

Accommodations and Instructional Strategies Can Help Students

Accommodations adjust how a student learns and demonstrates mastery.

Accommodations allow students access to learning.

Accommodations do not adjust what a student learns.

Information compiled by the Education Support System Consultants
Vermont Department of Education
B.E.S.T. Institute
June 2004

Accommodations and Instructional Strategies Can Help Students

Page	Topic	Page	Topic
1	General Accommodations	7	Strategies for Visual Learners
1	Organizational Strategies		Materials
	General		Student strategies
	Assignment books		Alternative media
	Paraphrasing directions		Teaching reading
	Daily routine	8	Strategies for Kinesthetic Learners
	Mastery		General
	Drill and Practice		Study skills
2	Motivational Strategies	9	Strategies for students with Auditory Processing Challenges
	Daily and weekly goals		General
	Checking papers		Reading/Literature
	Reinforcement		Handwriting
3	Presentation Strategies		Math
	Assignments		Social Studies/Science
	Advanced organizers	11	Strategies for students with Visual Perception Challenges
	Short attention span		General
	Directions and information		Reading/Literature
	Guided reading		Spelling/writing
	Taped lessons		Math
4	Materials		Social Studies/Science
	General	13	Strategies for students with Fine Motor Challenges
	Worksheets		General
	Textbook passages		Spelling/writing
4	Vocabulary Strategies		Math
4	Reading Strategies		Social Studies/Science
	Reading level	14	Strategies for students with Written Expression Challenges
	Concrete learning	14	Strategies for students with Verbal Expression Challenges
	New ideas and concepts	15	Strategies for checking student understanding
	Relation to previous experiences		General
	Study guides	16	Teacher made tests
	Alternative media		General
5	Spelling Strategies		Written expression difficulties
5	Writing Strategies		Verbal expression difficulties
6	Math Strategies		Practice tests
	Demonstrating understanding	16	Standardized Tests
	Key symbols	17	Strategies to help students who are bullied
	Key words		
	Number and symbol positions		
	Steps of process		
	Spatial relationships		
7	Strategies for Auditory Learners		
	Directions		
	Reading assignments		
	Study skills		

Accommodations and Instructional Strategies Can Help Students

General Accommodations

- Build upon students' strengths, interests, and needs
- Avoid use of comments that reflect your value judgements
- Involve students in designing, selecting, and evaluating the effectiveness of their work and accommodations so that they take ownership and responsibility for them
- Teach students to use/create accommodations and learning strategies that make sense for them
- Teach students to use strategies and accommodations that can be employed across situations and activities, such as verbal mediation strategies and graphic organizers
- Allow extra time so students have sufficient time to learn, practice new skills, and be successful
- Change activity and task requirements so students will be successful
- Make tasks meaningful
- Give constant and consistent feedback
- Praise in public, correct in private
- Present the students and their activities in a positive light
- Build in time every day for review of important concepts
- Allow students to record/monitor their own progress, such as on a visual chart
- When success is achieved, send home good news notes from school
- Accommodations and modifications should not single out the student. Make the modifications and accommodations part of the everyday routine

Organizational Strategies

General

- Set clear time limits
- Post assignment due dates in a consistent place
- Teach students to break down major projects and complete pieces of them at a time
- Assign pieces of a project for specific homework
- Number/order steps for completing tasks
- Use symbols/signals to help follow directions, i.e., arrow to continue, stop sign to stop
- Have student check off completed assignments
- Have make-up sessions for assignments not completed on time
- Have students with incomplete assignments come in before or after school to finish

Assignment books

- Teach students to write down assignments and keep an assignment book
- Take the last few minutes of class to remind students to put assignments into their assignment book
- Make the presentation of their completed assignment books a "ticket to leave" the activity or class. Make it part of the assignment and give credit
- Reinforce good study skills
- Clarify goals of homework assignments
- Coordinate assignments with other teachers

Paraphrasing directions

- After giving an assignment have the students paraphrase the directions
- Ask the students to read what they have written in their assignment books
- Have a student explain the assignment to their partner and vice versa
- Have someone (an aide, volunteer, capable student) responsible for rephrasing directions while you check assignment books

