

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) School Fact Sheet

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

MATERIALS

- Provide two sets of textbooks – one for school and one for home, online, or eBooks.
- Allow work to be completed and submitted online.
- Teach the student to use an assignment book and online calendar to record assignments and work completed to help with organization
- Allow use of electronic devices in the classroom (e.g. laptop or tablet)

INSTRUCTION

- Review the students 504 Plan or IEP to determine activities that are suitable for the child's medical condition
- Use multi-sensory instruction to focus on child's learning style.
- Address attention/organizational deficits with preferential seating; frequent checks that assignments are recorded and completed; clear directions with frequent feedback, monitoring of on-task behavior
- Teach internal memory aids – including rehearsing information
- Use checklists to break larger tasks down into smaller ones
- Teach tasks serially instead of having the student multi-task
- Support/facilitate social relationships; often the classroom is the only place these students can socialize with other children their own age
- Use visual aids such as graphic organizers and non-linguistic representations

LOGISTICAL/ADMINISTRATIVE

- Examine the daily physical demands: school attendance, distance between classes, number of stairs, availability of an elevator
- Shortened day – Students may need to come in late or leave early. Some students may only be in school partial days two or three times a week or on complete homebound instruction. Procedures to keep accurate track of attendance will need to be put in place
- Flexible scheduling – e.g. the student can attend Tuesday's 8th grade math lesson during any scheduled section of that class.
- Plan a place to rest if fatigue is evident
- Provide tutorial or homebound instruction for work missed or if child is too sick to attend school
- Dietary restrictions may need to be monitored
- Hydration – provide water for the student
- Support and facilitate social relationships within the school when possible.
- Tutoring and Homebound may need to be provided.

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ASSESSMENT

- Work needs to be divided into manageable segments
- Buddy system for notes; teacher outline of material taught
- Alternative ways to test knowledge of material (e.g. providing oral performance instead of written performance or PowerPoint)
- Extra time for assignments, modification of the number of problems and/or assignments completed, no time limit on assignments
- Provide significantly extended time to complete assignments

CURRICULUM

- Focus on mastery of skills rather than completion of assignments
- Essential content needs to be identified/prioritized to shorten the number and length of assignments, projects, quizzes and tests.
- Short frequent projects are preferable to long-term projects
- Tests/Final Exams may need to be given over several days and/or sessions. It may take a student with ME/CFS double the amount of time to complete an assignment or test.

SUGGESTED PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTS AND PROCEDURES

When testing a student with ME/CFS, one must be aware that the fatigue may have an effect or may confound the results of any educational psychological assessments that are administered. Dr. Robert Sedgwick (Bell, et. al, 2005) cautions psychologists and suggests that the student be tested “during their window of opportunity.” If the student’s symptoms are in the early morning hours, testing the student during that time may yield very different test results than if perhaps you tested the student at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. Testing is not required for a student with ME/CFS but if administered correctly can support the student in obtaining the appropriate school accommodations.

- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children ages 6 - 16 (WISC) and the WAIS is used for children 16 and older and adults. Achievement measures academic functioning; it does not measure working memory or processing speed. The digit span subtest measures attention, short-term memory and concentration. The test can be used to indicate whether there is a significant discrepancy between a child’s intelligence and their performance at school.
- The WAIS-R can be used to measure the auditory span of attention.
- The Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS) Form A or B can also be used. To determine if there are deficits in working memory, the psychologist can administer the digit span forward and backwards.
- The Test of Written Language (TOWL) can be used to compare contextual writing, writing an essay and the time comparison and some free thought writing
- Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT) tests reading skills.
- Computerized Continuous Performance Test (CPT) to evaluate processing speed, simple reaction time and vigilance, and executive function specifically multi-tasking.