Accessing Curriculum: Accommodations

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Part of a student's IEP is the team's consideration of accommodations. These accommodations are to support the students' access to the curriculum, as without access, they are not able to meaningfully interact with the curriculum, which becomes a barrier to progress. It is also important to remember that accommodations only change how the student is accessing the curriculum, while modifications change the content or amount of curriculum the student is accessing.

Sensory needs are a large consideration for autistic students, and we can provide accommodations such as sensory breaks, adding tactile supports to the curriculum, such as putting velcro on manipulatives, using Play-Doh when learning about shapes, using pop-its for counting, weighted materials (a weighted pencil can support handwriting or a weighted lap blanket can provide proprioceptive input), and sensory seating. Wobble stools, rocking chairs, beanbags, sensory cushions, standing, and elastic bands on chair legs are just some of the possible seating options.

Giving extra time to complete the assignment allows the student more time to process the incoming curriculum, and another accommodation could be breaking tasks down into smaller parts. This allows students to process smaller amounts of information at a time. The use of timers can also be an accommodation, along with a timeline for completing the expected work and even changing the time of day the work is expected to be completed.

Access to the curriculum also needs to include students being able to communicate. Accommodations for communication include using low- or high-tech AAC, visual schedules, peer models, lower staff-to-student ratios, allowing verbal instead of written responses, sentence starters, and word banks.

Technology can also be a meaningful accommodation for some students. This can include using digital copies of physical curriculum materials, text-to-speech or speech-to-text software, allowing students to use typing instead of handwriting for tasks, and technology allows us to change the font or size of text.

As the team considers which accommodation(s) allow for the appropriate and effective access to the curriculum, it is also important to consider if the student needs to be taught how to use the accommodation(s). Accommodations are not going to be successful if the student is not taught how to utilize them independently.

Additional Resources:

https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/acc/cresource/q1/p01/#content
https://eastersealsar.com/best-autism-classroom-accommodations-practices/

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