Chapter Four: Accommodations

Accommodations are adaptations to the learning environment which address particular student needs. These may include physical arrangements, assistive technology, particular instructional strategies and others. Such accommodations are available for students with exceptionalities in all areas of study whether prescribed, modified prescribed, or alternate.

In order for a student with an exceptionality to meet his or her learning potential, specific accommodations may be required over an extended period of time. This would include gifted and talented students who require high end learning opportunities commensurate with their abilities. The decision to provide an accommodation is made by the program planning team and documented on the Record of Accommodations form.
Classroom/subject teachers are responsible for providing the accommodations required by students in their class.

Accommodations are meant to support student learning but never to inhibit the development of independent learning skills. Students who require accommodations such as having materials read aloud or having answers scribed should be moved toward gaining skills such as use of assistive technology to foster as much independence as possible.

The reading of print materials, scribing, supervised breaks, etc. are not appropriate for a student without an exceptionality. However, a student without an exceptionality can periodically be offered devices and strategies such as curriculum compacting, copies of notes, pencil grips, fidget toys or independent study without them being considered accommodations. It is when a program planning team, guided by assessment results, deems the support to be a necessity for a student with an exceptionality that it becomes an accommodation. Without an exceptionality, these things are optional, not considered accommodations, and are not documented on the Record of Accommodations form.

Accommodations for public examinations are guided by regulations outlined by High School Certification (www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/publications/accommodationpolicy.pdf)

Students accessing the prescribed curriculum are expected to participate in provincial Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs). This includes students receiving accommodations and modified prescribed programming. Exemptions and accommodations may be granted on an individual basis as determined by Division of Evaluation and Research regulations. (www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/evaluation/crts/principalshandbook2010.pdf)

Instruction around an accommodation may be required for successful implementation of many accommodations. The Record of Accommodations form documents the plan for delivery of outcomes including the projected timeline, personnel responsible, and settings. Instruction around an accommodation does not require formal evaluation such as progress notes or grades. Implementation of accommodations is the responsibility of the classroom/subject teacher; other teachers, such as the instructional resource teacher, may provide support for the learning required.

Accommodations listed on the Record of Accommodations form are defined below.

Alternate Format Materials are provided to students with exceptionalities who encounter barriers with traditional print materials. These students may not be able to use textbooks, class handouts, assessment tools and other materials in their original format. Instead the materials need to be provided in an alternate format. Some examples of alternate format materials include Braille, audio books, and digital versions of books that can be read by text to voice software.

Commercially produced alternate format materials such as e-books and videos are available for purchase and may be used with students as part of general class instruction. Teachers are cautioned that extended use of these materials with a student who does not have an exceptionality may impede the development of appropriate reading skills.

Eligibility requirements for accessing alternate format materials provided by the Department of Education can be found on the following websites.

> Alternate Format Materials Site Entrance:
> https://cmaf.gov.nl.ca/

> The Alternate Format Materials Learning Center:
> www.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/studentsupportservices/resource_center/index.html

> (Contains videos, Presentations, Power Points, and User Guides)

Assistive technology includes any equipment that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a student with an exceptionality. Such technology promotes greater independence. Forms outlining eligibility requirements for accessing assistive technology provided by the Department of Education are available at www.gov.nl.ca/edu/forms/studentsupport/applications.html.

Adaptive aids are devices, controls, or appliances that are necessary to address specific individual needs. They enable individuals to increase their abilities to perform activities of daily living, or to perceive, control, or communicate within the environment in which they live.

Extended time is appropriate for a student with an exceptionality who requires additional time on an ongoing basis.

Copies of notes are provided on an ongoing basis by the classroom/subject teacher to students with exceptionalities that impede their note taking ability.

Reading of print material entails the reading aloud of print text including assessment materials. This would be used for a student with an exceptionality that affects his or her ability to access print text. As appropriate, students should be moved toward more independent methods of accessing print such as text to voice software. Materials read aloud using assistive technology and/or alternate format materials would be recorded under those categories.

Not all types of questions translate well into oral format. Depending upon the design of the assessment, this may require some changes to the format. Teachers should keep in mind principles of universal design when creating assessments.

An alternate setting may be required for students with exceptionalities. This is generally used for students who have attention concerns or who may require a quiet room. Using an alternate setting to manage behaviour in an instructional setting should be recorded under behaviour management plan.

Supervised breaks may be provided to students with exceptionalities who require a short break from instruction. These would occur under the supervision of a teacher.

Scribing may be appropriate for a student with an exceptionality resulting in difficulty putting ideas on paper. It involves having a designated scribe record only what the student dictates, without prompting.

Clarification of instructions may be provided for students with exceptionalities who are unable to interpret the meaning and/or intent of what is being asked**.** In assessment situations, care must be taken to ensure that examinable terms are not defined for the student, thereby compromising the integrity of the assessment.

Transcribing involves the student with an exceptionality writing his or her response to a question. A teacher then reads the student's written answer back to the student. The student orally tells the teacher of any changes or additions required to his or her answer and the teacher records them.

Independent study is an individual project or course required by a student who is gifted and talented. It may enable him or her to pursue a topic related to the classroom study in greater depth, investigate an area of interest, or to complete a required or additional course outside of the general timetable. It will be monitored and assessed regularly by a teacher familiar with the particular curricular content.

Curriculum compacting is used for students who are gifted and talented in order to add challenge to their programming. It involves pre-testing the outcomes of a prescribed course, documenting any which are previously mastered, and replacing them with more appropriate content. For content areas, it can involve increasing the pace of coverage to "buy time" for more challenging content. It may be used in conjunction with independent study.