

A GUIDE TO MODIFICATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

- ◆ WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “MODIFICATIONS” AND “ACCOMMODATIONS”?
- ◆ WHICH STUDENTS REQUIRE MODIFICATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS?
- ◆ AS A GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER, WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

Background

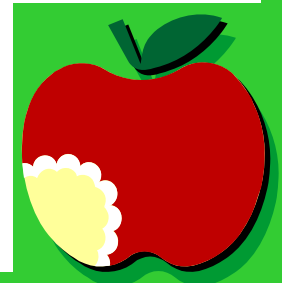
What is the difference between accommodations and modifications?

- ◆ **Accommodations** are changes to the course content, teaching strategies, standards, test preparation, location, timing, scheduling, expectations, student responses, environmental structuring and/or attributes which provide access for a student with a disability to participate in a course/standard/test which **DO NOT fundamentally alter or lower the standards or expectations of the course/standard/test.**
- ◆ **Modifications** are changes which **DO fundamentally alter or lower the standards or expectations of the course/standard/test.**

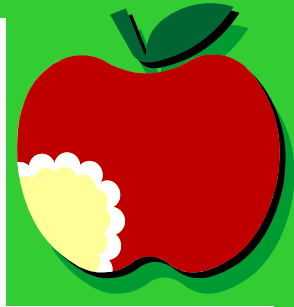
Source: Miriam Kurtzig Freedman, J.D. (1999) as quoted in “Guidelines For the Promotion and Retention of Special Education Students,” California Department of Education, Special Education Division

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General Strategies for Accommodations/Modifications



Step 1 – Break failure pattern; reduce pressure:

- ◆ Shorten assignments (lengthen gradually as student begins to cope):
 - Assign every other problem or question
 - Require fewer words or pages
- ◆ Allow extra time (particularly on tests)
- ◆ Provide easier materials
- ◆ Simplify requirements

Step 2 – Build motivation and self-esteem:

- ◆ Use *frequent* positive reinforcement:
 - Verbal – “Super!” “I knew you could do it!”, “You got that right!”
 - Non-verbal – Pat or simply touch on shoulder, big smile
 - Find something the student does well and acknowledge publicly
 - Make phone call home during the day with the student listening
 - Send a quick note home to parent complimenting student
- ◆ Provide frequent feedback

Step 3 – Modify testing procedures:

- ◆ Provide a written outline or review sheet or study guide
- ◆ Give exam orally (individually or to entire class)
- ◆ Type all tests or print clearly
- ◆ Avoid separate answer sheets
- ◆ Avoid long essay exams
- ◆ Include some recognition questions: multiple choice, matching, true-false, etc.
- ◆ Give shorter, more frequent tests
- ◆ Provide extra testing time
- ◆ Allow student to dictate answers
- ◆ Provide opportunity for projects in lieu of tests or as extra credit
- ◆ Test major points only
- ◆ Use study carrels

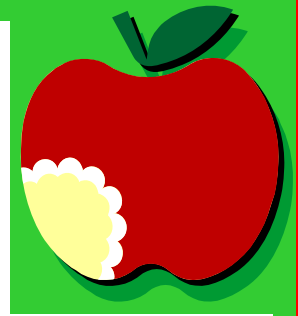
Step 4 – Adjust grading requirements:

- ◆ Mark items correct, not mistakes
- ◆ Notice and give credit for oral participation in class
- ◆ Grade content areas on the basis of ideas/knowledge rather than on spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
 - (or give two grades: one content and one mechanics)
- ◆ Look for and comment on strengths and areas of improvement rather than faults and areas of weakness
- ◆ Provide an opportunity to correct errors without penalty
- ◆ Be specific regarding specific requirements for a particular grade

Step 5 – Individualize teaching strategies:

