It "seeks to provide AT to persons with disabilities, so they can more fully participate in education, employment, and daily activities on a level playing field with other members of their communities. The Act covers people with disabilities of all ages, all disabilities, in all environments (early intervention, K-12, post-secondary, vocational rehabilitation, community living, aging services, etc.)." For more information, see <http://www.parentcenterhub.org>.

- **Assistive Technology Workshops, 2015 Hypersomnia Foundation Conference, Atlanta, GA**
  - **Technology Tools for Hypersomnia 101: Microsoft Windows and Office**  
(Shonda Lyons-Golden, EdS, Fulton County Schools, GA)
    - <http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tech-Tools-for-Hypersomnia-S.Lyons-Golden.pdf>
    - <http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Comparison-of-Accessibility-Features-in-Versions-of-Windows-S.Lyons-Golden.pdf>
  - **Technology Tools for Hypersomnia 102: iPad/iOS & Google Tools**  
(Gigi Whiteside, EdS, Fulton County Schools, GA)
    - <http://www.hypersomniafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tech-Tools-for-Hypersomnia-G.Whiteside.pdf>
- **Assistive Technology: Statute of the Act**  
Assistive Technology Act of 1998 | Section508.gov Public Law 105-394 105th Congress.  
An Act to support programs of grants to States to address the assistive technology needs of individuals with disabilities  
[www.section508.gov/assistive-technology-act-1998](http://www.section508.gov/assistive-technology-act-1998)
- **Assistive Technology Act | Center for Parent Information and Resources**  
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/ata/>
- **Assistive Technology Program | U.S. Department of Education**  
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/assistivetech.html>
- **Directory of Assistive Technology Projects by State/Territory**  
Each state and territory receives a federal grant for an Assistive Technology Act Project (ATAP) to provide services to persons with disabilities, as well as to those involved in providing services such as education and employment. State specific contact information and website links can be found at this website.  
<https://www.ataporg.org/programs>

## Additional Resources

- **Universal Design for Learning: A Placemat of Core Apps Serving Learning for All**  
[http://www.qiat.org/docs/resourcebank/UDL\\_Placemat\\_BWelsford\\_V2.pdf](http://www.qiat.org/docs/resourcebank/UDL_Placemat_BWelsford_V2.pdf)
- **Accessibility Guide for Windows 10**  
The following link is a download with features including: text to speech, word prediction, and distractibility removal.  
<http://bit.ly/Windows10AT>
- **Sonocent Audio Notetaker for PC and MAC**  
[www.sonocent.com](http://www.sonocent.com)
- **ATIA (Assistive Technology Industry Association)**  
AT Resources Funding Guide  
This guide provides sources of and resources for funding options. Companies that sell assistive technology can give you more specific answers about funding opportunities for their products and may help you find financial support from these or other funding sources.  
<https://www.atia.org>

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## **Academic Choices**

Your state's Department of Education is the best resource for information regarding academic options available to you and your family.

### ***School Vouchers***

Many states now offer "vouchers," or alternative education pathways, which allow students to take their full time equivalent (FTE) funds and use that money to pay the tuition at a self-selected school, be it a virtual school, private school, charter school, homeschool, etc.

#### **School Voucher Laws: State-By-State Comparison**

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

<http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/voucher-law-comparison.aspx>

From the NCSL:

*Thirteen states and the District of Columbia provide state-funded school vouchers to qualifying students. While each state approaches school vouchers differently, there are common questions states must address when developing their voucher programs. These include:*

- *What will the program jurisdiction be? Will it be statewide? Will it be limited to certain areas of the state?*
- *Which students will be eligible for a voucher? Will it be offered to low income students, special needs students, students attending failing schools, etc? Or, will*

*every student in the state be eligible?*

- *Will the voucher be only for students currently enrolled in public school? Or, will it be offered to students already attending private schools who otherwise meet the eligibility criteria?*
- *What will private schools be required to do in exchange for accepting publicly-funded students? Will they have to administer state assessments? Will they have to share student performance data with parents? Will they have to receive official accreditation? Will private schools have to share their financial reports with the state? For what reasons will participating schools be allowed to reject voucher student applications?*
- *Will there be a cap on the number of vouchers that can be handed out each year?*
- *What will be the maximum dollar value of a voucher?*

See where your state stands on school vouchers. Be sure to visit your state's Department of Education website for the most updated information.

*\*Note: The thirteen states that provide school vouchers are: AR, FL, GA, IN, LA, ME, MS, NC, OH, OK, UT, VT, WI, as well as Washington, D.C.*

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### **Charter Schools**

Charter schools are public schools that may provide a program of instruction that differs from traditional public schools.

