



# **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GUIDE: ACCOMMODATIONS MANUAL**

## **HOW TO SELECT, ADMINISTER, AND EVALUATE USE OF ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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# Step 1

## Expect Students with Disabilities To Achieve Grade-level Academic Content Standards

### Step 1 Objective

The purpose of this activity is to provide a foundation for the use of accommodations in the context of the expectation that students with disabilities can achieve grade level academic content standards.

### Key Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will

- expect the participation of students with disabilities in standards-based assessments and be aware of the laws that require participation,
- understand the importance of collaboration between general and special educators,
- become familiar with state academic content standards, and
- list conditions needed for students with disabilities to achieve grade-level content standards.

### BACKGROUND FOR FACILITATORS

Step 1 provides a foundation and context for the use of accommodations by students with disabilities. When students have engaged in standards-based instruction with support provided through special education services and strategies, they will be able to show what they have learned on state assessments. For some students, this access to instruction and assessments is attained through the use of accommodations.

Accommodations change the way a student accesses instruction and assessment, without changing the actual standards a student is working toward. The goal is to find a balance that gives students equal access to instruction and assessment without changing, modifying, or “watering down” the content or expected outcomes.

### FEDERAL LAWS REQUIRING PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS BY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Several federal laws require participation of students with disabilities in standards-based instruction and assessments. These include No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2001 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA).

#### No Child Left Behind Act (2001)

... the participation in such assessments of all students (Section 1111 (3) (C)(i)). (The term “such assessments” refers to a set of high-quality, yearly student academic

assessments.) The reasonable adaptations and accommodations for students with disabilities (as defined under section 602(3) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) necessary to measure the academic achievement of such students relative to State academic content and State student academic achievement standards (Section 1111 (3) (C)(ii)).

Stronger accountability for results is one of the four basic education reform principles contained in NCLB. This law complements the provisions in IDEA by providing public accountability at the school, district, and state levels for all students with disabilities. There are several critical elements in NCLB that ensure schools are held accountable for educational results so that the best education possible is provided to each and every student. Academic content standards (what students should learn) and academic achievement standards (how well they should learn) in reading and mathematics (with science added in 2007-08) form the basis of state accountability systems. State assessments are the mechanism for checking whether schools have been successful in teaching students the knowledge and skills defined by the content standards. By 2005-06, states must provide assessments in reading/language arts and mathematics for all students, including students with disabilities, in grades 3-8 and once in high school. By 2007-08, states must provide science assessments in grade spans.

School accountability is based on measuring each school's success in educating all of its students. The accountability system is defined in terms of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a way to measure the improvement in achieving standards for all students each year. Schools and states are held accountable for improvements on an annual basis by public reporting (as well as individualized reporting to parents) and ultimately through consequences if adequate results are not achieved.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)**

IDEA specifically governs services provided to students with disabilities. Accountability at the individual level is provided through IEPs developed on the basis of each child's unique needs. IDEA requires the participation of students with disabilities in state and districtwide assessments. IDEA states:

Children with disabilities are included in general state and districtwide assessment programs, with appropriate accommodations, where necessary.” (Section 612 (a) (17) (A)) The term “individualized education program” or “IEP” means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with this section and that includes...a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of state or districtwide assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the child to participate in such assessment; and if the IEP team determines that the child will not participate in a particular state or district-wide assessment of student achievement (or part of such an assessment), a statement of why that assessment is not appropriate for the child; and how the child will be assessed (Section 614 (d) (1) (A) (i) (B) (VI) (aa) (bb)).

### **ASSESSMENTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

Participation in standards-based instruction and assessment of achievement through the use of large-scale assessments is now recognized by state and district policymakers, educators, and parents as a critical element of equal opportunity and access to education. Assessments for accountability measure

- how successful schools are in including all students in standards-based education,
- how successful instructional strategies are in helping all students achieve at high levels, and
- what specific curriculum and instructional areas need improvement for specific groups of students.

Include students with disabilities in state assessments that are administered to hold schools accountable for the academic achievement of all students. In many cases, students will need accommodations to access grade-level state assessments. However, for students with significant cognitive disabilities, alternate assessments may be needed.

## EQUAL ACCESS TO GRADE-LEVEL CONTENT

Academic content standards are educational targets for students to work toward at each grade level. Teachers ensure that students work toward content standards by using a range of curricular and instructional strategies that are selected based on the varied strengths and needs of students.

The academic content standards developed by each state are the result of extensive planning, discussion, and interaction with administrators, teachers, parents and other school partners, as well as state and local policymakers, business partners, and community members. Most states continue to refine their standards as more is learned from research and practice. The discussions these groups have about standards focus on responding to these questions:

- What do we believe all children should know and be able to do?
- What are essential skills for success in today’s world?

In order to get students with disabilities involved in standards-based instruction, every IEP team member needs to become familiar with state and district academic content standards. Most state education agency websites contain basic information about the state standards. As a facilitator, be familiar with your state’s content standards and assessments.

Learning about standards is a critical and often a huge step for special educators and related services providers who may not have been involved in training and development on standards in the past. When assumptions are made that a group of students will be excluded from a district’s standards, assessments, and accountability system, assumptions are also made that the staff who work with these students have no need to know about this system. These assumptions can further separate the education of these students and reduce even more the perceived value of their education.

All students with disabilities can work toward grade-level academic content standards. Most students will be able to achieve these standards when three conditions are met:

- Instruction is provided by teachers who are qualified to teach content areas addressed by state standards and who know how to differentiate instruction.
- IEPs ensure the provision of specialized instruction (e.g., specific reading skills, strategies for “learning how to learn”).

- Accommodations are used to help students access grade-level instruction and demonstrate achievement through assessment. Selecting and using accommodations is the focus of the *Accommodations Manual*.

## CHANGING ROLES OF GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

In the past few years, important developments have occurred that have signaled changing roles for both general and special education personnel. For example, a national Professional Development Task Force recommended that “teachers in general education learn about special education” (President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002). This recommendation is consistent with a legislative priority supported by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE, 2001) to place a greater emphasis on the infusion of quality teaching for both general and special educators. This priority explicitly acknowledges that “the success of all children is dependent on the quality of both special education and general education...and that special education is not a place apart, but an integral part of education.”

The message is clear. General educators must become more knowledgeable about instructing students with a diverse range of learning needs. Special educators need to become more knowledgeable about strategies that will provide access to academic content standards for students with disabilities. Both types of teachers need to encourage a continuous flow of communication and collaborative planning activities to meet the instructional and assessment needs, including the use of accommodations, of students with disabilities.

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

Be prepared to present critical points from the “background” about the participation of students with disabilities in academic content standards, the importance of understanding standards and assessments by IEP team members, and federal and state assessment requirements. Some participants may voice the belief that students with disabilities should not have access to instruction on grade level standards because their disabilities make this access unrealistic. Use the discussion questions to address this concern.

### PowerPoint Slides

- PPT-2: Five Important Steps
- PPT-3: Step One. Description
- PPT-4: Student Participation in Assessments
- PPT-5: Assessments for Accountability
- PPT-6: Include All Students in Instruction and Assessments
- PPT-7: Three Conditions for High Expectations
- PPT-8: Equal Access to Grade-level Content
- PPT-9 & 10: Benefits of Collaboration

### Handouts

- Accommodations Manual: Step 1
- “Discussion Activity 1”: Participation of Students with Disabilities in Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment (pg. 40 of *Professional Development Guide*)

- “Discussion Activity 2”: Roles and Responsibilities (pg. 41 of *Professional Development Guide*)

## ACTIVITY PLAN

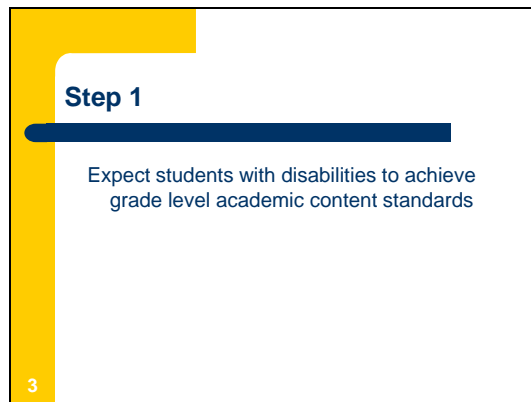
### 1. Review Five-Step Process (PPT-2, PPT-3)

► Present PPT-2 to introduce the five-step process described in the *Accommodations Manual*. Briefly review each step.



**PPT-2**

► Show PPT-3 to place focus on Step 1: Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards.



**PPT-3**

## 2. Federal and State Requirements for Assessment and Accountability (PPT-4)

► Show PPT-4 and describe federal and state requirements for assessments and accountability, then review the intent of each requirement. Stress the importance of federal and state requirements that support the use of accommodations.

**STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS**

- The participation of students with disabilities in assessments is required by the following federal and state laws:
  - No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)
  - 4 AAC 06.775 Statewide assessment program for students with disabilities (*Participation Guidelines, September 2007*)

**PPT-4**

## 3. Importance of Assessment Participation (PPT-5, PPT-6)

► Use PPT-5 to inform participants about what is measured by assessments for accountability and why such assessments are important to the student and the school alike. Many districts make decisions about how to allocate resources based on test results.

