Glossary of Accommodations
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Accommodations are "changes in standardized assessment conditions introduced to 'level the playing field' for students by removing the construct-irrelevant variance created by their disabilities" (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999, p. 9). In less technical terms, "the purpose of an assessment accommodation is to allow students with disabilities to show what they know without the impediment of the disability" (Elliott, Ysseldyke, Thurlow, & Erickson, 1998, p. 22).

> From Stephen Eliot and Ann M. Marquet. "Extended time as a testing accommodation: its effects and perceived consequences." *Exceptional Children*, Spring 2004.

Please note: The following glossary contains examples that may not work for all students. Accommodations are made according to the strengths and needs of each student as outlined in each student's IEP.

Instructional Accommodations

Ability grouping – Place a student in a group with students who are achieving just slightly better results, or who are stronger than the student in that particular skill. Students do best when placed with others who are not too advanced.

Assistive technology, such as text-to-speech software – The student should have access to software like Dragon Naturally Speaking in order to facilitate writing fluency.

Augmentative and alternative communications systems – The student requires an amplification system, such as an FM system, to help with comprehension. This accommodation is often required in the case of an Auditory Processing Disorder.

Buddy/peer tutoring – The student should be paired with a skilled classmate for study or social purposes.

Colour cues – Using different colours for different purposes can help students stay organized. Place a piece of coloured tape on all materials to do with a particular topic; for example, red tape on all books that deal with physical geography, yellow on all books that assist with human geography.

Computer options – Rather than asking the student to hand-write all assignments, provide access to a computer. Keyboarding can be much easier for students to coordinate than handwriting.

Concrete/Hands-on materials – Use hands-on materials to reinforce concepts. For example, working with rulers, measuring tapes, and classrooms reinforces the concept of change in distance.

Contracts – Students can sign a contract for behaviour, work completion, or attendance. The contract should have clear wording and clear expectations, as well as consequences for breaking the contract.

Dramatizing information –Walk through the steps of a process and act them out in order to help a student learn a skill. Dramatizing can also assist with concept attainment inquiries such as categorizing items.

Duplicated notes – When students are taking notes, provide complete copies of the notes. It is also a good idea to spread some copies around for students to use who have trouble transcribing notes from overheads or Powerpoint presentations.

Extra time for processing – Give the student extra time to think before asking them to provide an answer, or to begin a homework task. This can be done individually or as a class, asking students to close their eyes and think about something before they begin.

Gesture cues – Cue a student back to attention or away from a specific behaviour by using a gesture. For example, when you want the student to lower his or her voice, use a cue such as taking your two hands and moving them palm-down. You can cue the class as a whole by using the same gesture each time you do an activity – for example, always reading a story from the same place in the room, or standing in a particular area when you need to give homework.

Graphic organizers – Venn diagrams, charts, webs, and other graphic organizers help students visualize and categorize information. Ensure there is enough room to write for students who have difficulty with handwriting.

High structure – The student needs to have a very structured environment in each class. Unstructured work time, such as research time over a whole period in the library, may be difficult for the student to use well without becoming distracted or losing focus. Provide structure for the student by organizing time into smaller chunks and assigning a task to each chunk.

Large-size fonts – Enlarging text allows students with visual impairments to read them.

Manipulatives - Provide students with manipulatives like blocks, shapes, puzzle pieces, game pieces, playdough, and other materials to help them understand a concept in class.

Mind maps – A type of graphic organizer that helps students organize their thinking about a particular topic. The mind map features a key word in the centre with corollaries (ideas, topics, research interests, etc) radiating from the key word.

More frequent breaks – A break now and again helps the student to re-establish focus on the tasks at hand. These breaks could be short walks to get a drink, or a short break in class before beginning the next task.

Non-verbal signals – Any signal you can establish with the student to help he or she regain focus, regain control of his or her behavior, or indicate that some information is particularly important.

Note-taking assistance – Individual coaching on taking notes may benefit this student. You may also modify a regular note by creating a fill in the blanks version, or changing the note to a graphic organizer format.

Organization coaching - Explicit teaching of organization skills such as time management, organizing notes and assignments to help students be more organized and increase their efficacy.

Partnering- Assigning the student a partner for projects and class work. The partner should ideally be slightly more skilled than the student.

Reduced/uncluttered format - Handouts that are clear and have a lot of white space help students make sense of visual information. Reduced format can be a modified version of the handout created specifically for the students' needs.

Reinforcement incentives - Students benefit from rewards reinforcing expected and acceptable behaviour. These rewards may include extra breaks, reading time, videos, special seating, games, or other incentives tailored to the student. Food rewards are not recommended as some students are to avoid candy and other sugary foods. Food allergies can also be a concern.

Repetition of information - Students benefit from hearing information repeatedly. This repetition may take place over the course of a period or over the length of the course.

Rewording/rephrasing of information - Verbal instructions are given, and then rephrased in simpler wording. This rewording/rephrasing can take place for the whole class, or can be done by approaching the student after the class has begun seat work.

Spatially cued formats - The format of the assignment cues to the student to the amount of writing required to successfully complete the assignment. For example, if you expect a three paragraphs answer, provide the student with a worksheet that clearly demarcates three paragraphs.

Tactile tracing strategies- Largely used with elementary school children, this accommodation provides students with opportunities to learn letters and numbers by

tracing patterns with raised bumps. This accommodation may also be provided for low-vision students.

Taped texts - The student requires an audio version of books or taped lectures.

