
Specials, Extracurricular Activities, and the IEP

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I hope everyone had a fun summer! Now that school is back in session, you may find yourself shifting gears, preparing to ensure your kiddo has a successful school year.

While IEP meetings often focus primarily on academics, specials and extracurricular activities can also be accommodated and/or modified in the IEP.

Specials occur within the school day and may include options such as:

- art
- P.E.
- robotics
- food and nutrition

Schools may offer adaptive versions of these classes, meaning they have already been modified for kids with special needs. But most specials are within the general education curriculum so accommodations or modifications can apply to these classes just as they do academic classes. For example, a child in an art class could use a computer to render a drawing if using pen or pencil is a challenge. Or in robotics, a child may be assigned a para to offer support.

Extracurricular activities occur outside of school hours and include options such as:

- sports
- theatre
- band

These activities typically only provide group supervision by a coach or teacher. So if your child requires a higher level of supervision, it may be your responsibility to provide that additional support. However, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) division of the Department of Education states that school districts have “legal obligations to provide equal access to extracurricular athletic activities to students with disabilities.” If a school is unable to accommodate a student with special needs, the district may partner with the community to provide resources, such as via Unified Sports or Special Olympics.



The bottom line is that your child has every right to explore and participate in specials and extracurricular activities that interest him/her. Specials and extracurricular activities can be great sources of creativity and community, and help provide a well-rounded educational experience. The IEP is the best place to insure those opportunities exist for your kiddo. Reach out to your school social worker or your Arc advocate if you have question or concerns. Have a great school year!