► Use PPT-6 to stress that all students should be included in assessments and to introduce the various ways this can be accomplished.

**ASSESSMENTS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Assessments for Accountability help to measure:
  - How successful schools are in including all students in standards-based education
  - How well students are achieving standards
  - What needs to be improved for specific groups of students

**PPT-5**

**INCLUDE ALL STUDENTS IN INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENTS**

- To include all students in standards-based instruction and assessments:
  - Provide accommodations during instruction and assessment to increase access
  - Use alternate assessments for students with significant cognitive disabilities
  - Follow state guidelines for decisions about the provision of alternate assessments

**PPT-6**

## 4. Expectations for Achievement of Content Standards (PPT-6, PPT-7, PPT-8, PPT-9)

► Use PPT-7 to describe the three conditions that must be in place for the achievement of content standards by students with disabilities. Use PPT-8 to emphasize equal access to grade-level content. Discuss the importance of familiarity with content standards.

<p><b>3 CONDITIONS FOR HIGH EXPECTATIONS</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teachers qualified to teach content areas and who know how to differentiate instruction for diverse learners</li><li>2. IEPs that provide specialized instruction (e.g., reading strategies, study skills)</li><li>3. Accommodations which increase access to instruction and assessment</li></ol>	<p><b>EQUAL ACCESS TO GRADE LEVEL CONTENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remember that equal access to grade level content is the goal</li><li>• Every IEP team member must be familiar with state and district content standards and where to locate standards and updates</li><li>• Collaboration between general and special educators is key</li></ul>
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**PPT-7**

**PPT-8**

► Show PPT-9 and PPT-10 to participants to illustrate the potential benefits of collaboration for general and special education teachers, including opportunities to gain new skills and the improvement of a mutual support-building process that recognizes each other's strengths.

<p><b>BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Definition: General and special education teachers working as a team for the benefit of students with disabilities</li><li>• Promotes understanding of general and special education teacher roles and responsibilities</li></ul>	<p><b>COLLABORATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provides opportunities to gain new skills (e.g., general educator's knowledge of content—special educator's knowledge of specialized instructional techniques)</li><li>• Serves as a support building process that fosters the creation of a collaborative school culture</li></ul>
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**PPT-9**

**PPT-10**

**5. Group Discussion of Participation of Students with Disabilities in Standards-based Instruction and Assessment (DA-1 and DA-2) (pg. 40-41 of *Professional Development Guide*)**

► Provide handout for Discussion Activity 1 and lead participants in discussion for Activity 1. This discussion can take place in small groups, followed by a large group summary, or the entire discussion can take place within the large group. If small groups are used, invite the small groups to count off from one to five and have each person in the group write a brief response to their question (e.g., person who counted off #1 will answer question #1). Groups will report responses

in small groups, inviting comments by everyone in the group. Conclude the small group discussion with a large group summary.

► Throughout the discussion, look for responses focusing on

- where the student receives instruction
- who provides instruction and support
- flexibility in providing instruction in ways that best meet the student’s needs
- accommodations that increase access
- expectations that the student can achieve proficiency

► Provide handout for Discussion Activity 2. Break participants into small groups and ask them to complete the handout (e.g., “Your role as you see it” and “Others’ roles as you see them”). When completed, ask group members to respond to what each individual has written about the roles identified for themselves and others, and how those roles may be perceived differently by others.

► Use the information provided in Discussion Activity 2 to promote participants’ understanding of the following:

- similarities and differences between perceived roles and responsibilities of IEP team members
- recognition of the contributions each brings to the IEP team (e.g., content expertise of general educators, knowledge of accommodations of special educators)
- opportunities or barriers that can either facilitate or hinder future prospects for general and special education teacher collaboration

## References

Institute on Community Integration. (2004). Applied collaboration: A staff development training program to promote collaborative strategies between general and special education personnel. University of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN: Institute on Community Integration.

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (2001). Teacher quality: Selected issues of importance. Alexandria, VA: Author.

President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education (2002). A new era: Revitalizing special education for children and their families. Washington, DC: Author.

# Step 2:

## Learn About Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment

### Step 2 Objective

The purpose of this activity is to define “accommodations” and to describe specific instructional and assessment accommodations.

### Key Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will

- define accommodations,
- understand the link between instructional and assessment accommodations, and
- identify key accommodation categories (Presentation, Response, Setting, and Timing/Scheduling) and provide examples.

### BACKGROUND FOR FACILITATORS

Accommodations are practices and procedures in the areas of presentation, response, setting, and timing/scheduling that provide equitable access during instruction and assessments for students with disabilities. Accommodations are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student’s disability—they do not reduce learning expectations. Accommodation use should be the same for classroom instruction, classroom testing, and district or state assessments (see Figure 2.), although there are some accommodations that are appropriate for classroom instructional use that would not be appropriate in testing situations. However, no accommodation should be recommended for an assessment that a student has not had a thorough opportunity to learn and to use comfortably and effectively during instruction.

Most accommodation use does not begin and end in school. Students who use accommodations will generally also need them at home, in the community, and as they get older, in postsecondary education and at work.

### ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

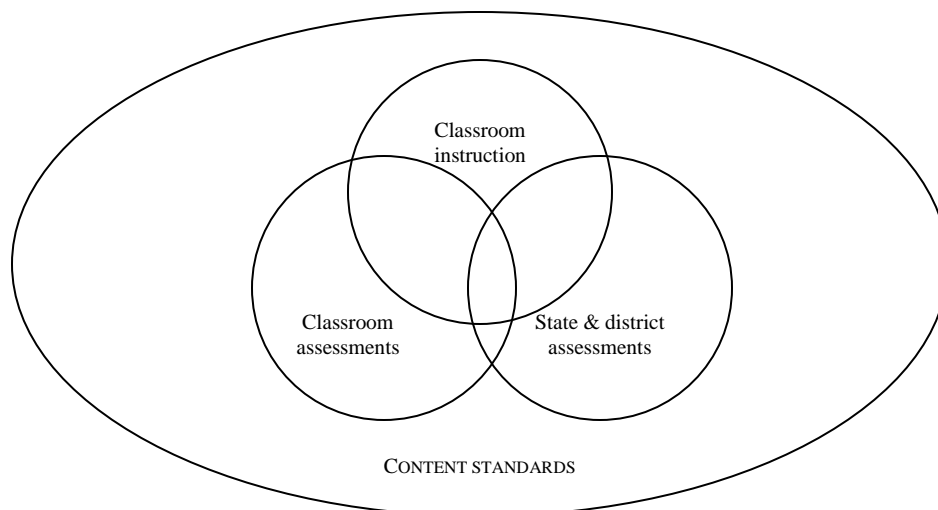
Students must learn to use accommodations during instruction in classroom settings and take classroom assessments using accommodations. Assessment conditions in the classroom should be the same as district or state assessment situations to increase a student’s comfort level and foster the student’s best possible performance.

Accommodations for instruction and assessment are intertwined. Some accommodations are appropriate for classroom use but may provide an unfair advantage in assessment situations. In an analysis of various assessment accommodation policies developed by states, a great deal of variability was observed in the use of terminology describing what constitutes an

“accommodation” (see Thurlow, Lazarus, Thompson, & Morse, in press). Differences between states were also noted in the types of assessment accommodations permitted.

In a broader sense, an accommodation provides students with access, or as some have stated, “leveling the playing field.” This is an important point, because it reflects one of the most fundamental beliefs we have about our educational system—that all individuals should be provided with equal opportunity—including the opportunity to achieve grade-level content standards. This is why the right to appropriate and reasonable accommodations has been codified in such major federal laws as IDEA, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and NCLB. Nearly two decades ago, Scheiber & Talpers (1985) stated that an accommodation should be looked at as a means of achieving equity. They assert it is “not about changing or lowering academic standards—it is an avenue for learning, receiving, and for demonstrating information.”

**Figure 2:**  
**Linking Accommodations in Classroom Instruction and Assessments**



## INSTRUCTIONAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION

Thurlow & Ysseldyke (2002) found that “the notion of individualizing instructional accommodations is similar to the concept of differentiated instruction.” As an approach to instruction that has emerged within the last several years, differentiated instruction represents a variety of strategies designed to provide for the instructional needs of a wide range of students in today’s diverse classrooms (Tomlinson, 1999). In fact, many of today’s instructional strategies are aimed at creating a more flexible teaching style that is responsive to a wide array of student needs and readiness levels. As such, providing students with alternative formats (e.g., books on tape, screen reading software), responding to student learning preferences, and developing multiple pathways to promote the achievement of grade-level academic content standards, are all examples of what is intended by the provision of accommodations—to give the student a fair and equitable chance to access and demonstrate learning. As a result, teachers who adopt a differentiated instructional approach to teaching will likely experience fewer problems with

providing accommodations to students since they already “get it”—that is, they would understand the big picture of what are considered best practices and effective learning and instructional techniques in contemporary American education.

## ACCOMMODATIONS CATEGORIES

Accommodations are commonly categorized in four ways: (1) Presentation, (2) Response, (3) Setting, and (4) Timing/Scheduling.

- **Presentation Accommodations**—allow students to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access are auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual.
- **Response Accommodations**—allow students to complete assignments, assessments, and activities in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.
- **Setting Accommodations**—change the location in which an assessment or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.
- **Timing/Scheduling Accommodations**—increase the allowable length of time to complete an assessment or assignment or change the way the time is organized.