Daily routine

- Follow a consistent daily routine.
- Allow the students to be the scribe for the day's agenda
- Post agenda daily in a consistent place
- Understand that change is difficult for some students and plan accordingly
- Pre-teach change in routine as though it were a new concept

Mastery

- Reduce the required mastery of materials to key concepts
- Using the two to three major objectives of a lesson, create individualized activities and tests that hone in on only those objectives while other students may move beyond those
- Structure cooperative activities that will allow the students to be responsible for major information points

Drill and Practice

- Provide opportunities for relevant drill and practice
- Limit amount of homework
- Allow a peer tutor to play a game that will reinforce the skills
- Create games and a game time for the class that reinforces the skills
- During quiet time, spend a few minutes going over with individual students the skills that need extra attention

Motivational Strategies

Daily and weekly goals

- Have goal-setting an all class activity
- Work on a contract basis where the students determines the contract requirements

Checking papers

- Don't mark the responses that are wrong but, rather, those that are right
- Correct the students' in-class work after short segments

Reinforcement

- Give immediate reinforcement for correct responses
- Give positive feedback for good use of social skills
- Generally keep a positive attitude
- Use all opportunities to reinforce effort

Materials

General

- Provide simpler materials that reinforce the concept being studied
- Use task box with Blooms' "Level of Questions" to allow students to move through the concepts from concrete to synthesis at their own speed
- Use books at the students reading level for independent project use
- Pair students that compliment each other's strengths
-
-

Worksheets

- Use simplified worksheets, especially in math
- Divide worksheets into fourths and enlarge on copier
- Make sure worksheets are spaced adequately and not so cluttered as to be distracting
- Make sure worksheets are not overcrowded or confusing
-
-

Textbook passages

- Highlight key passages using makers or highlighting tape
- Use clear overlays that won't ruin the book
-
-

Vocabulary Strategies

General

- Pre-teach new vocabulary
- Define words as simply as possible
- Don't use the word to define it
- Relate new words to words that are already known.
- Give new words meaning in the student's own world
- Work with synonyms and antonyms when defining new words
- Relate new words to situations and words that have been used in class before
- Have students put vocabulary in their own words, write it in a sentence or draw a picture
-
-

Reading Strategies

Reading level

- Reduce reading level for independent reading assignments
- For independent reading provide a multitude of books at all levels of interest and difficulty
- Check the reading levels of texts before using
-
-

Concrete learning

- Use manipulatives and pictures to be more concrete
- Use hands on activities
- Assign activities that reinforce concepts
- Use real life settings to reinforce concepts such as having students actually measure things rather than doing pencil-paper activities
-

Math Strategies

Demonstrating understanding

- Have students verbalize problems step-by-step to make sure s/he understands each step
- Have students talk through the problem out loud before starting
- When working with word problems, allow students to read problems out loud
- Review problems orally
- Use manipulatives

Key symbols

- Check to make sure the meaning of key symbols are understood
- Provide students with a card with math symbols/signs and an example of a completed problem using each symbol
- Attach card with symbols/signs and examples to inside cover of math or workbook

Key words

- Help students identify and group key words according to their meaning
- Teach students to approach problems by first picking out the important words that indicate the math process
- Create a referral web that visually reminds the students of the meaning of certain words, e.g., difference/less than/left = subtraction

Number and symbol positions

- Emphasize the position of numbers and symbols when it is important to computation
- Create a decimal chart as a reminder of how to work with decimal points
- Pre-teach lessons pointing out the position, e.g., lining up numbers
- Teach students to look at symbols before starting any problem

Steps of process

- Provide a list or diagram of steps in a mathematical process and allow students to refer to it as s/he works
- Encourage students to make their own study guides
- Teach mnemonics to remind students of complicated steps, e.g., for division, "Dear Miss Sally's Brown Dog" = divide multiply subtract bring down

Spatial relationships

- Allow students ample time to understand spatial relationships
- Make requirements simple and direct
- Use simple spatial relationships

- Teach student to be a list maker
- Teach other methods of visual organizers
-
-

Alternative media

- Use videos
- Use plays
- Use filmstrips
- Use books
- Use pictures
-
-

Teaching reading

- Use a sight word approach
- Have student create a sight word file and practice
- Have student identify small words that s/he already knows to help decode new words
-
-

Strategies for Kinesthetic Learners

Students who are kinesthetic learners learn and remember information best by doing. Kinesthetic learners excel when given hands-on activities and interactive assignments. Kinesthetic learners rarely sit still and constant movement tends to promote learning for them.

