



# SEAC SOUNDBYTES

## *Understanding Accommodations, Modifications and Alternative Programs in an IEP*

*October 2018*

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The start of a new school year also means that soon classroom teachers will be working with their Special Education Resource Teachers (SERTs) to develop student Individual Education Plans (IEPs), which are usually ready for distribution to parents in the latter part of October.

Often times many of the terms used on the IEP can be confusing to parents. Terms such as **Accommodations, Modifications and Alternative Programs** as they relate to the Curriculum / Subjects Areas. What exactly does this mean and how does it affect the individual student?

**Accommodations:** When a subject is **accommodated** for a pupil nothing about the subject content changes. An easy way to explain this might be if you are reading a novel and you require reading glasses. Nothing about the content in your novel is changed but your reading glasses are considered an accommodation to be able to access the novel you wish to read. You require glasses as a support to see and absorb the material. Accommodations are categorized as instructional, environmental or assessment supports and are listed by category on the IEP. Accommodations that are routinely used by most teachers with the entire class are not listed. Accommodations include only those supports required by a student that differ from what is normally provided during classroom instruction. Some further examples include an alternative work space, duplicated notes, extra time, frequent breaks and reduction of tasks. To reiterate nothing about the subject matter or level of instruction changes when a subject is accommodated only.

**Modifications:** When a subject is **modified** for a student there are aspects of the curriculum in that subject that DO change. In most cases the student may be presented with material below the grade level of their peers. In other subjects a modification can take the form of fewer learning expectations, simplified tasks or in some cases higher level activities. Because the material is being modified or changed from the regular curriculum for the student's grade, it is necessary to record the pupil's current level of functioning in that subject, an annual goal for the pupil, a sample selection of the learning expectations being presented, teaching strategies and assessment methods. A modified subject is one that has been changed to meet the level where the pupil can be expected to begin to progress.

**Alternative:** When a subject is **alternative** it is different curriculum from Ontario Curriculum. Samples of Alternative Curriculum include, Communication Numeracy, Communication Literacy, Daily Living and Employability Skills, Personal Care, Social Skills Training, Orientation and Mobility Training. Because this curriculum is different from regular grade curriculum, a current level of functioning, an annual goal, sample learning expectations, teaching strategies, and assessment strategies are outlined in detail in each subject area.

Some students may have IEPs with only alternative curriculum. Some pupils may only have accommodated subjects. Some students may have a combination of subjects that are modified, some that are accommodated only and some alternative subjects outlined in their IEP.

For more information, please visit

<https://www.hcdsb.org/Programs/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationPlan/Pages/Individual-Education-Plans.aspx>

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