A Guide to Adaptations and Modifications

Developed in consultation with representation from the following educational associations; BC Council of Special Educators (BCCASE), Learning Assistance Teachers' Association (LATA), Special Educators' Association (SEA), Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools, and British Columbia Teacher's Federation (BCTF)

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A GUIDE TO ADAPTATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

In British Columbia, three principles of learning guide practice in the development of Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs), which contain the provincially prescribed learning outcomes for grades and subjects. These are:

- Learning requires the active participation of the student.
- Students learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.
- Learning is both an individual and group process.

These same three principles should guide the differentiation of instruction, assessment methods, and/or materials--particularly the principle that people learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.

Today's classrooms are diverse and inclusive by nature. Differentiation of instruction and assessment and the principles of universal design are now recognized practices for teachers.

Both differentiation and universal design provide systematic approaches to setting goals, choosing or creating flexible materials and media, and assessment. To undertake differentiation and universal design, teachers need to be aware of a range of accommodations (multiple means of representation, of expression, and/or of engagement) that may be necessary to help each student in the classroom succeed. These accommodations may take the form of adaptations and/or modifications.

Many students with special needs and significant learning challenges will be able to achieve the learning outcomes for subjects or courses with no or minor adaptations. Some may be able to achieve the learning outcomes of some subjects or courses with adaptations. A small proportion will need to work on individualized outcomes, goals different than the curriculum; this is referred to as modification.

Adaptations

In BC policy, all students should have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. (Policy Document: Special Education: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/special_ed.htm.) Adaptations are teaching and assessment strategies especially designed to accommodate a student's needs so he or she can achieve the learning outcomes of the subject or course and to demonstrate mastery of concepts.   Essentially, adaptations are "best practice" in teaching. A student working on learning outcomes of any grade or course level may be supported through use of adaptations.

Adaptations do not represent unfair advantages to students. In fact, the opposite could be true. If appropriate adaptations are not used, students could be unfairly penalized for having learning differences, creating serious negative impacts to their achievement and self-concept.

Examples of Adaptations

Accommodations in the form of adaptations occur when teachers differentiate instruction, assessment and materials in order to create a flexible learning environment. For example, a student could be working on below grade level learning outcomes in Language Arts and at grade level in all other subjects or courses, some of which require reading materials at the lower reading level.

Adaptations include, but are not limited to:

- audio tapes, electronic texts, or a peer helper to assist with assigned readings
- access to a computer for written assignments (e.g. use of word prediction software, spell-checker, idea generator)
- alternatives to written assignments to demonstrate knowledge and understanding
- advance organizers/graphic organizers to assist with following classroom presentations
- extended time to complete assignments or tests
- support to develop and practice study skills; for example, in a learning assistance block
- use of computer software which provides text to speech/speech to text capabilities
- pre-teaching key vocabulary or concepts; multiple exposure to materials
- working on provincial learning outcomes from a lower grade level

Best practice in teaching suggests that a record of successful adaptations for any student should be kept within a student's file to both document current practice and support future instructional needs. In the case of a student with special needs who has an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) or English as a Second Language students who have Annual Instructional Plans, successful adaptations are recorded in these plans to document how the student is being supported currently and also so other teachers will know what works well for that student.

For students with special needs, adaptations that are used for tests and exams must be included in their IEPs in order for them to be considered for adaptations to the provincial exam conditions (adjudication).
Students whose education programs include adaptations will generally be working toward graduating with a Dogwood Diploma.

Grading and Reporting When There Are Adaptations

Grading for students who have been provided with adaptations should be in relation to the outcomes of the curriculum.   If the learning outcomes that a student is working toward are from the curriculum of a grade level lower than the current grade placement, this should be indicated in the IEP or learning plan and in the body of the student's progress report. Further information on this subject is available in the Ministry document:
Reporting Student Progress: Policy and Practice:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/classroom_assessment/09_report_student_prog.pdf

Modifications

This section may not apply to students in ESL programs unless they are also identified as a student with special needs as determined by Ministry and district processes.

Accommodations in the form of modifications are instructional and assessment-related decisions made to accommodate a student's educational needs that consist of individualized learning goals and outcomes which are different than learning outcomes of a course or subject.

When To Use Modifications

The decision to use modifications should be based on the same principle as adaptations—that all students must have equitable access to learning, opportunities for achievement, and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. Before modifying the outcomes for a student, schools should review all instructional interventions tried and consider assessment information, utilizing a process that is ongoing and consultative—similar to IEP development practices overall.