- **Charter schools - Fast Facts - U.S. Department of Education**  
National Center for Education Statistics  
<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=30>
- **Facts - The Center for Education Reform**  
There are more than 6,800 charter schools serving nearly 3 million children across the country (February 2016).  
<https://www.edreform.com/issues/choice-charter-schools/facts/>
- **Example: Georgia**  
<http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/Charter-Schools/Pages/General-Frequently-Asked-Questions.aspx>

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### **Virtual/Online Schools**

"If I were a parent looking for a virtual school, I would look for a virtual school that focuses on standards-based mastery, flexible pacing, and asynchronous learning (students and teachers log in at different times which means

students can complete their assignments and work at their own pace)."

K-12 Special Education Veteran Teacher

Sometimes referred to as "independent online education," virtual schools provide online coursework that students may complete remotely through an Internet-connected computer. Some virtual classes are managed by an actual teacher who teaches the course (using videos, presentations and other technology), grades the work, and assists students via messaging, email, or phone when needed. Other virtual courses are strictly computer-based programs with lessons, tutorials, and computer-graded assessments. Depending on the school, the user may take classes for free or may have to pay a fee for each course.

- **Online Learning – NAIS** ([www.nais.org](http://www.nais.org))  
National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS)  
**NAIS 2010 K-12 Online Learning: A Literature Review**  
<http://www.nais.org/articles/documents/k-12-online2010finalv1.pdf>
- **Rights, Resources, and Accredited Online Programs**  
A guide to help students with disabilities and their parents/supporters better understand their rights and responsibilities. It covers K-12 online education as well as postsecondary education and provides tips and information for locating higher education online programs that best suit a student's needs.  
<http://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/>
- **Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning - U.S. Department of Education**  
A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy. On request, this publication is available in alternate formats, such as braille, large print, or computer.  
<https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>
- **Example: Georgia**  
Students can attend GA Virtual School exclusively or can attend public school part of the day and take virtual courses for the rest of their school day.  
<http://www.gavirtualschool.org/About/GeneralFAQs.aspx>
- **Example: Colorado**  
Online Schools and Programs - Colorado Department of Education  
  
In Colorado, an online school is defined as a full-time education school. . . "that delivers a sequential program of synchronous or asynchronous instruction directed by a teacher, primarily through online digital learning strategies that provide students choice over time, place, and path, and teacher-guided modality of learning."  
  
An online program is defined as "a full-time education program... that delivers a sequential program of synchronous or asynchronous instruction directed by a teacher, primarily through online digital learning strategies that provide students choice over time, place, and path, and teacher-guided modality of learning."  
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/schools>

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## **Homeschooling**

Homeschooling is the practice of providing a child's K-12 instruction at home. Parents may choose to teach their children themselves or may have someone else provide part or all of the instruction. Students may use any combination of experiential education, workshops, workbook-based courses, or virtual courses. Accountability requirements for homeschooling vary from state to state.

- **Homeschooling - Fast Facts - U.S. Department of Education**

National Center for Education Statistics

The primary purpose of the Fast Facts website is to provide users with concise information on a range of educational issues, from early childhood to adult learning. Fast Facts draw from various published sources and are updated as new data become available. Additional references on each of these topics are highlighted within each fact.

<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91>

**Example: Georgia**

<http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Pages/Home-Schools.aspx>

Homeschooling also includes online homeschooling.

- **Homeschooling and Online Education - US Department of State**

Homeschooling allowances; education allowances; frequently asked questions and answers for home study/private instruction

[www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21941.htm](http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21941.htm)

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## **Alternative Education Models within Public Education**

"If I had a child with IH, I would home school my child (if I were able to do so) so that I could ensure a standards-based mastery education with flexible pacing. If my child demonstrated mastery for a standard, he/she would immediately move on to the next standard. If a project or paper could "prove" mastery of several standards, I would submit it accordingly. If I were not able to home school, I would look for a school/district that supports personalized learning."

K-12 Assistive Technology Specialist

## **Standards-Based Education**

Standards-based education refers to the planning, instruction and assessment of a student's level of mastery of specific, course-based standards at the K12 level. States may have their own set of standards or they may use Common Core standards.

- **Standards-Based Definition - The Glossary of Education Reform**

Dec 5, 2014 - In a school that uses standards-based approaches to educating students use state learning standards. Common synonym: mastery-based learning.

[www.edglossary.org/standards-based/](http://www.edglossary.org/standards-based/)

- **Example: New York**

[Shifting to Mastery-Based Approaches in New York City Public Schools](#)

Aug 27, 2014 - Because schools approach mastery in different ways, we focus on ... (or outcomes) aligned with Common Core and NY State standards.

