

Back-to-School Toolkit



Everything you
need to prep for
day one and an
IEP check-in



Undivided's Back-to-School Toolkit

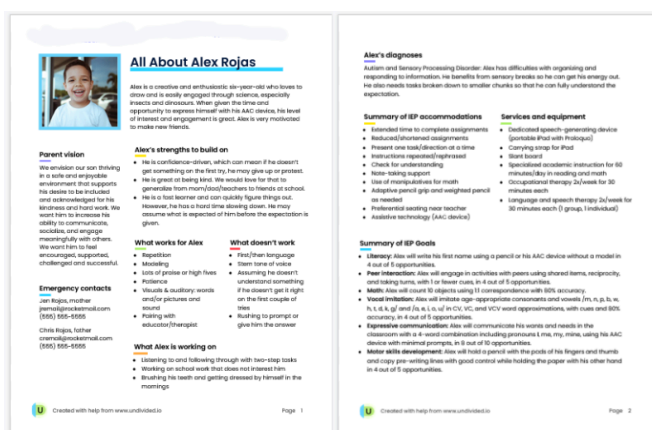
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What You Need for Day 1

It's that time of year again! As we get ready to send our kids back to school, we're thinking about all the things they might need to be successful this year – new click-top markers and pencil grips, sure, but that's not nearly all. We've put together the following templates, checklists, and resources for your back-to-school toolkit to help make your child's transition to a new school year as smooth as possible.

Create an All About Me and IEP summary

At the start of the school year, teachers are incredibly busy and may not take the time to read your child's entire IEP right away. You can make sure they prioritize your kid's most important support needs by creating an ["All About Me" with an IEP summary](#). This document briefly explains your child's strengths, where they need support, and their most important goals.



Check out our free template on the next page that you can use to make your own "All About Me" for teachers and school therapists. This template also includes a space to include your vision statement, your child's strengths, what they're working on, and what teachers need to know about working with them. It's a wealth of knowledge that teachers will be able to refer to quickly! Print and fill out the following pages, or for a digital version, [make a copy of our example All About Me document!](#)

Hello, my name is:



A bit about me:

Parent Vision

Strengths & Loves

Diagnosis

Emergency Contacts

What works for me



What doesn't work



What I'm working on



Medications



IEP Accommodations



IEP Services and Equipment



IEP Goals



You can find our full list of [printable IEP templates here in our free resource library](#).

Schedule a campus orientation tour

If your child is attending a new school this year, see if you can arrange a [campus visit](#) before their first day. Going through your child's schedule and making sure they know how to get to each classroom and bathroom, the cafeteria, the nurse's office, etc. can help calm those back-to-school jitters so they're more comfortable with the change in environment.

Check out our campus orientation checklist on the next page, written with help from an orientation and mobility therapist for a printable list that you can bring with you on a tour.

If a campus tour isn't possible before the first day of school, you can request a temporary transition aide to assist your child in navigating campus for the first several weeks. The aide can be faded out as your child gains confidence in finding (and settling into) their classes and extracurricular activities on their own. To request this temporary transition aide, Dr. Sarah Pelangka (special education advocate, BCBA-D, and owner of KnowIEPs), suggests parents try one of several options:

- Call an IEP meeting and request that a district rep be present (they have to approve the temporary service).
- Email the district and make the request to see if an aide can be approved at least for the first few days.
- Ask your child's teacher if they have a classroom paraprofessional who is available during transitions.

Campus Orientation Checklist

Entrance and exit	NOTES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Can your child get into the building from the outside? <input type="checkbox"/> What's the general school protocol at the start and end of the school day? Will your child follow the same protocols as most other students? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there metal thresholds or carpet that's difficult to traverse? <input type="checkbox"/> Can your child open the door, hold it open, and ambulate or push themselves over the threshold? 	
Bathrooms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does the lighting and contrast in bathrooms make it difficult to differentiate between surfaces? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there any safety-related issues if there's a water spill anywhere in the area? <input type="checkbox"/> If your child uses a wheelchair, can they turn it around in the stall? Can they reach the sink handles? Can they reach the soap and the paper towel dispenser? <input type="checkbox"/> Can your child use the stall lock to get in and out independently and maintain their privacy? <input type="checkbox"/> If your child needs a gender-neutral bathroom, is there one available? 	
Lunch area and cafeteria	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Are the tables accessible? If your child needs more supportive seating, are there other options in the cafeteria? Will benches be supportive enough so that your child can eat with peers? <input type="checkbox"/> If your child is going to purchase lunch, can they reach the card slider or interact with the cafeteria 	

