Comparison of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

	IDEA	Section 504	ADA
Requirements in the Law	• Provides a free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment.	• Requires any agency, school or institution receiving federal financial assistance to provide persons with disabilities to the greatest extent possible, an opportunity to be fully integrated into the mainstream.	• Extends coverage of section 504 to employment, public and private educational institutions, transportation providers and telecommunications, regardless of presence of any federal funding.
Definitions in the law	• Specific disability categories are defined in the law; covers students with educational disabilities that require special services from specially trained teachers. • Not all students with disabilities are eligible.	Defines persons with disabilities who: • have a physical or mental impairment which limits one or more major life activities; • have a record of such an impairment; or • are regarded as having an impairment.	• Definition of disability essentially same as Section 504 and extends coverage to persons without disabilities who may be related to or associated with a person with a disability; Includes HIV status, contagious and non-contagious diseases.
Who is covered	• Covers students with educational disabilities that require special education services ages 3-21 or until graduation.	• Protects all persons with a disability from discrimination in educational setting based solely on disability.	• Protects all persons with a disability from discrimination in educational setting based solely on disability.
Services provided	• Offers educational services that are remedial in addition to services available to all mainstream students (ie, PE, Art, field trips)	• Eliminates barriers that would prevent a student from full participation in programs/services offered to the general school population.	• Eliminates barriers that would prevent a student from full participation in programs/services offered to the general school population.

	IDEA	Section 504	ADA
Funding	• Schools receive federal funding to provide remedial services.	• Requires that schools not discriminate based on student's disability and must provide appropriate accommodations, but schools receive no additional financial support to provide support services or auxiliary aids.	• Requires that schools not discriminate based on student's disability and must provide appropriate accommodation's, but schools receive no additional financial support to provide support services or auxiliary aids.
Evaluation/Documentation	• School district is responsible for identifying and evaluating students with disabilities.	Same for elementary and secondary schools Same for students in college	• Students must self-identify as having a disability and must provide adequate documentation of disability.
	• Evaluations are the responsibility of the school and are performed at no expense to student/parent.	Same for elementary and secondary schools Same for students in college	• Evaluations/documentation of disability are student's responsibility and expense.
	• Parents must consent to evaluations and placement decisions.	Same for elementary and secondary schools Same for students in college	• Student has responsibility for advocacy, negotiating accommodations plan.
IEP/Accommodations	• Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed with parents, teachers and other specialists involved.	504 Plan developed with parents, teachers, school personnel involved (for elementary/secondary students) Same for college/postsecondary	• Accommodation plan developed with student, Disabilities Services Coordinator on campus
Classroom Placement	• Placement must be in the least restrictive environment; may be special classrooms, resource, or regular classroom. (Elementary and secondary students)	• Placement is in regular classroom with support services to eliminate barriers to the educational experience. (Elementary, secondary & college students)	• All courses are mainstream with accommodations provided to students who qualify under ADA.