## MODIFICATIONS OR ADAPTATIONS VS. ACCOMMODATIONS

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations—they provide access. Changing, lowering, or reducing learning expectations is usually referred to as a modification or adaptation. Modifications can result in greater gaps between students and their classmates. Using modifications may result in implications that could adversely affect a student throughout his or her educational career. These modifications include

- requiring a student to learn less material (e.g., fewer objectives, shorter units or lessons, fewer pages or problems),
- reducing assignments and assessments so a student only needs to complete the easiest problems or items,
- revising assignments or assessments to make them easier (e.g., crossing out half of the response choices on a multiple-choice test so that a student only has to pick from two options instead of four), and
- giving a student hints or clues to correct responses on assignments and tests.

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

Be prepared to discuss the general use of the term “accommodation” in relation to state laws and rules. Stress again the point that accommodations are intended to promote access, not give students with disabilities an “unfair advantage.” Also, stress the importance of using accommodations for both instruction and assessment and that some instructional accommodations may not be appropriate for some or all assessments. For example, a calculator may be suitable as an instructional accommodation, but not as an assessment accommodation,

particularly when math computation skills are being measured. Once again, consult your state policies about the use of instructional accommodations in assessment settings. (See text in manual insert, pg. 13)

### PowerPoint Slides

- PPT-11: Step 2: Learn about Accommodations
- PPT-12: Accommodations
- PPT-13: Accommodations Applications
- PPT-14, 15, 16, 17: Accommodations Categories
- PPT-18: Modifications
- PPT-19: State-specific Accommodation Policies

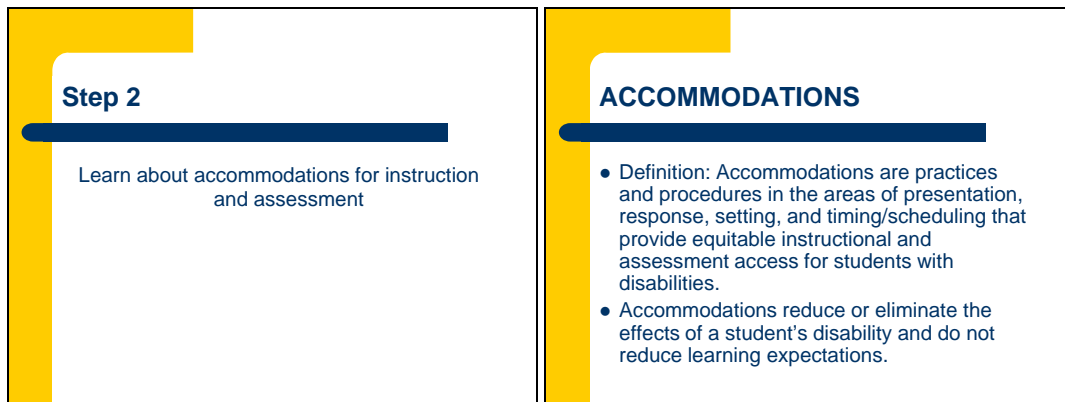
### Handouts

- *Accommodations Manual: Step 2*
- Fact Sheet 1: Presentation Accommodations (pg. 22)
- Fact Sheet 2: Response Accommodations (pg. 28)
- Fact Sheet 3: Timing/Scheduling Accommodations (pg. 33)
- Fact Sheet 4: Setting Accommodations (pg. 36)
- Fact Sheet 5: Examples of Accommodations Based on Characteristics (pg. 39)
- Discussion Activity 3: Consequences of Accommodations Use on State Assessments (pg. 42 of *Professional Development Guide*)

### ACTIVITY PLAN

#### 1. A Working Definition of Accommodations (PPT-11)

► Present PPT-11 to introduce the step. Show PPT-12 to display a working definition of the term “accommodation.” Indicate that this is how the term will be used to maintain consistency.



PPT-11

PPT-12

#### 2. Application of Instructional and Assessment Accommodations (PPT-13)

► Use the diagram on PPT-13 to show how accommodations are applied during both instruction and assessment.

**ACCOMMODATIONS APPLICATIONS**

- The use of accommodations is linked through each of these areas:

**PPT-13**

**3. Accommodations Categories (PPT-14, 15, 16, 17)**

► Refer to Fact Sheets 1-4 in the Accommodations Manual. Show PPT-14, 15, 16 and 17 and discuss how accommodations may be categorized in four ways: (1) Presentation, (2) Response, (3) Setting, and (4) Timing/Scheduling.

**ACCOMMODATIONS CATEGORIES**

- Presentation Accommodations
  - Allow students to access information in ways that do not require them to visually read standard print. These alternate modes of access are auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, and visual.

**PPT-14**

**ACCOMMODATIONS CATEGORIES**

- Response Accommodations
  - Allow students to complete assignments, tests, and activities in different ways or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.

**PPT-15**

**ACCOMMODATIONS CATEGORIES**

- Setting Accommodations
  - Change the location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.

**ACCOMMODATIONS CATEGORIES**

- Timing/Scheduling Accommodations
  - Increase the allowable length of time to complete a test or assignment and may also change the way the time is organized.

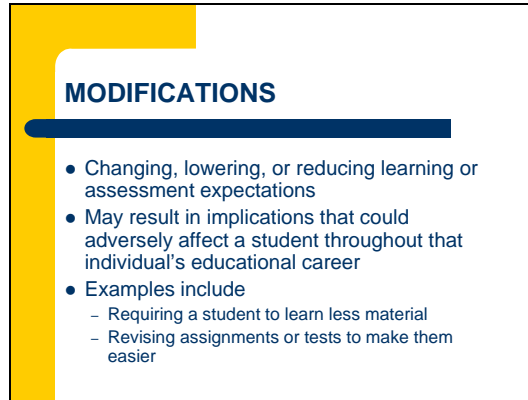
**PPT-16**

**PPT-17**

▶ Refer to Fact Sheet 5 in the *Accommodations Manual*. Briefly review the contents on the sheet to provide participants with more detailed information about the range of accommodations that address specific student characteristics under each category.

**4. Modifications (PPT-18)**

▶ Discuss modifications and their possible effects on students with disabilities.



**MODIFICATIONS**

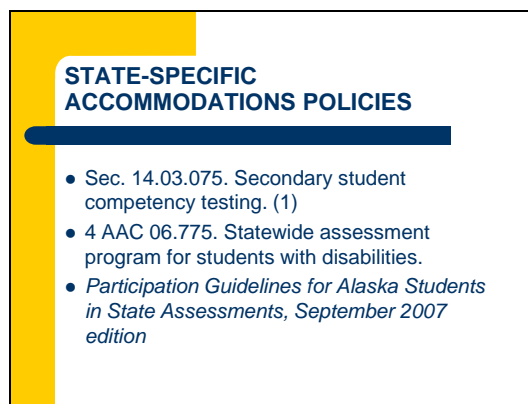
- Changing, lowering, or reducing learning or assessment expectations
- May result in implications that could adversely affect a student throughout that individual's educational career
- Examples include
  - Requiring a student to learn less material
  - Revising assignments or tests to make them easier

**PPT-18**

**5. State-specific Accommodation Policies (PPT-19)**

▶ Discuss state specific accommodations policies and procedures.

▶ Use Discussion Activity 3 to discuss state specific accommodations policies.



**STATE-SPECIFIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICIES**

- Sec. 14.03.075. Secondary student competency testing. (1)
- 4 AAC 06.775. Statewide assessment program for students with disabilities.
- *Participation Guidelines for Alaska Students in State Assessments, September 2007 edition*

**PPT-19**

**References**

Scheiber, B. & Talpers, J. (1985). *Campus access for learning disabled students: A comprehensive guide*. Pittsburgh, PA: Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities.

Thurlow, M. L., Lazarus, S.S., Thompson, S.J., & Morse, A.B. (in press). State policies on assessment participation and accommodations for students with disabilities. *Journal of Special Education*.

Thurlow, M. L., & Ysseldyke, J. E. (2002). *Including students with disabilities in assessments*. Student Assessment Series. Washington, DC: National Education Association.

Tomlinson, C.A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

# Step 3:

## Select Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Individual Students

### Step 3 Objective

The purpose of this activity is to introduce practical strategies to use in determining appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations for students with disabilities.

### Key Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will

- list approaches to the selection of accommodations,
- list questions to consider when selecting accommodations,
- know how to review and evaluate accommodations a student has used previously,
- know how to choose new accommodations based on a student's access needs,
- understand how students can play a significant role, with the support of their IEP team, in selecting and using accommodations, and
- know where to document accommodations use on a student's IEP and provide examples.

## BACKGROUND FOR FACILITATORS

Effective decision-making about the provision of appropriate accommodations begins with making good instructional decisions. In turn, making good instructional decisions is facilitated by gathering and reviewing good information about the student's disability and present level of performance in relation to local and state academic standards. In essence, the process of making decisions about accommodations is one in which members of the IEP team attempt to "level the playing field" so that students with disabilities can participate in the general education curriculum. IEP meetings that simply engage people in checking boxes on a state or local "compliance" document are not conducive to sound decision-making practices, nor do they advance equal opportunities for students to participate in the general education curriculum.

