

## Accessibility Supports - Accommodations

Education is a basic right for all children in the United States. With legislation aimed at the inclusion of all students comes the drive to ensure equitable access to grade-level standards. Academic standards are educational targets outlining what students are expected to learn at each grade level. Teachers ensure that students work toward grade-level standards by using a range of instructional strategies based on the varied strengths and needs of students. For some students, accessibility supports are provided during instruction and assessments to help promote equal access to grade-level content.

### Accommodations

An accommodation is a support or service that is provided to help a student fully access the general education curriculum. Accommodations provided during classroom instruction and assessments must also be provided during state assessments, if permitted.

### Modifications

Modifications are changes to course content, required work, or instructional level. They change the learning goal for an individual student and are used when the general curriculum is too advanced for a student. Modifications usually involve changing an assignment or objective.

# Do's and Don'ts When Selecting Accommodations

## Do

Make accessibility decisions based on individualized need

Select accessibility supports that reduce the effect of the disability and language barrier to access content and demonstrate learning

Be certain to document instructional and assessment accommodation(s) on the IEP, 504, or EL plan

When using technology, turn off certain universal features for some students if these features prove to be distracting

When using technology, select designated features based on input of one or more informed educator

Ensure that accommodations are selected based on CCC and multiple stakeholders' input

Make decisions about designated features and accommodations prior to the assessment day

Be specific about "Where, When, Who, and How" of providing accessibility supports

Refer to state accessibility policies and understand implications of selections

Evaluate accessibility supports used by the student

Get input about accessibility supports from teachers, parents, and students

Provide accessibility supports for assessments routinely used for classroom instruction or ensure that students practice each support sufficiently

Select accessibility supports based on specific individual needs

## Don't

Make accessibility decisions based on whatever is easiest to do

Select accessibility supports unrelated to the documented student learning needs or to give students an unfair advantage

Use an accommodation that has not been documented on the IEP, 504, or EL plan

Assume that all universal features should be available to all students without previous try-outs

Make blanket decisions about designated features

Make unilateral decisions about accommodations

Assume that various combinations of accommodations will work effectively without testing these accommodations

Assume that all instructional accessibility supports are appropriate for use on assessments

Simply indicate an accessibility support will be provided "as appropriate" or "as necessary"

Check every accessibility support possible on a checklist simply to be "safe"

Assume the same accessibility supports remain appropriate year after year

Provide an assessment accessibility support for the first time on the day of a test

Assume certain accessibility supports such as a dictionary, are appropriate for every student

## Accessibility Support Examples

The following examples of supports are based on student characteristics. Accommodations should be tailored to the individual needs of the student. The accommodation examples provided are not an exhaustive or limiting list. Please note that not all accommodations are permitted on statewide assessments. For a more comprehensive list, please refer to the [Accessibility and Accommodations Resource Guide and Toolkit](#) (August 2018) and the [Accessibility and Accommodations](#) Guidance (updated July 2018).

### Blind or Low Vision

Large print, magnification devices, low-tech optical, braille, low-tech devices, tactile graphics, text read aloud, assistive technology tools, auditory/screen reader, talking calculators and dictionaries, large print or braille notes, outlines, and instructions, descriptive video, express response to a scribe through speech, voice to text

### Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Change location to reduce distraction, change location to increase physical access (e.g., minimize background noise, face student when speaking, speak to student and not to interpreter, and increase wait time for interpreter to finish), extended time, provide additional breaks

### Weak Dexterity

Extended time, provide additional breaks, express response to scribe through speech, pointing or by using an assistive communication device, type on, or speak to, word processor, voice to text, use thick pencil or pencil grip, use written notes, outlines, and instructions

### Articulation and Speech

Model and exaggerate correct production of sounds, ensure student attends to speaker's mouth when modeling, extended time, slow down, give plenty of wait time for responses, Voice Output Device (VOD)/AAC device, another student or adult reads written responses, pair visual supports with speech

### Verbal Expression

Allow extra response time, allow use of visual supports, allow use of VOD/AAC device (high- or low-tech), provide model/sample sentence, provide carrier phrase, restate child's verbal output, provide correct model, small group setting

## Reading Decoding

Human reader, screen reader, videotape, timing/scheduling, change location so student does not distract others, use written notes, outlines, and instructions, extended time

## Written Expression

Express response to a scribe through speech, type on, or speak to, word processor, voice to text, use spelling and grammar assistive devices (e.g., electronic spelling device, spell check on computer), use written notes, outlines, and instructions

## Math Difficulties

Use calculation devices, visual organizers, graphic organizers, math tables and formula sheets, video clips, web site support

## Physical Difficulties

Express response to scribe through speech, pointing, or by using an assistive communications device, type on or speak to word processor, speak into tape recorder, write in test booklet instead of on answer sheet, augmentative devices for single or multiple messages, written notes, outlines, and instructions, change location to increase physical access, change location to access special equipment, extended time, multiple or frequent breaks

## Sustaining Attention

Use books on tape or recorded books to help focus on text, give short and simple directions with examples, offer choices, use of manipulatives, write in test booklet instead of on answer sheet, monitor placement of student responses on answer sheet, materials or devices used to solve or organize responses, visual organizers, graphic organizers, highlight key words in directions, check for understanding, templates, graph paper to keep numbers in proper columns