- ◆ Simplify or reduce complexity of directions; be specific
- ◆ Use student’s name or nonverbal signal to get his/her attention
- ◆ Provide reason for listening (tell student what to listen for)
- ◆ Present one concept at a time
- ◆ Break complex tasks into smaller steps
- ◆ Enhance verbal instructions by using lots of visual aids:
 - Direct eye contact
 - Key words on board
 - Notes on overhead projector
- ◆ Repeat directions when necessary; ask students to repeat
- ◆ Ask frequent questions during oral discussion to check for understanding
- ◆ Increase waiting time for response to questions
- ◆ Space repetition over a period of time
- ◆ Keep classroom quiet

- ◆ Provide structure; simplify student's environment
- ◆ Change seat and/or move desk if needed:
 - In front of room
 - Near you
 - Away from students most likely to distract
 - In a quiet, uncluttered corner
 - In a location of student's choice
- ◆ Consistent format for heading, margins, etc.
- ◆ Use of assignment sheet or notebook
- ◆ Post assignments on board
- ◆ Specify plan for communicating with parents:
 - Homework
 - Unfinished assignments
- ◆ Collect all work as soon as possible or as it is completed
- ◆ Post class rules/privileges and enforce consistently
- ◆ Reduce/simplify amount of material on a page:
 - Fold paper
 - Use index cards to cover part of the page
 - Larger print; fewer words or problems
- ◆ Alternate types of activities frequently during the day:
 - Group – individual
 - Sitting – moving
 - Verbal – quiet
 - Short – long
- ◆ Reward system for improved performance:
 - Notes home, privileges, stickers, graph of progress
 - Encourage self-competition rather than against others



Sample Strategies by Subject Area

READING

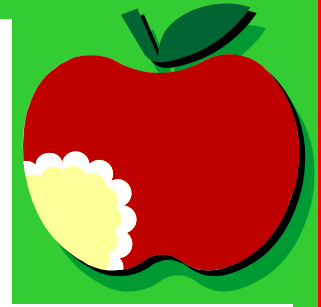
- _____ Lower level book
- _____ Skip non-relevant workbook pages
- _____ Assign fewer book reports
- _____ Provide opportunity for sharing books in a variety of ways
- _____ Paired reading practice
- _____ Individualized reading
- _____ Language experience approach
- _____ Peer or cross-age tutoring
- _____ Color code important word parts
- _____ Vocabulary cards and/or checklists
- _____ Circle words or word parts in newspaper
- _____ Games and centers for vocabulary/comprehension development

SPELLING

- _____ Reduce number of words from class list
- _____ Provide easier words, i.e., from reading book
- _____ Use spelling book from lower grade level
- _____ Teach regularities before irregularities
- _____ Highlight spelling demons (unpredictable words)
- _____ Underline difficult parts of words
- _____ Easier follow-up work for skills practice
- _____ Practice words on computer
- _____ Practice words with a partner
- _____ Practice words with a tape recorder
- _____ Weekly spelling contracts
- _____ Open-ended drill sheets
- _____ Individual dictionary for difficult words
- _____ Open-ended game boards for practice
- _____ Give test individually to allow more time
- _____ Teach use of reference books for poor spellers

HANDWRITING

- _____ Use of pencil grip
- _____ Use of paper with larger lines
- _____ Write on every other line
- _____ Accept homework typed by parent if student dictates
- _____ Allow student to take work home to finish
- _____ Encourage use of computer/word processor by student
- _____ Reduce standards for neatness
- _____ Photocopy some assignments rather than have student copy

**MATHEMATICS**

- _____ Number line on desk
- _____ Use of multiplication facts chart
- _____ Put boxes around problems
- _____ Use of visual clues to steps in computation
- _____ Continued use of marks for carrying/borrowing
- _____ Open-ended drill sheets for number facts
- _____ Flash cards with another student or parents
- _____ Use of finger multiplication
- _____ Problems from book copied for student
- _____ Photocopy problems from book
- _____ Shorter assignments, i.e., odd or even only
- _____ Fold paper to reveal fewer problems at one time
- _____ Longer time limits on number facts drills
- _____ Easier materials, i.e., lower grade level book
- _____ Teach estimation and use of calculator
- _____ Circle/highlight sign so student knows operation