Modifications should be considered for those students whose special needs are such that they are unable to access the curriculum (i.e., students with limited awareness of their surroundings, students with fragile mental/physical health, students medically and cognitively/multiply challenged.) Using the strategy of modifications for students not identified as special needs should be a rare practice.

In many cases, modifications need only form part of an educational program for a student with special needs, and they need not be a permanent or long term solution. Whether to use modifications should be reviewed on a regular basis. Decisions about modifications should be subject or course specific wherever possible. For example, a student with an intellectual disability may require modifications to a specific subject area such as mathematics; however, modifications may not be required to meet the provincial outcomes in physical education.

Although decisions about modifications to a student's courses or subjects may take place in grades earlier than Grade 10, a formal decision that an overall program is modified does not need to occur until Grade 10. The decision to provide modifications, particularly at the secondary school level, will result in students earning a School Completion Certificate upon leaving school rather than credits toward graduation or a Dogwood Diploma. Therefore, the critical decision of whether a students' education program should include modifications should not be made in isolation by a single classroom teacher. The decision should be carefully and thoughtfully made, in consultation with parents, school administration, and/or instructional support personnel. This decision should address longer term educational, career and life goals of students and encompass plans for attaining these goals.

Examples of Modifications

An educational program for a student might include a combination of accommodations which includes modifications. For example, a student could be working on grade level learning outcomes in Physical Education and Health and Career Education and below grade level learning outcomes in Mathematics, all with adaptations while at the same time working on individualized learning outcomes that meet the student's IEP goals in all other subjects. The individualized outcomes address functional life skills and foundational academic skills.

For students with special needs, modifications that consist of individualized learning outcomes or goals must be included in the IEP. Some further types of modifications include:
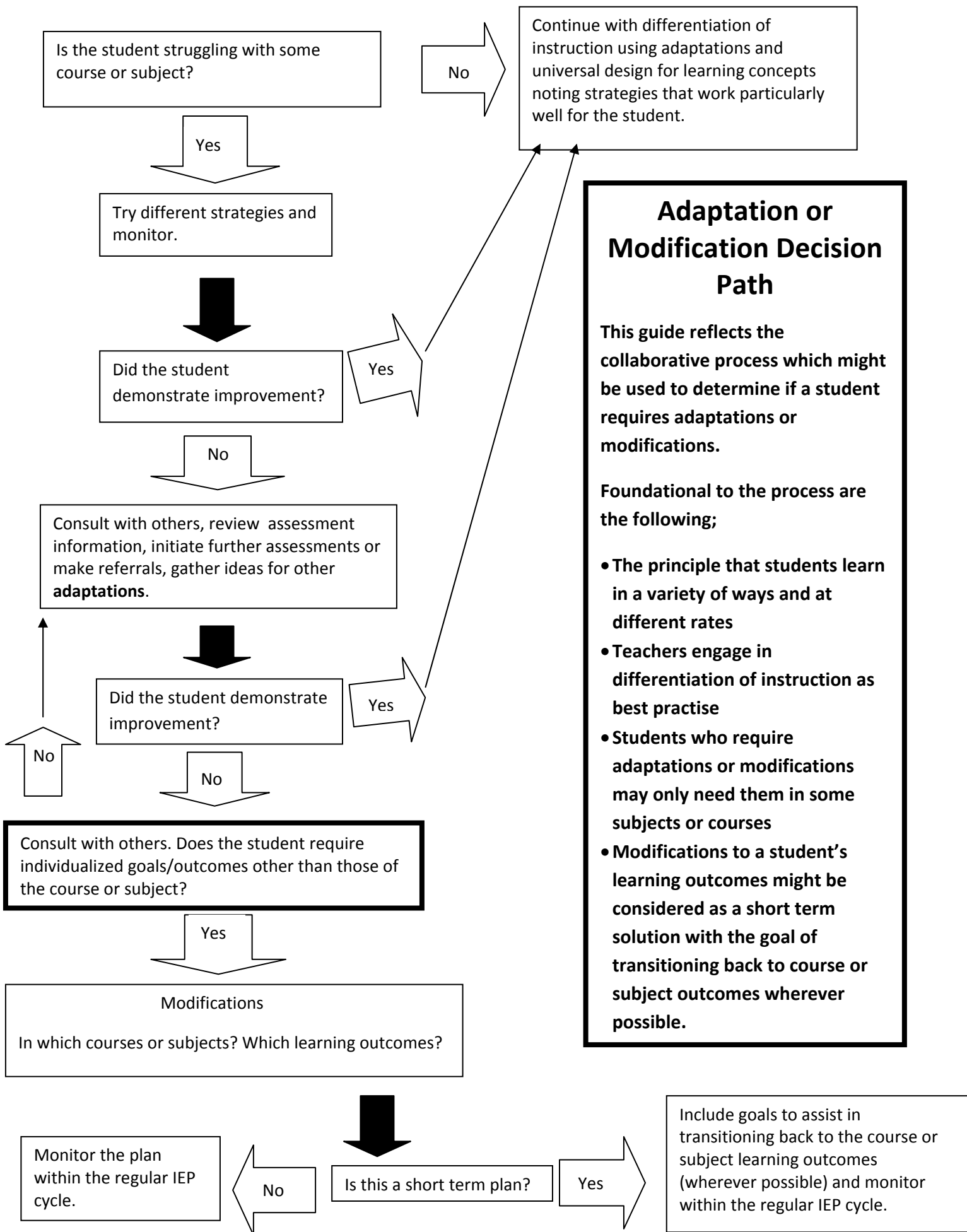
- Content and evaluation related to the course or subject but at a lower level of conceptual difficulty that is based on a student's individualized outcomes or goals. When students do well on this especially designed material, they have a chance to feel successful. For example, while students in a Grade 3 class are researching for presentations on the solar system, a student with special needs in this class uses a computer to drag and click planets into a template of the solar system and learns to say the names of each planet. At the secondary level, a Grade 9 student with special needs learns how to count change and manage a personal budget while other students are introduced to algebraic expressions.
- Only portions of the learning outcomes are addressed so that a student may participate in the classroom and feel success even though they are working at a conceptual level significantly different from the other students. For example, in a science class a student with special needs learns to identify safe and dangerous chemicals used in the lab, while other students carry out a chemistry experiment.
- Although related to the outcomes of the curriculum, the goals for a student with special needs are significantly different. For example, while other students are learning how to read and respond to text in a Grade 4 classroom, a student with special needs is learning how to listen to stories at a pre-primary level and when to turn the page at the appropriate time using assistive technology.

