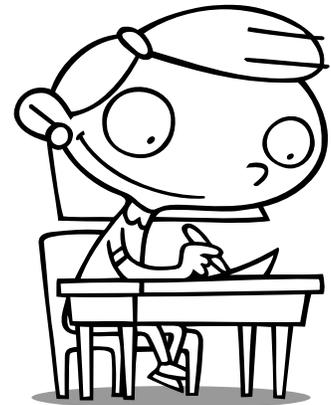


Common Testing Accommodations and Modifications for Students with Disabilities

By Wendy C. Ward, M.A.T.

Students with disabilities receive instruction in regular education classrooms more than ever. Legislation in most states requires that students with disabilities also be tested just as students without disabilities. Therefore, testing accommodations and modifications must frequently be made to meet these students' special needs.



An **accommodation** is an adjustment to an activity or setting that removes a barrier presented by a disability so students may have equal access to the same opportunities available to students without a disabilities. When accommodations are necessary, they are listed in a student's *Individualized Education Plan (IEP)* or *504 plan*. Students who have a disability and also require special education services in addition to accommodations have this information listed in the IEP, as well. This plan details the types of direct services students will receive and the goals of these services. Students who have a 504 plan do not require special education services. They only require changes to the environment or instructional situations. For example, a student with a 504 plan may need to always sit near the teacher due to the fact they are easily distracted.

There is no limit to the range of accommodations to list on an IEP. An accommodation should not alter the essential purpose of the assignment but provide an alternate way of teaching or testing. In other words, the testing environment or administration changes, not the content of the instruction. Since accommodations allow equal access, an educator is legally bound to provide them. Some commonly used testing accommodations are to:

- Allow extra time to complete the test.
- Read test directions orally.
- Repeat test directions as needed.
- Ask the student to repeat directions in his or her own words.
- Have the student highlight key words in the directions and/or questions.
- Allow the student to take the test in a small-group setting.
- Allow the student to take the test individually.
- Allow the student to mark his/her answers directly on the test form.
- Provide frequent breaks.
- Break up the testing into several sessions.
- Read specific parts of the test to the student.
- Allow the student to answer orally instead of write the answers.

Sometimes a student's disability requires that **modifications**, or alterations, be made to the test itself. In other words, either the content of the test or the way it is administered is altered. These are some commonly used testing modifications:

It is common practice that any accommodation or modification in testing be consistently followed in the classroom on a daily basis. For example, if a third grade student's *IEP* dictates that he/she be tested on a second grade level in reading, then the student must be instructed and tested on the second grade level in his/her classroom. It is important not to over-accommodate any one student. A student only needs accommodations or modifications to ensure that his/her disability does not interfere with his/her chances for success in the classroom.



Resources

Special Topic Area: Accommodations for Students with Disabilities. www.education.umn.edu/NCEO/TopicAreas/Accommodations/Accom_FAQ.htm. Retrieved 4/27/05.

Byrnes, MaryAnn. *Accommodations for students with disabilities: Removing barriers to learning.* www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3696/is_200002/ai_n8887807/print. Retrieved 4/27/05.