

Cafeteria

Accessibility means ensuring that the entire school environment—classrooms, library, playground, restrooms, cafeteria—are designed for every learner. This is a key condition for enabling students with physical, visual, auditory, and intellectual disabilities to navigate and learn independently. Utilizing a whole child approach to plan for students with visual impairment helps to confirm that everyone’s needs are addressed, including those of staff and students. Building teams can use the following components to guide discussions about planning to support environmental access.

- Read each component and indicate a Yes, No, or Unsure response.
- Take turns sharing observations and ideas.
- Note possible safety and accessibility problems.
- Suggest specific changes or supports that would help.
- Identify any additional components that need to be addressed.
- Document who will follow up and by when.

Universal Components

Table 1 Universal Components

Points	Yes	No	Unsure
1. Opportunities to get familiar with the cafeteria before the start of the school year are made available.			
2. Signage to entrances/exits, food lines, and clean up stations are clear and accessible to visual and non-visual students.			
3. Cafeteria offers a barrier-free layout with multiple routes to food lines and wide aisles for easy navigation.			
4. Food menus are up-to-date and available to students in multiple formats including through assistive technology.			
5. Multi-purpose cafeteria spaces (i.e., also used as gym, auditorium) maintain consistency with seating layout and station arrangement at mealtimes.			
6. Seating options that promote peer connection are offered and determined by student preference.			
7. Cafeteria staff support student independence in making food selections, handling payments, and taking personal responsibility for recycling and refuse disposal			
8. A system for requesting accommodations exists and has been shared with students and their families.			

Points	Yes	No	Unsure
9. Seating layout includes spaces that are not located in high traffic areas in addition to offering quiet zones.			
10. Training for building staff includes disability etiquette and awareness to promote positive school culture and climate.			
11. Training for building staff includes how to identify that a student may need help along with opportunities to practice offering assistance that respect student preference and honor autonomy.			

Targeted Components

Table 2 Targeted Components

1. The need for orientation & mobility training for the cafeteria has been determined.			
2. Cafeteria signage is available in the student's preferred learning media (i.e., high contrast, large print, braille that correctly matches the print information).			
3. The need for instruction on the process for paying for meals (i.e., money organization, inputting identification number) has been determined.			
4. Consultation from a Teacher of the Visually Impaired is required to support choice-making, environmental concerns, concept and vocabulary development, organization, social skills, and/or assistive technology use to promote student independence in the space.			
5. Safety planning includes documenting the need for support, assisted or unassisted, when exiting the cafeteria in emergency situations.			
6. Staff training includes discussion on the importance of using descriptive language when communicating information with a student with visual impairment.			
7. Clear points of contact for accessibility concerns have been determined and shared for student self-advocacy.			
8. Multiple options for seating are made available to support student preferences for comfort and social interaction.			
9. All additional considerations, questions, and concerns shared specific to the student have been documented for follow up.			