

2021 HSLDA SPECIAL NEEDS CONSULTANTS

Resource Guide

Essential First Steps for Homeschooling Students with Special Needs

Homeschooling truly is an Individualized & Customized Educational Plan!

No matter what educational setting you determine is the best fit for you student, when it comes to educating students with special needs here are some quick tips for success!

Essential Steps for Success when it comes to home education for students with special learning needs:

- ***Realize that you are the expert when it comes to your child! Learn all you can about your child's diagnosis, while recognizing that your child is more than a particular diagnosis or label.*** Nobody loves your child or wants to see them succeed and meet their full potential more than you. By learning about your child's diagnosis and different abilities, you can grow in understanding how to better support them as you continue to be your child's fiercest advocate and loudest cheerleader.
- ***Keep good records of your child's diagnosis;*** Create a homeschool records file and maintain any therapy notes, progress reports, evaluations, and educational/diagnostic test reports, such as a neuro-psychological or psycho-educational test report which will document/justify the student's need for accommodations.
- ***Consider creating a Student Education Plan and/or a Home Education Accommodation Plan;*** Your HSLDA Special Needs Consultants can assist you with this and provide templates.
- ***Accommodate for your child's needs.*** Accommodations are changes or adaptations to curricula and materials, how the content is presented, and/or how learning is demonstrated (oral presentation rather than written report); scope and quantity may be altered, presentation methods are changed, and typographic features may be altered, such as font size. Accommodations are meant to level the playing field and allow the individual to perform up to his/her potential. Accommodations are not cheating! So, make a plan for your student's reasonable accommodations and discuss these accommodations with your student and with other adults or teachers, such as those in your community of faith, coaches, music teachers, and co-op leaders. Accommodations level the playing field and

help students take in information or demonstrate what they know. Some common accommodations are extra time, use of audiobooks, dictation or oral assessment, and frequent breaks, to name a few. It is a good idea to keep a written record in your homeschool or educational files of the educational accommodations you provide to your student.

- ***Be open and honest discussing with your child about his diagnosis and teach your child self-advocacy skills.*** Students with disabilities are entitled to seek accommodations and should learn to self-advocate. Your child needs to understand that his diagnosis does not define him. There are many bright and successful people with disabilities. In fact, it is estimated that one in five people have a learning disability. Help your child come to understand what their difficulty or disability is and how it may impact them, but also teach them ways to work around it. Also, help your child recognize both the ways in which they are smart and their areas of strength. The book [*8 Great Smarts*](#) by Dr. Kathy Koch is a great resource.

Self-advocacy is an important, empowering life skill. Resources such as [*The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan*](#) by Ben Foss, the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity, LDadvisory.com, and Understood.org can help you find resources to educate your child and teach them how to advocate for themselves.

- ***Investigate curricula and resources, treatment options, such as therapies, interventions, and possible medications.*** A great place to start is your child's pediatrician or diagnosing professional. You may also want to consider seeking holistic treatments by working with an integrative physician. There are more and more types of therapies available for various disabilities and special needs: art and music therapy, pet and equine therapy, behavioral and cognitive therapy, and traditional or standard speech/language, vision, physical, and occupational therapies. Incorporate these interventions as part of your home education plan.
- ***Don't go it alone! Seek support for your child and your family.*** You can search the [HSLDA Group Services directory](#) to locate a homeschool support group. You can also find student and parent support in the community! Feel free to call your HSLDA Legal Representative or Educational Consultant for support.

Groups such as [Decoding Dyslexia](#) and [Eye to Eye](#) provide parent support and child mentoring, and national charitable organizations such as [Scottish Rite](#), [Easterseals](#), and [The Arc](#) offer resources, support, directories, grants, scholarships, and other helpful tools. [Joni and Friends](#) provides resources, a directory for disability ministries across the country, and family camps. [SPED Homeschool](#) is another national nonprofit organization that offers encouragement, resources, and an online community to support families impacted by special needs.

Common Accommodations:

- Extra time for reading assignments and/or use of audio books
- Untimed assessments or time and half for standardized testing
- Oral summaries or visual presentations, such as Power Points rather than written essays
- Use of laptop, voice recognition software (Dragon Dictate/Dragon Speak) vs. handwritten assignments or essay exams
- Use of calculator on standardized testing
- Reduced class size/testing group
- Frequent breaks

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