General

- Offer hands on projects
- Utilize cooperative games
- Create multi-sensory activities
- Utilize simulation activities
- Encourage active participation
- Encourage use of fidget objects
- Use music to aid memorization
- Seat in low traffic area of the room and allow fidgeting with less distraction of others
- Allow multi-tasking (classroom tasks while listening to instructions)
- Use variety of options to demonstrate learning including murals, diagrams, models, dioramas
- Sort for sequence
-
-

Reading strategies

- Provide a Reading Rocking Chair
- Use rhythm, rhyme and rap for memory
- Use Stand Up/Sit Down activities (up for vowels, sitting for consonants)
- Use clay, raised glue or finger wide depressions for formation of letter shapes
- Create story maps
- Create story collages
- Pantomime characters in stories
-
-

Math/Science

- Use manipulatives

- Use visual aids with auditory presentations and when giving verbal instructions
- Model or give demonstrations of tasks whenever possible
- Pair instructions with gestures
- Circulate about the room inconspicuously repeating directions for those who need them
- Teach listening skills
- Write simple directions on 3X5 cards and, after giving verbal instructions, tape them to students desks so they can use them for reference

Reading/Literature

- Break up oral presentations with visual or motor activities
- Emphasize the visual pattern when teaching a new word
- Use directed reading/thinking activities
- Use the Cloze procedures
- Use cognitive reading strategies (questioning, prediction)
- Use hypothesis testing procedures
- Use language experience activities
- Use reading comprehension activities

Handwriting

- Provide additional time for completion of written assignments
- Initially lower the standards for acceptable handwriting legibility, raising them as the student's skills improve
- Permit the student to respond orally when it is important that s/he demonstrate knowledge
- Teach keyboarding and allow/encourage computer use
- Allow use of tape recorder or copies of notes from other students in class
- Allow use of picture maps as story outlines
- Emphasize words with similar visual patterns in spelling
- Use dictation to reinforce spelling of phonetically regular words
- Promote use of personal and class dictionaries

Math

- When reading word problems aloud to students, give them a visual cue chart
- Graph problems on the board, rewrite problems simply
- Allow students to draw problems
- Provide an example of how problems are to be solved at the top of worksheets
- Make a basic problem-solving sequence chart to post in the classroom
- Limit use of strictly oral drills

Social Studies/Science

- Provide ample wait time for students having difficulty answering questions
- Give cues if a student is having difficulty with verbal answers
- Give students a worksheet to follow along with a filmstrip or film
- Use a film or filmstrip to provide an overview when introducing new material

Strategies for students with Visual Perception challenges

Students with visual perception challenges have difficulty comprehending what is seen. They probably do not like to read as well as they like to talk or listen. They may seem to have difficulty seeing the correct spelling or may change beginning and ending letters of words. When reading aloud they may skip lines or easily lose their place. They may have difficulty copying things accurately.

General

- Give clearest copy available
- Adjust for special lighting needs
- Make sure student is seated close to the teacher, board, work area
- Write clearly and neatly on the board and on worksheets
- Give verbal information or explanation along with visual presentations
- Divide worksheets physically by cutting, folding, drawing, covering the part of the worksheet not being focused on at the moment
- Give directions orally
- Have a buddy read the directions to the student
- Allow a peer with good note taking skills to use carbon paper or make copies when material has to be copied from the board
- Summarize the key points of your lesson at the end of each period to make sure students have recorded important material
- Give worksheets with few distracting pictures or designs
- Condense lengthy written directions by writing them in brief statements and/or including pictures or diagrams for clarity
- Allow time for students to ask questions about written directions
- Use taped textbooks, lectures, assignments
- Write directions in a different color
- Have student use template to reduce visual field
- Use technology for magnification
- Use visual clues, highlighter, flags to draw attention to important points, questions, directions, or steps
- Highlight main portions of a reading so that the student won't have to read the entire chapter
- Make a copy of your lecture notes and share with student
- Use activity worksheets to avoid problems associated with copying
- Promote copying accuracy by first allowing student to copy from a paper on their desk instead of the board
- Allow student to correct his/her own notes using another student's accurate notes
- Teach students how to copy and proofread what they copy
- Set aside a few textbooks that can be used repeatedly by students
-
-

