

# Parent Spotlight on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities



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## Parent Spotlight on Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

This booklet was written to provide information to parents and others about accommodations for students with disabilities.

### What are accommodations?

Accommodations are changes in the materials or procedures that are used for instruction or testing. They are used to ensure that students have access to instruction and can show what they know on tests. The intent is to level the playing field for students with disabilities, yet not change the important content that students need to be career or college ready when they graduate from high school. It is important for your child to have accommodations that meet your child's needs for instruction and testing. Your state department of education has policies about which accommodations are appropriate for the content of its tests.

### How do accommodations help my child?

Accommodations help your child reduce the impact of your child's disability on learning and performance on a test. Accommodations do not make learning or a test easier. Your child still needs to learn the same content and perform on the same test as other students, but appropriate accommodations help reduce the effects of your child's disability. Accommodations can help your child access the standards that are the basis for their instruction.

### What is a modification?

The term modification is sometimes used to refer to changes in the materials or procedures for instruction or testing. When this term is used, it indicates a change in the content of instruction or what the test measures. When used for instruction, modifications may help your child begin to learn the targeted content. They can then be gradually eliminated so that your child is using only accommodations. When used for testing, modifications change what the test is intended to measure, producing results that are not valid. They should be avoided for testing.

### How do accommodations help my child?

Accommodations help your child with a disability by reducing the impact of the disability on learning and performance on a test. Accommodations do not make learning or a test easier. Your child still needs to learn the same content and perform on the same test as other students.

### How many accommodations can my child get?

Ensuring that accommodations provided to your child are needed should be the focus when making decisions about accommodations. It is not the number of



accommodations that is important. In fact, having more accommodations than are needed may make it more difficult for your child to learn or to perform well on the test. Focusing on the needs of your child will help define how many accommodations are appropriate.

### Who decides whether my child gets accommodations for instruction and testing?

Your child's decision making team (either for an IEP or 504 accommodation plan) should decide whether accommodations are needed for both instruction and testing. This team should have information from classroom teachers and parents, as well as from psychologists, special educators, and school administrators. It should have information about your child's needs and whether accommodations help reduce the impact of those needs on instructional access or testing results.

### Who decides which accommodations your child will get for instruction and testing?

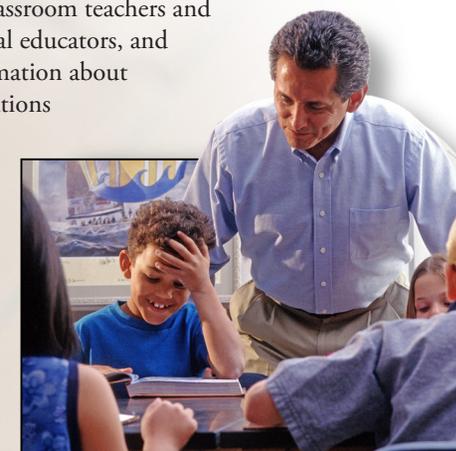
Your child's decision-making team (either for an IEP or 504 accommodation plan) should decide on the accommodations needed for both instruction and testing. This team should have the same information as used to decide whether accommodations are needed, but also should have information about the success of various accommodations in meeting those needs.

### How do we decide which accommodations are right for my child?

The best way to determine which accommodations are appropriate for your child is for his or her teacher to try them out in the classroom. Doing so can help determine whether they actually make a difference for your child in terms of access to instruction and being able to show knowledge and skills on a test.

### If my child gets an accommodation for instruction, doesn't that mean that my child gets it for testing too?

The use of an accommodation during instruction does not automatically mean that your son or daughter should receive that accommodation during testing. Tests are designed to measure specific content. Your child might benefit from some modifications when learning content, even though they would change the content being measured by a test. The accommodations that are allowed for testing are the ones that do not interfere with the accurate measurement of the content. IEP teams should be aware of policies on allowed testing accommodations.



## Can my child get an accommodation that is not on his or her IEP or 504 accommodation plan?

Your child's teacher may recognize that certain accommodations are needed for instruction, even though the IEP or 504 accommodation plan team did not consider them during the team meeting. It is appropriate for the teacher to provide these accommodations for instruction. In this way, your child's teacher will have the opportunity to try out accommodations during instruction to determine their effect, and then bring that information to you and the team making decisions about testing accommodations.

## What do I need to ask about accommodations?

You should ask about the needs of your child for accommodations for instruction and for testing. You also should check the policies for testing accommodations. Talking to your child about the purpose of accommodations is important as well.

If your child has an IEP or an 504 accommodation plan, you should ask about what is used during instruction. You should also be sure that your child is comfortable with using the accommodations that have been listed for him or her. If not, you should talk about this with your child and the teacher.

## Where can I get more information on accommodations?

Your state has information on accommodations that are approved for testing. Visit your state's website to explore this further.

If you are interested in general information on accommodations and modifications, visit the National Center on Educational Outcomes website at [www.nceo.info](http://www.nceo.info).

