An Overview on Administering Testing Accommodations to Students with Disabilities: D181 Instructional Assistants

Kelly Lyell, Ph.D., NCSP
School Psychologist
klyell@d181.org
Who can receive testing accommodations?

• Students with IEP’s
• Students with 504’s
• (Some students receiving ELL services)
What testing accommodations can students receive?

• ONLY those listed explicitly in their IEP/504
  – These accommodations can be different for classroom based assessments vs. district vs. state assessments
  – Accommodations can vary across subjects
  – Be sure to clarify/confirm which accommodations the student is eligible for in your specific situation
    • The case manager will have this information
    • If you are unsure about a specific accommodation, be sure to ask them for clarification!
Why do students receive accommodations?

• Accommodations are designed to provide equity, not advantage, and serve to level the playing field for students with disabilities.

• When used appropriately, they reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student’s disability; they do not reduce learning expectations.
What about modifications?

• Modifications or alterations refer to practices that change, lower, or reduce learning expectations.
• Providing a student with an unapproved modification can cause negative unintended consequences for the student and is an ETHICAL VIOLATION
• Some students require modifications in addition to accommodations; HOWEVER these are created and set up by the case manager or resource teacher.
  – You should not attempt to add or provide modifications during an assessment.
What do modifications look like?

• Examples of modifications include:
  – requiring a student to **learn less material** (e.g., fewer objectives, fewer pages or problems)
  – **reducing assignments** and assessments so a student only needs to complete the **easiest problems** or items, **revising assignments** or assessments to make them **easier** (e.g., crossing out half of the response choices on a multiple-choice test so that a student only has to pick from two options instead of four)
  – **giving a student hints or clues** to correct responses on assignments and tests
Do they need accommodations or modifications?

FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE
Ethical Testing Practices

• Ethical testing practices must be maintained during the administration of a test.

• Unethical testing practices relate to inappropriate interactions between test administrators and students taking the test, including:
  – allowing a student to answer fewer questions or choose from fewer options
  – changing the content by paraphrasing or offering additional information
  – coaching students during testing
  – editing student responses, or giving clues in any way
The accidental modification!

• It can be *easier than you think* to accidentally give a student hints or clues to correct responses on assignments and tests.

• This may look like excessive cues, asking students “if they are sure,” telling them to “go back and read that one again,” etc.

• Student performance should be consistent across raters, *regardless of who administers the assessment and accommodations*.
Standardization

• Adherence to uniform administration procedures and conditions during an assessment
• Standardization is an essential feature of educational assessments and is necessary to produce comparable information about student learning.
• Strict adherence to guidelines detailing instructions and procedures for the administration of accommodations is necessary to ensure test results reflect actual student learning
Are tests still standardized when students have accommodations?

• YES, essentially
  – We want to ensure as much standardization as possible
  – Some changes may be necessary to make the test more accessible to students, but ONLY changes that are made are those detailed in their IEP/504 are allowed (anything else is an ethical violation)
What are standardized measures?

- AIMSweb
  - RCBM, MCAP, MCOMP, TEL, TEN
  - Should be standardized for benchmarking and progress monitoring
- MAP
- PARCC
- IAAT
- ISA
- ... and now the CogAT!
What are common accommodations?

- **Presentation Accommodations** — adjusts the presentation of test material and/or test directions.
- **Response Accommodations** — adjusts the manner in which students respond to or answer test questions.
- **Setting Accommodations** — adjusts the place in which the testing normally occurs.
- **Scheduling Accommodations** — adjusts the time allowance or scheduling of a test.
Presentation Accommodations

• Commonly used for:
  – students with print disabilities, defined as difficulty or inability to visually read standard print because of a physical, sensory, or cognitive disability.

• Examples include:
  – large print, Braille, highlighter, explain or paraphrase directions
Response Accommodations

• Commonly used for:
  – Students with physical, sensory, or learning disabilities (including difficulties with memory, sequencing, directionality, alignment, and organization).

• Examples include:
  – Braille writer, special writing tools, scribe, use of calculator
Setting Accommodations

• Commonly used for:
  – Students who are easily distracted in large group settings or who receive accommodations that might distract other students.
  – Students with physical disabilities might need a more accessible location, specific room conditions, or special equipment.

