



**PIE's Resource Guide for Families  
of Students with Physical Disabilities  
Applying to and Attending  
NYC High School**

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## CONTENTS

### Introduction

### General Things to Know Regarding Accessible Schools

- Types of Accessible Schools A.1
- What does a school know about a student's disability A.2
- Where to ask for help A.3

### Application Process

- Looking at Schools to create lists of possibilities B.1
- Open Houses and School Tours B.3
- Applying for Accommodations on High School Admissions Exams, Auditions and Portfolios B.6

### Getting Ready to start High School

- Practical Considerations
- Requesting Reasonable Accommodations
- Paraprofessional
- Scheduling
- Nursing
- Assistive Technology
- Elevators
- Bathrooms
- Transportation
- Lunchroom Accommodations

- C.1 **Once School Begins: Issues to Watch** D.1
- C.1 Accessible Instructional Materials D.1
- C.2 Students with Endurance or Fatigue Issues D.1
- C.3 Non-Academic Time D.2
- C.4 Integrating Related Services D.2
- C.5 Regents and Final Exams D.3
- C.5 Extended High School Program D.3
- C.5 Field Trips D.4
- C.6
- C.7

## Introduction

[Parents for Inclusive Education \(PIE\)](#) is a group of parents, educators, and advocates working together to make inclusion a viable option for all students with disabilities in New York City. For the past several years we have been advocating for increased opportunities for students with physical disabilities, specifically with regard to high schools. With others in NYC, we have advocated for increased funding in order for the Department of Education to expand the number of physically accessible schools available to students, and we have advocated for more information to be provided to students and their families with regard to schools that are accessible to meet the needs of students with physical differences.

To further the information already available to students with physical disabilities and their families, PIE has created this Resource Guide to help parents and guardians of students with physical disabilities who have IEPs to support their children applying to and attending their first year of high school. **This Resource Guide is not a complete description of the high school application process. Rather, this Resource Guide focuses on aspects of the application process as they specifically relate to students with physical disabilities. Therefore, this Resource Guide is intended to be read as a supplement to other materials that explain the High School Application Process for all 8th grade students applying to high schools in NYC.**

If you are a parent or guardian preparing for the high school application process with your child, this should not be the only document you read on the process. We suggest you also review materials provided to you by your child's middle school and the Department of Education.

When reading this Resource Guide, we suggest you read or browse all of it, as questions may be answered as you read. If you have more questions or need assistance with any issue raised in this Guide, feel free to contact PIE at [pienyc@gmail.com](mailto:pienyc@gmail.com).

# General Things to Know Regarding Accessible Schools

## Types of Accessible Schools

- 1. FULLY ACCESSIBLE SCHOOLS** are schools that, according to the DOE, have no barriers to access for individuals with physical disabilities. We recommend you still visit a school to confirm it meets the accessibility needs of your child
- 2. PARTIALLY ACCESSIBLE SCHOOLS** vary greatly in their accessibility. Some of these schools are accessible to the degree that students or individuals with physical disabilities can access the majority of the building, but may not access the entire school program or building. However, some partially accessible buildings lack key elements that students or individuals with disabilities need, such as accessible bathrooms, doorways or even elevators.

The DOE has created Building Accessibility Profiles (“BAP”) for each partially accessible high school. These profiles specifically detail how the building hosting the high school may or may not be accessible. BAPs for individual buildings can be found on this link by clicking on the [link](#) in the “Building Accessibility” box for the particular NYC Public High School in which you are interested. **NOTE:** BAPs detail the accessibility of school buildings, not particular high schools. Therefore, if a building has more than one high school in it, the same BAP will cover all the high schools within that building. A more complete explanation of BAPs can be found at this [link](#).

Even after reviewing a building’s BAP, we recommend visiting any public high school that you are interested in having your child attend before applying to the school in order to ensure the school can meet the physical accessibility needs of your child. If you are interested in a partially accessible high school that has a key inaccessible feature or barrier, you can request the DOE make changes to the school with regard to the inaccessible features. This is also known as requesting a Reasonable Accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Examples of this could be ensuring a student can access a stage by requesting the installation of a lift, requesting changes be made to a classroom or lab, or asking for a bathroom to be altered so that it can be accessed by an individual with a wheelchair or other mobility device. See section entitled, “Requesting Reasonable Accommodations with Regard to Accessibility” for more information.