<p>worker? What will your child need to do and say?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Can they see the food on the other side of the display case? Can they manage a tray while moving? If not, how will staff or a peer help them?</p>	
<p>Recess, playground, and gym</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the playground equipment contrast with the ground surface? For example, is there a lot of beige on brown that blends in? Do the surfaces have holes in them where rainwater could cause a safety hazard?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How will your child navigate any stairs? Do they need highlighting on the edge of the steps? Does your child need training in those areas, or can the school highlight or reroute certain activities?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Does the school have a plan to support your child on the playground if they need it?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If there are groups of kids playing basketball or running games, are those games accessible? Should your IEP team meet to brainstorm other sets of activities that are more accessible?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How is the space in the gym utilized, and what does the school need to do to adapt to that space?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If there are tag games that incorporate following lines painted on the gym floor, does the school need to adapt those? For example, can staff use rope and tape to create a raised line that your child can trail with their mobility aid or foot?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Are the balls high contrast? Does your child need sound in the balls?</p>	
<p>Emergencies and fire drills</p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> What are the exit routes for emergencies and fire drills? Does the school have an exit plan specific to your child? For example, if a wheelchair user is on the second floor, how is that student going to</p>	

<p>get out of the building?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If there's a stay-in-place order and the lights go out, can your child get where they need to be to remain safe and to follow the school protocols? <input type="checkbox"/> If your child is sensitive to bright lights or noise, what supports are available to help them stay calm and quiet? 	
<p>Other questions to ask</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask for your child's schedule ahead of time, and request that it be provided in the appropriate format for the student (for example, large print, Braille, auditory access, etc.). <input type="checkbox"/> Will there be a monitor on field trips? Will there be someone familiar with travel needs and adaptations? Can the family be notified ahead of time in the event they want to preview the field trip area with their child? <input type="checkbox"/> If your child uses assistive technology that is large or difficult for them to carry, who's going to transport it from classroom to classroom? When the equipment comes home at the end of the day, who will help your child get it to the bus or pickup? <input type="checkbox"/> Who's going to provide accommodations in each setting—the teacher or the specialist? <input type="checkbox"/> What happens when there's a substitute aide, teacher, or specialist? 	

Create a visual schedule for the new school routine

Visual schedules are amazing for helping kids with routines, especially when transitioning to a new daily schedule or [staying motivated](#) to complete tasks. Whether your child would benefit more from a printed calendar, a magnetic board, or digital reminders, [this article](#) rounds up some great apps and websites to help you create a custom visual schedule for this school year.

Make sure your kid is ready for the first day of school

To avoid the morning rush on that first day of school, create a list of items that your kid will need to bring, and get those items ready in advance. Run down the list again as you send your kiddo out the door to make sure nothing is forgotten! Here are some ideas to get your back-to-school checklist started:


- Regular medications, including any paperwork required by the school with your child's doctor's signature
- Emergency medications, such as those for a food allergy or seizure, also including any paperwork signed by your child's doctor
- Extras of supplies your kid might need or run out of, like a change of clothes, face masks, glasses cord and cleaning cloth, motivational items to provide sensory support and encourage good behavior, a pillow for positioning or safety (seizures), or hearing aid batteries. Check out [our Adaptive Tools and Supplies list](#) put together by Undivided parents and an OT for additional ideas!

Schedule a one-month IEP check-in

IEP experts and fellow parents recommend scheduling an IEP check-in about four to six weeks into the new school year to make sure it's being followed.

Back to School

Checklist

- Create an "All About Me" with an IEP summary
- Schedule a campus orientation tour 
- Create a visual schedule for the new school routine
- Make a list of items to bring on day one
- Schedule a one-month IEP check-in



www.undivided.io

We know that the beginning of a new school year can feel overwhelming for both you and your kid. If you need help mapping out your priorities, making a plan, and getting your child the support they need, try a free Kickstart with an Undivided Navigator. They'll help walk you through all the resources we have available, including step-by-step guides in the Undivided app and education advocacy services to make sure you're prepared for the school year and beyond. Members also have access to bi-weekly Office Hours with our Education Advocate and other experts to make sure parents get all their questions answered. [Schedule your Kickstart](#) today to try membership for free!