• Examples include:
  – Examples: small group setting, 1:1 setting, special lighting, adaptive furniture
Scheduling Accommodations

• Commonly used for:
  – Students who need more time than generally allowed to complete assessments
  – Students who cannot concentrate continuously for an extended period or who become frustrated or stressed easily
  – Students with health-related disabilities or medications that affect their ability to stay alert or who have more productive times of the day

• Examples include:
  – Examples: extended time, frequent breaks, optimal time of day for testing
LET’S DISCUSS!
Scenario 1

• John has the test accommodation of “Read Aloud Test Directions and Items”
  – John asks the test proctor for clarification of a word in the directions.
    • Okay or not? Why?
  – John asks the test proctor for clarification of a word within the passage.
    • Okay or not? Why?
Scenario 1 Answer

• Read Aloud Test Directions and Items

  – Test proctors must read test items/questions and text word-for-word, exactly as written. *They may not clarify, elaborate, or provide assistance to students.*

  – Providing information about a word *changes the nature of the test.* The accommodation of reading aloud for a student reduces the burden of decoding words or physically reading (for visually impaired students), but should not change the demands on the student regarding *vocabulary or comprehension.*
Scenario 2

• Diana has accommodation of “Pacing Support”
  – Diana hurries through test items. Test proctor reminds her to slow down and read each multiple choice item before choosing a correct answer.
    • Okay or not? Why?
  – Diana hurries through test items. Test proctor asks her, “Are you sure?” after each response.
    • Okay or not? Why?
Scenario 2 Answer

• Pacing Support
  – Test proctors must be careful not to *inadvertently give clues* that indicate the correct answer or help eliminate some answer choices.
  – Reminding students to slow down does not change the nature of the test or give them an advantage over peers.
  – Asking students if they are “sure” can inadvertently get them to change a correct answer OR will give a subtle clue.
Scenario 3

- Cory has accommodation of “Redirect Student to the Test”
  - Cory is distracted; looking around the room or playing with materials. Test proctor says, “Let’s try number 5...” and reads item 5 aloud to him.
    - Okay or not? Why?
  - Cory frequently makes comments to the test proctor that are unrelated to the test. Test proctor encourages Cory to attempt next test item while pointing to the computer screen/paper.
    - Okay or not? Why?
Scenario 3 Answer

• Redirect Student to the Test
  – Test proctors should not provide accommodations not explicitly listed in the IEP. ONLY if “read test aloud” was ALSO an accommodation, would that be okay!
  – Encouraging students to keep working or orienting them towards their materials does not change the nature of the test or give them an advantage over peers.
Scenario 4

• Sean has accommodation of “General Administration Directions Clarified”
  – Sean does not understand test directions and asks for clarification. Test proctor rephrases directions and asks Sean to confirm his understanding by repeating directions back to her.
    • Okay or not? Why?
  – Sean does not understand a sentence within a test passage. Test proctor rephrases the sentence from the passage and asks Sean if he understands now.
    • Okay or not? Why?
  – Sean does not understand a specific math question. He asks the test proctor which operation he should use first to solve the equation.
    • Okay or not? Why?
Scenario 4 Answer

• **General Administration Directions Clarified**
  – Rephrasing or clarifying GENERAL test directions is appropriate.
  – Test proctors should not read, rephrase, clarify, or explain specific passages or items (this will change the nature of the test)
  – Test proctors should not provide any information to students regarding how to solve specific problems or answer specific questions
Other reminders

• Remember, it’s about testing, not teaching
• Don’t teach or correct
• Don’t practice the probes/items/etc.
• Don’t give hints or clues
• Don’t break standardization
• Don’t over-accommodate (provide accommodations beyond what is listed in IEP)
• Mind your comments/feedback
• Maintain ethical testing practices at all times
What’s the big deal?

• Consequences of **not** providing students with accommodations outlined in their IEP/504.
  – Thoughts?

• Consequences of providing students with MORE accommodations than are listed in their IEP/504, or by MODIFYING the assessment.
  – Thoughts?
Questions?
What if I still have questions?

• Check with the case manager, PSA, and/or your friendly neighborhood school psychologist!
  – Psychologists: Kelly Lyell (Oak ECE/Elm), Erin Eder (Oak/Lane), Ashley Miller (Monroe/Prospect), Lissa Trice (Walker/CHMS), Laura Burke (Madison), Kasia Kula (HMS)
  – PSA’s: Donna Rusick (Elm/Lane), Rachel Chorley (Monroe/Walker/Oak ECE), Kelly Kramer (Oak), Carrie Finazzo (Madison), Melissa Capizzi (Prospect/CHMS), Sue Waughon (HMS)