- 3. NON-ACCESSIBLE SCHOOLS** are schools that are not accessible to people with physical disabilities.

# General Things to Know Regarding Accessible Schools

## What does a school know about a student's disability when applying to high schools

Screened and audition high school programs can see only whether an applicant is designated as a student with a disability for the purpose of admissions. A student with a disability for the purpose of admissions means a student who is receiving special education services for more than 20% of their instructional program in SETSS, ICT, or Special Class. Screened and audition high schools are required to rank a certain number of students with disabilities. For high schools, that number is based on the percentage of students with disabilities in the school's borough.

Education option (ed-opt) programs are split into 50% ranked offers and 50% offers regardless of rank. For the ranked offers, high schools with ed-opt programs can see the same details screened programs can.

All other programs (unscreened / open and zoned programs) do not see applicants' status with regard to being a student with a disability because they do not rank students.

# General Things to Know Regarding Accessible Schools

## Where to ask for help

Middle School Guidance Counselors, where students attend middle school, provide assistance and support to students and their families who are applying to high school. It is our understanding that each year, middle school guidance counselors receive training on the high school application process, which includes special considerations for students with physical disabilities who are applying to high school.

In addition to guidance counselors, the following departments in the DOE may also provide assistance:

Individuals in the Special Education Office are tasked with the job of helping students with physical disabilities apply to high schools. If, as a student with a physical disability or as their parent/guardian, you experience problems at any time during the admissions process, you should first speak with your child's guidance counselor before escalating your concerns to [accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov).

Separate from the individuals who help with accessible admissions, the DOE has a different email address where requests can be made for changes in architecture or physical structures of a school. For example, if a partially accessible school needs a ramp outside in order to be accessible, changes need to be made to a bathroom, or if a school needs different furniture so that a person who uses a wheelchair or other mobility device can easily access a table. These requests can be sent to the Division of Space Management's Accessibility Coordinator at [accessibility@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibility@schools.nyc.gov). See section entitled, "Requesting Reasonable Accommodations with Regard to Accessibility" for more information.

You can also contact PIE ([pienyc@gmail.com](mailto:pienyc@gmail.com)) at any point in the process to seek information and/or assistance.

# Application Process

## Looking at Schools to create lists of possibilities

During 7th grade and the summer before 8th grade, you should start looking at the list of fully accessible schools and partially accessible school to create a list of high schools that might be of interest to your child. The DOE's new application system, MySchools.NYC, has a search engine of schools that you can filter based on level of accessibility. Some things to consider:

### PREFERENCES

Starting during the 2018-2019 school year, fully and partially accessible schools will prioritize the admissions of students with accessibility needs. This means that for high schools in accessible buildings that use screened admissions method, highly ranked applicants with accessibility needs will get an admissions priority over other highly ranked applicants. Additionally, high school programs that are located in accessible buildings and use an open, educational option, or zoned admissions method, students with accessibility needs will be in the first priority group, over all other applicants. Finally, all high schools will prioritize students with accessibility needs regardless of the zone or district where they live. [Here](#) is more information about this policy.

### SCHOOL LOCATION

- Is the high school close to home? Can the student get to the school without a school bus? Will the student want to use public transportation?
- If the student will be taking a school bus, how long might the bus ride take?
- Does the student have medical issues that makes a longer bus ride inappropriate? Will the student need the assistance of a paraprofessional to ride the school bus with him/her?
- If the student will be taking public transportation to school, is there an accessible subway near the high school? Does that subway line easily connect to the subway near your home?
- What time does school begin? Will the student be traveling during rush hour? How will travelling during rush hour impact the student's commute time and ability to travel reliably and timely?

# Application Process

## INTERESTS & COMMUNITY

- What are the academic and other interests of the student that match the high school offerings?
- Are there schools that are accessible or partially accessible that can foster or grow the student's interests?
- Will your child be among peers and be able to make social-emotional connections at this high school?
- Is diversity valued in the school's community?
- How are careers and/or college supported at the high school?

## SPECIALTY & SCREENED HIGH SCHOOLS

- Does the student want to attend a high school that requires the Specialized High Schools Admission Test (SHSAT)?
- Is your child interested in a screened high school that may require an interview, audition, the submission of a portfolio or an essay, participation in an assessment, or other admissions requirements?