The best way to deal with first-day nerves is preparation – so let's get prepared!

Feeling a little overwhelmed? Don't worry, Undivided is here to help!

Schedule a free Kickstart with a Navigator for support in accomplishing this goal. Get started at [Undivided.io/app/join](https://undivided.io/app/join)



Just scan this QR code!

"Being able to turn to my Undivided Navigator has significantly cut down on the research I need to do."

- Undivided client



The Fall Check-In: Following Up with an IEP for the New School Year

You've signed the IEP that's currently in place — but is your child actually getting everything that has been written into it? With school in full swing, it's important to make sure your kid is receiving the services and supports they need to make meaningful progress and get their year off to a great start.

About four to six weeks after school begins, make time to review some key areas of your child's IEP to see what may need updating or adjusting. This can help you determine whether you need to call a fall check-in meeting with your IEP team. While an IEP meeting isn't necessary for everyone, it can be critical in certain situations:

- You want to make changes to the IEP.
- Your child is starting the year at a new school and you want to meet the IEP team to establish a good working relationship and build trust — and make the kinds of adjustments that inevitably come with a change in schools.
- Your child will be working with therapists, teachers, or administrators who aren't familiar with them. Discussing goals carried over from the previous year — especially if your child didn't make the progress the team had hoped for — can help establish better expectations for this year.

But even if those situations don't apply to you, it's still a good idea to check in on your child's IEP for the year by doing the following.

Review your child's IEP

Spend some time reviewing your child's IEP. Consider how the IEP fits the new school year, the new campus, or the new classroom. Check out our article [How to Make Sure Your IEP Is Being Followed](#) for a breakdown of how to make sure your child's teachers and school are providing everything they agreed to. Focus on the most important

parts of the IEP: pay special attention to the list of accommodations/modifications as well as the related services. Are they providing everything your child needs for the new school year? If not, request an IEP meeting to make updates.

Request any necessary assessments

If your child has experienced a loss of learning over the summer or you feel their goals, services, and accommodations are no longer sufficient, a new assessment could go a long way toward getting your child the supports they need.

One reason you may want an updated assessment is to check in on the tools (whether high- or low-tech) that your child uses to access their education. Are they able to keep up with the pace of classwork? Are they struggling to do work independently at school or at home? Could a few well-designed apps make reading and writing assignments easier so they can focus on the learning at hand? Read about all the ways that [assistive technology \(AT\)](#) can boost a child's access to their education, and why it's important to check in on their accessibility needs every year. (You can also check out our article [Assistive Technology Tools to Empower Students with Disabilities](#) for a round-up of the many assistive tech tools and software applications out there.)

Finally, remember that parents can request an assessment of their child at any time. Check out our [article on assessments](#) to learn more. We also have a [sample letter](#) to help you request an assessment.

Review your child's goals and make sure they're based on the Common Core State Standards

There are so many reasons why it's important to make sure your child's IEP goals are based on the Common Core state standards. The main one, of course, is that every child deserves a rigorous education that helps them grow and learn about the world.

In California, teachers use the Common Core state standards to shape what they teach at each grade level. When students aren't ready to access the standards as

written, teachers also have access to Core Content Connectors (CCC) and Essential Understandings (EU), which help bridge the gap for both children with disabilities and their neurotypical peers.

Fall is a good time to review the state standards for your child's grade and consider how your child's IEP goals can be incorporated into the curriculum. Teachers often review the standards at Back to School Night.

Check out [these resources](#) to help you talk to your child's teacher about using CCC and EU to support your child if they need better access to Common Core curriculum.

Every child also deserves the opportunity to graduate with a diploma. Recent developments in California have led to the creation of a new pathway to earning a diploma for students with cognitive (and other) disabilities. Even if a student is using modifications to access their curriculum, or taking alternate assessments, they have the right to the opportunity to work toward a high school diploma. Read our article about [new pathways to a diploma for students with disabilities](#) to learn more.