## DOCUMENTING ACCOMMODATIONS ON A STUDENT'S IEP

For students with disabilities served under IDEA, determining appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations should not pose any particular problems for IEP teams that follow good IEP practices. With information obtained from the required summary of the student's present level of educational performance (PLEP), the process of identifying and documenting accommodations should be a fairly straightforward event. The PLEP is a federal requirement in which IEP team members must state "how the child's disability affects the child's involvement

and progress in the general education curriculum—the same curriculum as nondisabled children” (34 CFR (Section 300.346).

Depending on the design and overall format of a typical IEP, there are potentially three areas in which accommodations can be addressed:

- “Consideration of Special Factors” (34 CFR (Section 300.346). This is where communication and assistive technology supports are considered. The PLEP must document the need for these supports (e.g., Braille) in terms of facilitating access to the general curriculum and participation in standards-based assessments. IDEA requires assistive technology (AT) devices and services to be considered for students with disabilities. AT is considered an accommodation and in this case, a technological device or service that helps to “level the playing field.”
- “Supplementary Aids and Services” (34 CFR Section 300.28). This area of the IEP 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 non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate.” This also includes any instructional accommodations needed by the student to participate in the general curriculum. (e.g., providing a student with a physical impairment with the opportunity to use a word processor or other writing aids). The driving force behind the identification of supplementary aids and services is to ensure consideration of the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- “Participation in Assessments” (Section 300.138). This section of the IEP documents accommodations needed to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in general state and district-wide assessments.

Information obtained from the most recent re-evaluation, results of state and districtwide assessments, input from special and regular education teachers, and information obtained from the student and parents should serve as a solid foundation for making “consistent, coherent, and legally defensible” (DeStefano & Shriner, 2003) decisions about the identification and use of appropriate instructional and assessment accommodations for students with disabilities.

## DOCUMENTING ACCOMMODATIONS ON A STUDENT’S 504 PLAN

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires public schools to provide accommodations to students with disabilities even if they do not qualify for special education services under IDEA. The definition of a disability under Section 504 is much broader than the definition under IDEA. All IDEA students are also covered by Section 504, but not all Section 504 students are eligible for services under IDEA. Section 504 states:

No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. (29 U.S.C. Section 794)

Examples of students who may receive assessment accommodations based on their 504 accommodations plan include

- students with communicable diseases (e.g., hepatitis);

- students with temporary disabilities from accidents who may need short-term hospitalization or homebound recovery;
- students with allergies or asthma;
- students who are drug addicted or alcoholic, as long as they are not currently using illegal drugs;
- students with environmental illnesses; and
- students with attention deficits.

## DETERMINING THE CONSEQUENCES OF ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS USE

When choosing assessment accommodations with a student, it is important to look at state policies and procedures to determine whether use of an accommodation results in consequences on a state test (e.g., lowering or not counting a student’s score). Assessment accommodations that result in adverse consequences are commonly referred to as modifications, adaptations, alterations, and nonstandard or nonapproved accommodations (Thurlow & Wiener, 2000). The terminology can be confusing and terms may have different meanings in various contexts.

## WHAT WORKS

The process of deciding which accommodations a student with disabilities will use is not a “one-shot” or episodic event. There are times when a decision is not too difficult, as in the case of a student whose accommodations have been well documented and shown to be effective over time. There are other times, however, when making decisions about accommodations is very challenging, particularly for students with disabilities who demonstrate highly varied learning styles and preferences. The tendency may be to recommend the use of a variety of accommodations, with the assumption that “the more accommodations, the better,” or “at least something will help” students do their best. However, this “hit or miss” approach does not necessarily enhance a student’s access to instruction or an assessment.

It is necessary to work with a student prior to the IEP meeting to try out a variety of accommodations in the classroom, based on the impact of the student’s disability on learning, in order to figure out what works best. Every student with a disability does not need an accommodation, nor do all students with the same disability need the same accommodations. For example, students with low vision may simply wear glasses or contact lenses, or use a hand held magnifier, computerized magnification, several different sizes of large print, Braille, or audio presentation. A student with difficulty reading print because of a learning disability may use no accommodation or may use a human reader, a cassette tape or compact disk, or a screen reader. The ultimate decision about whether to use an accommodation rests on the individual student’s preferences and abilities. And, the ultimate effectiveness of an accommodation depends on a student’s familiarity and opportunity to practice using it in everyday life—in the classroom, at home, and in the community.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Selecting accommodations for instruction and assessment is the role of a student’s IEP team or 504 plan committee. Use these questions to guide the selection of appropriate accommodations

for students receiving special education services or a 504 plan for the first time and for students who are currently using accommodations.

*Refer to Fact Sheets 5 and 6 (pg. 39-44) and Teacher Tools 1 and 2 (pg. 48-51) in the Accommodations Manual for additional information in completing this step.*

- What are the student’s learning strengths and needs?
- How do the student’s learning needs affect the achievement of grade-level content standards?
- What specialized instruction (e.g., learning strategies, organizational skills, reading skills) does the student need to achieve grade-level content standards?
- What accommodations will increase the student’s access to instruction and assessment by addressing the student’s learning needs and reducing the effect of the student’s disability?
- What accommodations are regularly used by the student during instruction and assessments?
- What are the results for assignments and assessments when accommodations were used and not used?
- What is the student’s perception of how well an accommodation “worked?”
- Are there effective combinations of accommodations?
- What difficulties did the student experience when using accommodations?
- What are the perceptions of parents, teachers, and specialists about how the accommodation worked?
- Should the student continue to use an accommodation, are changes needed, or should the use of the accommodation be discontinued?

Of the accommodations that match the student’s needs, consider

- the student’s willingness to learn to use the accommodation,
- opportunities to learn how to use the accommodation in classroom settings, and
- conditions for use on state assessments.

Plan how and when the student will learn to use each new accommodation. Be sure there is plenty of time to learn to use instructional and assessment accommodations before an assessment takes place. Finally, plan for the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the student’s use of accommodations.

## INVOLVING STUDENTS IN SELECTING, USING, AND EVALUATING ACCOMMODATIONS

It is critical for students with disabilities to understand their disabilities and learn self-advocacy strategies for success in school and throughout life. Some students have had limited experience expressing personal preferences and advocating for themselves. Speaking out about preferences, particularly in the presence of “authority figures,” may be a new role for students, one for which they need guidance and feedback. Teachers and other IEP team members can play a key role in

working with students to advocate for themselves in the context of choosing and using accommodations.

The more that students are involved in the selection process, the more likely the accommodations will be used, especially as students reach adolescence and the desire to be more independent increases. Self-advocacy skills become critical here. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then they need to learn how to make sure those accommodations are provided in all of their classes and wherever they need them outside of school.

## RESEARCH RESULTS

Here are some results of a study conducted by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (Thompson, Thurlow, & Walz, 2000). Nearly 100 high school students with learning disabilities were interviewed about their participation in state tests that they have to pass in order to graduate from high school. Results show the following:

- Ninety percent of the students interviewed knew whether they had taken the state tests.
- Most students knew whether they had passed each test.
- About three fourths of the students tested said that they had used accommodations; only two students did not know what accommodations were.
- Many of the accommodations students used for testing were also used in daily classroom activities, including extended time, working in a small group or in a separate room, having tests read aloud, and having directions repeated.
- Other classroom accommodations students used that would not work for tests included books on tape, reduced amounts of reading, note taker, copy notes and/or directions from chalkboard or overheads.
- About two-thirds of the students were able to list accommodations that would be helpful to them in their future adult lives. The other third either did not know what would be helpful, or thought they probably would not need accommodations in the future.

Selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations are skills that can be valuable throughout a student's daily life and into postsecondary education, career and community life. These are critical skills for students to learn while still in high school. Research shows that students with disabilities can gain an understanding of accommodations. This underscores the importance of student participation in the decision-making process (Thompson, Thurlow, & Walz, 2000). Students can provide information that can be helpful in choosing accommodations that can help them do their best. In addition, it is important for students to understand the purpose of each test they take and the consequences of their scores, especially if the test is used to determine graduation status or promotional consideration.

## PREPARATION FOR POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND ADULT LIFE

A major challenge for many students with disabilities is the change in how services and accommodations are planned and provided as they move from high school to postsecondary settings. According to IDEA, schools are responsible for identifying students with disabilities,

and a team creates an IEP. In contrast, postsecondary institutions are subject to the ADA, under which students themselves must inform school officials of their disability, provide documentation, and propose viable options for accommodations.

Many college students are surprised when they discover the only way they can receive accommodations is by asking for them. There is no special education teacher assigned to take care of individual student needs. Colleges have disability services available but only for students who request them. Assertive self-advocacy is especially important when confronting instructors and employers who think a person using accommodations is receiving “special privileges.”

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

The facilitator should be familiar with where accommodation needs can be identified (e.g., Consideration of Special Factors, Supplementary Aids and Services, Participation in Assessments, other areas) on the local or state IEP. In particular, the facilitator should be thoroughly familiar with the types and sources of information that should be contained in the PLEP and how this information is essential for making good, defensible decisions about instructional and assessment accommodations.