Reading/Literature

- Use directed reading thinking activities
- Use cognitive reading strategies (questioning, predicting)
- Use hypothesis testing procedures
- Use highlighting to cue the student to important words and concepts
- Teach students to use highlighting to identify important words and concepts
- Introduce new vocabulary in context before a reading assignment
- Allow student to use a marker or index card to keep place while reading
- Set a purpose for each reading assignment

- Pair students for reading assignments, taking turns reading aloud to each other
- Use discussion activities often, allowing the students to relate to the story with their own personal experiences rather than writing answers to questions following a reading activity
- Discuss in class students' answers to questions, allowing for clarification of important points and a chance to see the relationship between individual questions and answer as well as the general concept being studied
- Divide hard words by syllables on worksheets to help students decode phonetic words on their own
- Substitute easier words/synonyms for difficult words
- Use pictures or ask students to illustrate or pantomime new vocabulary
- Give the students an outline, chart, or blank web to fill in during class presentations

Spelling

- Post commonly misspelled words on charts in a consistent place for easy student reference; beside each word write it in a sentence or give a pictorial clue.
- Have students make their own word file, dictionary

Writing

- Have students write in a journal daily, 5-10 minutes
- Allow students to dictate their stories into a tape recorder
- Arrange for students to work as partners to develop stories, requesting the student's partner to do the recording to enable the student to be creative without being frustrated by the mechanics of writing. Students should be encouraged to assume more and more responsibility for writing his/her own story
- Help students make their stories more interesting by discussion and posting synonyms

Math

- Verbalize steps
- Have students practice reading word problems to identify key words and the operation needed to solve each problem
- Distinguish clearly each operation on worksheets that have a mixture of operational problems; draw a circle around addition steps, a square around multiplication steps, etc.
- Group problems by the operation process to be used
- Alert students to the importance of paying close attention to the sign of the operation on randomly mixed problems
- Exchange practice worksheets with another teacher if more practice is needed
- Space problems farther apart on worksheets
- Allow students to use computational aids, number lines, technology, etc.
- Provide activities that help the student rapidly note the essential details of numerals and how to quickly scan numerals
- Provide activities that help the perception of numerals and groups of numerals in their correct orientation and sequence
- Highlight important discriminating features of numerals, sequences of numerals, and their orientation
- Use graph paper
- Limit the number of problems on each assignment sheet

Social Studies/Science

- During oral presentations pause periodically to ask for questions and give students a chance to add notes to their papers
- Summarize at the end of lectures and encourage students to ask questions about what they may have missed in their notes
- Review the notes from the previous lesson beginning before beginning a new presentation
- Teach book format to students
- Use cooperative learning strategies such as pairing students by strengths
-

Strategies for students with Fine Motor challenges

Students with fine motor challenges probably will do anything not to put a pencil or other writing implement into their hand. They have messy papers that look like a battle took place. They also may appear clumsy as visual integration problems may also be present. These students often run into things and art projects and shop class may also prove to be areas of difficulty.

General

- Strive to set a good handwriting example
- Adjust expectations for fine motor activities to match students' best efforts
- Place the paper to be copied directly at the top/above of the student's paper rather than to one side
- Teach students how to erase and make corrections without beginning over each time
- Minimize copying activities by providing the information or activities on worksheets or handouts
- Encourage students to use appropriate writing materials
- Have students write on top of 3-5 pieces of paper to provide a soft writing surface
- Assign follow-up activities that reduce the students' writing requirement
- Allow a peer with good note-taking skills to use carbon paper or make a copy of the notes to share an extra set of notes
- Encourage use of keyboarding practices so that students build speed and accuracy
-
-