# Application Process

## Open Houses

Most high schools will hold open houses in the Fall for all students as opportunities to visit the school and ask questions about its programs. These open houses are good to gain general information of the schools, but they do not provide many opportunities for specific questions and they can be very crowded. If you are planning to attend an Open House and your child needs to be accommodated during the event, we suggest speaking to the individuals at the school who are organizing the school's open house to inform them of your child's particular needs when attending the session.

### OPEN HOUSES FOR STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

For the past two years, some schools have had special open houses for students with disabilities. These events have either been before or after a general open house or a separate event all together. They provide students with physical disabilities and their families opportunities to:

- 1. Determine if the school can be accessible to meet the students' needs. Some things to look for include:**
  - b.** Can the student enter the building (i.e. is there an acceptable accessible entrance)? If there is a barrier, is it one that may be solved by a Request for a Reasonable Accommodation? (See Section, "[Requesting Reasonable Accommodations with Regard to Accessibility](#)")
  - c.** Can the student reach all the classrooms? Can the student access the: Cafeteria? Gymnasium? Auditorium? Stage? Art rooms? Science labs?
  - d.** Is there an elevator, if the student has trouble climbing stairs?
  - e.** Is the elevator large enough, if the student uses a wheelchair or another mobility device?
  - f.** Is there more than one elevator, in case one breaks? How often do the elevators break down?
  - g.** Is there a key that is needed to use the elevator? Will the student have a copy of the key in order to have independent access to the elevator?
  - h.** In case of fire, are there holding rooms or what is the protocol for those students with mobility challenges and needs?
  - i.** Are there bathrooms that the student can access? Can a wheelchair or other mobility device fit into the bathroom and one of the stalls? Are there grab bars? Is the doorway to the bathroom appropriate? Is there clear width/enough turning space in the bathroom and the stall? How crowded are the accessible bathrooms? For students

# Application Process

who need assistance is there some way to have privacy? If the bathrooms at a school are lacking in a particular way in order for it to be accessible for your child, you can request a reasonable accommodation for changes to be made to the bathrooms. See section entitled, [“Requesting an Accessibility Accommodation”](#) for more information

- j. Is there a clear path for students who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices to maneuver and turn around?
- k. If there are places in the building that are not accessible to students with physical disabilities, what are those places? How will limited access to these places affect the student’s high school experience?
- l. If the student is blind, is there sufficient braille labelling the classrooms and the other areas of the building?
- m. If the student is deaf or hearing-impaired hard-of-hearing, are there hearing loops in the classroom and other areas of the building?
- n. Is there room in the classrooms for students with wheelchairs or other mobility devices to move around and participate in small group work?
- o. If the student uses a wheelchair or other mobility device and does not transfer to

a typical chair, is the classroom furniture accessible or have adjustable height desks? Remember to look at the furniture in the classroom as well as the furniture in other areas of the building, like the cafeteria, science labs, and computer labs.

**NOTE:** If the accessibility of a school can be improved relatively easily, requests for changes can be made to the DOE. For instance, if a school’s furniture is inaccessible, room arrangements are not physically appropriate, bathrooms are not fully accessible, lighting is inappropriate or there is no signage in or outside of the building, a request can be made to makes these changes to the school. See section entitled, [“Requesting an Accessibility Accommodation”](#) for more information.

**2. Ask questions that are specifically related to students’ disabilities and how the school’s program can accommodate different learning needs of students with physical disabilities. However, keep in mind that all schools need to provide the programs and services on a student’s IEP. Some questions can include:**

- a. How would the school accommodate a student who easily fatigues?
- b. What might happen if a student cannot complete a full freshman course load due

# Application Process

- to medical or fatigue issues? Is a reduced schedule a possibility? What would it look like?
- c. Where would related services be provided? Is there a space for related services to be provided in school?
- d. Is the school familiar with providing students with accessible instructional materials?
- e. How are paraprofessionals at the school hired and trained? Can a parent/guardian provide some training to the para with regard to the personal needs of their child?
- f. Can the student be provided with orientation and mobility services to:
  - i. Learn how to travel the halls of the school;
  - ii. Locate classrooms, lockers, bathrooms and other key areas;
  - iii. Understand layout of school;
  - iv. Follow a schedule; or
  - v. Orient self within classrooms or special classes like the science labs or music/art studios
- If a school has an entrance exam, performance or portfolio requirement, make sure to confirm the process for receiving accommodations for such requirements and ensure that the school does not have any specific requirements.

