



## SPREAD THE WORD

# ACCESSIBILITY SUPPORT: ACCOMMODATIONS



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

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) is dedicated to ensuring that the availability of appropriate accessibility features and accommodations are interwoven throughout all aspects of daily instruction and access to valid assessment measurement and scoring.

## Accommodations

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

## Modifications

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



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# DOS AND DON'TS WHEN SELECTING ACCOMMODATIONS

### Do

Make accessibility decisions based on individual needs.

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

Ensure to document instructional and assessment accommodations via the Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Section 504 Plan, or Individualized Learning Plan (ILP).

Deactivate certain universal technology features if they prove to be distracting to the student.

Select designated technology features based on input from one or more informed educators.

Ensure accommodations are selected based on the Case Conference Committee (CCC) and stakeholder input.

Make decisions regarding designated features and accommodations prior to the assessment.

Be specific regarding where, when, who, and how accessibility supports will be provided.

Refer to state accessibility policy and understand the implications of selections.

Evaluate accessibility support used by the student.

Receive input regarding accessibility support from teachers, parents, and students.

Provide accessibility supports for assessments routinely used for classroom instruction or ensure that students practice with the supports sufficiently.

Select accommodations based on specific, individual needs.

### Don't

Make accessibility decisions based on the easiest answer.

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

Use an accommodation that has not been documented via the IEP, Section 504 Plan, or ILP.

Assume that all universal features should be available to all students without practice.

Make blanket decisions regarding designated features for students.

Make unilateral decisions regarding accommodations.

Assume various combinations of accommodations will work effectively without testing them.

Assume all instructional accommodations are appropriate for use on all assessments.

Simply indicate an accommodation will be provided "as appropriate" or "as necessary."

Check every accommodation possible on a checklist to simply be "safe."

Assume the same accommodations remain appropriate year after year.

Provide an assessment accommodation for the first time during the operational test.

Assume certain accommodations, such as a dictionary, are appropriate for every student.



The following examples of accommodations are based on student characteristics. Accommodations should be tailored to the individual needs of the student. The accommodation examples provided are not an exhaustive list; please note that not all accommodations are permitted on statewide assessments. For a more comprehensive outline of accommodations for statewide assessments, refer to the Accessibility and Accommodations Information for Statewide Assessments found on IDOE's [Assessment webpage](#).

### **Blind or Low Vision**

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

### **Deaf or Hard of Hearing**

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

### **Weak Dexterity**

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

## **Articulation and Speech**

Model and exaggerate correct pronunciation of sounds, ensure student watches speaker's mouth when modeling, extended time, slow down, offer additional wait time for responses, Voice Output Device (VOD)/Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) device, another administrator reads written responses, and pairing of visual supports with speech.

## **Verbal Expression**

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

## **Reading Decoding**

Human reader, screen reader, videotaping, timing/scheduling, change of location to avoid distraction, use of written notes, outlines, and instructions, and extended time.

## **Written Expression**

Express response to a scribe via speech, type on, or speak to, word processor, speech-to-text, use of spelling and grammar predictive technology devices (e.g., spelling device, spell check), use of written notes, outlines, and instructions.

## **Math Difficulties**

Use calculation devices, visual organizers, graphic organizers, math tables and formula sheets, video clips, and online website support.

## Physical Difficulties

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

## Sustaining Attention

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

## Verbal Expression

Provide simplified directions with examples, allow for note taking/recording or provide notes, give short and simple directions with examples, short segment test booklets (when available), allow for multiple or frequent breaks, change testing schedule or order of subtests, and provide testing schedule to student.

Utilize the [Accessibility and Accommodations Information for Statewide Assessments](#) for additional information on supported universal, embedded, and non-embedded accommodations for each assessment.



## What is the difference between accommodations for instruction and accommodations for statewide assessments?

An **accommodation** is a support or service that is provided to help a student fully access the general education curriculum. Accommodations are changes in the way that materials are presented or students respond (Elliott & Thurlow, 2006).

The reason for providing accommodations is that they enable the student to bypass (or partially bypass) the effects of the disability. Accommodations provided to a student with disabilities during classroom instruction and local assessments must also be provided to the student during statewide assessments, if permitted. If a student has been found to need an accommodation that is not allowed on a state assessment, it should still be used in the classroom setting. Educators must be familiar with state policies and procedures for administering statewide assessments and accommodations. Assessment accommodations are changes in testing materials or procedures that enable students to participate in testing in a way that assesses abilities rather than disabilities.

Without accommodations, assessments may not accurately measure students' knowledge and skills. Appropriate accommodations for statewide assessment programs are set forth in the program manual issued each year by IDOE (511 IAC 7-36-10).

Assessment accommodations are generally grouped into **the following categories:**

- **Presentation** (e.g., repeat directions, read aloud, large print, braille)
- **Equipment and Materials** (e.g., calculator, amplification equipment, manipulatives)
- **Response** (e.g., mark answers in book, scribe records response, pointing)
- **Setting** (e.g., individual administration, student's home, separate room)
- **Scheduling and Timing** (e.g., extended time, frequent breaks)

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

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

During the decision-making process, the CCC should consider the following:

- Student characteristics that must be considered to ensure that accommodations reduce the effect of the disability.
- Instructional tasks where students are expected to demonstrate grade-level Indiana Academic Standards content.
- Consistency with the standards-based IEP for classroom instruction and assessments with an emphasis on the fidelity of accommodations implementation and achievement standards noted in the IEP.

## Who should be involved in making accommodation decisions?

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

## What documentation is required to evaluate and improve accommodation use?

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

## How should you document decisions and the use of accommodations?

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

The areas within the IEP where accommodations may be addressed include the following:

- "Consideration of Special Factors" is where communication and assistive technology support is considered.
- "Supplementary Aids and Services" includes aids, services, and additional supports that are provided in their classes or other education-related setting that enables students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students to the maximum extent.
- "Participation in Assessments" documents accommodations required to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in statewide and local assessments.

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

### Spelling:

- **Accommodation:** Requiring fewer spelling words while maintaining the complexity of the words compared to those words the student's peers are expected to learn.
- **Modification:** Shortening a spelling list from 20 to 10 words.

### Mathematics:

- **Accommodation:** Requiring fewer mathematics word problems while maintaining the complexity of those problems compared to those words the student's peers are expected to learn. For example, all problems must contain the skills that the student's peers are required to learn.
- **Modification:** Shortening the number of problems to complete from 20 to 10 problems.





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## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Indiana Department of Education - <https://www.in.gov/doe/students/special-education/>.
- Indiana IEP Resource Center - The IEPRC offers support for educators throughout Indiana to improve the IEP process in schools. <https://www.indianaieprc.org/index.php>
- PATINS Project- Promoting Achievement through Technology and Instruction for all Students. <http://www.patinsproject.com/>
- Article 7 - Title 511, Article 7. Indiana State Board of Education; 511 IAC
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