


DEFINITION OF TEST MODIFICATIONS

Test modifications are changes in testing procedures or formats that provide students with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in test situations and to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities. Test modifications can change the way in which test items are presented to the student, the student's method of responding to test items or the process a student uses to derive responses to test items. Test modifications should not be excessive; they should alter the standard administration of a test to the least extent possible.

THE PURPOSE OF TEST MODIFICATIONS

The purpose of test modifications is to enable students with disabilities to participate in test programs on an equal basis with their nondisabled peers. They provide an opportunity for students with disabilities to demonstrate mastery of skills and attainment of knowledge without being limited or unfairly restricted due to the effects of a disability.

In determining a student's need for such modifications, emphasis must be placed on the necessity for modification, not merely the potential benefit from modification. Test modifications are provided in order to address a disability, and to the extent possible, they are intended to minimize the effects of a student's disability. Conversely, such modifications are not intended to substitute for knowledge and abilities that the student has not achieved; they are not intended to provide an unfair advantage over students taking tests and examinations under standardized conditions. The fact that a student may be expected to achieve a higher score with test modifications is not an appropriate sole criterion for providing such modifications.





FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The federal laws and regulations are:

- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, this law allocates federal funds to State and local education agencies to establish and implement policies and due process procedural safeguards for the identification of students with disabilities, up to 21 years of age, and for the provision of special education programs and services in the least restrictive environment, consistent with each student's needs and abilities.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, this civil rights law prohibits recipients of federal funds from discriminating on the basis of disability. It provides that no otherwise qualified individual with a disability shall, solely by reason of such disability, be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, this civil rights law extends the Section 504 prohibition against discrimination to public and private entities, regardless of whether they receive federal funds.

These federal laws and regulations apply to all operations of school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and colleges/universities.





TYPES OF TEST MODIFICATIONS

Test modifications can change the way test items are presented to a student, the student's method of responding to test items or the process a student uses to derive responses to test items. The test modifications included in students' IEPs or 504 Plans should modify the standard administration of a test to the least extent possible.

Common test modifications found on students' IEPs or 504 Plans, are described below. Every possible modification that may be appropriate for students with disabilities is not included, since students' needs are too diverse to attempt to address all possible situations in this publication.

FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING

Some students with disabilities may require extended time to complete examinations.

FLEXIBLE SETTING

For some students with disabilities, the standard location for test administration may not be appropriate. Some students are easily distracted or have difficulty remaining on task.

REVISED TEST FORMAT

Some students with disabilities may not be able to take a test using the standard test format. Some students with visual, perceptual or motor impairments do not have the ability to read regular size print. Other students with behavioral, visual, perceptual or motor impairments have difficulty maintaining their place in a standard examination booklet. Some students with learning disabilities are unable to read items with standard print and spacing. All of these students require some modification of the test format.



STUDENT ELIGIBILITY FOR TEST MODIFICATIONS

There are four circumstances in which students with disabilities may be eligible to receive test modifications.

1. Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program includes testing modifications.
2. Students who are declassified by the Committee on Special Education but still need modifications.
3. Students with disabilities whose Section 504 Accommodation Plan includes test modifications.
4. Students who acquire disabilities shortly before test administration.

DOCUMENTING TEST MODIFICATIONS

A student's need and eligibility for test modification must be documented in an IEP developed by the Committee on Special Education or in a Section 504 Accommodation Plan developed by the Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team. Test modifications must be documented in a clear manner to ensure a consistent understanding by the CSE or 504 Team, the principal, the teacher(s) and the parents. Specific test modifications should be indicated, not generic test modification categories (e.g., answers recorded in other manner). It is appropriate to indicate the conditions or types of tests that will require test modifications, but qualifying terms such as "as appropriate" or "when necessary" are inappropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION OF TEST MODIFICATIONS

School district personnel must ensure that test modifications are consistently administered to students with disabilities, as specified in their IEP or Section 504 Accommodation Plan, by appropriately trained or qualified individuals throughout their school program.

This includes tests, quizzes and examinations administered either in special education class settings or in general education class settings. In addition to tests administered at the discretion of the teacher(s), test modifications must be fully and consistently administered during State examinations, unless restricted by state guidelines.

In some instances, students may refuse or request to waive test modifications for local or State tests. School staff should take appropriate action to effectuate full implementation of the IEP or 504 Plan (e.g., explaining to the student the reasons for test modifications). However, where such action is not effective in altering the student's position, officials should document the incident and consider the appropriateness of additional counseling or of requesting a review of the student's program by the CSE or 504 Team.

The requirement to ensure the consistent provision of test modifications is not restricted to the traditional school year (September to June). Pursuant to Section 200.4(c)(2)(v) of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education, the IEP for some students with disabilities will specify the provision of special education programs or services on a twelve-month basis. In addition, students with an IEP or 504 Plan must also be provided an equitable opportunity to participate in general education summer school programs.

*Test
Modifications*

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