**HLP 13: ADAPT CURRICULUM TASKS AND MATERIALS FOR SPECIFIC LEARNING GOALS**

**VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to our video for HLP #13, Adapt Curriculum Tasks and Materials for Specific Learning Goals. There are 22 High Leverage Practices for special education spread across four domains. Adapt curriculum tasks and materials is included under the instruction domain.

The content for this video is from the HLP in Special Education Book published by CEC and the CEEDAR Center, and the chapter by Shelia Alber-Morgan and her colleagues in the HLP for Inclusive Classrooms book.

This video is split into two parts. In Part 1, we explain how adaptations to curriculum tasks and materials can best be explained by introducing accommodations and modifications. In Part 2, we elaborate and demonstrate examples of each within real classrooms.

**Part 1: Definition and Rationale.**

Broadly speaking, an adaptation is a change made by the teacher to some aspect of the curriculum. There are a number of ways that general and special education teachers and other stakeholders can provide adaptations to curriculum tasks and materials to help support all students, including those with disabilities. Many of these can be made informally. However, in this video, we refer to two types of adaptations specifically for use with students with disabilities: accommodations and modifications.

Let’s start with accommodations. An accommodation is a change in the way that a student with a disability accesses information or demonstrates learning. The purpose of an accommodation is to help the student access the general education curriculum by working around or overcoming a specific challenge or barrier caused by their disability. However, with an accommodation in place, the student with a disability still completes the same learning task, assignment, or assessment as peers without disabilities. In other words, students with disabilities who use accommodations are held to the same high expectations as their peers.

Accommodations can be categorized by purpose. For example, presentation accommodations provide alternatives for presenting information to students. Presentation accommodations for a student who has difficulty reading might include listening to audio recordings of books or getting verbal directions instead of written ones. There are also response accommodations, which provide alternatives for ways that students demonstrate their learning. These can include using speech-to-text technologies, using a spell checker, or a calculator. Setting accommodations make changes to the physical environment, such as providing a small group testing situation or seating the student in an area of the classroom with the best acoustics. Timing and scheduling accommodations can provide students with extended time for tests or assignments or permit needed breaks. IEP teams can help support a student’s success by matching the student’s disability-related needs to appropriate accommodations.

Here is an example of how accommodations can help a student with a disability. This student has ADHD and gets distracted by things that he sees and hears in the classroom. As a result, he often has incomplete assignments and does not finish tests. A setting accommodation that helps him work around these issues allows him to take tests in a quiet, alternative location. This helps him avoid seeing or hearing potential distractions like other students, ambient noise, or other anxiety producing or attention consuming stimuli. He takes the same test as his peers, he just takes it in a different location.

For some students, accommodations can be faded over time to move the student towards independence. In other instances, accommodations will always be needed to help a student access content or complete a learning or behavioral task. IEP teams determine which accommodations are necessary to support a student’s success and in what types of situations they are to be employed. The accommodations are then documented in the student’s IEP.

In contrast to accommodations, **modifications** change a learning objective or assessment. This goes beyond changing *how* the student learns or is tested and instead changes *what* the student is learning or being asked to do. The more significant the disability, the more likely that modifications to assignments, assessments, and other tasks will need to be made.

Modifications can also be categorized by type. For example, an assignment modification might mean a student answers fewer questions on a test, or completes an alternate assignment. A curriculum modification might mean the student will learn different material than what might be considered grade appropriate content. An assessment modification could involve measuring student achievement using a different standard and scale than students without IEPs. Modifications can be faded out over time, as student proficiency increases. For others, modifications may always be necessary.

Here is an example of how a modification can work: A student with an intellectual disability in the 7th grade may complete an alternative statewide assessment, such as a portfolio of performance, rather than the standard grade level assessment to evaluate her annual growth.

Any teacher working with students with disabilities needs to understand both types of adaptations and be ready to implement them appropriately. Required accommodations or modifications should help the student complete learning or behavioral tasks, make relevant progress, and should be listed in a student’s IEP or 504 Plan. Teachers should collect data on student performance to determine whether formally designated accommodations or modifications are effective.