Writing

- Help students understand the importance of good handwriting
- Show examples of how right answers may be marked wrong because of poor letter formation
- Encourage students to talk through the formation of letters
- Allow students to write on every other line of the paper
- Use paper with raised lines
- Use raised or texturized letters for students to feel the shape of letters and words
-
-

Math

- Turn lined paper to vertical position to aid in writing numbers in columns
- To align problems, use graph paper by putting one number in each box
- Make math paper template that encourages one problem per box/area
- Use alternative, non-writing, methods of testing
- Use manipulatives
-
-

Social Studies/Science

- Modify instructional materials that involve fine motor skills such as filling in charts and maps
- Use sharp colored pencils instead of crayons
- Provide more space for color or labeling
- Allow extra time for completion
- Use a blocking technique to facilitate neatness by setting index card at borders of the paper to prevent going out of bounds

Strategies for students with Written Expression challenges

Students with written expression challenges may know what they want to say but cannot put it into writing. They may not be able to remember how a word or letters look, which letters make up the sounds they want, or how to form letters and words. Often their writing does not make sense to others who read it but they can read it correctly. Their papers may have many scratch outs, insertions, misspellings, and erasures.

- Allow students more time to complete written assignments
- Allow students to give all or mostly short answers
- Allow students to complete assignments that call for written half in sentences and half in short phrases, gradually moving the students toward writing all in complete sentences
- Stress accuracy, not speed
- Give students class time to work on written reports
- Be specific in your comments about written work
- Allow students to check and correct their own worksheets against a model
- Permit students to use pictures, drawings, diagrams as part of their written products
- Post a proofreading checklist in class, have students put copy into their notebooks
- Have students skip every other line when writing rough drafts
- Allow students to give taped or live oral presentations
- Allow students to answer fewer questions
- Consider making worksheets that reduce writing requirements
- Allow a students to check math problems on a calculator
- Permit students to work independently in an area free of distractions
- Assign a different type of task or modification of the original task as an alternative to asking a students to redo a poorly completed written assignment
- Encourage students to revise, edit, and proofread drafts before completing a final copy
- Encourage students to use computers
- Use journals and diaries as informal means for encouraging interest and fluency in writing

Strategies for students with Verbal Expression challenges

Students with verbal expression challenges frequently cannot remember what word they want to use. They may confuse similar sounding words and sounds and use words out of context.

- Give 'wait-time' for responses or create a signal that you are about to provide the answer to the question
- Give guided cues or questions to help facilitate a student giving oral answers
- Teach students to use an outline or notes when presenting an oral report
- Structure opportunities for student verbal expression in one-to-one and small group basis
- Limit length of student oral presentations
- Actively involve students in listening during other student's presentations by using guided questions or formats
- Ask specific structured questions

- Arrange small discussion groups and paired talking activities that permit students to practice verbal skills in a comfortable setting
- Allow use of taped presentations
- Assign projects other than oral reports
- Encourage use of notes, letters, messages, journals as an alternative to verbal responses
- Reduce time student must wait until its his/her turn to give his/her report in order to lessen anxiety
-
-

Strategies for checking student understanding

One area that has been difficult for many teachers is how to find what a student knows without giving a written exam. Some teachers may have compensated by lowering the expectation level for everyone. The better way would be to allow the students to have input into what they would perceive as the best way of checking their acquisition of knowledge. Just as teachers are encouraged to stimulate as many senses as possible to deliver instruction, students must have the opportunity to demonstrate acquired skills and knowledge in a variety of ways. Students can respond to tasks through written, verbal, and large motor activities as well as fine activities. Below are some strategies to be considered.

General

- Use a buddy system where students check each others work
- Have a peer tutor check work
- Have adult volunteers and aides check work
- Use cooperative learning activities where students work together to complete assignments
- Use instructional games/active learning activities
- Have students chart their progress on individual charts or graphs
- Conduct review sessions, highlight key points, and encourage students to ask questions
- Give students possible test questions ahead of time to use as study guides
- Avoid giving unannounced tests
- Give announced quizzes that cover specified topics rather than unit long examinations
- Give credit for class participation
- Give untimed tests
- Allow students to explain their answers before considering them faulty, the answer may not be the one desired but it may be correct nevertheless
- Ask probing questions to help students clarify and extend their answers.
- Help students understand that we all make mistakes, the important point is we can learn from mistakes.
- Teach students to locate the key words in test items
- Provide alternative methods of conveying test information, allowing tests to be read to students, taping the exam and arranging for the student to take the test in an alternative environment
- Reduce test anxiety by allowing students to take tests on a one-to-one basis or in small groups
- Help students organize their time
- Give partial credit where warranted instead of counting an item entirely incorrect
- Consider occasional use of take home and open book tests
- Allow additional time to complete tasks
- Allow the students to complete tests during study time
- Cut tests in half, blowing up the copy on a copier so that it looks like a complete test
-
-