If you are interested in a high school that does not have a specific open house for students with physical disabilities but you have questions about how a student can be accommodated, we suggest you email the school principal and guidance counselor with your specific questions. If you do not receive a response after appropriately following up, we suggest contacting [accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov).

## School Fairs

In addition to Open Houses, the DOE holds high school fairs in each borough in early fall. Most high schools in the borough attend these fairs and it is a good opportunity to speak to the school generally about its program. While the school may not have the individuals at the table who can answer questions about special education or students with physical disabilities, you should still try to ask the questions. If the questions cannot be answered, ask with whom at the school you could follow up. Finally, if you have concerns about anonymity and not wanting schools to know about your child's specific disability before your child is accepted to the school, this could be a good time to ask questions without needing to identify your child.

# Application Process

## Applying for Accommodations on High School Admissions Exams, Auditions and Portfolios

Students who have testing accommodations listed on their IEP are entitled to accommodations when taking high school entrance exams and/or participating in auditions. The testing accommodations they receive on high school entrance exams and auditions will correspond to the testing accommodations they already receive on other assessments. However, students will not receive testing accommodations that are unnecessary (for example, extended time on an untimed test) or that interfere with what the test is trying to measure (for example, a calculator on a test that measures a student's arithmetic skills). For more information on testing accommodations for admission exams, we suggest looking at the [DOE's Testing Accommodation Section](#) on its website.

**NOTE:** Some of the testing accommodations on the Specialized High Schools Admissions Test (SHAST) have been standardized. For instance, students who are eligible for extended time and are recommended for time and a half will receive double time. For more information, consult the [Specialized High Schools Student Handbook](#).

Middle school guidance counselors are tasked with the responsibility of helping students receive their accommodations. Students and families should speak with their middle school guidance counselor about making these arrangements.

**NOTE:** Students with accommodations register for exams and auditions the same way as all other students.

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the High School about before the Student begins

### Practical Considerations

Once your child is matched with a high school, there is a lot to think about to determine whether the school is ready to accommodate your child. In this section, we list some of issues that typically are raised with regard to this population. All or only some of these issues may apply to your child.

How and when you raise these issues to the school is up to you. While you can wait until your child begins school, we suggest raising them as soon as possible after your child is accepted to the high school. One way to do this is to email the Principal of the school and introduce yourself and child and explain your desire to speak with him/her or some other individual at the school about your child's transition to the high school. You may want to briefly describe the issues or concerns in your email or you can wait until you meet.

If you have trouble advocating for some or any of these accommodations with the high school to which you child is assigned, you can contact the DOE at: [accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibleadmissions@schools.nyc.gov).

### Requesting Reasonable Accommodations with Regard to Accessibility

Once you know the school where your child will attend, think about whether there are any architectural changes that are necessary at the school in order for your child to be fully included in the school. Perhaps, consider visiting the school again to ensure all the necessary areas of the school are accessible. Some structural accommodations you can request that the DOE put in place before a student begins school include:

- At least one bathroom can meet the student's needs; (this may include having changing tables, grab bars, and/or a system for ensuring privacy in the bathroom).
- The furniture in classrooms, lunchroom, library, labs, and other places are accessible and provide knee and toe maneuvering clearance, especially if the student uses a wheelchair or other mobility device.

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the High School about before the Student begins

- For school entrances, the appropriate tools and mechanisms are installed to enable the student to enter independently.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Is there a push button at the door to enable a student to manipulate the door independently?
- If there is a separate accessible entrance, is the entrance properly labelled and does it have the necessary security and intercom that is required? Are there the appropriate tools to open that accessible side door to enable the student to independently enter the building?
- If there is a separate entrance, is it open to all so the student feels equal to other members of the school community?
- In auditoriums, the stage and other areas are accessible.
- If your child will be receiving therapy in school, there is an appropriate location for the therapy to take place where equipment (e.g. a stander, mats, therapy ball) can be used
- There is a place in the school where a student can rest and possibly lie down, if your child needs to take a break during the day or on an as needed basis. You should not assume that your child will be able to use the nurse's office to rest.
- The appropriate supports are in place to assist your child and ensure his/her safety and participation in fire drills or lockdown drills. If specific individuals are identified to help your child during an emergency, are back-up individuals also identified and trained for when primary individuals may be absent?