To conclude Part 1: Accommodations and modifications are two types of adaptations to curriculum tasks and materials that teachers can make to support students with disabilities. Accommodations help a student work around the challenge caused by his or her disability, but do not change the expectations for the student. In contrast, modifications alter the learning goal, task, or assessment. Both accommodations and modifications are determined by the IEP team and are documented in the IEP.

**Part 2: Components of this HLP.**

In Part 2, we highlight 3 components of this HLP that can guide practitioners as they make key adaptations for students with disabilities. The components are:

1. Identify accommodations and modifications that are necessary, given a student’s unique needs, and how those needs intersect with various aspects of the curriculum.
2. Use content enhancements in combination with traditional accommodations to support student needs.
3. Evaluate to determine whether adaptations are having the intended impact.

The first component of this HLP is to identify accommodations and modifications that are likely to support student success given the goals and objectives listed in the IEP, and areas of the curriculum where the student is likely to struggle. Other HLPs that are relevant here include HLP #11—setting short- and long-term learning goals—and HLP #12—systematically designing instruction towards learning goals. If appropriate goals and objectives are in place, and teachers are providing systematically designed instruction aligned with goals, the next logical consideration is adding needed accommodations and modifications to help support student success. IEP teams’ work to implement HLPs 11 and 12 provide a roadmap for how HLP 13, provide needed adaptations, will be utilized.

Adaptations for instruction are individual and content specific. A student with a print-based learning disability may need to utilize a text-to-speech accommodation to access the text-based content during social studies class. However, that accommodation would not be appropriate during reading intervention when the purpose is to improve decoding skills. Teachers may identify the accommodations or modifications that are needed by being familiar with the student and having a firm understanding of the lesson objective. Accommodations listed in the IEP should always be used, but teachers should also be flexible in identifying other options for making adaptations that may be useful for students.

The second component of this HLP is to use content enhancements in combination with formally designated accommodations to support student needs. Graphic organizers and guided notes are examples of content enhancements that can help students see essential connections between and among content being taught. Mnemonics also have a long history of supporting learning and achievement for students with disabilities. These powerful tools can help support student success across academic content areas.

In addition to supporting student success with learning standards or other curriculum items with which they are likely to struggle, content enhancements should be utilized in service of students’ IEP goals. These types of general adaptations do not always need to be recorded in a student’s IEP, though they can be used in conjunction with documented accommodations. For example, the teacher could opt to provide the student with a graphic organizer that is already complete, or help scaffold instruction so he can fill it out under the watchful eye of the teacher.

In this next clip, Ms. Cindy Lavender is working with two students struggling in reading. She is working on inferencing skills to help the students develop strategies and capacity to use context clues to infer the meaning of unknown words. She is using a graphic organizer as a content enhancement to guide their work. The use of this content enhancement is in service of the students’ IEP goals related to inferencing.

*Play Video Clip.*

One assumption often made by IEP teams and teachers is that all accommodations and modifications are equally needed and effective. I might think, “if I provide an accommodation or modification, it must be good.” However, if the list of accommodations and modifications listed in the IEP are derived from a pre-written list, or thought up on the spot, it is possible that either the selections could be incomplete, or unnecessary.

Therefore, the third component is to evaluate whether adaptations are having the intended impact on student performance. IEP team members, particularly general and special educators, use data from various assessments and other data sources to predict areas within the standards and curriculum where students are likely to struggle. Teachers should use curriculum-based measurements (CBM)s, or other high-quality assessments on an ongoing basis to evaluate the student’s progress toward meeting his or her goals. The data collected can then be used to make data-based decisions on whether to continue use of the accommodation or modification, or if changes are indicated. This prevents the ongoing use of ineffective adaptations.

**Conclusion**

An essential practice for all teachers is to use accommodations and modifications to help students with disabilities access the curriculum, perform learning tasks, or demonstrate their learning. Teachers and other stakeholders should carefully match needed accommodations and modifications to learning goals and evaluate the impact.

Thanks for watching, and please continue using resources from our library on High-Leverage Practices in Special Education.