Grading and Reporting When there are Modifications

If schools are using BCeSIS or Student Achievement Data Exchange (SADE) to record progress for students in Grades 4 to 12, a value is required to be entered to maintain student records over time. For more information about BCeSIS, please contact your local school district. For more information about SADE, please see the following link: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/datacollections/sade/

Progress reports to parents for students with special needs who are working toward individualized outcomes or goals in an IEP rather than the outcomes of the curriculum for that subject or course may be done using structured written comments or letter grades. The most appropriate form of reporting for the student should be determined collaboratively at the school level. If letter grades are used when modifications have been made, the body of the student progress report should state that the evaluation is in relation to the individualized outcomes or goals and not in relation to learning outcomes for the subject or course. The specific IEP outcomes or goals evaluated should be included in the student progress report. Further information on this subject is available in the Ministry document: *Reporting Student Progress: Policy and Practice*: http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/classroom_assessment/09_report_student_prog.pdf

Is the student struggling with some course or subject?

No → Continue with differentiation of instruction using adaptations and universal design for learning concepts noting strategies that work particularly well for the student.

Yes ↓

Try different strategies and monitor.

Did the student demonstrate improvement?

Yes →

No ↓

Consult with others, review assessment information, initiate further assessments or make referrals, gather ideas for other **adaptations**.

Did the student demonstrate improvement?

Yes →

No ↓   No ↑

Consult with others. Does the student require individualized goals/outcomes other than those of the course or subject?

Yes ↓

Modifications

In which courses or subjects? Which learning outcomes?

Adaptation or Modification Decision Path

This guide reflects the collaborative process which might be used to determine if a student requires adaptations or modifications.

Foundational to the process are the following;

- **The principle that students learn in a variety of ways and at different rates**
- **Teachers engage in differentiation of instruction as best practise**
- **Students who require adaptations or modifications may only need them in some subjects or courses**
- **Modifications to a student's learning outcomes might be considered as a short term solution with the goal of transitioning back to course or subject outcomes wherever possible.**

Monitor the plan within the regular IEP cycle.

← No ← Is this a short term plan? → Yes → Include goals to assist in transitioning back to the course or subject learning outcomes (wherever possible) and monitor within the regular IEP cycle.