

Headphones/Earbuds as Allowable 504 or IEP Accommodations



QUESTION

Can students' use of headphones or earbuds during class be an acceptable accommodation on a 504 plan or IEP in light of the district's cell phone policy?

ACCOMMODATION CONSIDERATIONS

For some students with disabilities, the ability to concentrate and minimize external distractions is significantly improved through the use of noise-reducing or noise-cancelling devices, white noise, or calming music. These supports may be essential accommodations to access learning.

District procedure [3246P](#) provides for the following cell phone exception:

Students having an IEP, 504 Plan or Individual Health Care Plan (IHP) that includes specific accommodations for assistive technology may use a cell phone and/or PED during the school day following the process outlined in the student's IEP, 504 Plan or IHP.

While this exception allows for **cell phone use when explicitly documented in a plan**, it's important to note that **many effective alternatives exist that do not require a cell phone**.

NON-CELL PHONE OPTIONS

To meet these needs while aligning with the district's cell phone policy, there are several alternatives that do not involve the use of a personal cell phone:

- **Noise reduction:** Earplugs, passive earmuffs
- **Noise cancellation:** Headphones or earbuds with active noise-cancelling features
- **White noise or calming music:** Headphones or earbuds connected via Bluetooth to a district-issued student device
 - **Device-specific details:**
 - **HS:** Devices have Bluetooth enabled and access to YouTube, allowing students to create and access a personalized accommodation playlist.
 - **MS:** Bluetooth is not enabled by default but can be activated on a student-specific basis. Devices also have access to YouTube for accommodation-based playlists.
 - **ES:** Bluetooth is also disabled by default but can be enabled individually. Devices do not have access to YouTube. However, a folder of approved MP3s can be created and stored in the student's Google Drive for access as needed.

SUMMARY

The goal is to provide appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities while maintaining alignment with the district's expectations for responsible technology use. The use of headphones or earbuds for noise reduction, noise cancellation, white noise, or calming music remains an allowable and effective accommodation. **Cell phone use may be considered when necessary and documented**, but in most cases, accommodations can be met through non-cell phone-based solutions.