Teacher made tests

General

- Match tests to instructional objectives
- Make certain your test activities match your teaching activities
- Figure out what you really want the student to know and then ask only those questions
- When making materials, consider including some self-checking activities
-

Written expression difficulties

- Use test formats that reduce writing requirements
- Allow students to write directly on the test paper
- Provide adequate space for students to write directly on the test paper
- Permit students to use manuscript or cursive
- Be sure to separate content of response from language mechanics and grade according to skill or knowledge required for specific subjects
- Allow students to complete essay questions in outline form rather than requiring full paragraphs; allow students to draw webs, diagrams, and charts in answering questions
- Make test formats familiar
- Let students demonstrate their knowledge by using manipulatives instead of giving written tests
- Allow oral exams or debates to verify understanding
-

Verbal expression difficulties

- Let students make drawings or diagrams
- Permit students adequate time
- Permit students to use manipulatives or handouts along with verbal explanations
- Allow students to tape their answers
- Arrange to have students give their answer to someone in a quiet, separate location
- Provide alternative modes of responding
-

Practice tests

- Provide sample or practice tests
- Use similar tests as review
- Provide the test as a study guide
- Don't test, allow the student to choose a different method of demonstrating knowledge
-
-

Standardized Tests

- Let the students know how much time they are allotted
- Teach the students how to pace themselves and check time remaining
- Check the answers to sample questions to insure understanding
- Allow students to use blocking with a blank index card to reduce distractions
- Monitor carefully during test to ensure students are following directions and answering correctly
- Orient students to the test format. It is unethical to give students specific test items ahead of time but it is not unethical to familiarize students with the test format or type of questions
- Explain to students that as the examiner you may not help them select answers but that you can answer questions about how to take the test
- Arrange to have test anxious students complete the test on a one-to-one basis
- Confer privately with test anxious students ahead of time to foster confidence
-
-

Bullying: Strategies for helping students who are affected

Students who are the targets of repeated bullying behavior often experience extreme fear and stress, such as fear of going to school, using the school bathroom and/or riding the bus to and from school. This fear and anxiety often results in:

- Chronic absenteeism
- Physical symptoms of illness
- Diminished ability to learn / reduced academic performance
- Progressively lower levels of self-esteem
- Abandonment from peers

It is important to address bullying issues as soon as they become evident and in a way that is consistent with school policy.

General Accommodations related to students who are targets of bullying:

- Recognize and identify the problem
- Build positive connections
- Provide academic supports
- Provide counseling
- Monitor progress
-

Strategies to stop bullying

- Provide students opportunities to talk openly about bullying
- Share with students their responsibility for and participation in creating positive social and physical environments
- Incorporate classroom activities that build self-esteem, acceptance and tolerance.
- Post and publicize rules against bullying and harassment
- Model behavior that promotes respect for all students
- Take immediate action when bullying is observed so that both the bully and the target know the behavior is not acceptable
-

Accommodations for specific symptomatic issues:

Chronic absenteeism:

- Provide student with as many high-interest activities as possible
- Involve the student in extra-curricular activities
- Avoid forcing student to interact with others or do things that make him/her unduly stressed or uncomfortable
- Speak with student to explain attendance expectation and to learn underlying reasons for absences
-
-

Diminished self-esteem

- Provide the student with positive feedback which indicates he/she is successful, important, respected, etc.
- Reduce the emphasis on competition
- Maintain consistency in expectations
- Teach the student appropriate ways to deal with anxiety, anger, fear, etc.
- Teach the student problem-solving skills
- Encourage the student to join a club of interest that will help to build a positive peer group