



Training Guide

for

Minnesota

Manual of Accommodations

for Students with Disabilities
in Instruction and Assessment

**A Guide to Selecting,
Administering, and Evaluating
the Use of Accommodations**

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Acknowledgments

The *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment: A Guide to Selecting, Administering, and Evaluating the Use of Accommodations* and its accompanying professional development training guide were developed by staff at the National Center on Educational Outcomes (Martha Thurlow, Deb Albus, and Laurene Christensen) as part of a contract to the National Center on Educational Outcomes from the Minnesota Department of Education. Appreciation is extended to staff from the Minnesota Department of Education Division of Special Education Policy (Barbara Troolin, Director) and the Division of Research and Assessment (Dirk Mattson, Director).

Special thanks to the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Assessing Special Education Students (ASES) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS), who developed the original *Accommodations Manual: How To Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities* and *Professional Development Guide* on which this guide is modeled. Significant changes are reflected in this training guide; these changes indicate current thinking on accommodation practices.

Additional thanks go to Deb Tanner for the design of the manual, the training guide, and the PowerPoint slides.

Introduction

All children can learn challenging academic content. For many students with disabilities, the use of accommodations ensures inclusion in the general curriculum. When it comes to assessment, the use of appropriate accommodations also ensures that students are able to best show what they know and are able to do. In addition, the appropriate use of assessment accommodations means that the scores from a student's assessment are valid and can be included in the accountability system.

This training guide is designed as a companion to the *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment* and the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments*. Together, these documents serve to outline five key steps in making decisions about accommodations and to identify Minnesota's policies for the use of accommodations on state assessments. The five steps are:

1. Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards.
2. Learn about accommodations for instruction.
3. Make decisions about accommodations for assessment.
4. Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment.
5. Evaluate and improve accommodation use.

Each of these five sections is accompanied by Activities and Tools to help make appropriate decisions about accommodations in instruction and assessment, informed by Minnesota's policies for statewide assessments. The goals for users of this training guide are the following:

1. Name the steps in making decisions about accommodations for instruction and assessment.
2. Identify key differences between instructional accommodations and assessment accommodations.
3. Locate and become familiar with Minnesota's policies about accommodations in the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments*.
4. Become comfortable using the training activities and tools included in the manual.

Additional training materials, including a CD and a PowerPoint presentation, are available to help school personnel become more familiar with the information presented in this manual. Please contact the Minnesota Department of Education for information on how to obtain the CD and/or PowerPoint presentation.

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 relatively easy, 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 approach does not necessarily enhance a student's access to instruction or an assessment and can actually decrease performance.

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 compact disk, or a screen reader. The ultimate decision about whether to use an accommodation rests on the individual student's preferences and needs, in combination with consideration of the content being measured by the assessment. 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.

Moving into Training

This brief introduction provides an entry point into the training manual. Facilitators of training are provided with the materials and background information in the manual to conduct training on the Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment.

Materials Needed for All Training Activities

1. Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment referred to as the Accommodations Manual throughout this training manual.
2. Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Assessments (on state Web site: <http://education.state.mn.us>).
3. Appendix A in training manual:
 - Discussion Activity 1: Participation of Students with Disabilities in Standards-based Instruction and Assessment
 - Activity 2A. Think of a Student
 - Activity 2B. Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations, Tool 2.1
 - Activity 3A What are the Do's and Don'ts of Selecting Accommodations?
 - Activity 3B: Selecting Accommodations for Assessment
 - Activity 4: Discussion Questions and Accommodations Logistics Plan for Assessment, Tool 4.1
4. Appendix B in training manual:
 - Self-Check Questions for Participants for Steps 1-5
 - Passport sheets to track progress through Self-Check Questions

Other Materials Needed

- Participants will need their own writing instruments
- Colored pens/markers for participants (Activity 2A)
- Printed copies of the tables in Tool 2.1 from the Accommodations Manual (Activity 2B)
- Printed strips and scissors, or precut strips, envelopes, printed do/don't sheet with empty columns and glue sticks (Activity 3A)
- Precut cards (Activity 3B)
- A stamp w/pad, stickers, or markers to mark passport sheets after self checks



STEP 1:

Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards

The purpose of this step 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.

Step 1 Objective: The purpose of this step 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 Outcomes

At the conclusion of the activities in Step 1, participants will

- Identify the laws that require participation in standards-based assessments.
- Identify elements needed for inclusion in grade-level content.
- Name the conditions needed for high expectations.

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.

Background for Facilitators

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 the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004.

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 provides public accountability at the school, district, and state levels for all students with disabilities. IDEA 2004 confirms the NCLB accountability requirements.

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, mathematics, and science 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. Reading/language arts and mathematics assessments for all students, including students with disabilities, in grades 3-8 and once in high school were required starting in 2005-2006. In 2007-08, states were required to provide science assessments in elementary, middle, and high school 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 through 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 (IDEA, 2004)

IDEA governs services for students with disabilities that provide access to the general curriculum. These are directed through an Individual Education Program for each student with a disability. 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 district-wide 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.

What specific curriculum and instructional areas need improvement for specific groups of students.

Students with disabilities are to be included 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 are essential skills for success in today’s world?

What do we believe all children should know and be able to do?

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. Minnesota’s Web site contains basic information about its standards. As a facilitator, be familiar with Minnesota’s academic standards and assessments. Check out the standards at the Minnesota Department of Education’s Web site: <http://children.state.mn.us/mde/index.html> for more about the assessments required by Minnesota, see the Procedures Manual for Minnesota’s 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, or 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. Ideally, the following conditions exist:

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

Important developments have occurred that have signaled changing roles for general, special education, and ESL/Bilingual personnel. Requirements for teachers to be highly qualified and use evidence-based practices have promoted attention to standards-based approaches (Muller & Burdette, 2007). Teachers are becoming more knowledgeable about instructing students with a diverse range of learning needs while instructing them in the content of academic standards (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2006). The growth of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Rose & Meyer, 2002; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005), Response to Intervention (RtI) (NASDSE, 2006), and other approaches to differentiate instruction on academic content has expanded the roles of teachers. This includes ESL/bilingual personnel who have likewise moved from traditional language instruction to instruction that incorporates English language development standards with academic content for students with diverse learning needs (Echevarria & Graves, 2006; Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, & Collins (2007). It is clear that there needs to be 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 Step 1

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 in the first step (see Handout for Step 1) to address this concern.

Step 1 PowerPoint Slides

Use these slides to present the information for this step. Information about each slide is presented here and notes are provided in the PowerPoint presentation. PPT-1 is the title slide.

PPT-2: Five Important Steps

PPT-3: Step 1: Expect students with disabilities to achieve

PPT-4: Equal inclusion in grade-level content

PPT-5: Conditions for high expectations

PPT-6: Legal basis for inclusion

PPT-7: Inclusion in MN accountability system

PPT-8: Step 1 Self Check

Step 1 Handouts

There are two handouts recommended for use in this step:

1. Accommodations Manual: Step 1 (see Accommodations Manual)

2. Discussion Activity 1: Participation of Students with Disabilities in Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment (see Appendix A in this training manual)

Step 1 Plan

Follow the sequence below to present PowerPoints and integrate activities into the presentation of Step 1.

1. Review Five-Step Process (PPT-2)

Present PPT-2 to introduce the five-step process described in the MN Manual of Accommodations. Briefly explain 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



Then, briefly cover PPT-4 to show what is needed for inclusion in grade-level content, and PPT-5 for the conditions needed for high expectations.

PPT-4



PPT-5



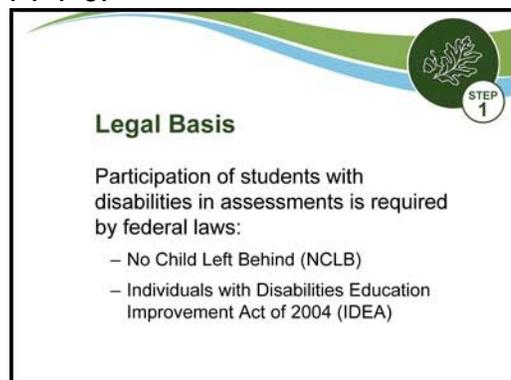
2. Inclusion for Accountability (PPT-6, PPT-7)

With PPT-6, describe how the requirements of law relate to the inclusion of all students in the accountability system. (Remind participants that the law requirements support the use of accommodations. Refer to manual page 7.)

Federal and state laws require inclusion of all students with disabilities in the accountability system. PPT-7 shows that all students with disabilities are included in the content standards in Minnesota, whether through regular achievement standards on regular state tests (listed on slide), or alternates (listed on slide). Highlight the tests shown in the slide. Then note that for Minnesota an alternate assessment based on grade-level achievement standards is not posted as a regular state test, so is not included in the slide. For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, who participate in the MTAS, accommodations used in classroom instruction and assessments are all allowed for state assessments. Thus, accommodations for the MTAS are not addressed in the current Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Assessments. Only those assessments listed on the slides are addressed in this training.

Remind training participants that appropriate accommodations are key for many students to be included in Minnesota's assessments.

PPT-6:



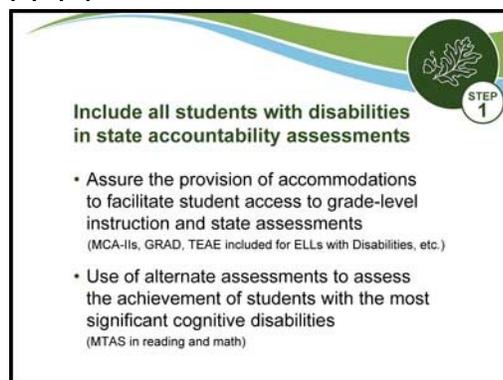
Legal Basis

Participation of students with disabilities in assessments is required by federal laws:

- No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA)

The slide features a decorative header with a green and blue wave and a circular logo with a leaf and the text 'STEP 1'.

PPT-7



Include all students with disabilities in state accountability assessments

- Assure the provision of accommodations to facilitate student access to grade-level instruction and state assessments (MCA-IIs, GRAD, TEAE included for ELLs with Disabilities, etc.)
- Use of alternate assessments to assess the achievement of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities (MTAS in reading and math)

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Step 1 Participant Self Check. Activity 1 occurs here before the self check for Step 1 PPT-8. See the Step Self Checks (in Appendix B of this training manual) for questions to ask for Step 1.

