

WEBINAR MATERIALS

**"Student Accommodations:
The Role of Parents and Advocates"**

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Presenter:

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ABOUT THE PRESENTER:



MaryAnn Byrnes, Ed.D., is an Educational Consultant who collaborates with schools to bridge the gap between regulation and practice. She has also been President of the Board of Directors for Clearway School.

Dr. Byrnes has a broad portfolio of experience in education; she began as a classroom teacher in Chicago and soon moved into the field of special education, teaching at elementary and secondary levels. MaryAnn served as a special education administrator for 18 years and as an Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She is a past president of the Massachusetts Council for Exceptional Children.

MaryAnn earned her B.A. from the University of Chicago, her M.A. in Learning Disabilities at Northwestern University and her Ed.D. in Learning Theory at Rutgers University.

The author of three peer-reviewed articles on selecting unambiguous accommodations, MaryAnn is also the academic editor of *Taking sides: Clashing views in special education*, published by McGraw-Hill and now in its fifth edition.

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Agenda

- **Section 1:**
 - Legal aspects
- **Section 2:**
 - Explicit Accommodations Model
- **Section 3:**
 - Applications of Explicit Accommodations Model



Preferential Seating Results

- 25 distinct interpretations
- Variety within/between gen ed & special ed
- Interpretation groupings
 - Proximity to room elements
 - Access to attention
 - Social contact concerns
 - Sensory characteristic
 - Active process, not set location



References for Teams

- Byrnes, M. (2008a). Educators' interpretations of ambiguous accommodations. *Remedial and Special Education, 29*(5), 306-315.
- Byrnes, M. (2008b). Writing explicit, unambiguous accommodations: A team effort. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 44*(1), 18-24.



Specifically for Principals

- Byrnes, M. (2008c). Removing barriers to learning: A primer. *Principal Leadership*, 9(3), 34-37.



Accommodations: Legal Bases I

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

- Civil rights legislation to ensure access for people with disabilities
- When/if a disability substantially limits one or more major life activities
- Focus on reasonable accommodations



Accommodations: Legal Bases II

IDEA

- Includes provisions of Section 504
- Emphasizes access to general education experience for students with disabilities
- Includes accommodations and Specially Designed Instruction



Accommodations:
Confusing Current Uses

- Informal adjustments in class
- Legally defined requirements for teachers of students on IEPs or 504 Plans
- Adjustments for large scale test participation



Accommodations:
More Confusion

- Essential for legally-required access by people with disabilities
- Vary by individual - not just by disability category
- Little guidance exists for identifying accommodations
- Ambiguous terms cover a variety of intended changes



Accommodations:
A Definition

- Tools and procedures that provide equal access to instruction and assessment for students with disabilities

- (Cortiella & Kaloi, 2009, <http://www.ncl.org>)



Accommodation Focus

- Presentation
- Response
- Setting
- Timing/Scheduling



Variations in Teaching

- Normal differentiation
 - AKA *Good teaching*
 - Responsiveness to learners
- Level playing field
 - AKA *Accommodation*
 - Facilitates equal access
- Different playing field
 - AKA *Specially Designed Instruction; modification*
 - Beyond reasonable expectations for a classroom teacher



Comparison

<p><i>Accommodations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Level the playing field• Do not substantially change expectations	<p><i>Modifications</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Change the playing field• Substantially change<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Instructional level– Instructional content– Performance expectations
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Comparison

Accommodations

- Level the playing field
- Do not substantially change expectations
- On 504 Plans and IEPs

Modifications

- Change the playing field
- Substantially change
 - Instructional level
 - Instructional content
 - Performance expectations
- On IEPs, NOT 504 Plans



The Impact of a Disability

- *Disability*: Student has a specific reading disability
- *Task*: Take math test with “word problems”
- *Purpose*: To check knowledge of math facts
- *Accommodation*: Word problems read aloud to student

Does this measure the student’s knowledge?



Appropriate Accommodations

- Remove barriers caused by a disability
- Provide equitable access
- Remove construct-irrelevant variance
- Create a level playing field

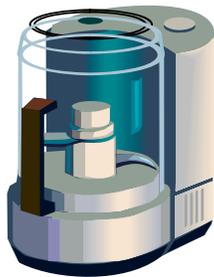


With Appropriate Accommodations

Activities do not become *easier*;
Activities become more *accessible*.



Accommodations!



Ras-catalyzed GTP hydrolysis in the presence of GTPase-activating proteins (GAPs)

Task:
Explain the importance of the finding described below.



A study of the interaction between Ras and GAP was done based on the understanding of the structures of both molecules. It has been found that certain invariant residues in regions of GAP and Ras protein are important for the binding of Ras and GAP. In the structure between GAP and Ras-GDP in the presence of aluminum fluoride, arginine at position 789 of GAP is critical for catalysis and stabilization of switch II region of Ras protein.