## Verbal Expression

Give short and simple directions with examples, allow for note-taker/recorder or provide copies of other's notes, record lectures or discussions, give short and simple directions with examples, short segment test booklets (when available), allow for multiple or frequent breaks, change testing schedule or order of subtests, provide testing schedule to student

# Question and Answer

## What is the difference between accommodations for instructions and accommodations for statewide assessment?

An **accommodation** is a support or service that is provided to help a student fully access the general education curriculum. Accommodations are changes in the way that materials are presented or students respond (Elliott & Thurlow, 2006). The reason for providing accommodations is that they enable the student to bypass (or partially bypass) the effects of the disability. Accommodations provided to a student with disabilities during classroom instruction and assessments must also be provided to the student during state assessments, if permitted. If a student has been found to need an accommodation and that accommodation is not allowed on a state assessment, it should still be used in the classroom setting. Educators need to be familiar with state policies and procedures for administering statewide assessments and accommodations.

**Assessment accommodations** are changes in testing materials or procedures that enable students to participate in assessments in a way that assesses abilities rather than disabilities. Without accommodations, assessments may not accurately measure students' knowledge and skills. Appropriate accommodations for the state assessment programs are set forth in the program manual issued each year by the department of education (511 IAC 7-36-10).

Assessment accommodations are generally grouped into the following categories:

- Presentation (e.g., repeat directions, read aloud, large print, braille)
- Equipment and materials (e.g., calculator, amplification equipment, manipulative)
- Response (e.g., mark answers in book, scribe records response, point)
- Setting (e.g., study carrel, student's home, separate room)
- Timing/Scheduling (e.g., extended time, frequent breaks)

## What should the Case Conference Committee consider when selecting accommodations?

To assure students with disabilities are engaged in standards-based instruction, the CCC must participate in the planning process and data review to make sure appropriate accommodations are selected for the student that enable access to grade-level instruction and participation in statewide assessments. The CCC needs to be familiar with the grade-level standards when making decisions about accommodations and participation in the general education curriculum.

During the decision making process, the CCC should take into account the following:

- Student characteristics that need to be considered so that accommodations reduce the effect of the disability.
  - Instructional tasks where students are expected to demonstrate grade-level state standards content knowledge and skills, such as assignments and class tests.
- Consistency with the standards-based IEP for classroom instruction and assessments, and an emphasis on fidelity of implementation for accommodations and achievement standards noted in the IEP.

To review Indiana Academic Standards, please visit <https://www.doe.in.gov/standards>

## Who is involved in making accommodation decisions?

The CCC, with input from the teachers, administrators, families, and other service providers, must make assessment and accommodation decisions for students with disabilities based on individual need in accordance with state and federal guidelines. Students with disabilities must be provided accommodations based on individual need as long as the accommodations do not invalidate the assessment.

## What documentation is needed to evaluate and improve the use of accommodations?

Selecting and monitoring the effectiveness of accommodations should be an ongoing process, and changes should be made as often as needed. It is important that the accommodations selected address the student's specific areas of need and facilitate the demonstration of skills and knowledge. Documentation should include when an accommodation is/isn't used and what accommodation was/wasn't used.

## How do we document decisions and the use of accommodations?

For students with disabilities, determining appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations during the IEP process should be evidenced by reviewing the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP). The PLAAFP is a state and federal requirement which must state "how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum-the same curriculum as non-disabled children".

The areas in the IEP document where accommodations can be addressed include the following:

"Consideration of Special Factors" is where communication and assistive technology supports are considered.

"Supplementary Aids and Services" is the area of the IEP that includes "aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate."

"Participation in Assessments" is the section of the IEP that documents accommodations needed to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in statewide and local assessments.

## What are examples of spelling and math accommodations versus modifications?

Spelling:

*Accommodation:* Requiring the student to do fewer spelling words, but maintaining the complexity of the words compared to those words the student's peers are expected to learn. For example, the shortened list must contain the letter sounds, vowels, and/or blend sounds that the student's peers spelling list contains.

*Modification:* Shortening a spelling list from 20 to 10 words.

Math:

*Accommodation:* Requiring the student to do fewer math word problems, but maintaining the complexity of those problems compared to those words the student's peers are expected to learn. For example, all problems must contain the skills that student's peers are also required to learn.

*Modification:* Shortening the number of problems to complete from 20 to 10 problems.

# Resources and References

- **Indiana Department of Education** - <https://www.doe.in.gov/specialed>
- **Indiana IEP Resource Center** - The IEPRC offers support for educators throughout Indiana to improve the IEP process in schools. <https://www.indianaieprc.org/index.php>
- **PATINS Project**- Promoting Achievement through Technology and Instruction for all Students. <http://www.patinsproject.com/>
- **Project Success** – Resource center that promotes higher academic achievement for individuals with disabilities. <http://www.projectsucceedindiana.com/>
- **Article 7** - Title 511, Article 7. Indiana State Board of Education; 511 IAC
- **ESSA** (2015). Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-85.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004). <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>
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