

School Accommodations that Support Success

For ADHD, Autism, learning + sensory differences, and other neurodivergent learning profiles

Executive Functioning + Attention

EF = brain-based skills for managing time, attention, organization, planning, emotions, flexibility, memory, and follow-through.

- Use clear written + verbal directions
- Break work into smaller steps
- Give one direction at a time
- Use schedules, checklists, timers
- Support starting, prioritizing + turning in work
- Provide notes/outlines in advance
- Reduce copying demands
- Allow extra time or stop-the-clock breaks

Sensory + Regulation

Sensory supports help students stay available for learning before overwhelm becomes distress.

- Allow headphones, fidgets, doodling or flexible seating
- Offer proactive movement/sensory breaks
- Provide access to a quiet/calm space
- Reduce noise, light, crowding or visual clutter
- Give advance warning before loud or unexpected events
- Allow alternative activities for pep rallies, parades, assemblies, or lunchroom

Communication Supports

Students may need more explicit language and more time to process.

- Allow processing time before expecting a response
- Do not require eye contact to prove listening
- Allow verbal, written, visual or assistive tech responses
- Clarify idioms, sarcasm and implied expectations
- Use direct, calm, respectful language
- Avoid public correction when possible

Social + Unstructured Time

Lunch, recess, group work and free time often carry hidden social rules.

- Support lunch, recess, arrival, dismissal and field trips with proactive social teaching strategies and in the moment social coaching.
- Offer structured choices during free time
- Teach how to explicitly join a game or start a conversation
- Help identify safe peers or small groups
- Make group roles clear and concrete
- Monitor for exclusion, teasing or subtle rejection

Neurodivergent School Accommodations

Academic Supports

These supports reduce access barriers without lowering expectations.

- Provide audiobooks or text-to-speech software
- Allow speech-to-text or typing
- Reduce unnecessary handwriting demands
- Use graphic organizers, models and examples
- Chunk reading and writing assignments
- Allow alternative ways to show understanding
- Grade content separately from handwriting/spelling when appropriate
- Allow for flexible deadlines and due dates

Testing Supports

Testing should measure the skill being assessed, not processing speed, handwriting, anxiety or sensory tolerance.

- Extended time or stop-the-clock breaks
- Small group/reduced-distraction setting
- Allow for flexible seating, gum chewing, or other sensory regulation supports.
- Directions read aloud or clarified
- Typing, text-to-speech or speech-to-text
- Calculator/math chart when calculation is not the target skill
- Reduce visual clutter or split tests across sessions

Transitions + Environment

Predictability and clear routines reduce stress and support independence.

- Build positive relationships and proactive behavior strategies.
- Preview the day and schedule changes
- Use visual timers or countdowns
- Prepare for substitutes, assemblies and field trips
- Allow extra transition time
- Use visual expectations and consistent language
- Offer quiet work options and flexible seating
- Avoid shaming, sarcasm or calling out publicly

Self-Advocacy + Neuroaffirming Practice

Focus on access, belonging, skill-building and emotional safety.

- Teach how to ask for help or request a break
- Use a private signal for support
- Include the student in planning when appropriate
- Validate needs without framing the student as difficult
- Do not require still body, quiet hands or eye contact as proof of attention
- Recognize movement, looking away or breaks as regulation tools
- Assume positive intent and look for the unmet need