PPT-8



Self Check Questions

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Step 1 Activities

Discussion for Activity 1 (located in Appendix of this training manual). After the presentation of the slides, have participants work through questions with a partner or small groups and then report out to large group.

References

D. H. Rose, A. Meyer, & C. Hitchcock (Eds.) (2005). *The universally designed classroom: Accessible curriculum and digital technologies*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Echevarria, J. & Graves, A. (2006). *Sheltered content instruction: Teaching English language learners with diverse abilities (3rd Edition)*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

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- Rose, D. H., & Meyer, A. (2002). *Teaching every student in the Digital Age: Universal Design for Learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Vaughn, S., Bos, C. S., & Schumm, J. S. (2006). *Teaching exceptional, diverse, and at risk students in the general education classroom* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

STEP 2:

Learning about accommodations for instruction



The purpose of this step is for participants to learn about accommodations for instruction. This information provides a foundation for making decisions about assessment accommodations, which are to be related to instructional accommodations. The information in this step aids in making decisions about accommodations for instruction.

Step 2 Objective: The purpose of this step is to provide background, guidance, and tools to help in decision making for accommodations in instruction.

Key Outcomes

At the conclusion of this step, participants will

- Name four categories of accommodations. Identify basic differences between an accommodation and modification in instruction.
- Describe the importance of collaboration between general, special education (and ESL/bilingual staff for ELLs with disabilities) in making decisions on IEP teams about instructional accommodations.
- Recognize three main team considerations for making accommodations decisions for instruction.
- Identify questions to ask concerning student characteristics, instructional tasks, and consistency with standards-based IEPs.
- Show how to use all the manual tools that address the three considerations for instruction.

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 show consistency across classroom instruction, classroom testing, and district or state assessments (see Figure 1 in manual). This does not mean that accommodation use is the same in each setting.

There are some accommodations that are appropriate for classroom instructional use that are not appropriate in testing situations. Still, no accommodation should be provided during an assessment that a student has not had an opportunity to learn and use comfortably and effectively during instruction.

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

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.”

Accommodations for Instruction

Students who use accommodations during instruction and who take classroom assessments using accommodations must be provided training and experience with these accommodations. Providing classroom assessment conditions that are similar to those of district and state assessments increase a student’s comfort level with the accommodation and foster the student’s best possible performance.

Although this section focuses on accommodations for instruction, accommodations for instruction and assessment are intertwined. Some accommodations are appropriate for classroom use but may not be appropriate in assessment situations because they compromise the intent of the assessment. More information on this is presented in Step 3.

Accommodations are an important avenue of access to grade-level academic standards. 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 and 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.”

Accommodations Categories

Accommodations, which are changes that do not change the content measured, may be placed into four categories: (1) Presentation, (2) Response, (3) Setting, and (4) Timing/Scheduling (Thurlow, Elliott, & Ysseldyke, 2003).

- **Presentation Accommodations**—change how an assignment or assessment is given to a student. These include alternate modes of access which may be auditory, multi-sensory, tactile, or visual.
- **Response Accommodations**— allow students to complete assignments, assessments, and activities in different ways (alternate format or procedure) or to solve or organize problems using some type of assistive device or organizer.
- **Setting Accommodations**—change the location in which an assignment or assessment is given or the conditions of the setting.
- **Timing/Scheduling Accommodations**—increase the allowable length of time to complete an assignment or assessment, or change the way the time is organized for an assignment or assessment.

Although we use all four categories to discuss accommodations in instruction, Minnesota only considers presentation and response categories as accommodations for state testing. Setting and Timing/Scheduling changes are considered general practices available to all students unless an exception exists in the state Procedures Manual.

Accommodations vs. Modifications

Accommodations do not reduce learning expectations—they provide access to grade-level content. Changing, lowering, or reducing learning expectations is usually referred to as a modification. 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

Documenting Accommodations on a Student's IEP

For students with disabilities served under IDEA, determining appropriate instructional 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 levels of academic achievement and functional performance, the process of identifying and documenting accommodations should be a fairly straightforward event. The statement of measurable annual goals, including both academic and functional goals, is a federal requirement (Section 614 (d)(1)(A)(i)(I)). 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 present levels of academic and functional performance 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).
- Information obtained from the most recent re-evaluation, results of state and district-wide 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)

Decision-Making Framework for Instruction

In this step, the decision-making framework for instructional accommodations is presented which includes three main considerations. These considerations include student characteristics, classroom tasks and assessments, and classroom policies for consistency with a student's IEP.

Student Characteristics

Student characteristics cover a wide range of information about the student. It includes information about a student's strengths and weaknesses related to specific learning or physical disabilities, a student's language proficiency, educational background, preferences and learning styles. Concerning accommodations, it also includes history with using the accommodation, student needs and preferences, and opportunities to learn how to use the accommodation in different settings.

Classroom Tasks and Assessment Characteristics

It is important to consider the specific classroom tasks that a student is asked to do to show he or she is progressing in academic content. This includes tasks across classes, tasks done in groups or by oneself, and classroom assessments. Decisions need to take into account the format and delivery of the content and how a student is meant to interact and demonstrate knowledge.

Classroom Policies

When choosing instructional accommodations with a student, it is important to make sure that the accommodations chosen to help a student meet academic content standards is not lessening what is required of the student resulting in modifications that may increase the achievement gap. Although some types of modifications may initially help scaffold learning, ongoing decision making should account for when such an accommodation is no longer used. Further, the use of classroom accommodations should be consistent with the student's IEP.

Step 2 PowerPoint Slides

Use these slides to present the information for Step 2. Information about each slide is presented here and notes are provided in the PowerPoint presentation.

PPT-9: **Step 2: Learning about accommodations for instruction**

PPT-10: What are accommodations?

PPT-11: Figure 1. Use of accommodations is linked

PPT-12 Figure 2. Decision making for instructional accommodations

PPT-13: Who is involved in decisions?

PPT-14: Accommodation categories

PPT-15: Accommodations vs. modifications

PPT-16: IEP team considerations (3 considerations/ Cs)

PPT-17: C1: Student characteristics

PPT-18: C1, Q1: What student characteristics may require accommodations? Tool 2.1

PPT-19: English language learners with disabilities

PPT-20: C1, Q2, & 3: Student preference and self advocacy, Tools 2.2 and 2.3

PPT-21: C1, Q4: Parent input, Tool 2.4

PPT-22: C2 and 3 Classroom tasks and consistency with standards-based IEP and Q5-7

PPT-23: Tools for Q5-7, 2.5 accommodation use in the classroom and 2.6 evaluating accommodation use in the classroom

PPT-24: Step 2

Step 2 Handouts

Three handouts are recommended for use with this step.

1. Accommodations Manual: Step 2 (see Accommodations Manual)
2. Activity 2A. Think of a Student (see Appendix A in this Training Manual)
3. Activity 2B. Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations, Tool 2.1 (see Appendix A in this Training Manual)

Step 2 Materials

For **Activity 2A** facilitators may want to bring colored pens/markers for participants to use in portraying their student.

For **Activity 2B** the facilitator needs to have printed copies of the corresponding tables (Tool 2.1 tables from Accommodations Manual) and sheets for the small groups by accommodation type to work on at tables (also organized by accommodation type so those interested in a similar accommodation category are working on the same type together).

Step 2 Plan

Follow the sequence below to present PowerPoints and integrate activities into the presentation of Step 2.

1. PPT-9 is the introduction to Step 2. PPT-10 presents the working definition of accommodations that will be used throughout the manual.

PPT-9



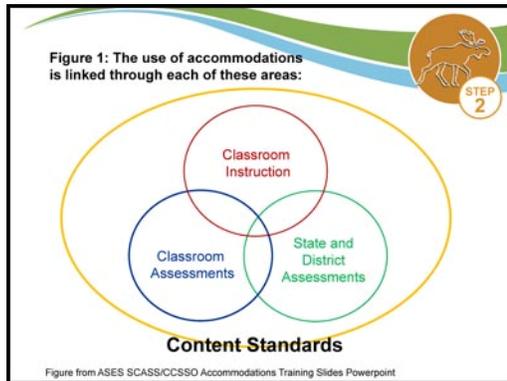
PPT-10



2. PPT-11 shows how accommodations are linked within categories of instruction and assessment, all within the state's content standards. This step addresses classroom instruction and assessments because they are integrally linked with state and district assessments.

► Use the diagram on PPT-11 to show how accommodation use is linked among these areas. Point out that there is not total overlap.

PPT-11



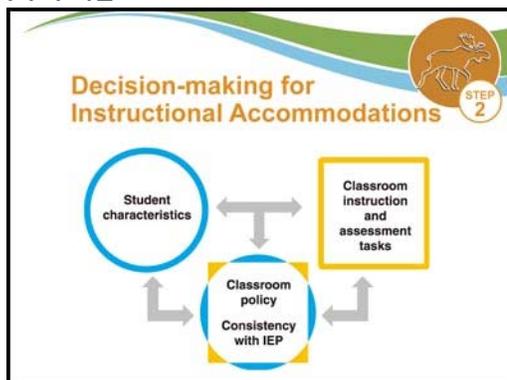
3. Overview of Decision Making for Instructional Accommodations (PPT 12)

► Refer to PPT-12 in presenting the three main considerations guiding decision making for instructional accommodations. The figure in the slides is a less detailed representation than the figure given in the manual.

Before directing participants to look at the corresponding manual figure, ask if they can give an example for each area. Then refer them to see the specific questions related to each consideration in the manual and explain that the steps and questions in the manual are based on these guiding frameworks for both instruction and assessment decisions in Step 3.

In the notes for this slide, details are given for each of the three areas taken from the manual. Point out that student characteristics include not only characteristics related to a student’s disability but other characteristics of the student such as language proficiency in English or other languages. Note also that instructional tasks can be described as the range of activities and objectives based on a grade-level standards-based IEP. If a student needs help reaching the grade-level content, then modifications to scaffold learning may be appropriate for a certain period of time.

PPT-12



4. Who is involved in decision making? (PPT-13)

► Refer to PPT-13 in presenting who is involved in accommodations decision making (for both instruction and assessment). Note that because some students with disabilities are also English language learners (ELLs) ESL/bilingual staff should be involved in team decisions for these students.