**Ambiguity Example:
Preferential Seating**

<i>Disability Characteristic</i>	<i>Intended Interpretation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attn. difficulties requiring frequent reinforcement• Limited vision• Need to access restroom quickly• Limited hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Near adult providing reinforcement• Near visuals• Near the door• Away from windows, open doors, and heating elements



Explicit Accommodations Model

- *Stage 1:* State the disability
- *Stage 2:* Describe the educational impact of the disability
- *Stage 3:* Consider educational tasks
- *Stage 4:* Identify barriers related to disability
- *Stage 5:* Write unambiguous accommodation to remove the barrier

(Byrnes, 2008b)



Stage 1
State the Disability

<p><i>Ed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emotional/behavioral disorder	<p><i>Lydia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific Learning Disability in written language
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Stage 2
Educational Impact of the Disability

<p><i>Ed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difficulty concentrating when distracted by life events• Anxiety can be triggered by reading content• Anxiety can lead to acting out in class• Can refocus with the assistance of his counselor	<p><i>Lydia</i></p>
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Stage 2
Educational Impact of the Disability

<p><i>Ed</i></p>	<p><i>Lydia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Struggles to put thoughts on paper• Works slowly when taking notes or timed written assignments• Responds readily and accurately to oral questions• Reads and comprehends grade level material
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Stage 3
Consider Educational Tasks

Expectations for 4th grade

- Read longer text selections independently
- Write interpretive responses
- Use text material in content subjects
- Begin to take notes in class
- Not required to plan long term tasks
- Not required to conduct Internet research



Stage 4
Identify Barriers Related to Disability

<p><i>Ed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May be distracted by internal thoughts during increased independent work• Internal concerns may affect interpretation tasks• Goals will emphasize work with counselor to increase ability to focus on task	<p><i>Lydia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May have difficulty writing quickly enough to match increased independent writing expectations• May experience difficulty taking notes or completing written tests• Goals emphasize improving written language skills
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Stage 5
Write Unambiguous Accommodation

<p><i>Ed</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify desktop signal to indicate need for attention• Seating near door so he can unobtrusively leave to see counselor	<p><i>Lydia</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seating near peers who will share notes or scribe in group tasks• Access to a computer with voice-to-print capability• Projects may be submitted orally
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Appropriate Explicit Accommodation?

- *Disability:* Student has very limited vision
- *Task:* Complete a page of math calculations
- *Purpose:* To check knowledge of math facts
- *Accommodation:* Problems enlarged, with fewer on a page

>>> **Poll:** *Is this accommodation appropriate?*



Appropriate Explicit Accommodation?

- *Disability:* Student has a specific reading disability
- *Task:* Take grade level benchmark reading test
- *Purpose:* To measure reading fluency, accuracy, and comprehension
- *Accommodation:* Passages read aloud to student

>>> **Poll:** *Is this accommodation appropriate?*



Appropriate Explicit Accommodation?

- *Disability:* Student has a physical disability affecting hand movement
- *Task:* Write an essay about the 2012 presidential election
- *Purpose:* To determine skill in 5 paragraph essay structure
- *Accommodation:* Student dictates essay

>>> **Poll:** *Can you make this accommodation less ambiguous?*



Advice for Parents & Advocates

- Keep accommodations concise
 - *Focus on the impact of the disability on the task*
 - *More is not always better*



Advice for Parents & Advocates

- Keep accommodations concise
 - *Focus on the impact of the disability on the task*
 - *More is not always better*
- Clarify accommodations during transitions
 - *Does everyone really mean the same thing?*



Advice for Parents & Advocates

- Keep accommodations concise
 - *Focus on the impact of the disability on the task*
 - *More is not always better*
- Clarify accommodations during transitions
 - *Is there a shared understanding?*
- Review accommodations regularly
 - *Do the same barriers still exist?*



Continuing Accommodations

Due to a continuing aspect of disability impact

- Sensory limitations
- Physical limitations
- Preferred school focus



Changing Accommodations

- When the condition no longer exists
 - Mended broken arm or leg
 - Recovery from illness
 - Response to treatment
- When successful Specially Designed Instruction has removed the need



In Closing: Accommodations

- Are mandated to ensure equal access - not equal outcomes
- Should reflect the individual
- Should be clearly written
- Are not meant to be used "as needed"
- Should change to reflect student need for access
- Are an essential element of self-advocacy





Student Accommodations: The Role of Parents and Advocates

Strategies for Advocates

Prepared by MaryAnn Byrnes, Ed.D.

If a school official says . . .	An advocate/parent might respond . . .	Resources
The student's 504 Plan/IEP should contain an accommodation for preferential seating.	Let's word this so that it is clear to everyone exactly where the student is to sit.	Byrnes, M. (2008). Writing explicit, unambiguous accommodations: A team effort. <i>Intervention in School and Clinic</i> , 44(1), 18-24.
What accommodations would you like to see on the 504 Plan/IEP?	I'd like someone to tell us how the curriculum expectations will change from this year - and how the student's disability will react to these changes.	Cortiella, C. & Kaloi, L. (2009). Understanding the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. http://www.ncld.org
We recommend the accommodation for extended time during testing.	Given this student's disability, what would happen without extended time? How will extended time affect the student's work?	Your state's definition of this disability. Your state's policy on large group testing.
The accommodation for having a note-taker does not seem appropriate at this time.	What is the expectation for note-taking in this grade? Is this the grade when everyone is learning note-taking or does this student require special consideration because of the disability?'	Byrnes, M. (2008). Writing explicit, unambiguous accommodations: A team effort. <i>Intervention in School and Clinic</i> , 44(1), 18-24.
The accommodations from this IEP should all be continued on next year's IEP.	Do you think that specially designed instruction on the IEP will help the student gain proficiency in this area so this accommodation is no longer needed?	Current IEP services, student goals and objectives
A scribe will be available as an accommodation during written language work.	Could the student dictate the work into a computer to be more independent?	Byrnes, M. (2008). Writing explicit, unambiguous accommodations: A team effort. <i>Intervention in School and Clinic</i> , 44(1), 18-24.
The school principal is concerned that accommodations give the student an unfair advantage over others.	Let's talk about how we can be more specific so the principal can see the link between the disability and the accommodation.	Byrnes, M. (2008). Removing barriers to learning: A primer. <i>Principal Leadership</i> , 9(3), 34-37.