If there are any issues that need to be addressed or other minor renovations needed to take place before a student can be fully included in the school, you should contact the Division of Space Management's Accessibility Coordinator at [accessibility@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:accessibility@schools.nyc.gov) to make the request. It is best to talk to the school about the request before contacting the Accessibility Coordinator. The school or the parent can make the request for the accommodation. There is no reason why a parent/guardian cannot make the request directly (i.e. the request does not need to come from the school).

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the High School about before the Student begins

### Paraprofessional

Paraprofessionals rarely move schools with students. And, typically, paraprofessionals are assigned directly to schools or are taken from a central pool of paraprofessionals.

A student does not have the right to any particular paraprofessional. However, your student has the right to an appropriate paraprofessional and one who is able to help the student in the ways in which are needed. With this in mind, it is helpful to ensure the school is aware of the reasons for the paraprofessional in order to take those needs into consideration when hiring and assigning paraprofessionals. Some examples of times when a school needs to consider the particular needs of a student when assigning the paraprofessional includes:

- If a student will need assistance transferring in and out of a wheelchair or other mobility device in order to use the bathroom or participate in other activities, the school needs to ensure that the paraprofessional assigned to the student has the physical ability to lift the student;
- If the student requires assistance from the paraprofessional to use assistive technology, the paraprofessional needs to be an individual who is comfortable using technology once trained to use the student's devices
- If the student will need a paraprofessional to take the student's notes, the paraprofessional needs to understand how to do this;

Once a paraprofessional is assigned to the student, you can request that the school work with you and others to train the paraprofessionals. Some issues the paraprofessional might need training on include seat positioning, toileting, use of assistive technology and learning how to appropriately support academics. As you think about the training a paraprofessional working with your child might need, it is best to make a list of all of your student's needs and have some time to review the list with the paraprofessional.

Many parents/guardians develop a personal relationship with their student's paraprofessional and often communicate with the paraprofessional via text about the student's personal needs.

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the High School about before the Student begins

### Scheduling

High schools do not consult with parents/guardians when creating a student's schedule. However, if your child's needs require consideration by the school when creating their schedule, you should inform the school in the spring or early in the summer. Some issues that you want a school to consider for a student are:

- Fatigue, especially if it happens at certain times in the day. Or, if possible, maybe it is best for your child not to have more than two academic classes in a row;
- Some students have medical conditions that result in them being more alert in the morning or more alert in the afternoon. If this applies to your child, you may want the school to consider it.
- Schools may offer to exempt a student from a nonacademic class in order to provide the student with a related service. For example, a school may offer to waive an art or music requirement so that a student can receive physical therapy. Agreeing to accept such a waiver is an individual decision and may make sense in the case of some students. However, it might be important to remember that, at times, nonacademic classes provide students opportunities to socialize and/or explore personal interests. If this is the case, a parent/guardian does not need to agree to accept a school's offer to exempt a student from a particular nonacademic subject.
- Some related services can successfully be pushed into non-academic subjects. For example, physical therapy can be pushed into gym class. This can be helpful if a student has a number of related services each week and not many free periods.

The considerations schools need take in to account when creating a student's schedule should be listed on the student's IEP. If they are not, it might be a good idea to obtain documentation from a doctor to support your child's need for a flexible schedule and state how your child's disability makes a traditional academic high school schedule difficult.

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the High School about before the Student begins

### Nursing

If nursing is on a student's IEP, be sure to coordinate with the school early on (i.e. summer before school begins) to ensure a nurse is present when the student begins school. This is also important if a nurse is needed to ride the bus with the student to and from school. Identifying individuals to perform these roles are not easy. It is imperative that a school starts a search for them early on and as parents/guardians you can encourage schools to do this.

### Assistive Technology

If your child uses assistive technology during the school day, you may want to inquire before your child leaves middle school as to how it will be transferred to your child's high school. This is especially important if your child only uses the technology in school, as opposed to transporting it to and from school each day. Additionally, you may ask the high school administrators about how individuals at the high school will be trained to use the technology or trained to work with your child with the technology. Similar to other issues described in this section, you may want to inform individuals at the high school about your child's experience with the technology and how it is most effectively used.