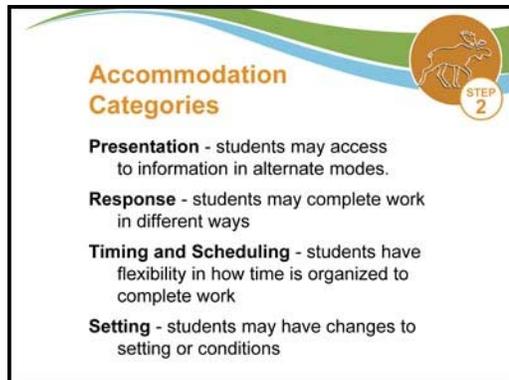
PPT-13



5. PPT-14 presents the different categories of accommodations: presentation, response, setting, and scheduling.

► Refer to PPT-14 and explain that these categories are used commonly to describe instructional accommodations. They include categories that are not used in Minnesota for assessment accommodations. Setting accommodations are not considered “accommodations” for assessments because placement in appropriate settings is considered an aspect of good testing practice, not an accommodation. It is important to point out the difference in instructional and assessment accommodations categories here. Decision makers should know that it is important to consider setting accommodations for instruction even though they will not be called accommodations for assessment.

PPT-14



6. PPT-15 differentiates accommodations and modifications in instruction.

► Refer to PPT-15 and explain that the terms hinge on expectations related to standards and achievement. Modifications change the content of instruction in some way and thus may increase achievement gaps. To the extent that expectations are lowered, student achievement may not reach full potential. The use of modifications in instruction may provide a way to scaffold learning, yet their use should be undertaken with caution. If questions are raised about alternate assessments based on modified achievement standards, clarify that modifications in instruction (and assessment) are different from the alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards.

PPT-15



Accommodations vs. Modifications

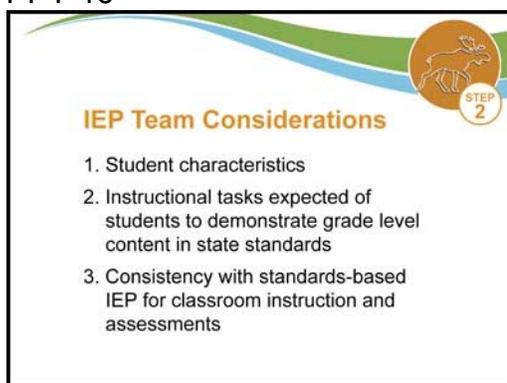
Accommodations provide access without reducing learning expectations

Modifications can increase the achievement gap by lowering expectations for what students are expected to know or do.

7. PPTs 16-23 focus on decision-making factors to consider for instruction. For each of these three considerations questions are provided along with tools for each question. It is useful in this section for participants to walk through the manual as the corresponding content is covered in the slides. If there are any questions about the questions or tools in this section during the PPT presentation, take time to address those as they come up. There are checking questions at the end of this step, and activities to help give participants an opportunity to use some of the tools for the specific student identified in Step 1's Think of a Student activity.

► Refer to PPT-16 and briefly explain that the team considerations in this section follow from those presented in Figure 2. You do not have to spend too much time on these points here because later slides provide an opportunity to go deeper with each consideration. However, a brief explanation of each point is useful to repeat here.

PPT-16



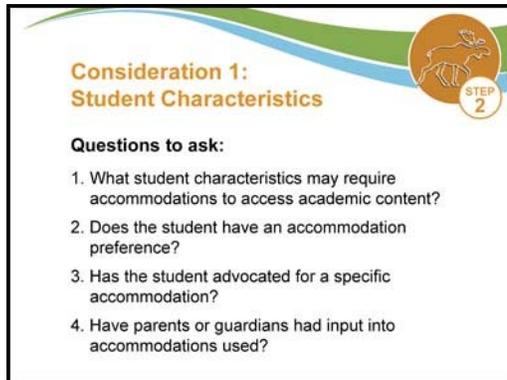
IEP Team Considerations

1. Student characteristics
2. Instructional tasks expected of students to demonstrate grade level content in state standards
3. Consistency with standards-based IEP for classroom instruction and assessments

Activity 2A: Think of a student (focuses on specific student characteristics)

► After the activity, shift focus back to the presentation and refer to PPT-17. Briefly present the guiding questions that go with this consideration, inviting participants to consider the student they focused on in the activity for the questions. Then explain that there are tools designed to help collect the information for each of the questions and that these will be presented in the following slides and can be found in their manuals also.

PPT-17



**Consideration 1:
Student Characteristics**

Questions to ask:

1. What student characteristics may require accommodations to access academic content?
2. Does the student have an accommodation preference?
3. Has the student advocated for a specific accommodation?
4. Have parents or guardians had input into accommodations used?

► Refer to PPT-18 briefly restating the question and then refer to the corresponding tool (Tool 2.1 is in the Appendix of the Accommodations Manual. **Note here that for each slide with the folder icon the tools are in the Accommodations Manual unless otherwise stated).**

PPT-18



1. What student characteristics may require accommodations to be included in classroom content?

Tools to Use Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations (Tools 2.1)

► Refer to PPT-19 and make the point that some students with disabilities are also English language learners. Present the additional characteristics to take into account for decisions related to these students (found in PPT-19 and is in the manual also). ELL/bilingual staff should be able to provide this information in addition to input from the parents and student, to cover both English proficiency and proficiency the student may have in another language. Perhaps get a show of hands of participants that have served on an IEP team for an ELL. Are there any specific pointers they may want to briefly share from that experience?

PPT-19



For English Language Learners with Disabilities Consider:

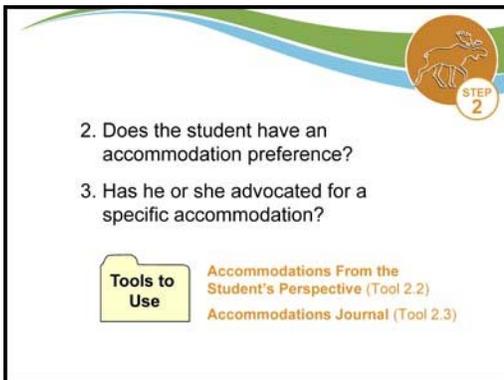
- Current English proficiency level
- Annual Review of progress toward English proficiency
- Experience and length of time in U.S. schools
- Level and type of instruction in primary language

STEP 2

► Continue with PPTs 20-21, presenting questions 2-4 that relate to individual student characteristics. For PPT-20, guide participants to the corresponding tools in the back of the Accommodations Manual (Tools 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4). Point out that it is important to include the student’s perspective in decision making and that these tools help collect information in this area. For tool 2.2 there is a box with information for the teacher. It should be removed before use with a student. Also, the tools may be modified or improved upon to suit specific needs. Do participants use a similar tool that they want to describe or share?

PPT-21 addresses parental input and provides specific questions to ask regarding both instruction and assessment accommodations use in one tool. Guide participants to look over Tool 2.4 in manual.

PPT-20



2. Does the student have an accommodation preference?

3. Has he or she advocated for a specific accommodation?

Tools to Use Accommodations From the Student’s Perspective (Tool 2.2)
Accommodations Journal (Tool 2.3)

STEP 2

PPT-21



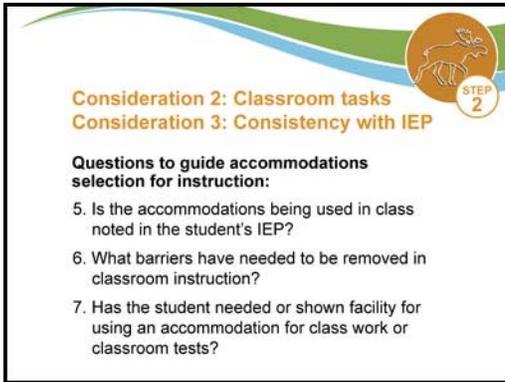
4. Have parents or guardians had input into accommodations used?

Tools to Use Parent Input on Accommodations (Tool 2.4)

STEP 2

► Continue with PPTs 22-23. These cover considerations 2 and 3. Present the questions on PPT-21 while simultaneously guiding them to corresponding pages in their manual that cover classroom tasks and classroom policy/consistency with IEP. Then introduce tools 2.5 and 2.6. Tool 2.5 can be used to track accommodation use in the classroom and 2.6 can be used with 2.5 to chart the observed effects on performance for a specific accommodation being used in class. Again, participants may want to tailor these tools to suit specific needs, or they may have similar tools of their own. Ask participants to share any similar tools that they know about or have used.

PPT-22

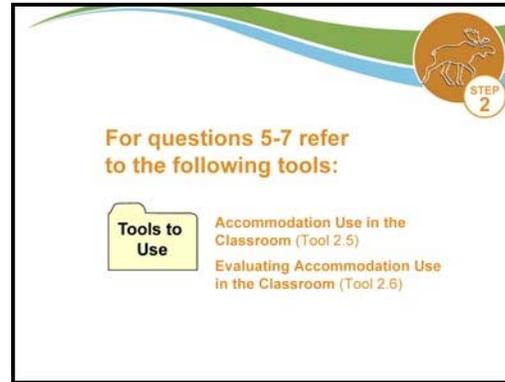


Consideration 2: Classroom tasks
Consideration 3: Consistency with IEP

Questions to guide accommodations selection for instruction:

5. Are the accommodations being used in class noted in the student's IEP?
6. What barriers have needed to be removed in classroom instruction?
7. Has the student needed or shown facility for using an accommodation for class work or classroom tests?

PPT-23



For questions 5-7 refer to the following tools:

Tools to Use

- Accommodation Use in the Classroom (Tool 2.5)
- Evaluating Accommodation Use in the Classroom (Tool 2.6)

Activity 2B. Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations, Tool 2.1

Step 2 Participant Self Check. Do Activity 2B before the final self check for Step 2. See the Step 2 Self questions (in Appendix B of this training manual) for questions to ask for Step 2.

PPT-24



Self Check Questions

Step 2 Activities

Activity 2A. Think of a student

Distribute the handout for Activity 2A. Give directions from the handout and provide time for participants to complete a representation of a specific student (real or imagined). Tell them that they will be working with their student for decision making in the activities to follow.

After participants have their representations completed, they can be asked to introduce their student, describing his or her characteristics, to a partner or in a small home group of those seated around them. This ends the activity.

Activity 2B Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations (Tool 2.1)

As a segue way back to the next activity and as a checking question, ask participants what the first consideration was for decision making. Focusing on student characteristics as the basis in Tool 2.1, explain that the next activity will build on questions about student characteristics in the classroom to accommodation use in actual standards-based activities in the classroom.

Walk through the directions on the handout with participants. Have them first complete the questions in Tool 2.1. Then, ask participants to choose one of their “Yes” questions that most interests them about their student within presentation/response, setting, or timing/scheduling. Have them get up and go to the corresponding table for their accommodation type. Then direct the groups to work in small groups to answer the discussion questions referencing their specific students.

