1. What are the similarities and differences between handling IDEA versus 504?

Both IDEA and 504 require covered students to be provided an individually designed instruction. Both require the parent to be notified regarding identification, evaluation, and placement. Both also require an impartial hearing for the parent or guardian regarding disagreements regarding identification, evaluation, and placement. One major difference is that IDEA covers 13 qualifying conditions while 504 is broader and can cover anyone with an impairment that limits a life activity. Another major difference is that IDEA provides additional funding while there is no additional funding tied to a 504 plan.

2. Any experiences you'd like to share regarding special ed or 504. Discuss one of the changes to IDEA in 2004.

I have not had any extraordinary experiences in my few teaching. For the most part the case load teachers do a great job of getting us our paper work right away. I have found that for the majority of my students with IEP's, I would not have known they had a learning disability if it wasn't for the IEP. I have had a few severally autistic students in the past few years, but they usually come with a full time Para, their own education plan, and specific computer software. The only 504 plan I can think of was a medication plan for student that was prone to seizures. The only real issue I had was last year regarding an IEP. Several of us teachers were forwarded an email from an angry parent that felt we were not following her sons IEP. The email was sent to the case load teacher and she asked us why we were not following the plan. This was three weeks before the end of the school year, and none of us know that an IEP even existed for this student.

Changes to IDEA in 2004: IEP attendance and participation. IDEA 2004 allows teachers to be excused from IEP meetings if it is not their area being discussed. As an elective / computer teacher, I seem to be excused from a lot of the IEP meetings. I think the problem with this is that I may be doing something in my class that is very helpful to the student that no one else is aware of.