### PowerPoint Slides

- PPT-20: Step Three: Select Accommodations
- PPT-21: Documenting Accommodations
- PPT-22: What Doesn't Work
- PPT-23, 24: Questions to Consider
- PPT-25, 26: Review Current Accommodations
- PPT-27: Decide Whether the Student should...
- PPT-28: Of the accommodations that match student needs
- PPT-29: Planning Use of New Accommodations
- PPT-30: Involve Students

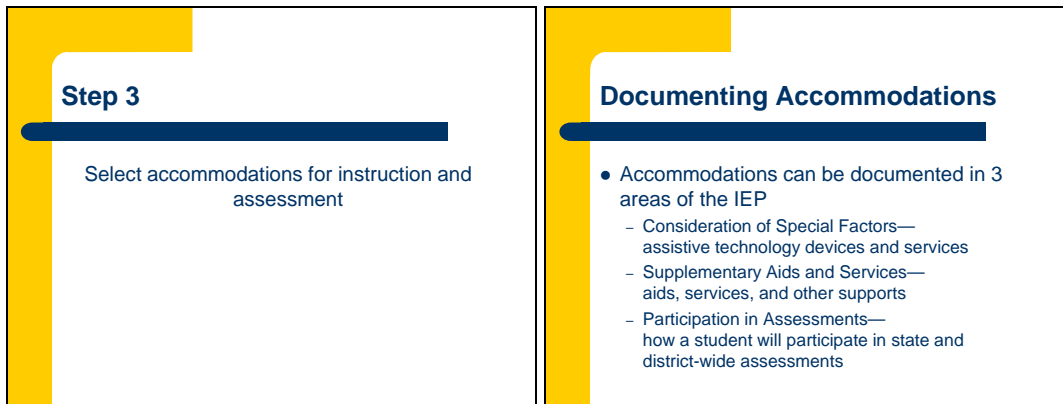
### Handouts

- *Accommodations Manual: Step 3*
- Teacher Tool 1: Access Needs that May Require Accommodations (pg. 48)
- Fact Sheet 5: Examples of Accommodations Based on Student Characteristics (pg. 39)
- Fact Sheet 6: Dos and Don'ts in Considering Accommodations (pg. 44)
- Teacher Tool 2: Accommodations from the Student's Perspective (pg. 50)

## ACTIVITY PLAN

### 1. What Works (PPT-20, PPT-21)

► Show PPT-20 to introduce the step and PPT-21 to explain that accommodations must be documented on IEP or 504 plan.

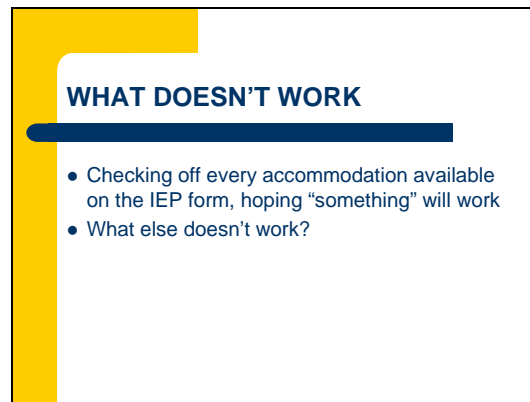


**PPT-20**

**PPT-21**

**2. Documenting Accommodations on a Student’s IEP (PPT- 22)**

► Use PPT-22 to discuss three areas where accommodations use can be documented on a student’s IEP. Use state or district-specific IEP forms to demonstrate where accommodations use should be documented.



**PPT-22**

► Also discuss briefly the documentation of accommodations on 504 accommodation forms for students with disabilities who do not receive special education services. Use state or district specific 504 accommodations forms (if available).

**3. Questions to Consider (PPT-23, PPT-24, PPT-25, PPT-26)**

► Use PPT-23 through PPT-26 to discuss questions to consider when selecting accommodations during instruction and assessment. Emphasize the importance of access to grade-level material and specialized support before looking at accommodation needs.

► Reinforce the notion that the process of determining accommodations is ongoing and, for some students, may involve a number of trials to find the right mix or combination of accommodations.

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- What are the student's learning strengths and needs?
- How do the student's learning needs affect the achievement of grade level content standards?

**PPT-23**

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- What specialized instruction (e.g., learning strategies, organizational skills, reading skills) does the student need to achieve grade level content standards?
- What accommodations will increase the student's access to instruction and assessment by reducing the effects of the disability?

**PPT-24**

**REVIEW CURRENT ACCOMMODATIONS**

- What accommodations are currently used by the student during instruction and for assessments?
- What are results for assignments and assessments when accommodations were used and not used?
- Are there effective combinations of accommodations?

**PPT-25**

**REVIEW CURRENT ACCOMMODATIONS**

- What difficulties did student experience when using accommodations?
- What is student's perception of how well accommodations "worked"?
- What are perceptions of parents, teachers and specialists about how well accommodations "worked"?

**PPT-26**

**3. Choosing New Accommodations (PPT-27, PPT-28, PPT-29, TT-1)**

► Discuss considerations when selecting accommodations with students, using PPT-27. Use PPT-28 to discuss access needs and PPT-29 to review planning consideration. Refer to Teacher Tool 1 and discuss access needs that may require accommodations.

**BASED ON THIS REVIEW**

- Decide whether the student should
  - Continue using an accommodation "as is"
  - Use an accommodation with changes
  - Have an accommodation discontinued

**PPT-27**

<p><b>OF THE ACCOMMODATIONS THAT MATCH THE STUDENT'S NEEDS, CONSIDER</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student's willingness to learn to use the accommodation</li> <li>• Opportunities to learn how to use the accommodation in classroom settings</li> <li>• Conditions for use on state assessments</li> </ul>	<p><b>PLANNING USE OF NEW ACCOMMODATIONS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan how a student will learn to use each new accommodation</li> <li>• Be certain there is sufficient time to learn to use instructional and assessment accommodations before test day</li> <li>• Plan for the ongoing evaluation and improvement of accommodations use</li> </ul>
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**PPT-28**

**PPT-29**

► Go back to Step 2: Learn About Accommodations and match access needs to the list of specific accommodations to try. Students may have additional access needs that are not listed. Invite participants to add to the list.

**4. Dos and Don'ts When Selecting Accommodations (FS- 6)**

- Refer to Fact Sheet 6 in the Accommodations Manual, “Dos and Don'ts When Choosing Accommodations.” Review the list with participants.
- Engage participants in a discussion of “Dos and Don'ts When Selecting Accommodations.” Make a list of these for participants to add to their fact sheets.

**5. Student Involvement in Selecting and Using Accommodations (PPT-30, and TT- 2)**

► Show PPT-28. Emphasize to participants that students can play a significant role, with the support of their IEP teams, in selecting and using accommodations. Students need to know what accommodations are possible, and then, based on knowledge of their personal strengths and limitations, they need to select and try accommodations that might be useful for them.

**INVOLVE STUDENTS**

- Involve students in selecting, using, and evaluating accommodations
- The more input students have in selecting their accommodations, the more likely the accommodations will be used
- Students should see accommodations as adding value to their daily life—not only in school—but for postsecondary, career, and community life

**PPT-30**

- ▶ Refer to Teacher Tool 2 in the Accommodations Manual: “Accommodations from the Student’s Perspective,” which contains an example of questions a student can ask to help determine strengths and advocate for support and accommodations. Ask participants to share other self-advocacy tools that they have found to be effective for students.
- ▶ A major challenge for many students with disabilities is the change in how services and accommodations are planned and provided as they move from high school to postsecondary settings. Colleges have disability services available but only for students who request them. Assertive self-advocacy is especially important when confronting instructors and employers who think a person using accommodations is receiving “special privileges.” Invite participants to share the postsecondary accommodations experiences of former students.

### **References**

- DeStefano, L., & Shriner, J. (2003). Participation and accommodation in state assessment: The role of individualized education programs. *Exceptional Children*, 69(2), 147-161.
- DeStefano, L., & Shriner, J., & Lloyd, C. A. (2001). Teacher decision making in participation of students with disabilities in large-scale assessment. *Exceptional Children*, 68(1), 7-22.
- Thompson, S., Thurlow, M., & Walz, L. (2000). Student perspectives on the use of accommodations on large-scale assessments (Minnesota Report No. 35). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

# Step 4:

## Administer Accommodations during Instruction and Assessment

### Step 4 Objective

The purpose of this activity is to provide an overview of the logistics involved in providing accommodations during assessments and procedures for standardizing the administration of accommodations during assessment. The importance of test security is emphasized.

### Key Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will

- understand the logistics involved in the appropriate administration of accommodations during assessment,
- have tools to use in planning for the provision of accommodations on test day, and
- understand the practices necessary to maintain test security and validity of test scores.

## BACKGROUND FOR FACILITATORS

### Administering Assessments and Accommodations

State and local laws and policies specify practices to assure test security and the standardized and ethical administration of assessments. Test administrators, proctors, and all staff involved in test administration must adhere to these policies. The Code of Professional Responsibilities in Educational Measurement (NCME, 1995) states that test administrators and others involved in assessments must:

- Take appropriate security precautions before, during, and after the administration of the assessment.
- Understand the procedures needed to administer the assessment prior to administration.
- Administer standardized assessments according to prescribed procedures and conditions and notify appropriate persons if any nonstandard or delimiting conditions occur.
- Avoid any conditions in the conduct of the assessment that might invalidate the results.
- Provide for and document all reasonable and allowable accommodations for the administration of the assessment to persons with disabilities or special needs
- Avoid actions or conditions that would permit or encourage individuals or groups to receive scores that misrepresent their actual levels of attainment.
- Failure to adhere to these practices may constitute a test irregularity or a breach of test security and must be reported and investigated according to state and local testing policies.