- They should think of the student that was the focus of Activity 2A.
- They should work through the questions in Tool 2.1 about that student. Have them check Yes for any characteristic that describes the student.
- After working through the list of questions, have them go back to the questions they marked as Yes. Ask them to choose one of the accommodation areas (i.e., presentation/response, setting, or timing/scheduling) and go to the area of the room designated for the one they marked (Table A, B, or C).
- In their self-selected areas, have them look at the table in Tool 2.1 that corresponds to their chosen accommodation area (e.g., Table A in Tool 2.1 for presentation/response). They should work with a partner or small group and discuss the questions that follow on their sheets.

After participants complete answering the small group questions, have them return to their seats with their “home group” and work together to fill in the chart on the back of their sheet for each of their students. Then have participants follow the next set of directions.

- Ask each member to (1) share an accommodation for his or her student for one category (e.g., presentation/response, setting, timing/scheduling), and (2) share an instance the member would and would NOT use the accommodation in instruction with the student. Then ask them to complete question 3.

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., Elliott, J., & Ysseldyke, J. (2003). *Testing students with disabilities: Practical strategies for complying with district and state requirements*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.

STEP 3:

Making decisions about assessment accommodations



Step 3 Objective: The purpose of this step is to provide background, guidance, and tools to help in decision making for accommodations on assessments.

Key Outcomes

At the conclusion of this step, participants will

- Be able to distinguish the difference between accommodations and modifications on assessments.
- Recognize three main team considerations for making accommodations decisions for state assessments.
- Identify questions to ask concerning student characteristics, state assessment tasks, and maintaining validity of state assessments.
- Show how to use all the manual tools that address the three considerations for assessment.

Background for Facilitators

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 and state standards-based assessments. 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

Determining appropriate assessment accommodations should not pose any particular problems for IEP teams that follow good IEP practices. As noted in Step 2 for instruction, the reauthorized IDEA (2004) requires a statement of measurable annual goals, including both academic and functional goals along with the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.

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

- “Consideration of Special Factors” (34 CFR Section 300.346). This is where communication and assistive technology supports are considered. The present levels of academic and functional performance 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.”
- “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 difficulties.

Decision-Making Framework for Assessment

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.

In this step, the decision-making framework for assessment accommodations is presented. It includes three main considerations. These considerations include student characteristics, tasks required on state assessments, and state test policies for maintaining the validity of assessments.

Student Characteristics

Student characteristics cover a wide range of information about the student. It includes information about a student's strengths and weaknesses related to specific learning or physical disabilities, a student's language proficiency, educational background, preferences, and learning styles. Concerning accommodations, it also includes history with using the accommodation, student needs and preferences, and opportunities to learn how to use the accommodation in different settings.

Test Characteristics

It is also important to consider the specific tasks that a student is required to do on a state assessment. Decisions need to take into account the academic content standards being assessed across different subject areas and the format and delivery of the test content and how a student is meant to interact and respond to test questions.

State Policies

When choosing assessment accommodations with a student, it is important to look at Minnesota's current policies and procedures to determine whether use of an accommodation maintains the validity of the assessment or results in consequences on a state test (e.g., lowering or not counting a student's score).

In the past, Minnesota had allowed certain modifications for assessments that *did* change what a test was measuring but this practice has been phased out along with the test for which it was allowed (i.e., BST). For consequences, if any, for certain testing practices see the Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Assessments. As state policies are updated frequently, it is best to check the current policy and amendments posted on the state's assessment page.

Consequences of Assessment Accommodations in Research

Assessment accommodations that result in adverse consequences are now most commonly referred to as modifications (Thurlow & Wiener, 2000). However, some documents may still use confusing terminology to refer to modifications.

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 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.

Related Research

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 had 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.

Step 3 PowerPoint Slides

PPT-25: Step Three: Making decisions about assessment accommodations

PPT-26: Accommodations and modifications on assessments

PPT-27: IEP team considerations (3 considerations/C's)

PPT-28: Figure 3. Decision-making for assessment accommodations

PPT-29: C1 Student characteristics, overview of questions

PPT-30: C1, Q1 & 2, refer to Tool 2.1, Tool 3.1 After test accommodation questions

PPT-31: C1, Q3, Tool 3.2 Assessment accommodations agreement

PPT-32: C2 Test characteristics, overview of questions

PPT-33: C2 Overview of questions continued

PPT-34: C2 Q1 & 2, Tool 3.3 MN test characteristics

PPT-35: C2 Q3, Refer to Tool 3.2 (assessment accommodations agreement)

PPT-36: C3 Maintaining validity, overview of questions

PPT-37: C3 Q1 & 2, Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Assessments and Tool 3.3

PPT-38: C3 Q3 Do's and don'ts when selecting accommodations Tool 3.4

PPT-39: Step 3 Self Check

Step 3 Handouts

Accommodations Manual: Step 3 (see Accommodations Manual)

Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Assessments (This is found on the state Web site)

Activity 3A. What are the Do's and Don'ts of Selecting Accommodations? (see Appendix A in this training manual)

Activity 3B. Selecting Accommodations for Assessment (see Appendix A in this training manual)

Step 3 Materials

This step includes activities that may be modified or used as described in the manual.

Activity 3A involves cutting strips and putting them in an envelope for each participant to arrange on a separate sheet and attached with glue sticks. This requires printed strips, scissors, envelopes, printed do/don't sheet with empty columns, and glue sticks. However, others may want to use the sheet before cutting the strips asking participants to identify do/don't as a list.

Activity 3B requires scissors to cut the cards apart in advance.

Step 3 Plan

1. Show PPT-25. It is the introductory slide for the next step.

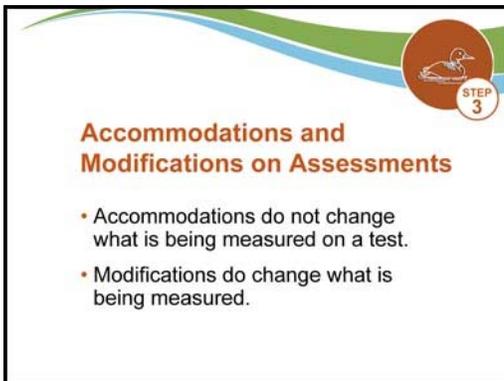
► Emphasize that although we cover instruction and assessment decisions separately, the two decisions are very much integrated as displayed in the first figure in Step 2. There was overlap but not completely.

PPT-25



► Use this slide to explain the difference between accommodations and modifications for state assessments. Ask if participants want to offer examples of a modification to differentiate it from an accommodation.

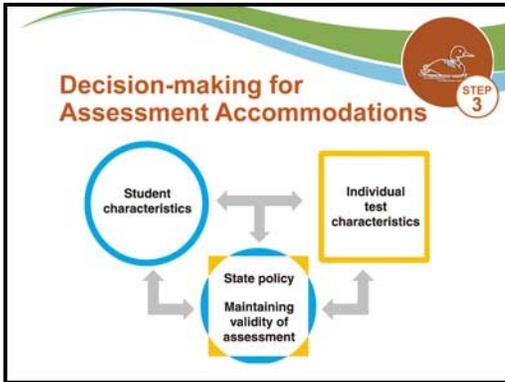
PPT-26



2. Overview of decision making for assessment accommodations

► Use PPT-27 to show the decision-making framework for assessment accommodations. Note the similarities with the instructional framework: student characteristics, tasks required, and maintaining validity/fidelity for measures that demonstrate academic content proficiency which for assessment includes state policies about accommodation use for specific tests. Ask for an example from the participants for each of the three areas.

PPT-27



3. Three considerations to guide decision making for assessment accommodations.

► Use PPT-28 to introduce the three main considerations in decision making in list format. In the next slides participants will go deeper with each consideration as was done for instruction.

PPT-28

-
- The slide, titled "IEP Team Considerations" (STEP 3), lists three key considerations for the IEP team:
1. Student characteristics
 2. Individual test characteristics
 3. Accommodation policies and maintaining validity

PPT-29 shows consideration 1 for assessment decision making.

► Go through the questions with participants as they follow along in the manual.

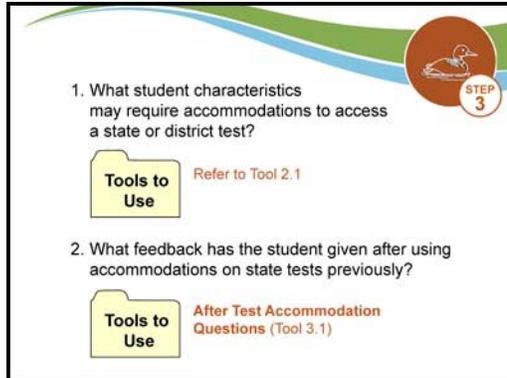
PPT-29

-
- The slide, titled "Consideration 1: Student Characteristics" (STEP 3), provides a list of questions to ask:
- Questions to ask:**
1. What student characteristics may require accommodations to access a state or district test?
 2. What feedback has the student given after using accommodations on tests previously?
 3. Has the student advocated for a particular accommodation on an assessment?

PPT-30 shows the tools to be used with questions 1 and 2.

► Go through the questions and guide the participants to the tools in the manual. Note that the first tool (2.1) was already introduced in Step 2 for instruction. In the tool, there is overlap with tasks that may be encountered on tests and thus would best be used in combination with a later tool that incorporates specific test task information from the Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Assessments. The second tool listed is straightforward and helps to collect information on a student's prior experiences with specific accommodations on tests.

PPT-30

The slide features a decorative header with a blue and green wavy line and a circular icon of a duck in the top right corner labeled 'STEP 3'. It contains two numbered questions. Question 1 asks about student characteristics requiring accommodations. Below it is a yellow folder icon labeled 'Tools to Use' with the text 'Refer to Tool 2.1'. Question 2 asks about student feedback on accommodations. Below it is another yellow folder icon labeled 'Tools to Use' with the text 'After Test Accommodation Questions (Tool 3.1)'.