Time-management aids - Assisting students with time-management might include breaking large tasks into their components and estimating how long each chunk will take. It could also involve using a timer to help the student stay on task, frequent reminders of the time left to complete a task, calendars and prompts to use a planner.

Visual cueing - A sign or visual symbol used to cue a student to a certain behavior. For example, a certain hand signal can indicate to a student that they need to take their seat.

Word-retrieval prompts - Prompts that help students recall a specific word. These prompts can include picture clues, definitions.

Environmental Accommodations

Adaptive equipment - Accommodations include computers, Alphasmart, headphones, scanners, and use of programs like Kurzweil (text to speech software) and Dragon Naturally Speaking (speech to text software). These types of technologies help students increase output, attend to tasks and adjust for spelling and graphomotor (handwriting) difficulties.

Alternative work space - Students have access to another space, like the resource room, to work. An alternative work space may help the student to attend to the task.

Assistive devices - Students may require devices such as an FM field, e-book readers, hearing aids, and subtitles for videos.

Minimizing of background noise - Students with difficulties filtering and selecting auditory information need a minimum of background noise in order to focus on the learning task at hand.

Proximity to instructor - Seating the student in the front of the room or near the instructor can help the student to focus and stay on task. Proximity seating also helps students who have auditory processing disorders or impaired hearing.

Quiet setting - Similar to minimizing background noise, a quiet setting helps the student focus on the task and increases output.

Reduction of audio/visual stimuli – The student may find it difficult to process audio and visual stimuli. Videos, sound recordings and powerpoint presentations may not be the way

for students to acquire and retain information. Use fewer of these teaching methods, or providing alternative activities for the student.

Special lighting- This accommodation is typically used with students who have low vision. A desk light or specific task lighting can help the student complete their work.

Strategic seating – Strategic seating may mean the student sits close to the board, away from a particular classmate, near to the door in case he or she needs to leave quickly, or any other seating arrangement made with the student's needs in mind.

Study carrel – A carrel helps the student stay focused on his work by isolating him from his classmates. Some students are comforted by enclosed spaces.

Use of headphones – Headphones are used to allow the student to focus on her work and shut out the noise of other classmates. Some students listen to music, while others might listen to taped texts or audio books.

Assessment Accommodations

EQAO is the Education Quality and Accountability Office. The EQAO administers tests of reading, writing and math to all students in the province in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 10. Accommodations marked EQAO are applied to these standardized tests, and are also applied to assessment done in the classroom by the classroom teacher.

Access to computer for written work – The student can use his or her SEA laptop or a computer in the classroom or resource room for tasks like tests, exams, and culminating tasks.

Allow for frequent breaks – During assessment tasks, students have the opportunity to take a break from the work and go for a short (often supervised) walk, get a drink, or get up from the desk and stretch. This allows students to refocus on their work.

Allow notes/open book for tests – Students with working memory challenges have access to notes and/or texts during test writing. Students often begin writing the test in one colour of pen, and use another colour for information they retrieved from the text.

Alternative to written tests and exams (EQAO) – The student can be evaluated via oral or practical exams rather than being required to demonstrate knowledge in written form only.

Dictionary, thesaurus and word lists – During assessment or evaluative tasks, provide students with a dictionary, thesaurus or word list. Access to definitions or synonyms assists students with working memory challenges and allows them to complete the task.

Extra time and/or flexibility in exam scheduling (EQAO) – There is flexibility in scheduling exams around student needs, such as appointments, or regular meetings with Occupational Therapists or other professionals.

Extra time to respond (EQAO) - Extra time is defined as double time. If the class is given 1 hour to write a test, the accommodated student would have 2 hours.

Opportunities for oral evaluation (EQAO) – Students with strong verbal reasoning skills have the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge through oral evaluation.

Provide self-checking methods – Incorporate into assessment a way for the student to make sure he or she is on track for success. This may take the form of a checklist to determine if all parts of the assignment are completed, a hint or mnemonic for a formula the student may use to check her work, or an acronym such as COPS (capitals, overall appearance, punctuation and spelling) to help students correct their own work.

Provide time out area – For students with behavior exceptionalities, a time-out area helps to quell anxiety-related behaviors during assessment tasks.

Read all written instructions – Students with poor reading comprehension benefit from having instructions read to them as they write tests, exams or complete culminating tasks. Instructions may be read using Kurzweil or by a classroom teacher, EA, or resource teacher.

Read all written instructions except for tests of reading (EQAO) – When reading comprehension is being assessed, reading written instructions is not permitted. When other skills are being assessed, such as grammar conventions, writing or mathematic, instructions may be read.

Reduce written output – Decrease the number and/or frequency of written assignments. For example, if an assignment asks for three diary entries, a student with this accommodation might be successful completing two entries. If the assignment asks for a learning journal each week, the accommodated student may submit journals every other week and still be successful. Similarly, math tests frequently evaluate the same skill repeatedly across the test. Reduce the number of questions a student needs to answer to evaluate the skill.

Scribe (EQAO) – A scribe writes down exactly what the student says in response to each question or task. During evaluative tasks such as tests, scribes do not prompt or assist the

student in any way. Scribing assists students with strong verbal skills or weak graphomotor, spelling or grammar skills to complete tasks and demonstrate their understanding of concepts and recall of information.

Visual aids/concrete materials – While assessing student skills, use actual materials and visual aids such as laminated pictures, posters, and transparencies to help students demonstrate skills and describe concepts.