Once decisions have been made about providing accommodations to students, the logistics of providing the accommodations must be considered. In this case, logistics simply refers to how the accommodations will be provided. Instructional accommodations must be provided by the staff providing instruction during any period that necessitates the accommodation. During assessments, many students may require accommodations at the same time, so thoughtful planning is critical. It is not uncommon for members of the IEP team, most often special education teachers, to be given the responsibility for arranging, coordinating, and providing assessment accommodations for all students who need them. Thus, it is essential that everyone involved in this process know and understand the requirements and consequences of using accommodations in district and state assessments.

## STANDARDIZED ADMINISTRATION AND TEST SECURITY

To administer test accommodations appropriately, teachers and other school personnel must understand the importance of standardization, and test security.

Assessments must be administered using standardized and ethical procedures. Adherence to standard procedures and directions for the implementation of accommodations is necessary to preserve the integrity of the test. Standardization refers to adherence to uniform administration procedures and conditions during an assessment. Standardization is an essential feature of educational assessments and is necessary to produce comparable information about student learning. Strict adherence to guidelines detailing instructions and procedures for the administration of accommodations is necessary to ensure that test results reflect actual student learning.

Changes in administration procedures may invalidate test scores and may result in sanctions for teachers and schools. For example, helping students in any way does not give a true picture of what students know. Helping includes coaching, editing student work, answering questions, or giving cues in any way, including gestures, facial expressions, or encouragement to change an answer. Changing the content of a test to make it easier for students who have not learned the content being tested invalidates a test, especially if the test is designed to be used for accountability. These changes might include allowing a student to answer fewer questions, reducing the number of responses required, or changing the content by paraphrasing or offering additional information. If a student receives extra help during testing, his or her scores will not be valid indicators of what he or she can do. It is important to simply encourage students to do their best.

Test administrators must also be cognizant of test security. Any disclosure of test items or answers may adversely affect the value of the test by invalidating the test results. Test security can become an issue when accessible test formats are used (e.g., Braille, large print) or when someone other than the student is allowed to see the test (e.g., reader, scribe, interpreter). In order to ensure test security and confidentiality, test administrators need to (1) keep testing materials in a secure place to prevent unauthorized access, (2) keep all test content confidential (e.g., refrain from sharing information or implying test content with anyone), and (3) return all materials as instructed. Accessible format tests need to be provided to the test administrator under secure and confidential means up to one full day before test administration so that the test administrator can appropriately plan for the accessible media test administration.

## PLANNING FOR ASSESSMENT ACCOMMODATIONS

Schools need to plan for who will need what accommodation, and how each assessment accommodation will be implemented and monitored on the day of assessment. Some schools use an accommodation request form that is completed by a student's IEP team. Information about all students can be compiled on a database that has each student's name, accommodations needed, and logistics for providing the accommodation on test day.

Many state educational agencies and local educational agencies provide guidelines to assist IEP teams in making informed decisions about the provision of assessment accommodations. Such guidelines should outline instructions and procedures for the appropriate administration of selected accommodations. For example, these guidelines can define the role of the scribe when the IEP team has selected dictation of answers as an accommodation, or prescribe conditions for reading test items aloud if the IEP team has selected reading test items as an accommodation. Strict adherence to these guidelines is necessary to ensure the test results reflect actual student learning. If accommodations are administered inconsistently, the results will not be comparable across examinees. For example, if the directions given to students vary, some students may receive too little assistance from the test administrator and some may receive too much. The use of detailed guidelines not only ensures that the efforts of students and teachers will yield meaningful information, but it also makes test administration easier.

Prior to test day, a designated member of the IEP team or other appropriate staff should make sure the test administrator or proctor knows what accommodations the student will be using. Don't assume the test administrator knows how or what accommodations to administer. A test administrator, particularly one unfamiliar with the student, will need to know details (e.g., whether extra time will be allowed for a student and if so, how much). Accordingly, when the familiar call goes out, "Time's up, put your pencils down," the test administrator is able to determine how long and where a student receiving extra time can continue working. Similarly, test administrators may not be familiar with some of the less conventional response formats such as allowing the student to write directly on the text booklet. If alternative response formats are considered for a student, it is critical that those administering the test are aware of the general parameters with which the accommodation can be provided. Even the most creative and well thought out accommodations will mean little if they are poorly implemented, thus logistical considerations are important.

As an example of how even the best laid plans can be frustrated, it is helpful to cite a study that was conducted about the nature of how assessment accommodations were implemented. In this study, researchers reviewed student IEPs to identify what accommodations were documented. When they visited schools on test day to observe what accommodations were actually received, they found that "location" was most often the critical factor. That is, where students were tested was more likely to determine what accommodations they received than what was documented on the IEP (Rhode Island Department of Education, 2003). So, if a student were in a room where a teacher decided to read the test to the group, then the student received a read-aloud accommodation. Likewise, if a student were in a room where a teacher decided that students would read the test to themselves, no read-aloud accommodations were provided. This study underscores several practices that must not be used when planning for the implementation of accommodations during testing: (1) making on-the-spot decisions about what accommodations a student needs for testing, (2) making an accommodation available to everyone simply because of

convenience, and (3) not considering an accommodation essential because only one student needs it.

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

Be prepared to discuss the importance of planning for the logistics of implementing accommodations during testing. Discuss the importance of timing in planning for accommodations (e.g., the need to inform test companies or contractors of necessary changes to the testing forms or materials). The facilitator must also have an understanding of the implications of test accommodations for test security and standardization. Convey the importance of maintaining standardization in test administration procedures (i.e., what happens if standardization in test administration procedures is not maintained) and stress the importance of test security.

### PowerPoint Slides

- PPT-31: Step 4: Administer Accommodations
- PPT-32: Coordinating the Logistics...
- PPT-33: Prior to Day of Assessment...
- PPT-34: Test Administrators Must Understand...
- PPT-35 & 36: Ensuring Standardization
- PPT-37: Ethical Testing Practices
- PPT-38: Test Security

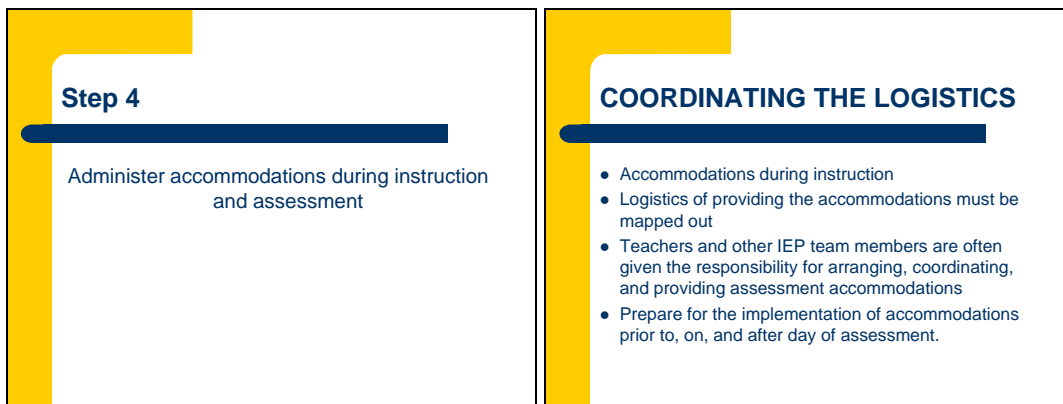
### Handouts

- Accommodations Manual: Step 4
- Teacher Tool 3: Assessment Accommodations Plan (pg. 52)
- Teacher Tool 4: Assessment Accommodations Agreement (pg. 53)
- Teacher Tool 5: Logistic Planning Checklist (pg. 54)
- Fact Sheet 7: Rules for Administering Specific Assessment Accommodations (pg. 45-47)

## ACTIVITY PLAN

### 1. Coordinating the Logistics of Administering Accommodations during Testing (PPT-31, PPT-32)

► Show PPT-31 to introduce the activity and PPT-32 to discuss the importance of planning for the logistics of who does what, when, and where. Once decisions have been made about who uses accommodations, the logistics must be mapped out.



**PPT-31**

**PPT-32**

► Discuss the use of a planning form to keep everyone informed about what is expected during testing administration (refer participants to Teacher Tools 3 and 4 in the *Accommodations Manual*). Explain that these tools can be used to coordinate a plan for providing assessment accommodations.

► Engage participants in a discussion about what might be done to prepare for the implementation of accommodations prior to test day, on test day, and after test day. Refer to Teacher Tool 5 in the *Accommodations Manual*.

► Pose the following question: What is the student’s role in planning for the logistics and implementation of accommodations during testing? Instruct participants to think silently about the question. Ask the participants to pair up and exchange thoughts. Finally, ask the pairs to share their responses with the entire group.

► Stress the need to plan in advance for accommodations that require adaptations to the test booklets (e.g., Braille, large print). Also, discuss the need to arrange, prior to test day, for accommodations involving special equipment (e.g., screen reader, tape recorder, Braille).