1. What student characteristics may require accommodations to access a state or district test?

Tools to Use Refer to Tool 2.1

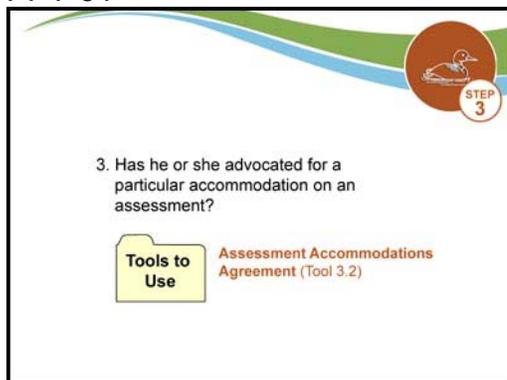
2. What feedback has the student given after using accommodations on state tests previously?

Tools to Use After Test Accommodation Questions (Tool 3.1)

PPT-31 presents the third question for consideration 1.

► Refer to the question, "Which promotes student self-advocacy?" and then guide participants to Tool 3.2 and explain its use. Point out that it is important for students to learn to self advocate for accommodations as they will need this skill throughout their life in higher education and work settings. 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. Ask participants to share other self-advocacy tools that they have found to be effective for students.

PPT-31

The slide features a decorative header with a blue and green wavy line and a circular icon of a duck in the top right corner labeled 'STEP 3'. It contains one numbered question. Question 3 asks if a student has advocated for a particular accommodation. Below it is a yellow folder icon labeled 'Tools to Use' with the text 'Assessment Accommodations Agreement (Tool 3.2)'.

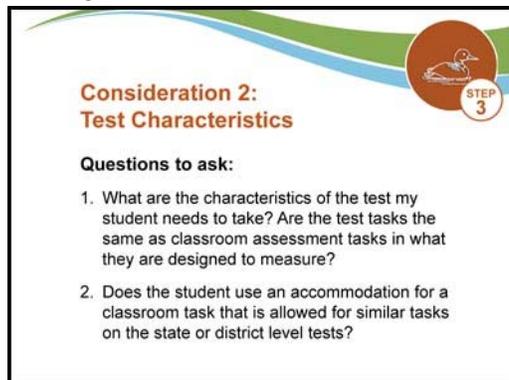
3. Has he or she advocated for a particular accommodation on an assessment?

Tools to Use Assessment Accommodations Agreement (Tool 3.2)

2. Consideration 2. PPT-32 introduces consideration 2: Test characteristics

► Introduce the second consideration and review questions 1 and 2 with participants, as they follow in their manuals (page 19).

PPT-32

The slide features a decorative header with green and blue wavy lines. On the right side, there is a circular icon containing a duck and the text 'STEP 3'. The main text is as follows:

**Consideration 2:
Test Characteristics**

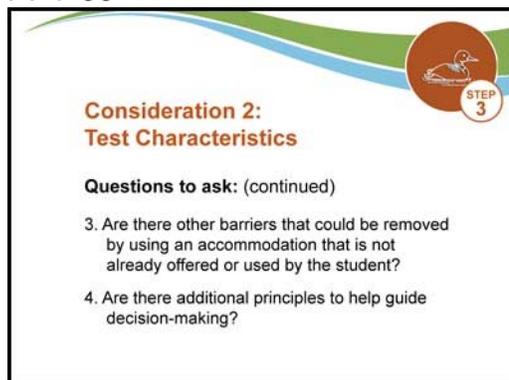
Questions to ask:

1. What are the characteristics of the test my student needs to take? Are the test tasks the same as classroom assessment tasks in what they are designed to measure?
2. Does the student use an accommodation for a classroom task that is allowed for similar tasks on the state or district level tests?

PPT-33 presents questions 3 and 4 for consideration 1 (continued).

► Review questions 3 and 4 as with PPT-30.

PPT-33

The slide features a decorative header with green and blue wavy lines. On the right side, there is a circular icon containing a duck and the text 'STEP 3'. The main text is as follows:

**Consideration 2:
Test Characteristics**

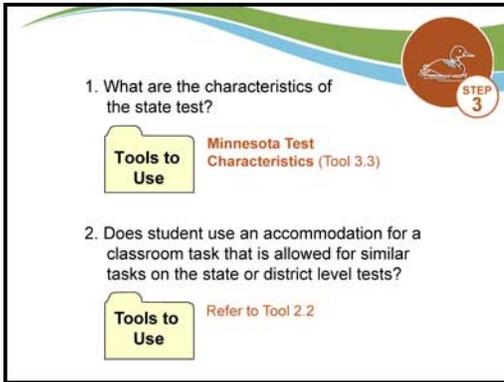
Questions to ask: (continued)

3. Are there other barriers that could be removed by using an accommodation that is not already offered or used by the student?
4. Are there additional principles to help guide decision-making?

PPT-34 reviews questions 1 and 2 with the corresponding tools.

► Use PPT-32 to review the questions and to introduce the tools that can be used for each question. The Minnesota test characteristics sheet is simply a note-taking sheet for use with the Procedures Manual for Minnesota's Tests. The second tool refers back to information collected in Tool 2.2 used for instruction in Step 2. It may be useful in combination with Tool 3.3.

PPT-34



1. What are the characteristics of the state test?

Tools to Use Minnesota Test Characteristics (Tool 3.3)

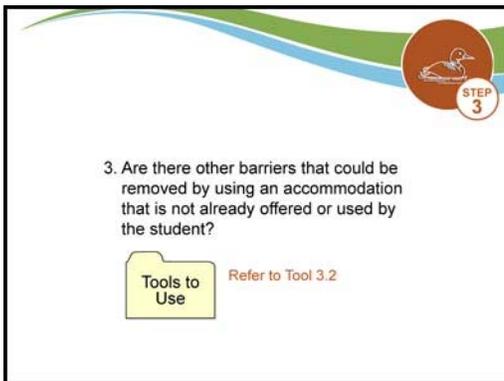
2. Does student use an accommodation for a classroom task that is allowed for similar tasks on the state or district level tests?

Tools to Use Refer to Tool 2.2

STEP 3

PPT-35 presents the third question with corresponding Tool 3.2. The tool is the assessment agreement sheet for students to use for self-advocacy. Note that the tool has a box with important information for the teacher in it. A copy of the sheet, with the box removed, is provided for use with students. There may be other tools that are useful to address this question such as student journaling on the topic in the classroom and input from the teacher or parent/guardian. Do the participants know of others?

PPT-35



3. Are there other barriers that could be removed by using an accommodation that is not already offered or used by the student?

Tools to Use Refer to Tool 3.2

STEP 3

PPT-36 presents the third consideration for decision making for assessment accommodations.

► Review the questions to ask about maintaining validity of state assessments.

PPT-36

**Consideration 3:
Maintaining Validity**

Questions to ask:

- Does the state or district allow the identified accommodation for the test or portion of the test noted as a barrier?
- If not, does the accommodation change the standard of the assessment?
- Are there additional principles to help guide decision-making?

PPT-37 presents questions 1 and 2 from Consideration 3.

► Point out that for both of these questions participants are directed to consult the Procedures Manual for Minnesota’s Assessments. For the second question, they are also encouraged to review test specifications and Tool 3.3. For more details about state tests, reviewing the test specifications found on the state Web site may provide additional detailed information. For example, one may check whether the same sized fonts are available across grade levels of tests as these vary. Tool 3.3 offers a space to make notes about tests and potential barriers using these resources.

PPT-37

1. Does the state or district allow the identified accommodation for the test or portion of the test as noted as a barrier?

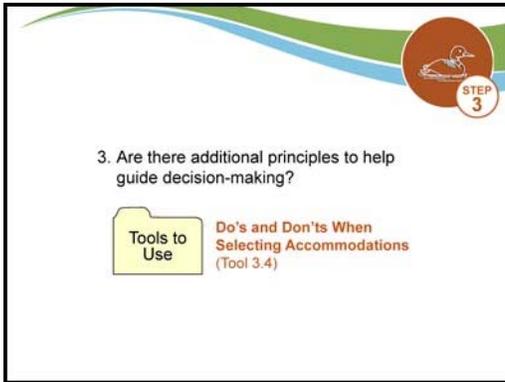
2. If not, does the accommodation change standard of the assessment?

Tools to Use See Procedures Manual, test specification documents and refer to Tool 3.3

PPT-38 presents the third and final question for consideration 3.

► Use PPT-38 to guide participants to Tool 3.4 (in Accommodations Manual). This tool provides additional guidance about decision making that participants may find useful. Tell participants that we will look at this tool in a few minutes. [The following activity deals with the content of this tool. This tool can be used as a self check for the activity.]

PPT-38



Step 3 Participant Self Check. The PPT-39 Step 3 self check follows the activities after this step (3A and 3B). See the Step Self-Check Questions (in Appendix B of this training manual) for questions to ask for Step 3.

PPT-39



Step 3 Activities

Activity 3A Accommodations Do's and Don'ts

Preparation for activity: Cut each item on the handout into strips and place in an envelope, along with the directions for the activity. Give one envelope to groups of 3-4, along with one copy of the Accommodations Do's and Don'ts Sheet that is empty. Tool 3.4 may be used as the check at the end.

Have participants follow the directions on the handout: This envelope contains suggestions for making accommodations decisions. Which are the “do’s” (the statements that are good to follow) and which are the “don’ts” (the statements better left alone)? Paste each strip under its corresponding column. After you’ve placed all of the suggestions in either the Do or the Don’t column, add 1-2 suggestions of your own.

Activity 3B Selecting Accommodations for Assessment

Ask participants to refer back to the Describe Your Student Activity from Step 2. With the particular student in mind, participants will now make assessment accommodation decisions for that student, for one Minnesota assessment. Give each participant one decision-making card. Participants may want to work in pairs.

Note: The accommodations decisions being made are not meant to model how final assessment decisions are made because it is obviously not an IEP meeting with all available participants engaged in the process. However, to become familiar with the tools, we offer these experiences for using them.

References

- DeStefano, L., & Shriner, J. (2003). Participation and accommodation in state assessment: The role of individualized education programs. *Exceptional Children*, 69(2), 147-161.
- 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.
- Thurlow, M.L., Lazarus, S.S., Thompson, S.J., & Morse, A. (2005). State policies on assessment participation and accommodations for students with disabilities. *Journal of Special Education*, 38(4), 232-240.
- Thurlow, M., & Wiener, D. (2000). *Non-approved accommodations: Recommendations for use and reporting* (Policy Direction No. 11). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.



STEP 4:

Administering accommodations during instruction and assessment

Step 4 Objective: The purpose of this step 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 Outcomes

At the conclusion of this step, participants will

- Describe appropriate administration of accommodations for instruction and assessment.
- Identify a tool in the planning for logistics and provision of accommodations for test day.
- Demonstrate where to find current information on test administration, test security, and other information for Minnesota assessments.

