

Testing Accommodations Versus Testing Modifications

Introduction

Many times parents will not know the difference between modifications and accommodations listed on his/her child's IEP. This **Parent Teacher Conference Handout** will explain the difference to parents so they can fully understand the concepts if they need to make a request for a change in his/her child's IEP.

A distinction that has gained widespread national acceptance in recent years is one that illustrates the differences between the terms "testing accommodations" and "testing modifications." IDEA 2004 removed references to "modifications in administration" and now uses the term "testing accommodations" and requires that the State develop guidelines for the provision of appropriate accommodations.

Testing accommodations are changes made in the administration of the test in order to remove obstacles to the test-taking process that are presented by the disability **without changing the constructs being tested**. The testing accommodations most frequently required by students as indicated in their IEPs are:

- flexibility in scheduling/timing;
- flexibility in the setting used for the administration of assessments;
- changes in the method of presentation; and
- changes in the method of response.

Testing modifications are changes made to the testing process or to the content of the assessment itself, or provision of certain adaptive technologies or services, **that affect the constructs being tested**. Examples of testing modifications that affect the construct of the test:

- simplification or explanation of test questions;
- reading of items designed to test the student's reading skills;
- use of spell and/or grammar-checking devices on a test of the student's writing skills; and
- use of a calculator on a test of the student's computational skills.

The chief consequence of testing modifications is that, while students with disabilities may have increased access to the examination, the modification changes what is being tested and the student's score may be invalid.