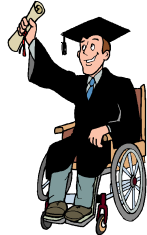
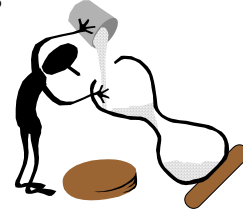


- IV. Assessing students with disabilities



- 4.4.4: How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?



- **An accommodation** is a change in format, response, setting, timing, or scheduling that does NOT alter the assessment content or what the assessment is measuring.
  - An accommodation is meant to “level the playing field” so the true abilities of the student can be measured, not their disabilities

- Accommodations should be used when they...
  - ensure that an assessment measures the student’s knowledge and skills rather than the student’s disabilities.
  - are routinely provided during classroom instruction.
  - are based on what students need in order to be provided with an equal opportunity to show what they know without impediment of their disabilities.

» (National Center on Educational Outcomes)

- The decision of what accommodations are made is based on....
  - Individualized Education Program (IEP) team with consideration of general education teachers even if not part of the IEP team

- The impact of assessment accommodations on score comparability is currently unknown.

- Some typical accommodations include...

- 1. Presentation

- Large print editions of tests
    - Braille editions of tests
    - Directions read aloud by test administrator
    - Test items read aloud by test administrator
    - Test given by person familiar to child

- Standard directions read several times at start of exam
- Directions reread for each new page of test items
- Directions given in simplified language
- Key words in directions (such as verbs) underlined or highlighted

- Directions provided for each new set of skills in the exam
- Directions repeated as needed
- Student asked to demonstrate understanding of directions
- Directions given in any format necessary to accommodate student (signing, auditory amplification, repeating, etc.)

### How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Directions provided on verbatim audiotape (for students who have difficulty with printed words or numbers and/or who acquire knowledge primarily through the auditory channel)
- Student given a written copy of examiner's instructions (from examiner's manual) at time of tests
- Additional examples provided

- Practice tests or examples provided before test is administered
- Student [physically] assisted to track the test items by pointing or placing the student's finger on the items
- Spacing increased between test items
- Size, shape, or location of the space for answers altered as needed

- Fewer items placed on each page
- Size of answer bubbles enlarged
- Cues (e.g., arrows and stop signs) provided on answer form
- Student cued to remain on task
- Physical assistance provided
- Paper placed in different positions
- Student's test taking position altered

- Opportunity for movement increased or decreased
- Stimuli reduced (e.g., number of items on desk limited)
- Test administered by special education teacher or aide
- Directions and test signed by interpreter

- Appropriate adjustment of any medication ensured to prevent interference with the student's functioning
- Use of glasses, if needed
- Proper functioning of hearing aids ensured
- Students who use braille edition of test use braille rulers

- Sign language interpreter, amplification, or visual display for test directions/examiner-led activities
- Videocassette with taped interpreter signing test instructions and test items
- Cued speech interpreters, and/or oral interpreters
- Magnifying equipment (closed circuit television, optical low-vision aid, etc.)

- Assistive technology (adaptive keyboard, word processor, voice-activated word processor, voice synthesizer, etc.)
- Amplification equipment (e.g., hearing aid, auditory trainer)
- Noise buffers worn by student
- Augmentative communication systems or strategies, including letter boards, picture communication systems and voice output systems

- Loose-leaf test booklet (allow student to remove pages and insert them in a device such as printer or typewriter for doing math scratchwork)
- Placemaker, special paper, graph paper, or writing template to allow student to maintain position better or focus attention
- Acetate color shields on pages to reduce glare and increase contrast

- Masks or markers to maintain place
- Visual stickers
- FM or other type of assistive listening device
- Closed-caption or video materials
- Tape or magnets to secure papers to work area
- Mounting systems, including slantboards and easel

- Device to screen out extraneous sounds
- Each test site must have two adults when using an interpreter to sign the test: 1) a test administrator who reads the information aloud (e.g., directions, test questions) and 2) a qualified interpreter who signs to the students. It is recommended that the school use an interpreter who has previously signed for the students.

- The interpreter must be proficient in sign language or the student's individual communication modality. The interpreter should not fingerspell words that have a commonly used sign. Test administrator and interpreter must attend all training sessions.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Because the interpreter must be familiar with the concepts of writing/open-ended and multiple-choice test questions, he or she is allowed to review writing/open-ended test items for up to 15 minutes and multiple choice items for up to 2 hours per subject on the day of testing under secure conditions. The interpreters must not disclose the content or specific items of the test. Test security must be maintained.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Place keepers, trackers and pointers; allow students to use a device [for] place keeping or the assistance of a proctor to nonverbally assist in the manual tracking of item to item or item to answer sheet. Proctor must have training in performing the service without giving verbal or nonverbal clues to student.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- On some tests, students with disabilities may be unable to complete a test item due to item format. Whenever possible, the format of the item should be changed to allow student to complete the test. However, this is not always possible, i.e., some test items can't be reproduced in braille. Questions presented auditorally can't always be signed without changing purpose of the item. In such case, questions should be omitted and the credit for the question prorated. (Only use when inability to complete due to item format, not due to lack of competence in skills or knowledge being measured.)