Undivided provides 1:1 support and step-by-step guides to help with your child's IEP. Get started at www.undivided.io/app/join.

Review your child's access to socialization and general education activities

Checking to make sure your child is included with peers during their school day is one of the biggest reasons to do a fall check-in. If you wrote an inclusive placement or inclusive goals into your child's IEP, you'll want to ensure that the school staff is working to make sure your child is meaningfully included in the classroom.

Placement details

- Are they getting the educational and/or social minutes with their same-aged peers that are outlined in their IEP?
- If your child is in a special day class for the majority of the day, where do they sit when they go into the gen ed classroom? Do they have their own desk? Are they interacting with other kids or just other adults? Are kids with IEPs truly included in the same activities at the same time in the same place with general education students?
- Are all gen ed class activities accessible and inclusive? This includes group work, independent work time, presentations, performances, asking/answering questions, and student responsibilities.

Accommodations/modifications

- Is your child able to relay their knowledge in an accessible way for THEM, or are they expected to do things the same way as everyone else?
- If a specialist or special education teacher is modifying work for teachers and your child, can you see samples, and is that happening every day?

Social opportunities

- Does your child eat lunch, go on field trips, and have PE with same-aged peers?
- Do they have daily opportunities to socialize with all kids?
- If your child requires facilitation for socializing or communicating, who is supporting that?

The beginning of the school year is also a good time to help your child get involved in extracurricular and social activities that are just starting up. Check out our article on [socialization and inclusion](#) for ideas around lunch clubs, recreation therapy, and more, as well as this primer on [extracurricular rights](#).

Make sure there's an emergency plan for your child

It's essential to consider whether your existing emergency plan still fits the environment. If you don't have one, discuss an emergency plan with your IEP team to make sure your child's support and mobility needs are fully accounted for, including scheduling time to practice implementing the plan.

With your IEP team, it's a good idea to discuss the school's emergency evacuation/lockdown plans and what challenges your child may face related to their disability. An [emergency plan](#) developed by the IEP team can include specific information about the equipment or devices needed, which staff will provide assistance, the procedures to be followed to ensure the student's safety, and any accommodations and related services that support the plan.

You might also consider creating a one-sheet emergency plan for easy reference that communicates your child's primary support needs quickly. Check out our template on the next page:

Emergency Evacuation/Lockdown Plan for _____:

Classroom:

Date:

Items in emergency go-kit	Assistance
Location of go-kit:	Support need: Assigned staff: Backup: Assigned peer: Backup:
Additional equipment needed	Supports for exiting the building
Equipment: Location:	
Building exit location	Go-to meeting point
Classroom ____: Classroom ____: Classroom ____: Backup location:	Classroom ____: Classroom ____: Classroom ____: Backup location:
Lockdown location	Lockdown supports needed

You should also make sure any health-related plans are covered in your child's IEP, such as what to do in a medical emergency. An [Individualized Health Plan \(IHP\)](#) can be written by the school nurse to document your child's health needs at school, such as medications or dietary needs. It also includes a plan to train staff and protocol to address medical emergencies. The format of an IHP can vary from district to district, so it's recommended to attach the IHP to an IEP or 504 plan.

Update the IEP as needed

Remember, you can call an IEP meeting at any time. If, after your check-ins, you realize that you need to update your child's IEP, you can request a meeting. If you have a fall IEP meeting coming up, our [Ultimate Checklist for IEP Prep](#) has you covered to help you get ready.

If you're thinking this sounds like a lot of things to get in place at the beginning of the school year, you're not wrong! That's why Undivided Navigators are here to offer 1:1 help with making sure all these tasks get done. Most of our Navigators are also parents raising kids with disabilities, so they know all the hoops we have to jump through to ensure that our kids get the most out of their education. If you're not already an Undivided member, you can [sign up for a free Kickstart](#) to talk with a Navigator about your needs and goals and get help advocating for your child at school.

About Undivided

Undivided is a parent-driven support system for families raising kids with disabilities. We provide an inclusive community, experienced parent coaches, and expert-backed resources, all organized on our innovative platform, to help families get more for their children. Whether you need help accessing Regional Center services, developing an IEP, or finding funding resources for therapies, Undivided's digital workspace can walk you through each step with expert-backed answers.



Get started at www.undivided.io/app/join.