A Guide to Modifications and Accommodations
For Students Experiencing Difficulty in
General Education Classrooms

◆ WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “MODIFICATIONS” AND “ACCOMMODATIONS”?
◆ WHICH STUDENTS REQUIRE MODIFICATIONS AND ACCOMMODATIONS?
◆ AS A GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHER, WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

What is the difference between accommodations and modifications?

◆ **Accommodations** are changes to the course content, teaching strategies, standards, test preparation, location, timing, scheduling, expectations, student responses, environmental structuring and/or attributes which provide access for a student with a disability to participate in a course/standard/test which **DO NOT fundamentally alter or lower the standards or expectations of the course/standard/test.**

◆ **Modifications** are changes which **DO fundamentally alter or lower the standards or expectations of the course/standard/test.**

Source: Miriam Kurtzig Freedman, J.D. (1999) as quoted in “Guidelines For the Promotion and Retention of Special Education Students,” California Department of Education, Special Education Division

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Step 1 – Break failure pattern; reduce pressure:
♦ Shorten assignments (lengthen gradually as student begins to cope):
  - Assign every other problem or question
  - Require fewer words or pages
♦ Allow extra time (particularly on tests)
♦ Provide easier materials
♦ Simplify requirements

Step 2 – Build motivation and self-esteem:
♦ Use frequent positive reinforcement:
  - Verbal – “Super!” “I knew you could do it!”, “You got that right!”
  - Non-verbal – Pat or simply touch on shoulder, big smile
  - Find something the student does well and acknowledge publicly
  - Make phone call home during the day with the student listening
  - Send a quick note home to parent complimenting student
♦ Provide frequent feedback

Step 3 – Modify testing procedures:
♦ Provide a written outline or review sheet or study guide
♦ Give exam orally (individually or to entire class)
♦ Type all tests or print clearly
♦ Avoid separate answer sheets
♦ Avoid long essay exams
♦ Include some recognition questions: multiple choice, matching, true-false, etc.
♦ Give shorter, more frequent tests
♦ Provide extra testing time
♦ Allow student to dictate answers
♦ Provide opportunity for projects in lieu of tests or as extra credit
♦ Test major points only
♦ Use study carrels

Step 4 – Adjust grading requirements:
♦ Mark items correct, not mistakes
♦ Notice and give credit for oral participation in class
♦ Grade content areas on the basis of ideas/knowledge rather than on spelling, grammar, punctuation, etc.
  (or give two grades: one content and one mechanics)
♦ Look for and comment on strengths and areas of improvement rather than faults and areas of weakness
♦ Provide an opportunity to correct errors without penalty
♦ Be specific regarding specific requirements for a particular grade

Step 5 – Individualize teaching strategies:
♦ Simplify or reduce complexity of directions; be specific
♦ Use student’s name or nonverbal signal to get his/her attention
♦ Provide reason for listening (tell student what to listen for)
♦ Present one concept at a time
♦ Break complex tasks into smaller steps
♦ Enhance verbal instructions by using lots of visual aids:
  - Direct eye contact
  - Key words on board
  - Notes on overhead projector
♦ Repeat directions when necessary; ask students to repeat
♦ Ask frequent questions during oral discussion to check for understanding
♦ Increase waiting time for response to questions
♦ Space repetition over a period of time
♦ Keep classroom quiet
♦ Provide structure; simplify student’s environment
♦ Change seat and/or move desk if needed:
  - In front of room
  - Near you
  - Away from students most likely to distract
  - In a quiet, uncluttered corner
  - In a location of student’s choice
♦ Consistent format for heading, margins, etc.
♦ Use of assignment sheet or notebook
♦ Post assignments on board
♦ Specify plan for communicating with parents:
  - Homework
  - Unfinished assignments
♦ Collect all work as soon as possible or as it is completed
♦ Post class rules/privileges and enforce consistently
♦ Reduce/simplify amount of material on a page:
  - Fold paper
  - Use index cards to cover part of the page
  - Larger print; fewer words or problems
♦ Alternate types of activities frequently during the day:
  - Group – individual
  - Sitting – moving
  - Verbal – quiet
  - Short – long
♦ Reward system for improved performance:
  - Notes home, privileges, stickers, graph of progress
  - Encourage self-competition rather than against others

Sample Strategies by Subject Area

READING

- Lower level book
- Skip non-relevant workbook pages
- Assign fewer book reports
- Provide opportunity for sharing books in a variety of ways
- Paired reading practice
- Individualized reading
- Language experience approach
- Peer or cross-age tutoring
- Color code important word parts
- Vocabulary cards and/or checklists
- Circle words or word parts in newspaper
- Games and centers for vocabulary/comprehension development

SPELLING

- Reduce number of words from class list
- Provide easier words, i.e., from reading book
- Use spelling book from lower grade level
- Teach regularities before irregularities
- Highlight spelling demons (unpredictable words)
- Underline difficult parts of words
- Easier follow-up work for skills practice
- Practice words on computer
- Practice words with a partner
- Practice words with a tape recorder
- Weekly spelling contracts
- Open-ended drill sheets
- Individual dictionary for difficult words
- Open-ended game boards for practice
- Give test individually to allow more time
- Teach use of reference books for poor spellers
Handwriting

- Use of pencil grip
- Use of paper with larger lines
- Write on every other line
- Accept homework typed by parent if student dictates
- Allow student to take work home to finish
- Encourage use of computer/word processor by student
- Reduce standards for neatness
- Photocopy some assignments rather than have student copy

Mathematics

- Number line on desk
- Use of multiplication facts chart
- Put boxes around problems
- Use of visual clues to steps in computation
- Continued use of marks for carrying/borrowing
- Open-ended drill sheets for number facts
- Flash cards with another student or parents
- Use of finger multiplication
- Problems from book copied for student
- Photocopy problems from book
- Shorter assignments, i.e., odd or even only
- Fold paper to reveal fewer problems at one time
- Longer time limits on number facts drills
- Easier materials, i.e., lower grade level book
- Teach estimation and use of calculator
- Circle/highlight sign so student knows operation

English/Written Language

- Use textbook or workbook at student’s reading level
- Skip non relevant pages
- Begin with the sentence as a unit of thought
- Gradually lengthen writing assignments
- Vary length of assignment by ability level
- Allow student to dictate longer stories
- Allow more time for writing
- Underline incorrectly spelled words
- Make individual spelling dictionary of frequently used words
- Teach use of reference books for poor spellers
- Peer or cross-age tutors

Science/Social Studies

- Text or workbook at student’s reading level
- Provide course overview of what will be covered in what order
- Teach SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review)
- Provide alternative activities to be used for grading (assignments/projects/reports/tests)
- Vary requirements for lesson by ability level
- Have consistent homework policy and time
- Prepare study guide for each unit
- Divide total project into series of short assignments
- Teach pneumonic devices and tricks as aids to memorizing facts/lists
- Use “hands on” experiences as often as possible
- Provide photocopy of your notes or those of a good student
- Emphasize major concepts with a few supporting facts and details in each chapter
- Use visual aids as often as possible (films, overhead, etc.)
- Preview or highlight important concepts in advance
- Tell the student what he needs to know for exams
- Provide opportunity for student to earn extra credit

*Adapted from: “Handbook for Modifying the Regular Education Program to Meet the Needs of Students Achieving Below Grade Level!”*