ENGLISH/WRITTEN LANGUAGE

- _____ Use textbook or workbook at student's reading level
- _____ Skip non relevant pages
- _____ Begin with the sentence as a unit of thought
- _____ Gradually lengthen writing assignments
- _____ Vary length of assignment by ability level
- _____ Allow student to dictate longer stories
- _____ Allow more time for writing
- _____ Underline incorrectly spelled words
- _____ Make individual spelling dictionary of frequently used words
- _____ Teach use of reference books for poor spellers
- _____ Peer or cross-age tutors

SCIENCE/SOCIAL STUDIES

- _____ Text or workbook at student's reading level
- _____ Provide course overview of what will be covered in what order
- _____ Teach SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)
- _____ Provide alternative activities to be used for grading (assignments/projects/reports/tests)
- _____ Vary requirements for lesson by ability level
- _____ Have consistent homework policy and time
- _____ Prepare study guide for each unit
- _____ Divide total project into series of short assignments
- _____ Teach mnemonic devices and tricks as aids to memorizing facts/lists
- _____ Use "hands on" experiences as often as possible
- _____ Provide photocopy of your notes or those of a good student
- _____ Emphasize major concepts with a few supporting facts and details in each chapter
- _____ Use visual aids as often as possible (films, overhead, etc.)
- _____ Preview or highlight important concepts in advance
- _____ Tell the student what he needs to know for exams
- _____ Provide opportunity for student to earn extra credit

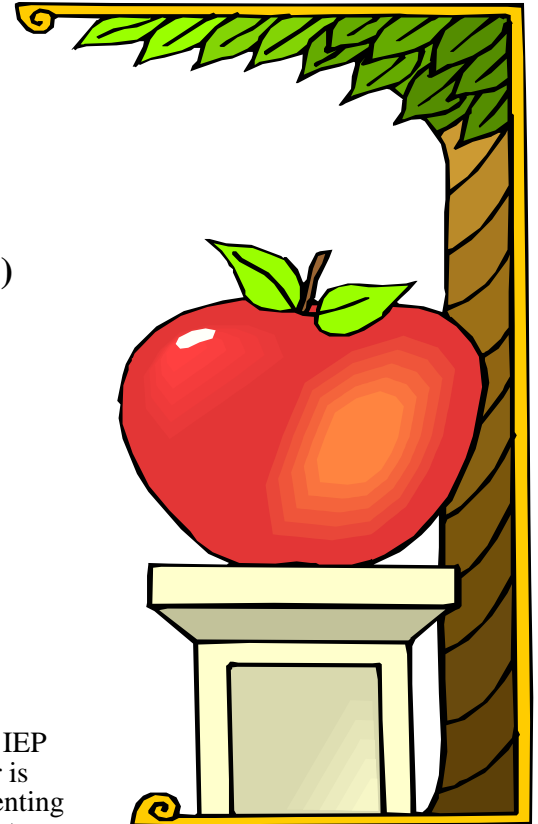
Legal

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 104.33(b)(1)(i))

Requires “provision of regular or special education and related aids and services to meet individual needs of handicapped persons as adequately as the needs of non-handicapped persons are met.”

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (PL 105-17):

- ◆ Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 300.347 – (The IEP must contain) “a statement of the program modifications...that will be provided for the child...to be involved and progress in the general education curriculum...and to participate in extra-curricular and other non-academic activities.”
- ◆ CFR 300.342 - “The child’s (Individualized Education Program) IEP is accessible to each regular education teacher...and each teacher is informed of his or her specific responsibilities related to implementing the child’s IEP and the specific accommodations and supports that must be provided in accordance with the child’s IEP.”



