

# Supporting Teachers with Accommodations & Modifications in Distance Learning Environments

Providing students with disabilities accommodations virtually is comparable to how you would provide accommodations in the traditional school setting. We have to make sure to tap into pre-existing resources and perhaps think outside the box. This document is here to help you navigate both pre-existing and new resources to help support learning. In this resource, you will find:

- **Common Accommodations and Modifications** that can be transferred to the Virtual Setting
- **Best Practices:**
  - Teacher Moves that Work in both In-Person and Virtual Classrooms
  - Embedding Resources and Prompts into Content Provided by the Teacher
  - Increasing Student Habits, such as Time Management and Self-Regulation

**Related resources can be found in the following link(s)**

- [Creating Accessible Learning Environments](#)
- [Online Course Accessibility Checklist](#)

**Audience:** Special Education Teachers and General Education Teachers

## Common Accommodations and Modifications that can Transfer to the Virtual Setting ([Understood](#), 2014-2020)

| Type Accommodations   | Implementation in Virtual Setting  |
|---|--|
| Reading out loud  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Teacher audio records reading or enables text-to-speech</li> </ul>  |
| Chunking/Providing students with fewer items on a page                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● When sending home packets or creating work for students to complete, reduce the amount of content on one page</li> </ul>  |
| Student receives peer or teacher notes  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Record lesson (either before or during)</li> <li>● Send the teacher notes after the lesson</li> </ul>   |
| Ensure students have written instructions (alternatively, ways to clarifying instruction) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Send instructions ahead of time</li> <li>● Screen share and provide time for students to write instructions down</li> <li>● Teacher records instruction</li> <li>● The teacher sets up a time for students to attend 'office hours' to ask questions</li> </ul> |
| Dictation of responses  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A family member can help students write out responses</li> <li>● Capture responses in an audio recording</li> <li>● Capture responses live through a video or phone chat</li> </ul>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Use of Calculator  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Online calculator</a></li> <li>● Phone app with calculator</li> <li>● <a href="#">Multiplication Table</a></li> </ul>  |
| Use of a visual timer  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● During group work: use a visual alarm and enable screen sharing to provide visual timer</li> </ul>   |
| Sitting near-adult   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ensure students are sitting by a family member during certain activities</li> </ul>  |
| Provide sensory input (exercise band around a chair leg or silent hand fidget)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tennis ball</li> <li>● Home-made putty (activity)</li> <li>● Soccer or basketball under feet to move</li> </ul>  |
| More time on assignments or tests  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine with families what that looks like (e.g. if packets are due on Friday, can the student send them in on Monday?)</li> </ul>   |
| Provide extra time to process  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Send assignments and directions early</li> <li>● Provide time to check-in with student 1:1 either virtually while other students are working or before or after class</li> </ul>   |
| Take a break   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● During classes, provide “in class” break - students don’t leave computer but can stretch, have a group check-in, sit calming while the teacher plays music</li> <li>● For independent work, build in “TAKE A BREAK” in the packet so students can see</li> </ul>   |
| Testing  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide time for students to take tests on a certain day</li> <li>● If tests are done 1:1 or in a small group the teacher can read questions out loud</li> </ul>   |
| Organizational Support   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use the highlighter function to indicate important information and where students need to be writing</li> <li>● Provide study skills instruction</li> <li>● For writing assignments, send home graphic organizers</li> <li>● If students are using 2 documents together (e.g. reading and answering questions sheet) provide those with the same color filter and group them together or provide a sheet that describes which document goes which</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Accommodations that may not be applicable to virtual settings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Separate setting for testing</li> <li>● Walking with and supporting students during transition periods</li> </ul> |   |

# Best Practices

## Tap into your Teacher Moves

Some teaching practices in the virtual setting are very similar to those within a brick and mortar classroom. Teachers are expected to and can still provide accommodations and modifications per student IEPs within the virtual setting. Here are some general tips for ensuring student engagement that work across instructional settings:

**Communicate regularly with students. This is especially important for students who struggle with on-task behaviors, who get overwhelmed regularly and who benefit from more direct teacher guidance**

- Online
  - Email
  - Direct chat
  - During feedback on assignments
    - Feedback can also be given through a [screencast and/or voice recording](#). This can be helpful for students who benefit from teacher guidance and who need directions repeated as they can always go back and rewatch or listen.
- Group discussion and [small group service options](#)
- Direct phone or video conference

## Provide an opportunity for collaboration with peers

- Ensure there are structured ways for students to discuss topics collectively as a group, for example by creating 'breakout rooms' within [Zoom](#) or [Google Hangout](#)
  - If using email/calendar, send out individual calendar invites for each of these break-out groups
  - Peer to peer feedback using Google Docs is another way to increase collaboration through the [commenting and suggesting functions](#)

## Maintain flexibility, but still set clear expectations for:

- Participation
  - How and when students show up and enter the space.
  - Materials they need, both physical (e.g. notebook and pencil) and virtual (e.g. a website or document)
- Pacing
  - Consider the time it takes to present content or a new concept. This will likely require more time in a virtual space.
- Progress
  - Review student work prior to and following a lesson to review student progress, identify gaps to adjust future lessons or activities/check-ins

**Work with students to set goals to support pacing and progression of work. Goal setting is key to providing students with ownership of their work and time**

- Set goals on a shared document, on an individual piece of paper, or through an email.
  - It makes students accountable and increases their self-awareness
- Have them reflect (collectively or individually) on what worked / what did not work and what could be different next time.

