



Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations and modifications are changes in instruction, testing, or completion of assignments that will assist the student in accessing the general education curriculum. They must be written in the IEP or the 504 Plan. Having too many accommodations or modifications may be overwhelming to both teacher and student, so often it is recommended to identify those top items that will have the greatest impact on the student's learning and then to be sure those items are implemented. Each setting needs to be considered as a student may need different accommodations or modifications in different subjects or settings. The accommodations or modifications that are needed may change in different grades or different schools.

There are very important differences between an accommodation and a modification:

Accommodations: allow the student to access the same curriculum as general education students WITHOUT altering that curriculum. What is altered is the way in which the student accesses the curriculum – changes in time, format, setting, schedule and/or presentation. It does not alter what the test measures. For example, a test to measure a student's ability to "decode" words must be read by the student rather than having it read to them. An accommodation would be providing a quiet space or longer time to read.

Modifications: change the standard or what the test is supposed to measure. The student is expected to master part of a concept or standard or is given an alternate assignment that is easier. Examples include allowing a student to use a calculator in a math test (when other students are not allowed to do so) or using a lower grade level text or test. If a student needs modifications this should be made very clear to the parent as it may later impact the student's ability to attain a high school diploma.

Ideas on what accommodations or modifications a student needs should be based on assessment of the student as well as a discussion with the student. If a student refuses an accommodation it will not be helpful. There are many common accommodations but the IEP team should also be creative and think out of the box to come up with ideas that work for the individual student. Accommodation and modification examples which are common and not so common:

Classroom Environment

- Keep workspaces clear of unrelated materials.
- Provide a computer for written work.
- Seat the student close to the teacher or a positive role model (preferential seating)
- Use a study carrel. (Provide extras so that the student is not singled out.)
- Seat the student away from windows or doorways.

Daily Work and Homework

- Extended time for assignments
- Shorten assignment
- Number and sequence the steps in a task
- Show a model of the end product

- Provide interim grade or check-in
- Weight daily work higher than tests

Tests

- Go over directions orally
- Teach the student how to take tests (e.g., how to review, to plan time for each section)
- Permit as much time as needed to finish tests
- Allow tests to be taken in a room with few distractions
- Have test materials read to the student, and allow oral responses
- Divide tests into small sections of similar questions or problems
- Use recognition tests (true-false, multiple choice, or matching) instead of essays

Behavior

- Arrange a “check-in” time to organize the day
- Pair the student with a student who is a good behavior model for class projects
- Use nonverbal cues to remind the student to refocus on their work
- Minimize the use of punishment; provide positive reinforcement of good behavior
- Increase the frequency of reinforcements

Math

- Group similar problems together (e.g., all addition in one section).
- Provide fewer problems on a worksheet
- Require fewer problems to attain passing grades.
- Use enlarged graph paper to write problems helping student keep numbers in columns.
- Provide a table of math facts for reference.
- Tape a number line to the student’s desk.
- Read and explain story problems, or break problems into smaller steps.

Handwriting

- Use worksheets that require minimal writing.
- Use fill-in questions with space for a brief response rather than a short essay.
- Provide a “designated note taker” or photocopy of other student or teacher notes. (Do not require a poor note taker or a student with no friends to arrange with another student for notes.)
- Provide a print copy of any assignments or directions written on the blackboard.
- Omit assignments that require copying, or let the student use a tape recorder to dictate answers

Lengthy lists of suggestions are available, see www.fape.org.

It is important to include the older student in the discussion of what is needed, as when a student offers what he or she thinks would help, that creates ownership of the ideas, and he or she is more likely to use the ideas.

Monitoring the implementation of accommodations and modifications is important. If something isn’t working or being used well, call an IEP meeting (or a 504 meeting) to discuss the situation and make changes that will work for the student.

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