Accommodations for Students with Dyslexia

Accommodations, provided for both testing and instruction, change the way students access information and demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities; they do not change academic standards or expectations. The purpose of accommodations is to ensure equal access to the full school experience for students with dyslexia or other learning disabilities (e.g., providing extended exam time for a student who has slow processing speed affecting academic fluency). Accommodations are adjustments made to allow a student to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities without lowering learning or performance expectations and without changing what is being measured (e.g., providing text in audio format when academic knowledge [e.g., history, biology, literature] is the target skill being measured). Accommodations do not change the content of instruction, give students an unfair advantage, or change the skills or knowledge that a test measures. Accommodations make it possible for students with dyslexia to demonstrate their learning without being hindered by their disabilities. Appropriate accommodations need to be an integral part of the normal cycle of teaching and testing—never reserved only for periods of assessment. Classroom accommodations make it possible for students to learn and demonstrate their learning through full participation in classroom instruction.

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Assessment (testing) accommodations are changes in assessment materials (e.g., large print) or procedures (e.g., extended time) that allow students to demonstrate their abilities—not their disabilities —during tests and exams. Without accommodations, an assessment may not accurately measure the knowledge and skills of a student with a learning disability (e.g., dyslexia). An accommodation does not change item or test validity.

Modifications Are Different from Accommodations

(https://dyslexiaida.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/Final-jpeg.png) Modifications to curriculum content, homework assignments, or assessments change the nature of instruction and assessments and what students are expected to learn—but they have the advantage of allowing interaction with other students in the classroom and school. An instructional modification (i.e., homework assignments) might be assignment of math problems requiring a lower level of math knowledge-skill. A modification in curriculum content might be to teach different, lower level concepts and information (e.g., continuation of work on multiplication when other students move on to fractions). Assessment modifications might include use of a

Accommodation or Modification?

- Accommodations are instructional or test adaptations. They allow a student to demonstrate what he or she knows without fundamentally changing the target skill being taught in the classroom or measured in testing situations. Accommodations do not reduce learning or performance expectations. Instead, accommodations change the manner or setting in which information is presented or the manner in which students respond.
- Modifications are instructional or test adaptations that allow a student to demonstrate what he knows or can do, but the target skill is also reduced in some way. Modifications usually lower performance expectations (e.g., lessening the complexity of the items or the task required).

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calculator on a test of math facts accuracy or text in audio-format when reading comprehension is the target skill being measured. Modifications can be allowed for both testing and instruction. If the validity of a test item or the content of instruction is affected or altered, the change is a modification—not an accommodation.

> Accommodations are only helpful if the student knows how to use them effectively.

Accommodation or Modification?

Choosing between an accommodation or a modification is a decision critical for future educational choices. Modifications change instructional content and knowledge—and their assessment; accommodations do not. A student's IEP team is responsible for making formal decisions related to accommodations (or modifications, if warranted).

Choosing Accommodations Wisely and Purposefully

Each accommodation needs to be matched to the individual student's educational needs. Decide which accommodations are needed to ensure that the student is on equal footing with those who do not have a disability. Provide evidence to support choice of accommodation requests. Are the accommodations linked directly to the student's functional limitations? How? Keep in mind that the answers to these questions may not be the same for instruction and assessment.

Extra time alone rarely improves performance for students with dyslexia—or for students without learning disabilities. Not every student needs, or benefits from, extended time. Extended time provides students with time to use strategies needed to accomplish tasks inherently difficult for them (e.g., systematic decoding strategies for students with poor single word decoding skills; rereading text with complex syntax and grammar in order to comprehend). Some students, who may benefit from extended time, need to be taught how to use the extra time. Students who routinely read too fast for either accuracy or comprehension need to learn explicit word identification strategies as well as strategies for improving their reading comprehension. Practice is the key to effective use of accommodations. Accommodations should be integrated into classroom practice before use is expected in assessment situations.

Types of Accommodations Presentation, Response, Setting, and Timing/Scheduling are the four basic types of accommodations used during instruction and assessment:

- **Presentation** accommodations allow students to access instructional materials in ways that do not require them to read standard print presented in a standard visual format:
  - Presentation Accommodations—Instruction
    - Verbal instructions
    - Repetition of instructions Text/
    - Instructions in audio-format
    - Larger print
    - Fewer Items per page

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Accommodations for Students with Dyslexia

- Visual prompts or cues (e.g., arrow pointing on page)
    - Highlighted text
- Alternative answer sheet
- Information in songs or poems (e.g., facts, definitions).
- Presentation Accommodations—Assessment
    - Calculator
    - Speech-to-Text software
    - Text-to-Speech software
    - Electronic dictionary
    - Spelling checker
    - Grammar check.
- **Response** accommodations allow students alternatives for completion of activities, assignments, and tests. Students may be permitted to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in alternate ways, or to solve or organize their work using an electronic device or organizer.
    - Mark answers in test book instead of on separate answer sheet
    - Dictate to scribe or record oral responses on audio-recorder
    - Record oral responses on Livescribe pen
    - Point to response choices
    - Type (keyboard) response.
- **Setting** accommodations change the location in which a test or assignment is given or the conditions of the assessment setting.
    - Individual or small group
    - Reduce visual and/or auditory distractions (e.g., separate desk or location within classroom ("private office")
    - Distraction-free setting (separate room)
    - Alternative furniture arrangement (e.g., facing frontèteacher for whole group lessons vs block of tables for small group work).
- **Timing/Scheduling** accommodations change the length of time allowed for completion of a test, project, or assignment and may also change the way the time is organized (e.g., breaks):
    - Flexible scheduling (e.g., several sessions vs one)
    - Extended time
    - Allowing for more frequent breaks (as appropriate)
    - Changing order of tasks or subtests.