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, when, and where the accommodations will be provided. Instructional accommodations must be provided by the instructional staff 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. However, 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 regular grade-level assessment, 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 was 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 was 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 Step

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 (e.g., what happens if standardization in test administration procedures is not maintained) and stress the importance of test security.

Step 4 PowerPoint Slides

- PPT-40: Step 4: Administering accommodations during instruction and assessment
- PPT-41: Examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for instruction
- PPT-42: More examples for instruction
- PPT-43: Examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for assessment
- PPT-44: More examples for assessment
- PPT-45: Examples of ethical and unethical accommodation practices during assessment
- PPT-46: Other information on administration – See Procedures Manual for Minnesota’s Assessments
- PPT-47: Need to map out logistics

Step 4 Handouts

- Accommodations Manual: Step 4 (see Accommodations Manual)
- Activity 4. Discussion Questions and Accommodations Logistics Plan for Assessment, Tool 4.1 (see Appendix in this training manual)

Step 4 Plan

1. Administering Accommodations during Instruction and Assessment (PPT-40-46)

- ▶ Show PPT-40 to introduce Step 4.

PPT-40



STEP 4:
Administering accommodations during instruction and assessment

The slide features a decorative header with a green and blue wave pattern and a purple circular icon containing a white silhouette of a dog. The text is centered on a white background.

PPT-41-42 are examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices. As slides are presented the first shows two options followed by a slide with one of the examples crossed out to show the appropriate practice. Advance to the following slide after participants are given the opportunity to give their answer.

► Show PPT-41 and explain that one of the examples is appropriate and one is not for instruction. Ask participants to choose the appropriate option then advance to the next slide showing the correct answer. Discuss briefly why the choice was inappropriate (e.g., although accommodations on an assessment may be different from those of instruction, they should not be very different. Accommodations provided should be as seamless as possible between instruction and assessment for the student with appropriate consideration given to the content of the assessment).

PPT-41

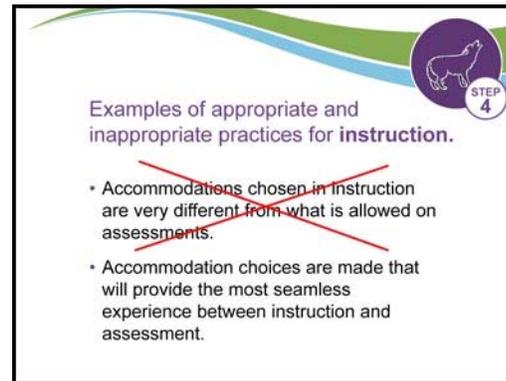


Examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for **instruction**.

- Accommodations chosen in instruction are very different from what is allowed on assessments.
- Accommodation choices are made that will provide the most seamless experience between instruction and assessment.

The slide features a decorative header with a green and blue wave pattern and a purple circular icon containing a white silhouette of a dog with the text 'STEP 4' below it. The text is centered on a white background.

PPT-42



Examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for **instruction**.

- ~~Accommodations chosen in instruction are very different from what is allowed on assessments.~~
- Accommodation choices are made that will provide the most seamless experience between instruction and assessment.

The slide features a decorative header with a green and blue wave pattern and a purple circular icon containing a white silhouette of a dog with the text 'STEP 4' below it. The text is centered on a white background. The first bullet point is crossed out with a large red 'X'.

► Show PPT-43 and repeat the process by asking participants to identify the appropriate example, then advancing to the next slide to show the correct answer.

Then ask participants to identify other appropriate or inappropriate practices from their own experience.

Some further examples of inappropriate practices to get participants thinking might be:

- 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.

Some further examples of appropriate practices are:

- Monitoring the implementation of accommodations on test day including using an accommodation request form that is completed by a student’s IEP team.
- Creating a database containing information about student accommodations.

PPT-43

More appropriate and inappropriate practices...

- School level personnel are not aware of the accommodation needs of students in instruction.
- School level personnel track students' ongoing accommodation use to best ensure their needs for accommodations on assessment days are met.*

Note: The slide contains a purple circular icon with a white silhouette of a bear and the text 'STEP 4'.

PPT-44

More appropriate and inappropriate practices...

- ~~School level personnel are not aware of the accommodation needs of students in instruction.~~
- School level personnel track students' ongoing accommodation use to best ensure their needs for accommodations on assessment days are met.*

Note: The slide contains a purple circular icon with a white silhouette of a bear and the text 'STEP 4'. The first bullet point is crossed out with a red X.

PPT-45-46 provide examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for the planning and implementation of accommodations for assessment.

► Show PPT-45 and use a process similar to the process used for the practices for instruction by asking participants to identify the appropriate example for assessment and then advancing to the next slide to show the answer. For slide 46 briefly discuss why preparing instructional objectives or study guides on specific Minnesota test items is not appropriate. For slide 48 discuss why basing decisions on “typical” student needs for a group is inappropriate. For slide 50 briefly discuss allowing notes during a test as inappropriate.

Then ask participants to identify other appropriate or inappropriate practices from their own experience for assessment.

PPT-45

Examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for Assessment

- Develop instructional objectives based on the academic standards.
- Prepare instructional objectives or study guides based on specific Minnesota test items and teach accordingly.

Note: The slide contains a purple circular icon with a white silhouette of a bear and the text 'STEP 4'.

PPT-46

Examples of appropriate and inappropriate practices for Assessment

- Develop instructional objectives based on the academic standards.
- ~~Prepare instructional objectives or study guides based on specific Minnesota test items and teach accordingly.~~

Note: The slide contains a purple circular icon with a white silhouette of a bear and the text 'STEP 4'. The second bullet point is crossed out with a red X.

PPT-47

More appropriate and inappropriate practices...

- Encourage IEP teams to base assessment decisions on what is typically used for students with similar characteristics.
- Base assessment decisions on individual student needs.

STEP 4

PPT-48

More appropriate and inappropriate practices...

- ~~• Encourage IEP teams to base assessment decisions on what is typically used for students with similar characteristics.~~
- Base assessment decisions on individual student needs.

STEP 4

PPT-49

Examples of ethical and unethical accommodation practices during the assessment

- Follow state guidelines on appropriate accommodations that maintain test validity for specific tests.
- Allow the use of notes or other materials that give students an edge in answering items.

STEP 4

PPT-50

Examples of ethical and unethical accommodation practices during the assessment

- Follow state guidelines on appropriate accommodations that maintain test validity for specific tests.
- ~~• Allow the use of notes or other materials that give students an edge in answering items.~~

STEP 4

PPT-51 points participants to other sources for information on ethical testing administration, test security and general security of accommodated materials, etc. The Procedures Manual for Minnesota’s Assessments is the primary source for these and other additional questions they may have.

► Go through slide content pointing out that the Procedures Manual on the Department of Education Web site is the primary source for these additional sources of information.

PPT-51

Other information

For all other information on ethical test administration, test security, general security of accommodated materials and non-disclosure agreements... Please see the **Procedure Manual for Minnesota’s Assessments**

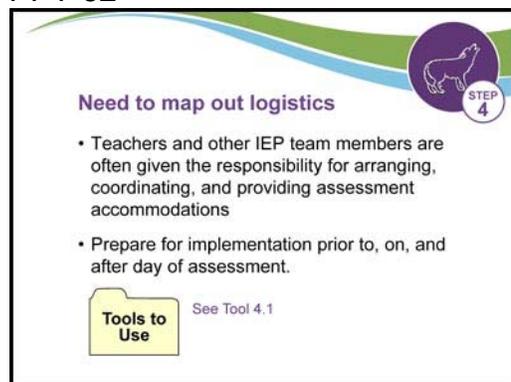
STEP 4

2. Logistical planning for accommodations

PPT-52 introduces the need to map out logistics for state assessment days.

► Present the slide and ask participants to see Tool 4.1 in their manuals. Describe how the tool can be used to plan for the logistics of accommodations use on test day. Ask participants whether they know of other questions or elements not covered on the sheet that they have found useful.

PPT-52



Step 4 Activities

Activity 4: Discussion Questions and Accommodations Logistics Plan for Assessment (Tool 4.1 found in Appendix)

Ask participants to refer to the handout for discussion questions in Activity 4. Ask them to discuss the questions in their home groups (those seated around them) referencing the student. Suggest that these latter training activities have been focusing on accommodation(s) for testing. They will want to refer to Tool 4.1 to help bring up issues in the planning for logistics as they go through the discussion questions.

After participants have had a chance to discuss the questions, have them report out on questions 2 and 3 from the sheet so that others' ideas about planning can be shared among the groups.

Step 4 Participant Self Check. This self check should occur after the activity for Step 4. See the Step Self-Check Questions (in Appendix B of this training manual) for questions to ask for Step 4.

PPT-53



References

- National Council on Measurement in Education. (1995). *Code of professional responsibilities in educational measurement*. Washington, D. C.
- Rhode Island Department of Education. (2003). *Rhode Island assessment accommodation study: Research summary*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

STEP 5:

Evaluate and improve accommodations use



Step 5 Objective: The purpose of this step is to provide information about evaluating and improving the use of assessment accommodations.

Key Outcomes

At the conclusion of this step, participants will

- Describe why it is important to collect information on the use and appropriate administration of accommodations.
- Identify different ways to collect information on accommodations for analysis.
- Generate 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 district wide 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 and appropriate 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

- 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?
- Are there procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised with the provision of accommodations?
- Are students receiving accommodations as documented in their IEP and 504 Plans?
- Are there procedures in place to ensure that test administrators adhere to directions for the implementation of accommodations?
- How many students with IEPs or 504 Plans are receiving accommodations?
- What types of accommodations are provided and are some used more than others?
- 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 accommodations that were not effective?

Questions to Guide Evaluation at the Student Level

- What accommodations are used by the student during instruction and assessments?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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 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 evaluation is not the responsibility of just one individual. The entire IEP team, and others as well, should contribute to the information gathering and decision-making process about accommodations.

Many of the questions above have already been presented in relation to considerations and tools from previous steps. In the PowerPoints for this step the chart from Step 5 in the manual is referenced as another resource for guiding ongoing evaluation efforts.

Facilitator Preparation for Step

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 the evaluation as a "team effort" that includes the parents and the student. Also, emphasize that it is 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 questions, as well as student level questions.