### Elevators

Some schools have elevators that everyone in the school community can access, while other schools have elevators that can only be accessed by adults with keys. If your child will need to use the elevator on a daily basis and the elevator is not open to all students, it is important to coordinate with high school administrators as to how your students will have access to the elevator at all times when it is needed.

### Bathrooms

Some students need specific accommodations in bathrooms (i.e. changing tables or private bathroom for medical issues). Be sure to bring these needs to the school's attention as early as possible so the school can work with you on planning how to meet these needs. Additionally, if the accessible bathroom is not open to all students, it is important to coordinate with high school administrators as to how your child can have the access s/he needs (i.e. if the bathroom requires a key, the high school may need to give your child a copy of the key).

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the High School about before the Student begins

### Transportation

If your student needs travel accommodations different than the ones listed on his/her IEP, use the student's IEP meeting in the spring of his/her 8th grade year to have the accommodations changed. To do this, you will need to obtain the medical documentation and 504 Accommodations Form stating the student's current need for transportation accommodations. The [form can be found here](#). When reviewing the form, individuals at the DOE will likely request to speak with the doctor who completed the form. As a result, the DOE requires a parent to complete and submit a HIPAA form along with the 504 Accommodations Form. The HIPAA [form can be found here](#).

Medical documents are typically reviewed by individuals beyond those involved in the IEP process. Given the number of individuals that need to review the documents, it is wise to submit requests for transportation accommodations as early as possible, even before the IEP meeting in the spring of 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Once the transportation accommodations are changed on the IEP, it is important to call Office of Pupil Transportation ("OPT") or check its website a few days before school begins to ensure the appropriate accommodations are in place before school begins. If there are problems with OPT providing the accommodations listed on a student's IEP, call OPT at 718-392-8855 or email at [pupiltransportationteam@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:pupiltransportationteam@schools.nyc.gov).

Also, be aware that sometimes, buses ask students to leave class early to board the afternoon bus that will be transporting the student home. There is no requirement for the student to comply with this request. Students should remain in their classes until the very end of class at the end of the day. If a bus driver, matron or bus company asks a student to leave class early to board the bus and leave for home, you can call OPT and register a complaint. It is also important to speak with the student's high school and ask them to assist in speaking with the bus company or bus driver about this being an inappropriate policy.

# Getting Ready to start High School

## Issues to talk to the School about before the Student begins

### Lunchroom Accommodations

It might be important to think through what your child needs during meal time. Some students might need assistance obtaining food from a lunch line, eating, additional time to eat, a quieter environment (as opposed to a loud cafeteria) during meal time. Students may also need special furniture in the cafeteria. (See Section on “Requesting Reasonable Accommodations with Regard to Accessibility.”) These needs should be thought through before school begins and raised to the school.

It is also important to remember that lunch time may be one of the only times during the day that a student can socialize and be with friends. This is especially true for students who receive related services during a free period in their schedule. As a parent/guardian, you may want to ensure your child remains free during lunch in order to see his friends or have some rest in the school day as opposed to using it as another nonacademic time to schedule related services or something else.

# Once School Begins

## Issues to watch

### Accessible Instructional Materials

Some students with physical disabilities also have learning issues or need academic instruction in an accessible format. Accessible materials include a pdf, word document, or powerpoint which can be enlarged, highlighted or otherwise adapted as needed. Students will have different requirements for accessible materials. Most text books can be obtained in an electronic format that can be adapted to meet a student's needs and many schools employ electronic systems (i.e. google classroom) to help student stay abreast of assignments and projects. However, when teachers hand out packets of information, such materials may not be accessible. In addition to outlining your child's needs for accessible materials in his/her IEP, schools should be informed of how materials need to be specifically adapted so that they can be accessible to your child. Some adaptations that you may want to consider requesting are:

- Specific font type and size
- Specific color of text and color of background
- Specific amount of information on each page
- Specific amount of questions or problems per page

These accommodations should also be included on the student's IEP.

### Students with Endurance or Fatigue Issues

Some students may have problems with fatigue and will require academic requirements be adapted to accommodate for fatigue issues. Accommodations can be written into a student's IEP to accommodate fatigue. Some accommodations can include shortening assignments or providing students appropriate time to practice and demonstrate mastery of specific skills, as opposed to requiring the student to complete lengthy assignments that contribute to fatigue (e.g. 5 math problems covering required skills rather than 20). Students may also need extended time to complete assignments.

See also section on [Extended High School Program](#).