### **Use data-driven digital curriculum for individualized learning to better guide instruction**

- Meet students where they are at
- Provide on-going progress monitoring systems
  - Here are some online learning platforms (for more, reference the small group doc)
    - [ReadWorks](#) - Free online stories that can be read online and sorted by grade-level. Readings can also be read out loud and printed. Readings are paired with questions to support independent or guided work at home.
    - [IXL ELA](#) - Free online adaptive and interactive educational website. Personalize work based on student grade-level and content/subject.
    - [IXL math](#) - Free online adaptive and interactive educational website. Personalize work based on student grade-level and content/subject.
    - [Newsela](#) - Free online resource with current and real-life events. Readings are student-friendly and tailored to their interest and instructional reading levels.
    - [Tween Tribune](#) - Free online newspaper of current events, tailored to students ages 8-15.

Further guidance can be found within the resources linked below in the reference

- [Engaging and Motivating Students in a Virtual Learning Environment](#)

### **Embed Resources and Prompts**

Presenting information through different modalities increases student engagement and access. Utilizing a virtual tool and having access to online resources creates more opportunities to differentiate and accommodate to meet the needs of students. Non-textual visuals:

- Video clips
- Charts
- Pictures / Graphics illustrations
- Diagrams
- Record Videos and Voice Recordings
  - How to voice record on [Windows](#) and [Apple](#) computers
  - Utilize [screencast](#) to pre-record lessons
- Reduce the amount of content on one page
- Increase font size
- Color Contrast
- Activate **text-to-speech** on [Windows](#) and [Apple](#) computers as well as through [Chrome Extensions](#)
- Activate **speech-to-text** on [Windows](#) and [Apple](#) computers as well as through [Chrome Extension](#)
- Ensure students have graphic organizers, graph paper

- Building in Check For Understandings, word banks, and places for students to stop and summarize or take a break

**Further guidance can be found within the resources linked below in the reference**

- This [slide-deck](#) provides descriptions of accommodations and modifications as well as provides examples for how to accommodate and modify assignments that apply to the virtual setting.
- [Accommodating Diverse Learning Styles in an Online Environment](#) describes different ways that you can take into account students’ learning styles to adapt instruction and provide accommodations.

**Improve Student Habits**

During times of independent study or when students are working at a self-directed pace, students still need support with habits that help them maintain focus, self-regulation and on-task behaviors. This is especially important for students who have ADD/ADHD or who are on the autism spectrum.

- Provide students with [Sample - independent study check-list](#)
- [Sample- Goal setting sheet](#) (inform families on usage and expectations)
- Record lesson for students to review
- Use of timers:
  - Apple apps of schedule - *these should be free*
    - [“Visual timer”](#) - or Youtube
    - [“Class Timetable”](#)
    - [“Handy Timetable”](#)
    - [“Visual Schedules Lite”](#)
    - [“This for That: Visual Schedules”](#)

**Final Word:**

Providing students with accommodations and modifications looks similar to providing them in-person. However, it can still be changing and brings to the surfaces new or unexpected barriers. We recommend: (1) continue to communicate clearly and effectively with students and their families and tap into your best teacher moves, (2) embed resources and prompts through assignments and (3) continue to support students on their habits who need it most.

| Timing      | Independent Study Checklist  |   |
|-------------|--|---|
| Environment | My environment is free of distractions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Away from TV</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Away from my phone</li> </ul> I have all the supplies I need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Computer and charger</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pencil</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Paper</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Headphones</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Water</li> </ul> |   |
| x-x minutes | Beginning  | <input type="checkbox"/> Have I set a goal myself |

|  |        |   |
|--|--------|---|
|  |        | <input type="checkbox"/> I am logged in or have all the necessary materials<br><input type="checkbox"/> I have read the directions carefully  |
| x-x minutes  | Middle | <input type="checkbox"/> I am logging questions<br><input type="checkbox"/> I am taking a break when I am feeling stressed or overwhelmed   |
| x-x minutes  | End    | <input type="checkbox"/> I am sending questions to my teacher and/or attending office hours<br><input type="checkbox"/> I have read through my work, identified and fixed any mistakes<br><input type="checkbox"/> I have cleaned up my workspace |
| Break Options: Up to x minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to music</li> <li>• Put head down</li> <li>• Play a game</li> <li>• Read</li> </ul> |        |   |

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|--|
| <b>Study Goal Setting and Reflection Sheet</b> |
| My Goal During Independent Study:              |
| What I can do to achieve my Goal:              |
| How did I do?                                  |



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