Organization, Study Strategies, and Increasing Accessibility to State/District Tests

Organization

In addition to the types of accommodations and examples listed, devices and strategies that help students to organize their time and their work can sometimes be helpful. Some examples are listed:

- Timers to keep track of time
- Highlighters to mark text
- Planners for tracking assignments
- Graph paper to organize math problems on paper
- Color Coding (e.g., subject areas, categorization within notes).

Study Strategies

- Visualization
- Retelling as soon as possible after a lecture

- Putting new learning into own words as soon as possible after class—talking about learning
- Organizing a study group for discussion (practice).

Accommodations and State/District Tests

Accommodations provided, *and routinely used*, should be the same, or similar, during classroom instruction, classroom tests, and state/district tests. However, some accommodations are only permitted during instruction and cannot be used on state/district assessments. Requirements vary from state to state and from district to district, but accommodations that are written into students' IEPs and 504 plans should be available.

The 2004 reauthorization of IDEA requires states to have accommodation guidelines for assessments and to report the number of students using accommodations during state and district assessments. All fifty states currently have published guidelines indicating the specific assessment accommodations that are permitted. Policies in some states also include instructional accommodations. The purpose of these state guidelines is to ensure that test scores actually reflect what students know and are able to do. For those states that have adopted Common Core State Standards, CCSS testing companies have created universal accessibility features (e.g., magnified text, repetition of instructions, scratch paper, digital notepad for note-taking, spell-check software, use of a highlighter) available to all students taking these tests. Details of accessibility features and requirements and guidelines for provision of accommodations, different for each of the two CCSS testing companies, are included in the following documents:

- Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), with the assistance of the National Center on Educational Outcomes) prepared "Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium: Usability, Accessibility, and Accommodations Guidelines" (July 1, 2016): smarterbalanced.org/…/Usability-Accessibility-Accommodations-Guidelines.pdf (http://www.smarterbalanced.org/.../Usability-Accessibility-Accommodations-Guidelines.pdf)
- Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for Collegsmarterbalanced.org/…/Usability-Accessibility-Accommodations-Guidelines.pdf (http://www.smarterbalanced.org/.../Usability- Accessibility-Accommodations-Guidelines.pdf)

PARCC Accessibility Features and Accommodations Manual (link)

Road to Success for Students with Dyslexia: Intervention and Accommodations—with Appropriate Intensity and Duration

An accommodation is not a substitute for appropriate intervention-remediation. An accommodation, such as extended time, can be the bridge between success and failure for a student with dyslexia—the critical difference that levels the playing field. To achieve this success, students with dyslexia usually require a purposefully planned

combination of intervention-remediation (with appropriate intensity and duration) and accommodations:

- Intervention specific to the patterns of individual strengths and challenges of each student provides the *opportunity for academic achievement*; this specialized instruction is not a crutch but a lifeline.
- Accommodations *level the playing field* for students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities; they do *not* give an unfair advantage.
- As either a parent or a teacher, do *not* assume a student learns the same way you do.
- *Always keep the goal in mind*—and plan instruction, assessment, and accommodations accordingly.

Please note that this fact sheet does not provide a comprehensive list of accommodations—only a sampling of options. It is up to families and each student's instructional team to explore alternatives as they plan the optimal combination of instruction and accommodations that is the best match for each student.

Resources

National Center for Learning Disabilities (NCLD): www.understood.org; (http://www.understood.org)Accommodations: What They Are and How They Work

ADA-Americans with Disabilities Act-Testing Accommodations https://www.ada.gov/regs2014/testing_accommodations.pdf (https://www.ada.gov/regs2014/testing_accommodations.pdf)

Accommodations, Modifications, and Alternate Assessments: How They Affect Instruction and Assessment http://www.greatschools.org/gk/?s=accommodations (http://www.greatschools.org/gk/?s=accommodations)

High-Stakes Assessment (Teaching LD) http://www.dldcec.org/ld_resources/alerts/4.htm(http://www.dldcec.org/ld_resources/alerts/4.htm)

Forum on Accommodations in the 21 Century: Critical Considerations for Students with Disabilities. Joint Publication of National Center on Educational Outcomes. https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/AccommodationsForumReport2011.pdf (https://nceo.umn.edu/docs/OnlinePubs/AccommodationsForumReport2011.pdf)

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