As a special educator you will frequently be asked about the need for a student to have some type of modifications on their IEP. Alternate testing techniques are modifications that take into account the individual needs of a child having a disability and as a result modify testing or classroom procedures or formats. These modifications attempt to provide these students with equal opportunity to participate in testing or classroom situations.

These techniques must appear on the student's IEP and provide the opportunity to demonstrate a child with a disability’s mastery of skills without being unfairly restricted by the presence of that disability. Children classified by the IEP Committee are entitled to alternate testing and classroom modifications as long as there is substantiated evidence for such a need in the testing or background of the child. There are no limits as to the number of modifications, but only include them in the IEP if they will enable the child to be more successful in school.
After taking this course you will understand:

- Flexible scheduling in testing
- Testing in a flexible setting
- Revised test format
- Extended time for testing
- Revised test direction
- The opportunity to record answers in any manner
- The use of a calculator for testing
- The use of a tape recorder for testing
- The use of a typewriter or word processor
- The need of a Braille Writer
- Questions read; test may be read
- When a student will not be penalized for spelling errors on tests
- When a student will have use of computer/word processor for written work to compensate for handwriting/spelling deficits
- Enlarged print
- Enlarged answer sheets

A-Student Eligibility for Use of Testing Techniques

Only students who have been identified as having a disability by the IEP Committee normally receive alternate testing techniques. However, there are three other possible avenues that can be taken to provide alternate testing techniques without being classified.

1. The law usually allows the school principal the authority to approve a student's need for testing modification which do not alter the intended purpose of a test for a student who may have a disability, but not severe enough to warrant identification by the IEP Committee. An example of this may be a student who has ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and as a result may have some mild problems but they do not constitute a severe discrepancy in his/her functioning.

2. In cases of certain tests, i.e. college entrance SAT, two pieces of documentation from outside professionals (not working in the same agency) indicating the need for alternate testing techniques i.e. untimed tests, may allow the student these privileges even thought they have not been identified by the IEP Committee.

3. Students receiving transitional services (these services are provided to students having been declassified by the IEP Committee is entitled to receive services and/or modifications up to one year after declassification).
B-Criteria for Allowing Use of Testing Techniques

The IEP Committee determines alternate testing techniques for students identified as having a disability. The Committee takes into account several variables when making this determination:

1. The individual needs of the child as determined by evaluation, observation, background history and other pertinent information presented at the IEP Committee meeting.

2. The necessity for modification in light of the student's past academic and test performance without modifications.

3. The student's potential benefit from the modification

The IEP Committee tries to keep in mind that all students could benefit from alternate testing techniques and as a result a recommendation based just on potential to enhance performance may be inappropriate. The need for modifications must be substantiated in the evaluation results.

C-Alternate Testing Techniques Which Modify Manner of Presentation

Alternate testing techniques, which modify a student’s manner of presentation, constitute the largest category of modifications that may appear on a student's IEP. These are separated into several categories and each contains several options.

Flexible Scheduling--This modification is usually applied for students who may have problems in the rate in which they process information, i.e. physical disabilities such as motor or visual impairments. Examples of modifications that fall under this category include:

- untimed tests
- administration of a test in several sessions during the course of the day
- administration of a test in several sessions over several days

Flexible Setting--This modification allows disabled students to take a test in another setting other than a regular classroom. This may become necessary in cases where a child has health impairments and may be unable to leave home or the hospital, where a child's disability interferes with his/her remaining on task or is easily distracted. In other cases a disabled student may require special lighting or acoustics or a specifically equipped room. Examples include:

- individual administration of a test in a separate location
- small group administration of a test in a separate location
- provisions for special lighting
- provisions for special acoustics
- provision for adaptive or special furniture
- administration of test in a location with minimal distractions
Revised Test Format--This modification is utilized by students whose disability may interfere with their ability to take a test using the standard test format i.e. students with visual or perceptual disabilities who may not be able to read regular size print. Examples include:

- use of a large print edition
- increased spacing between items
- reduction in the number of items per page
- use of a Braille edition
- increase the size of answer bubbles on test answer forms
- rearrangement of multiple choice items with answer bubble right next to each choice

Revised Test Directions--This modification allows students with certain disabilities a greater chance of understanding directions and thereby successfully completing a test. Examples include:

- ability to have directions read to child
- ability to reread the directions for each page of questions
- ability to simplify the language in the directions
- ability to provide additional examples

Use of Aids--Some disabled students require the use of aids in order to interpret test items. i.e. hearing impaired children These may include:

- auditory amplification devices
- visual magnification devices
- auditory tape of questions
- masks or markers to maintain the student's place on a page
- having questions read to the student
- having questions signed to the student

D - Alternate Testing Techniques Which Modify Manner of Response

Use of Aids--These modifications allow a disabled student to record their answers to examination questions rather than in the conventional manner. These techniques may include:

- the use of a tape recorder
- the use of a typewriter
- the use of a communication device
- the use of a word processor
- the use of amanuensis (secretary)

Revised Format--Some disabled students may be unable to record their responses to test questions on conventional answer forms and as a result require a change in the test format. These may include:
• the ability to record answers directly in the test booklet
• the ability to increase the spacing between questions or problems
• the ability to increase the size of the answer blocks
• the ability to provide cues (stop sign, arrows) directly on the answer form