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- ...audiocassettes used in conjunction with a printed test to provide multi-sensory stimulation.
- Assist the student to track the test items by pointing or placing the student's finger on the items.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Directions are nonsecure documents and may be reviewed prior to test administration.
- Reading assessments may be read to student when the intent of reading is to measure comprehension, only if this is the normal mode as documented in IEP/504 plan

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

– 2. Response

- Student marks answers in test booklets
- Student marks answers by machine
- Student writes answers on large-spaced paper
- Student dictates answers to proctor or assistant who records it

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Student dictates answers to scribe or tape recorder to be later transcribed; students are to include specific instruction about punctuation on the Writing Assessment
- Student signs or points as alternative responses
- Student audiotapes responses
- Periodic checks provided to ensure student is marking in correct spaces

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Spelling, punctuation and paragraphing requirements waived
- Use of Response Aids, such as:
  - abacus
  - arithmetic table
  - chubby, thin, or long well- sharpened pencils

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Misspeller's Dictionary, if student identified as having a disability which interferes with ability to learn how to spell (not special accommodation - electronic dictionaries are special accommodations)
- calculator, if documented disability interferes with mental or physical ability to perform math processes without calculator

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- word processor or typewriter
- calculator/ talking calculator
- communication devices such as language board, speech synthesizer, computer, or typewriter
- other assistive communication device
- additional answer pages for students who require more space for writing due to size of their handwriting

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- pencil adapted in size or grip diameter
- slate and stylus, braille writers, and modified abacus or speech output calculators (re: braille only)
- spell-check device (either separate device or as word processing function)
- grammar-check device
- Scribe - The students should know the identity of the scribe, who should have previous experience working with the students.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Answers to questions designed to measure writing ability in English or in a second language may be recorded in an alternative manner (e.g., dictation). Spell check and grammar check devices are permitted. Students with severe spelling disabilities may be excused from spelling requirements.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- In general, the student who uses an aid to record responses must provide all information, including spelling of difficult words, punctuation, paragraphing, grammar, etc. Only those students whose disability affects their ability to spell and punctuate should be excused from providing such information. Modifications can't include both a spell check device and deletion of spelling requirements (either/or).

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Only those students whose disability affects their ability to either memorize or compute basic math facts should be allowed to use computational aids.
- Regardless of the response option used, all student responses must be recorded in a regular spring test booklet before materials are sent in for scoring. If student's answers are marked in large print or separate sheet, test administrator must transfer the responses to a regular print test booklet.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- If a student has no means of written communication sufficient to complete the writing assessment due to severe physical disability, that student can be exempted from the writing portion only of the basic skills test or high school graduation test. An exemption for this reason does not affect that student's eligibility for a regular high school diploma. Any decision to exempt a student from writing assessment should be clearly documented with justification in IEP.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- 3. Setting
  - In a small group, in a separate location
  - Individually, in a separate location
  - In a carrel
  - In the special education classroom
  - With student seated in front of classroom
  - With teacher facing student

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Near student's special education teacher or aide
- At the student's home
- At the hospital
- With special lighting
- With special acoustics
- Individual testing stations for students responding verbally

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- With adaptive or special furniture
- In location with minimal distractions
- Students with visual impairments may be separated from other examinees if their method of response is distracting to other students.
- Students should not be required to take exams in corridors or other uncomfortable locations.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- 4. Timing/Scheduling Accommodations
  - At time of day or week most beneficial to student
  - Multiple testing sessions
  - In periods of \_\_\_ minutes followed by rest breaks of \_\_\_ minutes
  - Extended time to complete tests

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- Untimed testing sessions
- ...until, in the administrator's judgment, the students can no longer sustain the activity due to physical disability or limited attention span. (Allow test administrator to determine length of sessions and need for breaks based on observation of student's ability to successfully sustain the activity. Additional sessions would be scheduled as needed to complete testing.)

• Excerpted from **All Kids Count** by Julia K. Landau, Janet R. Vohs, and Carolyn A. Romano, Parents Engaged in Education Reform (PEER Project), Federation for Children with Special Needs, Boston, Massachusetts.

How can assessments be **accommodated** for students with disabilities?

- The most common accommodations include...
    - Individual administration
    - Dictate response to proctor/scribe
    - Small group administration
    - Large print
    - Braille
    - Extended time
    - Interpreter for instructions
    - Read/reread/simplify/clarify directions
    - Computer/machine response
    - Read aloud
    - Write in test booklet
    - Testing with breaks
- » (Thurlow & Bolt, 2001)

- The type of test can impact the types of accommodation decisions made.
  - Norm-referenced assessments
    - should have been normed with accommodations in mind; otherwise, they may not be comparable.
  - Criterion-referenced assessments
    - measure performance in relation to standards, and thus should be more open to the use of accommodations. Reporting results from accommodated assessments with non-accommodated assessments should be acceptable

- The ultimate decision of what accommodations are use is based on what is best for the student!