PACER CENTER
ACTION
INFORMATION SHEETS

School Accommodation and Modification Ideas for Students who Receive Special Education Services

Some students with disabilities who receive special education services need accommodations or modifications to their educational program in order to participate in the general curriculum and to be successful in school. While the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its regulations do not define accommodations or modifications, there is some agreement as to what they mean. An *accommodation* as used in this document allows a student to complete the same assignment or test as other students, but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response and/or presentation. This accommodation does not alter in any significant way what the test or assignment measures. Examples of accommodations include a student who is blind taking a Braille version of a test or a student taking a test alone in a quiet room.

A *modification* as used in this document is an adjustment to an assignment or a test that changes the standard or what the test or assignment is supposed to measure. Examples of modifications include a student completing work on part of a standard or a student completing an alternate assignment that is more easily achievable than the assignment.

Modifications and accommodations should be discussed by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and team decisions are written into a student's IEP. These changes should be chosen to fit the student's individual needs. It's important to include the student, if appropriate, when discussing accommodations and modifications. Asking the student what would be helpful is a good first step.

Under IDEA, assistive technology can be used as an accommodation for students with disabilities. Assistive technology is defined as "any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability." There are many assistive technology products available to help students with disabilities. The IEP team should consider if assistive technology is needed to make progress on goals and objectives in the IEP or in the general education curriculum. When reviewing these ideas, keep in mind that any accommodation or modification an IEP team chooses must be based on the individual needs of the student, and they must be provided if written in the student's IEP.

Textbooks and Curriculum

Books: Accommodations

- Provide audio books in accessible formats and have the student follow the text while listening
- Provide summaries of chapters
- Use peer readers
- Use marker to highlight important textbook sections
- Provide two sets of classroom curriculum materials, one for home and one for school
- Provide the student with a list of discussion questions before reading the material
- Provide books and other written materials in alternate formats such as Braille or large print
- Explore use of assistive technology (such as Bookshare, Kurzweil)

Books: Modifications

- Provide alternative books with similar concepts but at an easier reading level
- Give page numbers to help the student find answers

Curriculum: Accommodations

- Provide a vocabulary list
- Substitute alternatives for long writing assignments (clay models, posters, panoramas, collections, power point, or oral presentation)
- Provide alternatives to reading aloud in front of the class
- Provide alternatives to crossword puzzles or word finds

Curriculum: Modifications

- Shorten assignments to focus on mastery of key concepts

NOTE: many of the accommodations listed in this handout may also be appropriate for students with disabilities who have a Section 504 accommodation plan. The purpose of Section 504 accommodations is to eliminate barriers to full participation in school activities, including the general education curriculum. Modifications do not apply to 504 students.

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- Shorten spelling tests to focus on mastering the most functional words

Classroom Environment: Accommodations

- Keep work space clear of unrelated materials
- Keep the classroom quiet during intense learning times
- Reduce visual distractions in the classroom
- Provide a computer for written work
- Seat the student close to the teacher or a positive role model
- Use a study carrel (provide extra carrels so that the student will not feel singled out)
- Seat the student away from windows, doorways, and radiators
- Provide a clear view of the board, teacher, and screen
- Keep extra supplies of classroom materials (pencils, paper) on hand
- Provide additional personal space between desks
- Post a visual schedule on student's desk
- Allow a pass system for students needing frequent movement breaks
- Provide accessible classroom locations and accessible furniture (such as special desks, tables, chairs)
- Provide headsets to block noise
- Provide FM or sound field system for listening
- Provide organizers for lockers/desk

Instructions and Assignments

Directions: Accommodations

- Use both oral and printed directions
- Highlight key words in directions
- Give directions in small steps using as few words as possible
- Number and sequence steps in a task
- Have a student repeat directions to check for comprehension
- Provide visual aides
- Show a model of the end product (such as a completed math problem or finished quiz)
- Stand near the student when giving directions
- Allow use of tape recorder or assistive technology device to record directions

