

Hartland Consolidated Schools

Snippets from the Office of Special Education

Accommodations vs. Modifications



Curricular Adaptations

Curricular adaptations are changes in a student's educational environment, which allow the student equal opportunity to obtain access, results, benefits and levels of achievement. These adaptations could consist of both accommodations and modifications. Even though these two teams are often confused in the educational world, it is important that we all have a common understanding of the terms and the implication of each.

Accommodation

The term accommodation means to give aid or help. Legally, accommodations must be given to students with special needs to help them have the same opportunities as students without disabilities. Accommodations change how the student learns but *does not change the curriculum standard*. Accommodations do not substantially change the instructional level, content, or performance criteria.

Examples of accommodations:

- Extended time
- Chunking or breaking down the assignment into smaller parts that equal the whole
- Preferential seating
- Specialized seating, lighting, or furniture
- Repeated directions

Modification

The word modification means to change or alter; make less severe or strong; tone down. Modifications change what the student learns therefore, affecting the grading process. Changes are made to provide a student the opportunity to participate meaningfully and productively along with their other students in classroom and school learning experiences. Sometimes, people refer to these assignments as "adjusted or altered".

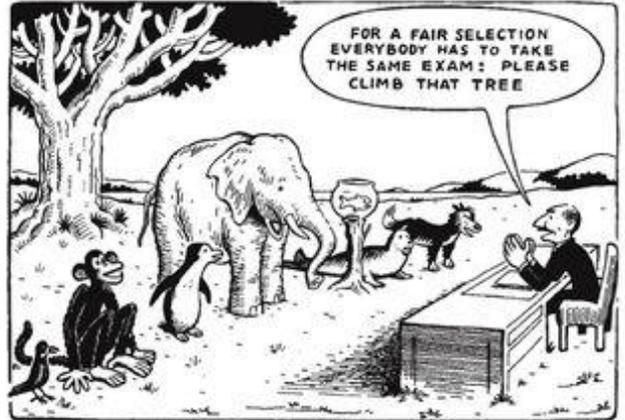
Examples of modifications:

- Changing the instructional level (adapting a 5th grade curriculum for a student who is at first grade cognitive level)
- Changing the content or what is being taught (having a student work on addition rather than multiplication)
- Reduced assignment if the standard is altered

Universal Accommodations

Universal Accommodations are those that any student can utilize, regardless of eligibility, without changing what is being measured. This includes evidence based instructional strategies. Universal Accommodations do not need to be listed in the IEP but can be listed in the PLAAFP to provide teachers additional information to better support the student.

Most students, and even adults, will benefit at times from the use of accommodations. The mouse is a great example of an accommodation that was meant for people with special needs, however, many others benefited from the accommodation so it has become a universal accommodation. The curb-cut in a sidewalk is another example of a universal accommodation. When teachers embed universal accommodations within their instruction, students are less likely to require special accommodations to be written in their IEPs in order to ensure equal opportunity to obtain access, results, benefits and levels of achievement.



Examples of universal accommodations:

- Administration of assessments in an alternate setting
- Preferential seating
- Ability to move, stand, or pace during assessment in a manner where others' work cannot be seen and is not distracting to others
- Administering of assessment by qualified person familiar to the student
- Teacher may emphasize key words in assessment directions
- Teacher may repeat or restate directions
- Students may ask for clarification of directions
- Teacher provides visual, auditory or physical cues to student to begin, maintain, or finish task
- Use of acetate colored shield, highlighters, highlighter tape, page flags, and reading guides on test booklets

Sources

Sources for this information include Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Michigan Administration Rules for Special Education (MARSE), LRP Publications, and Legally Speaking: A Staff Training Guide for Communication with Parents and Avoiding Conflicts in Special Education, and Excerpt from MDE Assessment Accommodation Summary Table FAQs, June 2013



Hartland Consolidated Schools & Livingston Educational Service Agency
Department of Special Education - Sue Pearson, Ed.S. Director
9525 Highland Road, Howell, MI 48843 810-626-2102



September 26 2013