# Once School Begins

## Issues to watch

### Non-Academic Time

The school might need to put some accommodations in place for when your child is participating in nonacademic classes. In other words, if a student is participating in an art class, is that class appropriately accommodating the student's needs? Another example might be if a student with physical disabilities is participating in physical education with his nondisabled peers; is the gym class modifying its activities so that the student with the disability can participate? Similarly, if a student has a free period in their school day when s/he can socialize and complete school work, are there appropriate accommodations in place for the student during this time? If students need help or accommodation during these times of the day, you should speak to school administrators.

### Integrating Related Services

Some related services can be successfully pushed into classes. Some examples of this include providing speech during a group conversations in an ELA class, occupational therapy during a music class or physical therapy in a gym class. However, be mindful of related services being pushed into classes because it does not always make sense. For instance, if a student has more than one session of a particular related service, it might not make sense for multiple sessions of the related service to be pushed into a class. Programming decisions about whether related services are pushed into the classroom or pulled-out should be based on the student's needs and decided during the student's IEP meeting. These decisions should not be based on the schedules of therapists.

# Once School Begins

## Issues to watch

### Regents and Final Exams

Additional documentation is required by New York State for students who need the accommodation of multiple-day testing for Regents exams. The additional documentation is required regardless of whether the accommodation is listed on your child's IEP. If your child needs multiple-day testing on Regents exams, it is important to discuss with the school the length of time your child can test each day in order to plan for and implement this accommodation. We recommend speaking to the school long in advance of the exam in order for the appropriate documentation to be submitted to the state.

### Extended High School Program

Under the law, students with IEPs have the right to attend high school until the age of 21. With this in mind, it is sometimes useful to plan for a student to attend high school longer than 4 years. Bearing in mind the academic rigor of many high school classes along with the related services many students need in order to achieve academic success as well as the limited hours in a school day, sometimes it makes sense for a student to decrease his/her course load in order to have enough time in a school day for academic classes, related services and nonacademic classes. In return, these students will need to remain in school for more than 4 years in order to finish all the necessary requirements for graduation. If extending high school in order to decrease a student's course load is something that you are interested in for your child, we suggest you discuss it early on with the school or raise it at the first IEP meeting held for your child at the school.

Some high schools may not be familiar with the idea of extending high school and may require a student to first drop nonacademic classes before academic ones. However, it is a reasonable accommodation to request that a student delay academic classes, as opposed to nonacademic classes. If you experience problems negotiating this for your child, we suggest contacting [SpecialEducation@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:SpecialEducation@schools.nyc.gov).

# Once School Begins

## Issues to watch

### Field Trips

Field trips can be challenging for high schools to coordinate for students with physical disabilities, especially when schools rely on public transportation for students to get to the location of the field trip. If students are traveling via public transportation, the school needs to be cognizant to use a transportation route that is accessible for your child. Also, the school should be prepared to check the route the morning of the trip to ensure that all public buses, elevators and trains are working and be prepared to use alternate routes. Schools may not be aware of all the considerations that go into using public transportation. As parent/guardian, you may need to inform the school of the considerations that need to be remembered when planning a field trip.

If a school is planning a field trip with a bus, the school needs to remember to reserve a bus with a lift and accessible seating. If the school cannot reserve a full-size bus with a lift so that students can ride with their friends and needs to reserve a minibus instead, the school should consider how to appropriately integrate students without physical disabilities on to the minibus so that students with physical disabilities feel included, as opposed to isolated when riding the minibus. A high school should remember these considerations on their own, however, as the parent/guardian sometimes it is best to remind them.

Additionally, if your child has medical needs that requires the presence of a nurse in the student's vicinity even if the student does not have a 1-1 nursing service listed on his/her IEP, the school may need to make the necessary arrangements for a nurse to travel with the student during a field trip. Again, while schools should remember the need of a nurse for a student, often times, parents/guardians may need to remind school administrators if nursing needs to be arranged for field trips.

Finally, schools should be mindful to schedule trips that are inclusive for all students. For example, a school trip to go ice skating may not be a good idea if students who use wheelchairs will be participating. Additionally, schools should be encouraged to arrange field trips where students with physical disabilities are able to receive the appropriate supports and accommodations from school staff in order to participate. In other words, it is not appropriate for a school expect a parent/guardian to attend a field trip in order for their child to participate.