► Ask participants to name specific accommodations and how they would plan for the logistics and implementation of those specific accommodations on test day. For example, things you may need to do to plan for the logistics and implementation of a read-aloud accommodation during testing might include: (1) finding a qualified reader, (2) finding a substitute qualified reader, (3) reserving a separate room or location for testing, and (4) designating a staff member to inform the reader of their role and responsibilities on test day.

**2. Prior to Day of Assessment (PPT- 33, PPT- 34)**

► Display PPT-33 and PPT-34. Discuss the need for teachers or other members of a student’s IEP team to make certain the test administrator or proctor knows what accommodations a student will be using on test day and how to implement each accommodation.

**PRIOR TO DAY OF ASSESSMENT**

- Be certain test administrators and proctors know the accommodations that must be provided to individual students
- Accommodation forms and databases can be used to monitor the implementation of accommodations on day of assessment
- Where will a student with “extended time” accommodation continue assessment? Where will student who requires a “read to” accommodation take assessment?
- Know how to administer accommodations

**PPT-33**

**FOLLOWING THROUGH ON DAY OF ASSESSMENT**

- Test administrators must understand the importance of:
  - Ethical Testing Practices
  - Standardization
  - Test security

**PPT-34**

► Engage participants in a discussion of what teachers and test administrators must not do on test day. Consider the following examples:

- Making “on-the-spot” decisions about what accommodations a student needs for testing.
- Giving an accommodation to everyone in a room because of convenience.
- Not giving an individual an accommodation because that individual is the only one in the room who needs it.

► Provide examples for monitoring the implementation of accommodations on test day including using an accommodation request form that is completed by a student’s IEP team or creating a database containing information about student accommodations. Ask participants for other suggestions.

**3. Standardization and Administration of Accommodations (PPT-35, PPT-36)**

► Show PPT-35 and PPT-36 and emphasize the importance of ensuring standardization in test administration. Discuss considerations for establishing guidelines for individuals who provide accommodations to students during testing (e.g., scribe, reader, interpreter). Ask participants to generate suggestions about what could be included as guidelines to ensure standardization of test administration.

**ENSURING STANDARDIZATION**

- Standardization: The adherence of uniform administration procedures and conditions during an assessment
- Strict adherence to guidelines for instructions and procedures for the administration of accommodations is necessary to ensure that test results reflect actual student learning

**PPT-35**

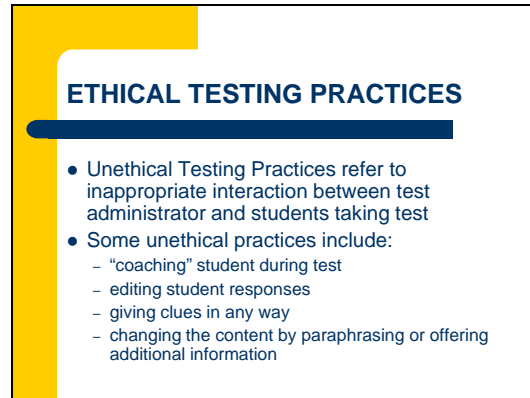
**ENSURING STANDARDIZATION**

- The objective of providing assessment accommodations is to make fair comparisons with other students taking the test

**PPT-36**

#### 4. Ensuring Ethical Testing Practices (PPT-37)

► Show PPT-37 and discuss the relationship between ethical test practices and test results, specifically how inferences about what students know and can do can be invalid if unethical testing practices are employed. Cite state and local policy on reporting test irregularities.



#### PPT-37

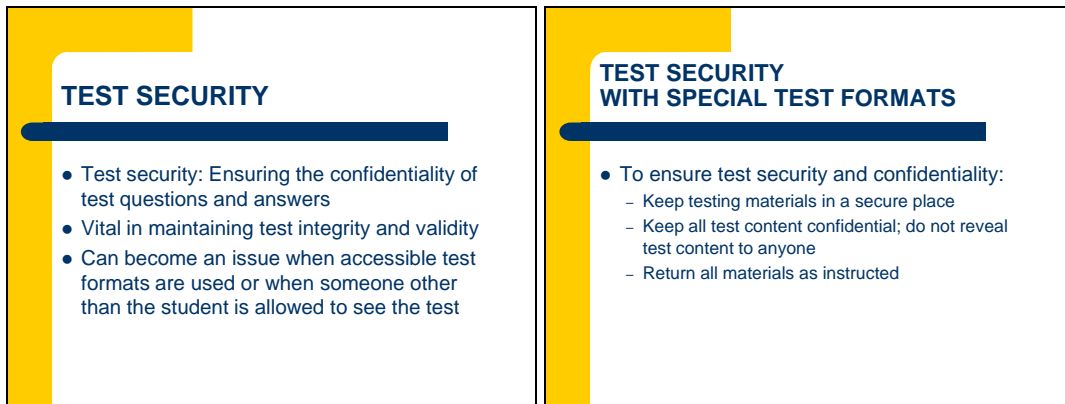
► Discuss the need to adhere to ethical testing practices during test administration. Describe some ways in which unethical testing practices can lead to invalid indicators of student achievement. Provide examples of how test administrators may violate ethical testing practices (e.g., “coaching” the student, providing visual cues).

► Ask participants to share examples of what might be considered unethical testing practices and how to prevent them.

► Refer to Fact Sheet 7. Briefly review the contents of the sheet to provide participants with more detailed information about establishing rules for administering specific assessment accommodations.

#### 5. Test Security (PPT-38, PPT-39)

► Show PPT-38 and PPT-39 and discuss when test security can become an issue (i.e., when accessible test formats are used and when someone other than the student is allowed to see the test). Remind participants that adherence to standard procedures and test security is necessary to preserve the integrity of the test. Cite state and local policy for reporting test security violations.



**PPT-38**

**PPT-39**

- ▶ Describe what test administrators need to do to ensure test security and confidentiality. Emphasize the importance of keeping testing materials in a secure place to prevent unauthorized access, ensuring all test content is kept confidential, and returning all materials as instructed.
- ▶ Ask participants to name examples of test security violations by educators and students and discuss how these violations could be prevented.

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# Step 5: Evaluate and Improve Accommodations Use

## Step 5 Objective

The purpose of this activity is to provide information about evaluating and improving the use of assessment accommodations.

## Key Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this activity, participants will

- understand the need to collect information on the use and appropriate administration of accommodations,
- be familiar with different ways of collecting information on accommodations using formative evaluation, and
- understand the type of questions that can be used to guide evaluation of accommodations use.

## BACKGROUND FOR FACILITATORS

Instruction and assessment accommodations should be selected on the basis of an individual student’s needs. Evaluating the effectiveness of the use of accommodations at the district, school and individual student level is necessary to ensure the meaningful participation of students with disabilities in standards-based instruction and state and districtwide assessments. The information from evaluation can be used in any number of different ways—from identifying questionable patterns of accommodation use to indicating areas in which IEP/504 team members and test administrators need additional training and support.

## QUESTIONS TO GUIDE EVALUATION

The purpose of evaluating the use of accommodations is to determine the extent to which students with disabilities are provided with equitable access. Although terms like “evaluation” may sound imposing to some, this need not be an arduous task. As used in this guide, evaluating the use of accommodations does not involve extensive “data analysis,” nor does it require any type of complex methodology. Rather, the approach is one that is based on a fairly simple and straightforward process of conducting what is known as “formative” evaluation. The idea behind formative evaluation is to “turn over useful information quickly to make improvements” (Brinkerhoff, 1983). In this case, “information” can include comments, observations, notes, or anecdotal reports from the student’s teachers, parents, and other members of the IEP team, including students themselves. Formative evaluation is based on the premise that no plan is likely to work perfectly the first time, perhaps not even after two or three iterations. Selecting and using accommodations is by nature a dynamic process and one that requires continuous improvement; hence, a formative approach is one that can help members of the IEP planning team to monitor and gauge when changes are necessary.

While formative evaluation provides considerable latitude with regard to various ways in which information can be collected, it is by no means an “aimless” process. It must be purposeful and

focused on the issue to be addressed. In this case, we are concerned about the use of accommodations and how they effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities. This information can be obtained from asking some basic questions about the use of accommodations, both at the level of the school or district (i.e., a systems perspective) or at the individual (i.e., student) level.

In addition to collecting information about the use of accommodations within the classroom, information also needs to be gathered on the implementation of accommodations during assessment. Observations conducted during test administration, interviews with test administrators, and talking with students after testing sessions will likely yield data that can be used to guide the formative evaluation process at the school or district level and at the student level. Questions at each level are shown below.

### **Questions to Guide Evaluation of Accommodation Use at the School or District Level**

1. Are there policies to ensure ethical testing practices, the standardized administration of assessments, and that test security practices are followed before, during, and after the day of the test?
2. Are there procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised with the provision of accommodations?
3. Are students receiving accommodations as documented in their IEP and 504 plans?
4. Are there procedures in place to ensure that test administrators adhere to directions for the implementation of accommodations?
5. How many students with IEPs or 504 plans are receiving accommodations?
6. What types of accommodations are provided and are some used more than others?
7. How well do students who receive accommodations perform on state and local assessments? If students are not meeting the expected level of performance, is it due to the students not having had access to the necessary instruction, not receiving the accommodation, or using the accommodations that were not effective?