Step 5 PowerPoint Slides

PPT-54: Step 5: Evaluate and improve accommodations use

PPT-55: Reasons why

PPT-56: Ways to collect information

PPT-57: Example questions to ask

PPT-58: Additional questions and resources

Step 5 Handouts

Accommodations Manual: Step 5 (see Accommodations Manual).

Step 5 Plan

1. Introduction to evaluating and improving accommodations use

► Show PPT-54 and introduce Step 5.

PPT-54



2. Why evaluate?

PPT-55 shows how evaluation can be conducted by using a formative evaluation approach.

► Present PPT-51's reasons to evaluate and improve accommodation use. Ask participants for other reasons they might think of in addition to those already on the slide.

PPT-55



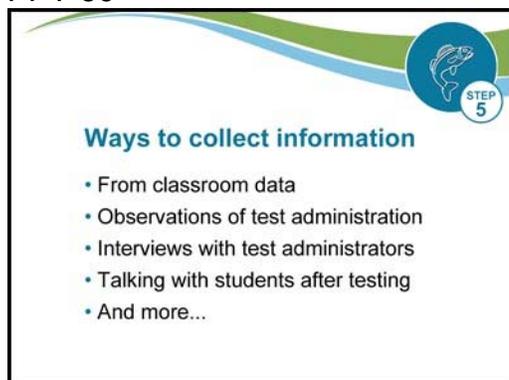
3. Sources of information to use in evaluation

► Discuss the points on PPT-56 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.

Emphasize the importance of collecting evaluation information on the use and impact of accommodations for the purpose of continuous improvement. Stress that the use of accommodations is a dynamic process in which student needs will change over time. Thus, 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 accommodation practices and potential staff training needs for the future.

PPT-56



Ways to collect information

- From classroom data
- Observations of test administration
- Interviews with test administrators
- Talking with students after testing
- And more...

4. Guiding questions for evaluation

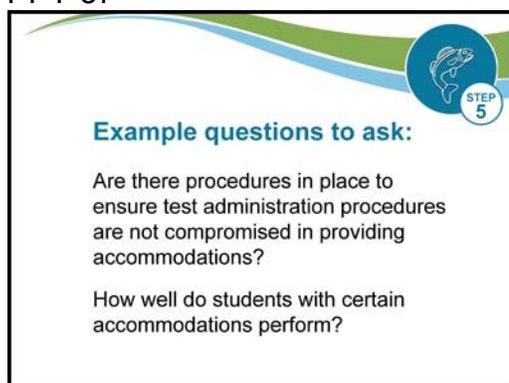
PPTs-57 and 58 show questions that may be asked to guide the evaluation of accommodations.

► Go over the questions on PPT-57 and ask if participants have specific questions to add. If there is little response the facilitator may want to offer some of the questions provided in the background text for this step as additional questions to ask.

Note that questions for evaluating the use of accommodations may vary 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.

Show PPT-58 and note that the chart in Step 5 (in the manual) shows how some of the questions for evaluation match the questions asked in the tools in Steps 2-4. Participants may find it useful to reference this chart and investigate other sources for evaluating accommodations use at the local level.

PPT-57



Example questions to ask:

Are there procedures in place to ensure test administration procedures are not compromised in providing accommodations?

How well do students with certain accommodations perform?

PPT-58

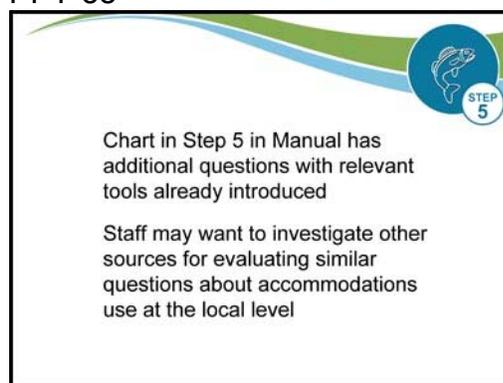


Chart in Step 5 in Manual has additional questions with relevant tools already introduced

Staff may want to investigate other sources for evaluating similar questions about accommodations use at the local level

Step 5 Participant Self Check. Do this self check after the final slides. See the Step Self-Check Questions (in Appendix B of this training manual) for questions to ask for Step 5.

PPT-59



References

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

Appendix A

Step Activities

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?

2. How often do you think all school staff access Minnesota's academic standards?

(a) You personally?

(b) Are there ways we can improve?

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

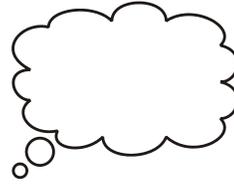
4. Think of a student with disabilities who has met proficiency on the MCAs (include ELLs with disabilities in your discussions). What did it take to bring this student to proficiency?

(a) Describe how this is similar or different to general education students who do not meet proficiency on state assessments.

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

Activity 1 was adapted from a discussion activity, "Participation of Students with Disabilities in Standards-based Instruction and Assessment," developed by the Delaware Department of Education, September 2006.

Activity 2A



Activity: Think of a Student

Directions: Think of a specific student you know who uses accommodations in order to access grade-level content. In the space below, describe the student. What is he or she like? What are the student's needs and characteristics? You may choose to draw a picture of the student, describe the student in words, or use a combination of both.

Activity 2B

Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations (Tool 2.1)

Directions:

- Think of the student who was the focus of Activity 2.
- Work through the questions in Tool 2.1 about that student. Check Yes for any characteristic that describes the student.
- After working through the list of questions, go back to the questions you marked as Yes. The facilitator will ask you to choose one and go to the area of the room designated for the one you marked (Table A, B, C, etc. as found in Tool 2.1 in your manual).
- In your self-selected area, look at the corresponding table (e.g., Table A), with a partner or small group and go through the discussion questions below.

Discussion questions:

1. What accommodation may benefit your student in grade-level content?
2. Is there another accommodation not listed that would be beneficial?
3. What category of accommodation is it? (e.g., presentation/response, setting, or timing/scheduling)?
4. When would you NOT want to use one of these accommodations for instruction?

Activity 2B is continued on next page.

Activity 2B was adapted from a discussion activity, "To Use or Not to Use? That is the Question," developed by the Delaware Department of Education, September 2006.

Activity 2B continued: Each member shares an accommodation for his or her student for one category (e.g., presentation/response, setting, timing/scheduling). Each share an instance when you would and would NOT use the accommodation in instruction with the student. Then complete question 3.

	_____	_____	_____	_____
Presentation	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use
Response	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use
Setting	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use
Timing/ Scheduling	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use	Use Not use

3. Below, list any accommodations on this sheet that may pose a challenge in use. Note the barrier and offer possible solutions.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Activity 3A

What are the Do's and Don'ts of Selecting Accommodations?

[Note to trainers: Cut each item below into strips and place in an envelope, along with the directions for the activity. Give one envelope to groups of 3-4, along with one copy of the Accommodations Do's and Don'ts Chart.]

Directions: This envelop contains suggestions for making accommodations decisions. Which are the “do’s” (the statements that are good to follow) and which are the don’ts (the statements better left alone)? Paste each strip under the column its corresponding column. After you’ve placed all of the suggestions in either the Do or the Don’t column, add 1-2 suggestions of your own.

simply indicate an accommodation will be provided “as appropriate” or “as necessary.”

make accommodations decisions based on whatever is easiest to do (e.g., preferential seating).

be familiar with the types of accommodations that can be used as both instructional and assessment accommodations.

refer to state accommodations policies and understand implications of selections.

get input about accommodations from teachers, parents, and students, and use it to make decisions at IEP team or 504 planning committee meetings.

provide accommodations for assessments routinely used for classroom instruction.

select accommodations based on specific individual needs in each content area.

assume certain accommodations, such as extra time, are appropriate for every student in every content area.

provide an assessment accommodation for the first time on the day of a test.

make decisions about instructional and assessment accommodations alone.

assume the same accommodations remain appropriate year after year.

select accommodations that reduce the effect of the disability to access instruction and demonstrate learning.

be certain to document instructional and assessment accommodation(s) on the IEP or Plans.

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

make accommodation decisions based on individualized needs.

assume that all instructional accommodations are appropriate for use on assessments.

use an accommodation that has not been documented on the IEP or 504 Plan.

evaluate accommodations used by the student.

select accommodations unrelated to documented student learning needs or are intended to give students an unfair advantage.

be specific about the "Where, When, Who, and How" of providing accommodations.

Accommodations Do's and Don'ts

When Making Decisions about Accommodations, Do...	When Making Decisions about Accommodations, Don't...

Activity 3B

Activity: Selecting Accommodations for Assessment

[Note to trainers: Ask participants to refer back to the Describe Your Student Activity from Step 2. With the particular student in mind, participants will now make assessment accommodations decisions for that student, for one Minnesota assessment. Cut these cards apart and give each participant one decision-making card. Participants may want to work in pairs. You may want to refer to the following tools: Accommodations Decision Tracking Sheet, Tool 2.1 Inclusion Needs That May Require Accommodations, Tool 2.2 Accommodations From the Student's Perspective, Tool 2.4 Parent Input in Accommodations, and Tool 3.3 Minnesota Test Characteristics. These tools can be used to record answers, or other paper can be used accordingly.]

Activity: Selecting Accommodations for Assessment

[Note to trainers: Ask participants to refer back to the Describe Your Student Activity from Step 2. With the particular student in mind, participants will now make assessment accommodations decisions for that student, for one Minnesota assessment. Give each participant one decision-making card. Participants may want to work in pairs.]