<http://www.competencyworks.org/resources/shifting-to-mastery-based-approaches-in-new-york-city-public-schools/>

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## **Personalized Learning**

Personalized learning is the tailoring of pedagogy, curriculum and learning environments to meet the needs and aspirations of individual learners. Technology is a valuable resource for facilitating personalized learning environments. Personalized learning environments engage students and motivate them to think critically, problem solve, manage information, collaborate effectively, take responsibility for individual learning and behavior; they include assessments, project-based learning opportunities, effective use of data, mentoring and guiding.

- **Example: Vermont**

[What Is Personalization, Really? | Edutopia](#)

Mar 2, 2015 - Personalized learning means student agency, defining curriculum by real-life skills. Grades 9-12 | Montpelier, VT.

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/what-is-personalization-really-mike-martin-adam-bunting>

- **Example: Gates Foundation**

[Personalized Learning - K-12 Education](#)

When learning is personalized, students take ownership of their education and discover their passions and interests.

<http://K12education.gatesfoundation.org/student-success/personalized-learning>

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## **Competency-Based Learning**

Transitioning away from seat time, in favor of a structure that creates flexibility, allows students to progress as they demonstrate mastery of academic content, regardless of time, place, or pace of learning. Competency-based strategies provide flexibility in the way that credit can be earned or awarded and provide students with personalized learning opportunities. These strategies include online and blended learning, dual-enrollment and early-college high schools, project-based and community-based learning, and credit recovery, among others. The content is relevant to each student and tailored to unique needs, and the pace of learning is customized to each student.

- **Competency-Based Learning Definition - The Glossary of Education**

Defining competency-based learning is complicated by the fact that educators not only use a wide variety of terms for the general approach, but the terms may or may

not be used synonymously from place to place. A few of the more common synonyms include

*proficiency-based, mastery-based, outcome-based, performance-based,* and *standards-based* education, instruction, and learning, among others.

<http://edglossary.org/competency-based-learning/>

Examples of competency-based learning from [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) include these statewide initiatives, although the links are provided for users' convenience and are not endorsements. See [full disclaimer](#):

<https://www2.ed.gov/notices/disclaimer/index.html>

- **Example: New Hampshire**

The state is initiating high school redesign that replaces the time-based system (Carnegie unit) with a competency-based system focused on personalized learning, strong teacher-student relationships, flexible supports, and development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

[https://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs\\_redesign/index.htm](https://www.education.nh.gov/innovations/hs_redesign/index.htm)

- **Example: Ohio's Credit Flexibility Plan**

This plan, adopted by the State Board of Education in 2009, allows students to earn high school credit by demonstrating subject area competency, completing classroom instruction, or a combination of the two. Under this plan, subject area competency can be demonstrated by participation in alternative experiences, including internships, community service, online learning, educational travel, and independent study.

<http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Quality-School-Choice/Credit-Flexibility-Plan>

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### ***Alternative Public Schools/Programs Accessible Only with IEP or 504 Approval***

These school options vary across schools and school districts, and accommodations can be sought only through either a 504 or IEP. Typically, a 504 Coordinator or Graduation Coach is in charge of facilitating 504 meetings, whereas a special education coordinator/case manager is in charge of facilitating IEP meetings.

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## **PRIVATE EDUCATION**

Private schools are also known as independent schools, non-government schools or non-state schools and may be secular or religion-based. Private schools may not necessarily have to follow the public school calendar or the approaches to education used in the public sector. Their procedures/protocols for requesting accommodations may not be consistent with those of the public education departments in which their students reside. Parents need to seek out their own answers and pursue the right person at the private school to request or set up a meeting about academic accommodations that are needed. In order for your child to earn credit, the private school must be "accredited" by a credible accrediting body. Check with the Department

of Education in your state to determine the accreditation status of a given private school.

- **Public and private school - Fast Facts - U.S. Department of Education**  
National Center for Education Statistics (<https://nces.ed.gov>)  
The primary purpose of the Fast Facts website is to provide users with concise information on a range of educational issues, from early childhood to adult learning. Fast Facts draw from various published sources and are updated as new data become available. Additional references on each of these topics are highlighted within each fact.  
<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=55>
- **NAIS - National Association of Independent Schools**  
The National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), a nonprofit membership association, provides services to more than 1800 schools.  
[www.nais.org](http://www.nais.org)
- **CAPE | Private School Facts - Council for American Private Education**  
THE COUNCIL FOR AMERICAN PRIVATE EDUCATION (CAPE) [www.capenet.org](http://www.capenet.org) is a coalition of national organizations and state affiliates serving private elementary and secondary schools. There are over 33,000 private schools in America; in fact, one in four of the nation's schools is a private school. More than five million students attend them. CAPE member organizations represent more than 80 percent of private school enrollment nationwide.  
<http://www.capenet.org/facts.html>

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## **GLOSSARIES OF TERMS**

- <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/504-plan/504-plan-terms-to-know>
- <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/getting-started/disability-important-terms/terms-you-may-hear-and-what-they-mean>

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