



## MODIFICATIONS VS. ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities may need accommodations or modifications to their educational programming in order to participate in the general education curriculum successfully. Modifications and accommodations should be written into a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They should be determined by the child's IEP team based on their disability and individual needs.

A **modification** is an adjustment to the assignment or test. It changes the standard or what the test or assignment is measuring. Often students with modifications receive part of their instruction (the modified curriculum) from the special education teacher in the resource room.

### Types of Modifications

- Curriculum Content - reduces, simplifies, alternate or shortened assignments.
- Type of Instruction - individual, small group
- Materials - adapted instruction materials and equipment

An accommodation allows the student to complete the same assignment or test as the other students, but with changes in environment, presentation and/or response mode. An accommodation does not alter what the test or assignment is measuring.

### Types of Adaptations

- Environment - alter the setting or how you structure your class
  - Preferential seating
  - Room arrangement, minimized visual or auditory distractions
  - Small group or one on one setting
  - Defined physical space for student within the room or adapted furniture
  - Specifically stated rules and consequences
  - Daily schedule displayed
- Presentation - changes in how you present instruction
  - Pace or time adjustments - allow more time, frequent breaks
  - Multisensory presentation techniques - audio of text, graphic organizers, sign language, visual models
  - Assistive technology - highlighted key vocabulary words, calculator, color overlay, Braille text
  - Reinforcements - printed study guides, stickers, repeated directions, peer tutors

- Response Mode
  - Type - allow oral rather than written, allow to copy from a book, no spelling penalty
  - Length - break assignments into segments or reduce the number of pencil/paper tasks

## **Assessments**

- Accommodations that are listed on a child's IEP also apply to state-wide and district-wide assessments.

## **Guidelines for Teams**

### ***Can the student participate in the lesson in the same way as all other students?***

Teachers are often surprised by the ability of the student to participate in many general classroom activities without accommodations. Often it is assumed that disability always means something different must be planned.

### ***What supports and/or accommodations are necessary for the student's full participation in this lesson?***

This means providing the student with support, adapted materials, and modified expectations.

- Caution must be taken when using adult support. Peers are natural sources of support and use of peer support should outweigh the use of adults. It is important to remember that paraprofessional support should be provided only at times of need.

## **The issue of FAIRNESS:**

Accommodations are not provided to guarantee success to students. They allow a level playing field so that students with disabilities have the same opportunities to succeed as their peers. It's a chance to participate, not an advantage. Fair does not mean equal, it means equality.

## **Administrators**

The school administrator can address accommodations in several ways. Supporting inclusion is the first step necessary to this process.

- Inclusion can be more readily implemented in a school where it is clear that the school administration supports it. This administrative support fosters change in attitudes and behaviors of all staff.
- Make sure that staff and teachers know that most students with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms most of the time. Point out that the majority of students with disabilities have mild disabilities.
- Reassure teachers that while they will need to make changes in their instructional methods and materials, support will be provided.

## **How can a principal demonstrate commitment to all students in the the school?**

By doing the following:

- Attend and participate in IEP meetings
- Ask how students are doing
- Providing positive reinforcement when teachers are working together to meet the needs of students with disabilities
- Provide staff development opportunities and time for teachers to collaborate and plan for student needs.