Assessment Decision-Making Cards

<p>Your student will be taking the MCA-II in Reading. What accommodations will he or she need?</p> <p>What are the characteristics of your student that should be considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What instructional accommodations does the student use regularly? • Has the student indicated a preference for a certain accommodation? • Have parents and teachers given input? <p>What are the test specifications, according to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the tasks the test requires of the student? • What is the test designed to measure? <p>What assessment accommodations are appropriate for <i>this student</i>, for <i>this test</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>, is the accommodation allowed for this test? • Are there consequences for using the accommodation? • Does the accommodation change the target of the assessment? 	<p>Your student will be taking the MCA-II in Math. What accommodations will he or she need?</p> <p>What are the characteristics of your student that should be considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What instructional accommodations does the student use regularly? • Has the student indicated a preference for a certain accommodation? • Have parents and teachers given input? <p>What are the test specifications, according to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the tasks the test requires of the student? • What is the test designed to measure? <p>What assessment accommodations are appropriate for <i>this student</i>, for <i>this test</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>, is the accommodation allowed for this test? • Are there consequences for using the accommodation? • Does the accommodation change the target of the assessment?
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<p>Your student will be taking the MTELL. What accommodations will he or she need?</p> <p>What are the characteristics of your student that should be considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What instructional accommodations does the student use regularly? • Has the student indicated a preference for a certain accommodation? • Have parents and teachers given input? <p>What are the test specifications, according to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the tasks the test requires of the student? • What is the test designed to measure? <p>What assessment accommodations are appropriate for <i>this student</i>, for <i>this test</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>, is the accommodation allowed for this test? • Are there consequences for using the accommodation? • Does the accommodation change the target of the assessment? 	<p>Your student will be taking the TEAELS. What accommodations will he or she need?</p> <p>What are the characteristics of your student that should be considered?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What instructional accommodations does the student use regularly? • Has the student indicated a preference for a certain accommodation? • Have parents and teachers given input? <p>What are the test specifications, according to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the tasks the test requires of the student? • What is the test designed to measure? <p>What assessment accommodations are appropriate for <i>this student</i>, for <i>this test</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the <i>Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments</i>, is the accommodation allowed for this test? • Are there consequences for using the accommodation? • Does the accommodation change the target of the assessment?
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Activity 4

Activity 4: Discussion Questions and Accommodations Logistics Plan for Assessment (Tool 4.1)

1. In your home group, review what accommodations you might need to provide for your students for a state assessment (refer to prior activities focused on a student and accommodations needed for an assessment).

What are the logistical needs to address?

2. Do you currently use a form like Tool 4.1?

3. What other information might you need for building a master plan to arrange for logistics?

Appendix B

Step Self-Check Questions and Facilitator's Key



Self-Check Questions: Step 1

Directions: For each statement from Step 1 below, circle whether the statement is True or False. If a statement is False, what would make it True?

True or False

1. The two federal laws that require the participation of all students in standards-based assessments are Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004).

True or False

2. Strong collaboration between special education and general education teachers is necessary so that students with disabilities are appropriately included in grade-level content.

True or False

3. High quality instruction and appropriate accommodations are two factors that support high expectations for students with disabilities.

True or False

4. Assessments for accountability are used only to measure how successful schools, districts, and states are in getting students to proficiency on state standards.



Self-Check Questions: Step 2

Directions: For each statement from Step 2 below, circle whether the statement is True or False. If a statement is False, what would make it True?

True or False

1. Accommodations change learning expectations.

True or False

2. The four categories of accommodations are presentation, response, timing/scheduling, and equipment.

True or False

3. Providing extra accommodations—ones that the student doesn't really need—can have a negative effect on a student's performance.

True or False

4. Student preference should be considered when making decisions about accommodations for instruction and assessment.



Self-Check Questions: Step 3

Directions: For each statement from Step 3 below, circle whether the statement is True or False. If a statement is False, what would make it True?

True or False

1. When making accommodation decisions for state assessments, IEP teams should consider the student's characteristics, the test specifications, and the state policies on accommodations.

True or False

2. Some instructional accommodations may not be allowed on state assessments.

True or False

3. The test specifications for Minnesota's statewide assessments can be found in the *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment*.

True or False

4. Accommodations not listed in the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments* and the *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment* may not be used for assessment.



Self-Check Questions: Step 4

Directions: For each statement from Step 4 below, circle whether the statement is True or False. If a statement is False, what would make it True?

True or False

1. Following ethical testing practices helps ensure that validity of the assessment is maintained.

True or False

2. It's okay if allowable accommodations a student will need for assessment are not available for instruction.

True or False

3. Planning for the logistics of providing assessment accommodations involves coordinating information among several people in a school.

True or False

4. Information on test security can be found in the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments*.



Self-Check Questions: Step 5

Directions: For each statement from Step 5 below, circle whether the statement is True or False. If a statement is False, what would make it True?

True or False

1. It is most important that accommodation data be collected and analyzed at the state level.

True or False

2. It is not necessary to keep track of how students who use accommodations perform on statewide assessments.

True or False

3. Teachers' perceptions of the accommodation's effectiveness should be considered when evaluating the use of accommodations.

True or False

4. One individual on the IEP team should be designated to collect and analyze data about accommodations.

Self-Check Questions Answer Key

Note to trainers: You may want to use these questions to guide discussion at the end of each step.

Step 1: Expect students with disabilities to achieve grade-level academic content standards

1. The two federal laws that require the participation of all students in standards-based assessments are Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004).
False. NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004). IDEA requires the participation of students with disabilities in state and district-wide assessments, and specifically governs services provided to students with disabilities. One of the basic reform principles of NCLB is stronger accountability for results for all students.
2. Strong collaboration between special education and general education teachers is necessary so that students with disabilities are appropriately included in grade-level content.
True.
3. High quality instruction and appropriate accommodations are two factors that support high expectations for students with disabilities?
True.
4. Assessments for accountability are used only to measure how successful schools, districts, and states are in getting students to proficiency on state standards.
False. Accountability assessments do measure how successful schools, districts, and states are in including all students in standards-based education. However, accountability assessments are also used to determine 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.

Step 2: Learn about accommodations for instruction

1. Accommodations change learning expectations.
False. Modifications change learning expectations by lowering expectations. Accommodations provide access so students can show what they know.
2. The four categories of accommodations are presentation, response, timing/scheduling, and equipment.
False. The four categories of accommodations are presentation, response, timing/scheduling, and setting.
3. Providing extra accommodations—ones that the student doesn't really need—can have a negative effect on a student's performance.
True.

4. Student preference should be considered when making decisions about accommodations for instruction and assessment.
True. Tool 2.2 and Tool 2.3 address accommodations from the student's perspective.

Step 3: Make decisions about accommodations for assessment

1. When making accommodations decisions for state assessments, IEP teams should consider the student's characteristics, the test specifications, and the state policies on accommodations.
True.
2. Some instructional accommodations may not be allowed on state assessments.
True.
3. The test specifications for Minnesota's statewide assessments can be found in the *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment*.
False. The test specifications are located in the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments*.
4. Accommodations not listed in the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments* and the *Minnesota Manual of Accommodations for Students with Disabilities in Instruction and Assessment* may not be used for assessment.
False. If decision-making teams have questions about an accommodation not described in these materials, they may contact the Minnesota Department of Education at mde.testing@state.mn.us or fax 651.582.8874.

Step 4: Administer accommodations during instruction and assessment

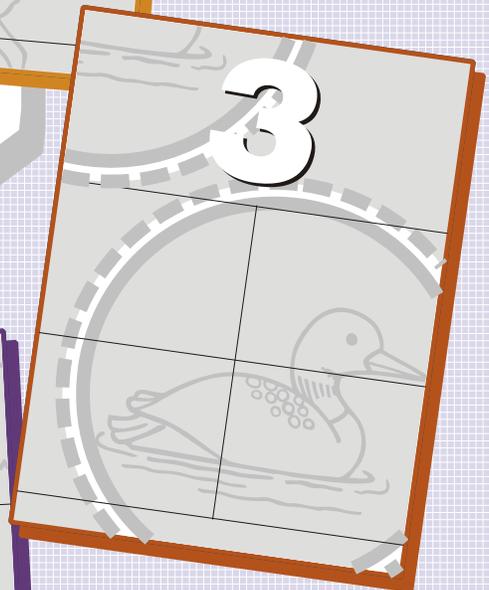
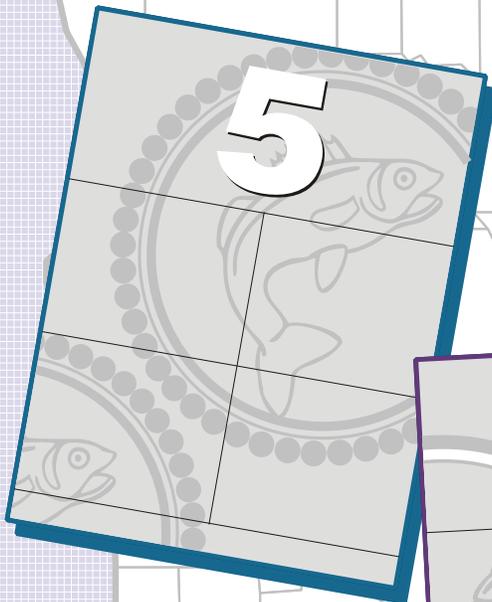
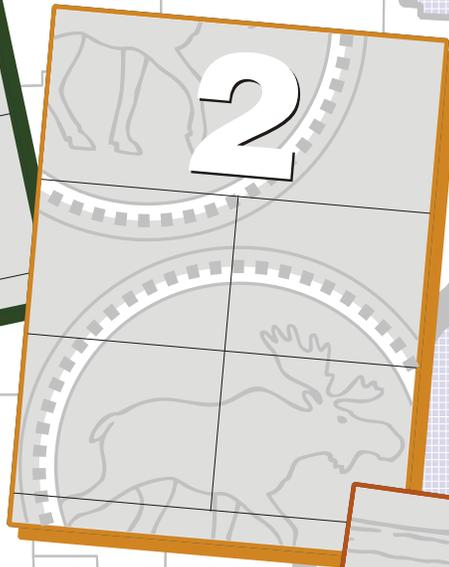
1. Following ethical testing practices helps ensure that validity of the assessment is maintained.
True.
2. It's okay if allowable accommodations a student will need for assessment are not available for instruction.
False. Accommodations used for assessment should also be used for instruction. In addition, it is important for students not to use an accommodation for the first time on an assessment.
3. Planning for the logistics of providing assessment accommodations involves coordinating information among several people in a school.
True. See Tool 4.1 for one example of an accommodations logistics planning tool.
4. Information on test security can be found in the *Procedures Manual for the Minnesota Assessments*.
True.

Step 5: Evaluate and improve accommodations use

1. It is most important that accommodations data be collected and analyzed at the state level.
False. Collecting data on accommodations is most useful to the individual student, in making decisions about future accommodations use, and for the school and district, for formative assessment purposes.
2. It is not necessary to keep track of how students who use accommodations perform on statewide assessments.
False. Districts should keep track of how students who use accommodations perform on statewide assessments. If students are not meeting expected levels of performance, it is important to know why so that changes in accommodations or instruction, or both, can be provided as needed.
3. Teachers' perceptions of the accommodation's effectiveness should be considered when evaluating the use of accommodations.
True. Tools 2.2 and 2.4 address teachers' input on accommodations.
4. One individual on the IEP team should be designated to collect and analyze data about accommodations.
False. Evaluating the use of accommodations is the responsibility of all members of the IEP team.

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