Case Law – Doe vs Withers (1993-West Virginia Circuit Court, Taylor County #92-C-92):

The parents of a student with learning disabilities brought legal action against a high school teacher for refusing to accommodate their son’s disability in the classroom. The parents alleged that the teacher refused to provide their son with oral testing as required in his IEP. The jury held in favor for the parent and awarded \$5,000.00 in punitive damages and \$10,000.00 in compensatory damages, for which the teacher was held responsible.

To Summarize

Accommodations and modifications **MUST** be provided to students as written in their IEPs or 504 plans. Teachers who do not do so may be personally liable for damages.

Classroom teachers are required to attend IEP meetings and participate in developing the accommodations/modifications. In this way, teachers are involved in selecting strategies which work for them and make sense within the context of their classroom.

The IDEA requires that “The regular education teacher of the child, as a member of the IEP team, shall, to the extent appropriate, participate in the development of the IEP of the child, including the determination of appropriate positive behavioral interventions and strategies and the determination of supplementary aids and services, program modifications, or supports for school personnel...” (CFR 300.346 (d))

Teachers should also be a part of 504 plan teams.

Further, some modifications/accommodations are great for **other** students who may be struggling also; don’t be afraid to try these for any student who may need them!

Examples of how it looks on an IEP:

Explanation of disability and how it affects progress in general curriculum -

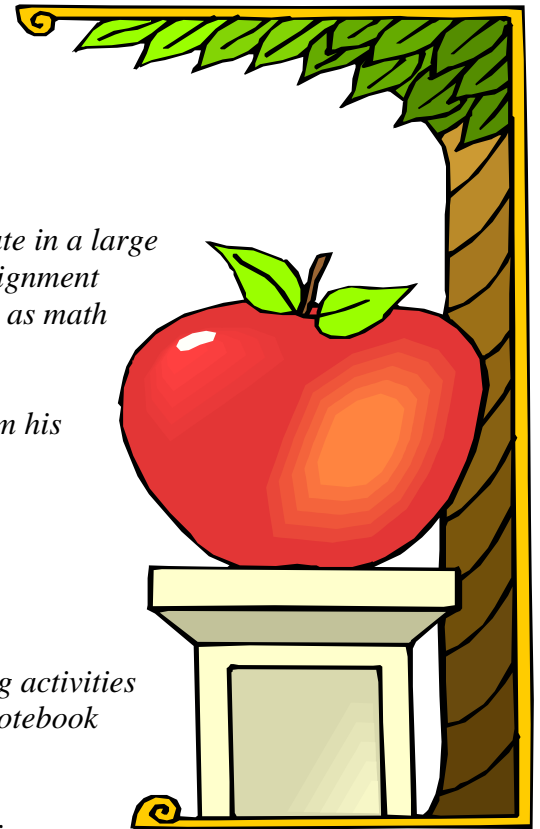
“Jim’s difficulties in attention make it hard for him to concentrate in a large group setting. He often forgets to record assignments in his assignment notebook. He has difficulty memorizing basic information, such as math facts.”

“Trevor’s deficits in the area of auditory processing detract from his ability to comprehend orally presented material and impede his participation in class and in small group discussions.”

Program modifications/accommodations needed in general education -

“Jim will be allowed to use a calculator in math problem solving activities in science and social studies. Teachers will check assignment notebook daily for accuracy.”

“Trevor may utilize tape recorder and/or get duplicate notes for lectures; have extra time to prepare for oral presentations; and be provided models, demonstrations, and examples.”



“I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am THE DECISIVE ELEMENT in the classroom.

My personal approach creates the climate.

My daily mood makes the weather.

As a teacher, I POSSESS A TREMENDOUS POWER to make a child’s life miserable or joyous.

I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration.

I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal.

In all situations, IT IS MY RESPONSE that decides whether a crisis will be escalated Or deescalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.