E - Alternate Testing Techniques That Modify Process Used To Derive Response

Use of Aids--Some students may possess the innate ability to process mathematical information, but may have a disability that prohibits them from using paper and pencil to solve computations. Other disabled students may not be able to memorize arithmetic facts but can solve difficult word problems. When these problems occur with disabled students the following modifications can be used:

• use of a calculator
• use of an abacus
• use of arithmetic tables

F - Special Education teacher's Role and Responsibilities for Implementation of Alternate Testing Techniques

The special education teacher provides a crucial role in the implementation of alternate testing techniques. This is accomplished on the following ways:

1. A special education evaluator provides a clear understanding of a child's strength and weakness areas, learning style and the affects of the child's disability upon academic performance. With this information in hand, the special education teacher can analyze the need for specific modifications that can be substantiated by the results of the evaluation.

2. A special education teacher in a self-contained special education classroom comes in direct contact with the student in classroom instruction. This experience provides a strong basis for recommending specific changes or additions to the modifications on a student's IEP.

3. The special education teacher on the IEP Committee provides background experience that can assist the committee in recommending appropriate test modifications that may become part of a initial referral IEP, change in an IEP during an annual review or modification of alternate testing techniques as the result of a report from an outside agency.

4. The special education teacher can also assist the parent of a special education student in understanding alternate testing techniques and available options.

5. The special education teacher may serve as a consultant to teachers, parents and administrators and offer advice on testing modifications to students.

6. The special education teacher may monitor the implementation of assigned modifications for a particular student to insure that the student's rights are being followed.
Testing Modifications

Below are the various modifications that can be suggested. We have included the criteria that need to be present when recommending that the modification be added to the child’s IEP.

1. Flexible Scheduling
   - Extended Time

Recommendation Criteria

   - Slow Processing Speed or
   - Slow Psycho-Motor Speed or
   - Severe Anxiety

2. Flexible Setting
   - Separate location with minimal distractions

Recommendation Criteria

   - Students with serious Attentional Difficulties or
   - Students who are easily distracted and have difficulty remaining on task due to processing difficulties, anxiety, etc.

3. Revised Test Format
   - Modifications of test document

Recommendation Criteria

   - Students with Visuo-Perceptual processing deficits that would have difficulty transferring answers onto a machine scorable booklet or sheet

4A. Revised Test Directions
   - Directions and/or test read

Recommendation Criteria

   - Students who have documented reading comprehension skills below 25th percentile on standardized tests
4B. Revised Test Directions

- Simplify language in directions

**Recommendation Criteria**

- Documented language processing deficits
- Significant receptive language weaknesses

5A. Use of Aids to Record Responses

- Use of a calculator/arithmetic tables (for higher level math)

**Recommendation Criteria**

- Students with documented problem solving basic computation skills below 25\textsuperscript{th} percentile on standardized tests or
- Students with severe memory deficits

5B. Use of Aids to Record Responses

- Use of a word processor

**Recommendation Criteria**

- Documented grapho-motor deficits or
- Documented written language deficits significantly below current grade level

5C. Use of Aids to Record Responses

- Opportunity to record answers in any manner

**Recommendation Criteria**

- Documented grapho-motor deficits or
- Documented written language deficits significantly below current grade level
5D. Use of Aids to Record Responses

- Spelling discounted

**Recommendation Criteria**

- Students with documented spelling skills below 25\textsuperscript{th} percentile on standardized tests or
- 50\% discrepancy between aptitude and spelling achievement score on standardized tests

*Criteria - Use of the following criteria taking into account student cognitive ability and teacher judgment.*

**TESTING MODIFICATIONS IMPORTANT POINTS:**

- Testing modifications are to give students the same opportunities as their peers. They are not designed to achieve the identical result or give an unfair advantage to disabled students.

- Testing modifications should NOT be excessive. They should alter standard administration to the least extent possible.

- Testing modifications may allow a student access to higher level classes.

- Higher scores are NOT reasons for giving test modifications.

- The only students allowed to have modifications are:
  
  1-Disabled students  
  2-Declassified students (until graduation or before if no longer appropriate)  
  3-504 Students (same as classified) with accommodation plans  
  4-Students who acquire short term disabilities shortly before the test. (Time, location, amanuensis, reader (vision impaired) (not comprehension) Principal's discretion. Refer to CSE or CST for long term situations.

- Testing modifications are to be specific.

- Students should have to take state exams and the IEP must indicate why a student is exempted from them if necessary. Only IEP diploma bound students may be exempted from certain tests.

- It is the building principal's responsibility to ensure that test modifications are implemented correctly.

- Diagnostic Evaluations (newly referred students) do not require test modifications. Administration of test modifications is at the discretion of the examiner.
• If a student refuses to utilize a test modification, it should be documented and if necessary be eliminated from the IEP.

• The Principals should receive information on test modifications, as well as all teachers of appropriate students.

• Students should not be counseled towards more restrictive career objectives because they are disabled.

• General Education teacher MUST administer test modifications as described in the IEP.

Conclusion

Regardless of the child’s disability, modifications and accommodations will be part of most children’s IEPs. Therefore it is imperative that you know all about these additions to the IEP so that you can ensure that the student receives the best options possible.