### **Questions to Guide Evaluation at the Student Level**

1. What accommodations are used by the student during instruction and assessments?
2. What are the results of classroom assignments and assessments when accommodations are and are not used? If a student did not meet the expected level of performance, is it due to not having access to the necessary instruction, not receiving the accommodations, or using accommodations that were not effective?
3. What is the student's perception of how well the accommodation worked?
4. What seem to be effective combinations of accommodations?
5. What are the difficulties encountered in the use of accommodations?
6. What are the perceptions of teachers and others about how the accommodation appears to be working?

The questions indicated above are those that can be used to formatively evaluate the use of accommodations at both the school, district, and student levels. School and district level

questions can be addressed by a committee responsible for continuous improvement efforts, while the student level questions are those that need to be considered by the IEP team. It is critical to stress that formative evaluation is not the responsibility of just one individual. The entire IEP team should contribute to the information gathering and decision-making process about accommodations.

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION FOR ACTIVITY

Information on the use of accommodations is relatively easy to collect when it is done as a collective effort of the IEP planning team. Stress the importance of formative evaluation as a “team effort” that includes the parents and the student. Also, emphasize the point that the formative approach is one based on a continuous improvement process. The focus is on using information to make changes that will lead to improvements in student access to grade level instructional and assessments. Be prepared to discuss district and school level, as well as student level questions.

### PowerPoint Slides

- PPT- 40: Step 5: Evaluate and Improve Accommodations Use
- PPT- 41: Using Formative Evaluation
- PPT- 42: Why Evaluate Accommodations Use
- PPT- 43, 44: Questions to Guide Evaluation at the School or District Level
- PPT- 45, 46: Questions to Guide Evaluation at the Student Level

### Handouts

- *Accommodations Manual: Step 5*
- Teacher Tool 6: Accommodations Journal (pg. 56)
- Activity Plan

### 1. Evaluation of Accommodations Use (PPT-40, PPT-41, TT- 7)

► Show PPT-40 to introduce the activity and PPT-41 to show how evaluation can be conducted by using a formative evaluation approach. Discuss the points on the slide and emphasize that evaluation of the use of accommodations can be accomplished through observations, notes, or anecdotal reports from the student’s teachers, parents, and other members of the IEP team, including students themselves. Stress that formative evaluation is not conducted to “prove” whether an accommodation has been effective. Rather, it is an approach that is used to monitor progress and promote continuous improvement.

<p><b>Step 5</b></p> <hr style="border: 2px solid blue;"/> <p>Evaluate and improve accommodations use</p>	<p><b>USING FORMATIVE EVALUATION</b></p> <hr style="border: 2px solid blue;"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use formative evaluation to “turn over useful information quickly to make improvements” in accommodation use</li> <li>• Useful information can be obtained from members of the IEP planning team—evaluation is a team effort</li> <li>• Formative evaluation is based on the premise of using information for continuous improvement</li> </ul>
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**PPT-40**

**PPT-41**

► Use PPT-42 Engage participants in a discussion about the importance of collecting evaluation information on the use and impact of accommodations for the purpose of continuous improvement. Stress to participants that use of accommodations is a dynamic process in which student needs will change over time, so it is essential that their use be evaluated periodically to ensure the meaningful participation of students with disabilities. In addition, indicate to participants that the purpose of evaluating the use of accommodations is not only to determine the extent to which students with disabilities are provided with equitable access but to identify questionable accommodations practices and potential staff training needs for the future.

**WHY EVALUATE ACCOMODATIONS USE**

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- To ensure the meaningful participation of all students in state and district-wide assessments
- To reveal questionable patterns of accommodations use
- To identify IEP/504 team members, test administrators, or others in need of additional training and support

**PPT-42**

► Introduce Teacher Tool 6 to show how students can be engaged in providing feedback about accommodations provided to them.

► Ask participants to think of different ways to collect information on the use of accommodations. Then ask the participants to pair up and exchange thoughts. Finally, ask the pairs to share their responses with the entire group.

**2. Questions to Guide Evaluation (PPT- 43, PPT- 44, PPT- 45, PPT- 46)**

► Indicate to participants that formative evaluation can be used to address school or district or individual student use of accommodations. Use PPT-43 and PPT-44 to show key questions with regard to evaluating the use of accommodations at the school or district level. Indicate to participants that these represent global questions in determining how responsive systems (i.e., either school or district) are with regard to meeting the accommodation needs of students with disabilities. Indicate to participants that these questions are perhaps best addressed through a school or district special education advisory council or other type of committee that includes teachers, related services staff (e.g., school psychologist), special education coordinators, administrators, and parents.

**QUESTIONS TO GUIDE EVALUATION AT THE SCHOOL OR DISTRICT LEVEL**

- Are there policies to ensure standardized and ethical assessment administration and that test security practices are followed before, during, and after assessment?
- Are there procedures to ensure assessment administration procedures are not compromised with the provision of accommodations?
- Are students receiving accommodations as documented in the IEP and 504 plans?

**PPT-43**

**QUESTIONS TO GUIDE EVALUATION AT THE SCHOOL OR DISTRICT LEVEL**

- Are there procedures in place to ensure test administrators adhere to directions for the administration of accommodations?
- How many students are receiving accommodations?
- What types of accommodations are provided and are some used more than others?
- What are the results for students when accommodations are used? If students are not demonstrating expected level of performance, did students have access to instruction in assessed content? Was the accommodation effective?

**PPT-44**

► Review the questions on PPT-45 and PPT-46 to guide evaluation at the student level. Stress that these are key questions in which a formative evaluation approach can be used. Formative evaluation of student accommodations can be accomplished by having members of the IEP planning team contribute information to address each of the questions. Remind participants that Teacher Tool 6 can be used to gather input from the student.

**QUESTIONS TO GUIDE EVALUATION AT THE STUDENT LEVEL**

- What accommodations are used by the student during instruction and on assessments?
- What are the results of classroom assignments and assessments when accommodations are/are not used? If student not demonstrating expected performance level, did student have access to instruction in assessed content, receive accommodation, or was accommodation not effective?

**PPT-45**

**QUESTIONS TO GUIDE EVALUATION AT THE STUDENT LEVEL**

- What is the student's perception of how well the accommodation "worked"?
- What seem to be effective "combinations" of accommodations?
- What are the difficulties encountered in the use of accommodations for a student?
- What are the perceptions of teachers and others about how the accommodation appears to be "working"?

**PPT-46**

**References**

Brinkerhoff, R. O. (1983). Program evaluation: A practitioner's guide for trainers and educators: Sourcebook. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

# Discussion Activity 1

## Participation of Students with Disabilities in Standards-based Instruction and Assessment

*Directions: This activity can be completed in small discussion groups. Each person in a small group could answer one question and then share responses with the group*

1. What benefits have you seen for students with disabilities as a result of access to academic content standards?

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2. Are your state's academic content standards readily available to all school staff? If not, what are your suggestions for improvement?

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3. Do all students have access to instruction on academic content standards? If not, what are your suggestions for improvement?

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4. Think of a student with disabilities who has met proficiency on your state tests. What did it take to bring this student to proficiency?

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5. Think of a student who has not met proficiency on your state tests. What would it take to bring this student to proficiency?

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# Discussion Activity 2

## Identifying Roles and Responsibilities

*Directions: This activity can be completed in small groups. Complete the columns below and discuss roles and responsibilities in the provision of standards-based education to students with disabilities.*

YOUR ROLE AS YOU SEE IT

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THE ROLE OF OTHER COLLEAGUES AS YOU SEE THEM

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### DISCUSSION ISSUES

1. Is your role clear in the provision of standards-based education to students with disabilities?
2. What appear to be similarities and differences between perceived roles and responsibilities of IEP team members?
3. To what extent does collaboration among IEP team members occur in your building or district? What are some of the barriers or obstacles?
4. Are our boundaries clear? What are you doing now that you feel may be “out of your jurisdiction”?
5. What are some opportunities or barriers that can either facilitate or hinder future opportunities for general and special education teacher collaboration?

# Discussion Activity 3

## Consequences of Accommodations on State Assessments

### 1. Choose a state test, content area, and grade level:

State test \_\_\_\_\_ Content Area \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Place each of the accommodations listed below into the correct shape provided:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| • Alternative keyboard and software                | • Cue student to begin working and stay on task                         | • Oral interpretation of test items in native language |
| • Audio amplification devices                      | • Express response to a scribe through speech, pointing, or AT device   | • Screen reader  |
| • Audiotape or CD                                  | • Extended time   | • Short segment test booklets                          |
| • BIG Mack – a single-message communication device | • Have student repeat and explain directions to check for understanding | • Sign language  |
| • Bilingual dictionary                             | • Human reader for test items   | • Spelling and grammar assistive devices               |
| • Braille  | • Large print   | • Tactile graphics                                     |
| • Calculation devices                              | • Magnification devices   | • Talking materials                                    |
| • Change location                                  | • Multiple or frequent breaks   | • Type on Braille                                      |
| • Change testing schedule or order of subtests     | • Native language test version  | • Use graph/scratch paper                              |
|  |   | • Videotape and descriptive video                      |

