

# SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES BEST PRACTICES

## CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

One of the ways to increase student access to academic content standards through instruction in the general curriculum is by using instructional accommodations. Accommodations are changes in the way a student accesses learning without changing the actual standards a student is working toward. Accommodations do not change the content of instruction or expectations for performance. Teachers need to have clear goals for instruction based on grade level academic content standards and benchmarks or indicators.

## DECIDING WHICH ACCOMMODATIONS TO USE

Decisions about which accommodations to use are individualized and made for each student by that student's IEP team. That's why it is vital for every member of each student's IEP team to be well informed about accommodations. A team approach to determining appropriate accommodations and then supporting students in the use of those accommodations is critical. The team needs to include the student and parents, general and special educators, and any support or related services personnel necessary to help the student use an accommodation.

## ACCOMMODATION SUGGESTIONS

The following are ideas for accommodations in textbooks and curriculum, the classroom environment, instruction and assignments, and possible behavior expectations that may be helpful when educating students with disabilities. When reviewing these ideas, keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list and any accommodation an IEP team chooses must be based on the individual needs of the student.

### BOOKS

- Provide two sets of textbooks, one for home and one for school.
- Provide audiotapes of textbooks and have the student follow the text while listening.
- Use markers to highlight important textbook sections.

## RESOURCES

**Accommodations Module (Pepper)**  
<https://www.pepperpd.com>

**Accommodations PD Module (IRIS)**  
<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/acc/>

**OSDE Accommodations Manual and Guide**  
<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/accommodations>

**Accommodations (LD Online)**  
<http://www.ldonline.org/indepth/accommodations>

- Provide the student with a list of discussion questions before reading the material.
- Use index cards to record major themes.

## CURRICULUM

- Provide alternatives to reading aloud in front of the class.
- Provide a vocabulary list.

## CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

- Evaluate the classroom structure against the student's needs (flexible structure, firm limits, etc.).
- Keep workspaces clear of unrelated materials.
- Reduce visual distractions in the classroom.
- Keep extra supplies of classroom materials (pencils, paper) on hand.
- Provide an unobstructed view of the whiteboard, teacher, screens, etc.
- Provide a computer for written work.
- Post a visual schedule on student's desk.
- Provide headsets to block noise.
- Use a pass system for students needing frequent movement breaks.

## DIRECTIONS

- 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.



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- Have a student repeat directions to check for comprehension.
- Show a model of the end product (such as a completed math problem or finished quiz).

## TIME/TRANSITION

- Increase wait time for response.
- Provide a visual timer.
- Alert student several minutes before a transition from one activity to another.
- Provide assistance when moving between classrooms or around the building.
- Allow student to leave classroom 2-3 minutes early to avoid crowded hallways.

## GRADING

- Use daily or frequent grading and average into a grade for the quarter.
- Mark the correct answers rather than incorrect ones.

## TESTS

- Go over directions orally.
- Allow tests 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 an alternative test.

## MATH

- Group similar problems together (such as all addition in one section unless testing to see if student can determine which function to use).
- Use enlarged graph paper to help the student keep numbers in columns.
- Provide a table of math facts for reference (unless testing math facts).

- Read and explain story problems or break problems into smaller steps.
- Circle math computation signs.

## READING

- Use visual presentations of verbal material, such as word webs and visual organizers.
- Extra time to complete reading assignments.
- Use highlighters to mark key words and phrases.
- Provide outline of reading material.

## BEHAVIOR

- Pair student with students modeling good behavior for classwork, projects, and mentoring.
- Have the student practice presenting in a small group before presenting to the class.
- Establish a plan to manage side effects of medication (such as water bottle for thirst, extra bathroom breaks).

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

1. Think about all the classes you are taking now. Which is your best class?
2. Explain why you do well in that class.
  - These are your strengths.
3. Which class is the hardest?
4. What's the hardest part of the class for you?
5. What could your teachers do to help you access the information and complete tasks needed in your classes?

## TIPS FOR TEACHERS

1. Keep a list of the accommodations that are listed in the IEP needed for each student.
2. When planning instruction ensure that accommodations are taken into account and written in lesson plans.
3. Keep notes on:
  - Students' perception of how well their accommodations are working
  - Your perception of how accommodations are working
  - Difficulties of accommodations use
  - Effective combinations of accommodations

