

Nationally, it is recognized that one in four students has a disability. To create more equitable learning environments, accommodations are essential. **These supports are not about lowering expectations—they're about *removing barriers*.** When implemented effectively, accommodations allow students to access the curriculum, engage fully, and thrive both academically and socially. Accommodations can be broadly categorized into several areas. The following are a few examples of accommodations to use as inspiration. These should be tailored to each student.

Academic Accommodations

- **Preferential Seating:** Seating students close to where instruction is happening (typically near the teacher) to reduce distractions and increase engagement.
- **Extended Time:** Allowing students extended time on assignments that may be challenging, and providing a space where they can continue working without disruptions
- **Modified assignments:** Reducing the number of questions on homework or tests, breaking down assignments into smaller parts, or offering alternative formats to demonstrate understanding (e.g., oral reports, posters, videos).
- **Assistive Technology:** Utilizing tools and devices to support learning, such as text-to-speech software, speech-to-text software, typing, calculators, AI, or graphic organizers.
- **Note-Taking Support:** Providing assistance with note-taking, such as pre-printed notes, peer note-takers, or access to audio recordings of lessons.
- **Direct Support Professional:** A direct support person or paraprofessional is necessary when a child faces significant barriers to accessing the academic, social, or physical learning environment. This should be a last resort for intensive needs.

Environmental and Physical Accommodations

- **Physical Access:** Ensuring that the learning environment is physically accessible to all, including those with mobility impairments. This may involve ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms, and adaptive furniture.
- **Sensory supports:** Provide tools like fidgets, noise-canceling headphones, or weighted items—either in the classroom or a designated calming space—to help students regulate sensory input and stay focused.
- **Structured and predictable routines:** Displaying daily schedules and using visual supports to help students anticipate and understand routines.
- **Flexible seating:** Offering options such as wobble chairs, standing desks, bean bags, or wobble cushions to cater to diverse sensory needs and promote focus.
- **Allow for breaks:** Offer scheduled breaks for movement or sensory input to help students release energy and refocus

Social and Emotional Accommodations

- **Positive reinforcement:** Acknowledge and reward positive behavior frequently. Using specific praise, such as "Billy, I really like how you completed your work and put your pencil box away, nice job!" is more effective than general praise.
- **Peer support:** Utilizing peer buddy systems or thoughtfully grouping students for collaborative work to encourage positive social interactions
- **Teacher Support:** Providing teachers and staff with ongoing training and coaching on inclusive practices, disability awareness, and effective accommodations.
- **Family Partnerships:** Collaborating closely with families to understand their child's needs, preferences, and strengths. Open communication and shared decision-making are essential.

Key Takeaways

Ultimately, the most effective accommodations are individualized and take into account the unique strengths and needs of each student. Regular evaluation and adjustments are important to ensure that the accommodations remain appropriate and effective as the student develops and learns.

- **Accommodations are Student-Specific:** What works for one student may not work for another. It's crucial to assess each student's individual needs and tailor accommodations accordingly.
- **Inclusive Practices Benefit All:** Many accommodations can benefit all students in the classroom, not just those with disabilities.
- **Consistency and Collaboration are Key:** Implement accommodations consistently and work closely with families, special education staff, and other professionals to ensure their effectiveness. Regular communication is vital to refine and support each student's unique learning journey

Accommodations are not about lowering the bar, but creating a level playing field so everyone can be successful.

Sasone Support

Sasone, a program of Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, exists to ensure access to Jewish life and learning for all students in our community. We provide tailored guidance, resources, grants, professional development, and on-the-ground support to help schools implement inclusive practices with intention and integrity.

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