

Modifications and Accommodations - Making it Meaningful

Heather Monaghan
Special Education Curriculum Specialist
Alvin ISD

Modifications and Accommodations - What's the Difference?

- ▶ Accommodation - changes *how* a student learns the content
- ▶ Modification - changes *what* a student is expected to learn

So what counts as an accommodation?

And what counts as a modification?

It depends on the context!

“It depends” examples

▶ Spelling Assistance

When a student is writing facts about the first Gulf War, *spelling assistance* is an accommodation.

When a student is taking a spelling test, *spelling assistance* is a modification.

“It depends” examples

► Calculation Device

When a student needs to calculate the density of an object, a *calculator* is an accommodation.

When a student is taking a multiplication facts computation test, a *calculator* is a modification.

Is it an accommodation or a modification?

- ▶ Preferential seating
- ▶ Oral administration
- ▶ Visual supports
- ▶ Simplified text
- ▶ Text-to-speech
- ▶ Fewer questions
- ▶ Reminders to stay on task
- ▶ Use a calculator
- ▶ Use a word bank
- ▶ Omit portions of the TEKS
- ▶ Don't penalize for spelling errors
- ▶ Change the level of curriculum

How do I know what accommodation my child needs?

- ▶ **First**, think about the areas your child struggles with. This information can come from parent observations, full evaluation, teacher observations, homework assignments, tests, etc.
- ▶ Thinking about the difficult area for your child what supports could be put in place to help?
- ▶ *Example: my child struggles with reading comprehension. If the teacher would review vocabulary words with him before reading a book, and pair answer choices with pictures, he would be much more successful.*

How do I know if an accommodation works?

- ▶ After a student has been using an accommodation routinely, that accommodation should be withheld occasionally to make sure it is making a difference in his/her achievement.
- ▶ *Example: When vocabulary is pre-taught, answer choices are paired with pictures, and questions and answer choices are read aloud, McKenna is able to answer comprehension questions with 85% accuracy. Without accommodations, McKenna is able to answer comprehension questions with 62% accuracy.*

How do I know if my child needs a modification?

- ▶ It is difficult to determine whether a child needs modified curriculum outside of school. In Texas, our curriculum is based on state standards, called TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills). This is what drives our curriculum framework and lessons in the classroom.
- ▶ Example: a 7th grade student is receiving her reading instruction in a resource classroom. She is currently reading on a 3rd grade level. When the student practices strategies to identify the main idea and supporting details, her teacher provides her text that is on a 3rd grade reading level.

How do I know if a modification works?

- ▶ If your child is being successful in school, it's working!
- ▶ Modifications should be implemented on an *individual* basis.

Scenario #1

A 7th grade class is given an assignment to read a passage and then write a summary paragraph.

Accommodation

Sugar is given grade level reading materials and a blank graphic organizer to complete this assignment.

Modification

Angus is given 3rd grade reading materials, picture supports embedded into the passage, and 3 cards with beginning, middle, and end. He has to sequence in order of events from the story.

Scenario #2

A 5th grade math class is completing an assignment with multi-step word problems.

Accommodation

Patrick is given the same word problems, but they are broken down into steps (bullet points) so he only has to focus on one step at a time. Formulas are embedded into the assignment.

Modification

Heather's assignment is comprised of word problems that are only one step and formulas are embedded into the assignment.

Scenario #3

A high school Biology class is completing a lab investigation. Students must follow the 8-step directions and answer 3 short-answer questions.

Accommodation

Ryan works with a partner who reads the directions to him, one step at a time. Ryan completes the investigation, then uses a spell checker with word prediction software to answer the 3 short-answer questions.

Modification

Sara works with a partner who reads the directions to her. Sara then completes as much of each step as she is able, then her partner fills in the gaps. Sara then answers 3 multiple-choice questions.

The best advocate for your child is... **YOUR CHILD!**

- ▶ How can your child be an advocate for themselves? They have to know what works for them!
- ▶ Let's look at some common ACCOMMODATIONS

Common Accommodations

- ▶ Extra time
- ▶ Respond orally
- ▶ No penalty for spelling errors
- ▶ Simplified instructions
- ▶ Assignment notebook
- ▶ Visual aids
- ▶ Auditory aids
- ▶ Frequent/immediate feedback
- ▶ Oral administration
- ▶ Spelling assistance
- ▶ Check for understanding
- ▶ Sit near teacher/preferential seating
- ▶ Use of a highlighter
- ▶ Large print materials
- ▶ Color overlays/transparencies
- ▶ Copy of notes
- ▶ Clearly defined limits
- ▶ Positive reinforcement
- ▶ Frequent breaks
- ▶ Calculator

Coaching your child to have candid conversations with their teachers

- ▶ How can a student advocate for themselves in the classroom? They need practice having those conversations with teachers.
- ▶ A conversation can be as simple as:
 - ▶ “Mrs. Monaghan, when I am writing, it’s easier for me to put my thoughts on a graphic organizer first.”
 - ▶ “Mrs. Monaghan, I’m supposed to use a calculator. Can I have one please?”
 - ▶ “Mrs. Monaghan, who is going to read this assignment out loud to me?”

My personal thoughts...

- ▶ A student should be well versed in his or her disability and what he or she needs to be successful academically and socially. If they don't know what their specific needs are, how can they stand up for what they *need* in their classroom?

Let's chat...

My contact information

Heather Monaghan

(281) 245-2324

hmonaghan@alvinisd.net