School Accommodation Ideas for Students Who Receive Section 504 or Special Education Services

Accommodations are changes to support an individual student requires in accessing and making progress in the general curriculum. Accommodations level the playing field for students with disabilities by changing the timing, scheduling, setting, formatting, presentation or response. Accommodations do not change the learning expectations of the student.

Accommodations should be discussed by the IEP or Section 504 team and chosen to fit the student's individual needs. Asking a student what they think would be helpful is often a great first step to thinking about their needs and what adjustments may help eliminate barriers.

The following accommodations are provided as examples, which may or may not be appropriate for an individual student. This list is not exhaustive

Timing

- Warn the student at set minute intervals before a transition from one activity to the next
- Provide additional time to complete a task
- Allow a set amount of extra time to turn in homework without penalty
- Increase wait time for responses to questions
- Provide a visual timer

Instruction

- Use both oral and printed directions
- Highlight key words in directions
- Break down directions into small steps using as few words as possible
- Have student repeat directions back to check for understanding
- Use of visuals, videos, or step-by-step models
- Show a model of the final product (such as a completed math problem or finished writing assignment)
- Repetition or re-teaching of content using different strategies
- Stand near the student when giving directions
- Allow the use of a tape recorder or assistive technology device to record directions
- Provide social stories that show how students can deal with different social situations

Scheduling

- Breaks during instruction or testing
- Tests given at the best time of day for the student
- Shortened testing sessions spread over multiple days
- Core classes scheduled at the best time of the day for the student
- Schedule physical education class each trimester for students requiring lots of movement
- Allow the student to leave the classroom 2-3 minutes early to avoid crowded hallways

Materials

- Large print or braille materials
- Text-to-speech software or audiobooks
- Visual supports such as graphic organizers or charts
- Use of manipulatives or hands-on materials
- Highlighted key words or simplified directions
- Provide summaries of chapters
- Provide a vocabulary list
- Provide two sets of classroom curriculum materials, one for home and one for school

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Setting

- Preferential seating (near teacher or away from distractions)
- Small group or individual testing environment
- Noise-cancelling headphones or sound-buffered workspace
- Reduced visual distractions in the classroom
- Keep workspace clear of unrelated materials
- Provide additional personal space between desks
- Use a pass system for students needing frequent movement breaks
- Provide accessible classroom locations and accessible furniture (such as special desks, tables, chairs, etc.)
- Provide FM or sound field amplification system for listening
- Provide organizers for lockers/desk
- Ensure accessible entrance is open for after school activities
- Provide assistance when moving between classrooms or around the building

Student Response

- Verbal instead of written responses
- Use of a scribe or speech-to-text technology
- Answering questions using a computer or tablet
- Responses via drawing or multiple choice instead of essay
- Substitute alternatives for long writing assignments (clay models, posters, panoramas, collections, electronic presentation, or oral presentation)
- Provide alternatives to reading aloud in front of the class

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology can be used as an accommodation. Under IDEA assistive technology is defined as, “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability.”
There are many assistive technology products available to help students with disabilities.

- Speech-to-text software
- Text-to-speech programs
- Communication devices (e.g., alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices like GoTalk or Proloquo2Go)
- Digital graphic organizers and / or visual schedules
- Audiobooks or electronic textbooks
- Adaptive keyboards or alternative input devices
- Allow use of sensory tools
- Pencil grips
- Use of color coded materials
- Provide locker accommodations (such as a key instead of a combination lock)

Families are key partners. If you believe your child may benefit from accommodations or assistive technology, talk with your school’s 504 or IEP team. Sharing your observations and concerns can lead to effective strategies that support your child’s learning.

Michigan Alliance for Families
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