Time/Transitions: Accommodations

- Alert student several minutes before a transition from one activity to another
- Provide additional time to complete a task
- Allow specified amount of extra time to turn in homework without penalty
- Provide assistance when moving between classrooms or around the building
- Allow student to leave classroom 2-3 minutes early to avoid crowded hallways
- Increase wait time for responses
- Provide a visual timer

Handwriting: Accommodations

- 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 another student's or teacher's notes (do not expect student to arrange with another student for notes)
- Provide outlines for videos
- Provide print copy of any assignments or directions written on the blackboard or smartboard
- Provide photocopy materials rather than requiring student to copy from the board or text book
- Let the student use a tape recorder to dictate answers
- Provide access to a word processor, alpha smart, or similar device
- Provide adaptive writing tools, pencil grips, slanted surface
- Allow use of voice activated software for long writen assignments
- Allow student to dictate a writing assignment for a teacher or teacher's aide to scribe
- Provide partially completed outlines of lectures for students to fill in the blanks
- Explore use of alternate keyboard options and writing software

Grading: Accommodations

- Use daily or frequent grading and average into a grade for the quarter
- Weigh daily work higher than tests for a student who performs poorly on tests due to the disability
- Mark the correct answers rather than incorrect ones

Grading: Modifications

- Provide partial grade based on individual progress or effort
- Permit a student to rework missed problems for a better grade

- Use a pass-fail or an alternate grading system
- Average grades out when assignments are reworked or grade on corrected work

Tests: Accommodations

- Go over directions orally
- Permit extended time to complete tests
- Allow test to be taken in a room with few distractions
- Have materials read to the student and allow oral responses (for tests that don't measure reading or writing)
- Divide tests into small sections of similar questions and problems
- Allow the student to complete an independent project as alternative test
- Provide study guides and study questions that directly relate to tests
- Provide a sample or practice test

Tests: Modifications

- Use recognition tests (true-false, multiple choice, or matching) instead of essays
- Grade spelling separately from content
- Provide the first letter of the missing word
- Allow take-home or open-book tests
- Provide a vocabulary list with definitions
- Provide possible answers for fill-in-the blank sections

Math: Accommodations

- Allow the student to use a calculator without penalty
- Group similar problems together (such as all addition in one section unless testing to see if student can determine which function to use)
- Provide fewer problems on a worksheet (such as 4 to 6 problems on a page rather than 20 or 30 on a page but the same number of problems)
- Use enlarged graph paper to help the student keep numbers in columns
- Provide a table of math facts for reference (unless testing math facts)
- Tape a number line to student's desk
- Read and explain story problems or break problems into smaller steps
- Use pictures or graphics
- Circle math computation signs
- Require fewer problems to focus on mastery of concepts

Math: Modification

- Focus on mastery of more functional math concepts

Behavior: Accommodations

- Pair student with students modeling good behavior for classwork, projects and mentoring
- Reward positive behaviors
- Create a "back pocket pass" the student can use to leave the classroom without asking permission
- Use non-verbal cues or code word to communicate inappropriate behavior
- Establish plan to manage side effects of medication (such as water bottle for thirst, extra bathroom breaks)

Other Accommodations

- Check progress and provide feedback often in the first few minutes of each assignment
- Introduce an overview of long-term assignments so the student knows what is expected and when it is due
- Provide structured assignments with lists for the student to cross off when finished
- Break long-term assignments into small, sequential steps with daily monitoring and frequent grading
- Have the student practice presenting in a small group before presenting to the class
- Give student worksheets one at a time
- Sequence work with the easiest parts first
- Allow use of sensory tools for those with sensory needs
- Establish a form of communication between home and school
- Reward student for recording assignments and due dates in a notebook
- Draw arrows on worksheets, chalkboard, or overheads to show how ideas are related, or use other graphic organizers such as flow charts
- Provide locker accommodations (such as key versus combination)
- Explore use of memory organization aides (PDA's, smartphones, cell phones)
- Use color coded materials for each class