

Accommodations and My Child's Special Education Plan

The Department of Education is in the process of adopting a philosophy of teaching known as Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which is particularly effective at meeting the learning needs of the greatest number of students. The adoption of UDL means that some students who previously required a special education plan (SEP) to receive accommodations in the classroom, and may also have required special approval for accommodations during provincial assessments, will begin to receive accommodations without an SEP.

This document introduces UDL and explains why it eliminates the need for an SEP for certain students. You will also learn about changes that will be implemented during the 2010-11 school year relating to accommodations for instruction and assessment.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a research-based educational philosophy that provides a framework for designing curricula that enable all students to develop knowledge, skills and an enthusiasm for learning. The principles of UDL hold that the needs of the greatest number of students can be met by maximizing the usability of programs, services, practices and learning environments. Barriers to learning are reduced and supports are provided to ensure that students can participate in learning. You can learn more about UDL by visiting www.CAST.org.

The key to UDL is for the teacher to provide options in these learning areas:

The **what** of learning – The teacher uses various methods to present information so that all students can build knowledge.

The **how** of learning – The teacher provides different activities and opportunities for each student to express his or her knowledge and to learn skills.

The **why** of learning – The teacher builds enthusiasm for learning among all students by offering challenges, supports and encouragement that motivate and engage each individual.

UDL enables teachers and students to use a range of strategies, technologies or adjustments at their own discretion to meet learning needs in the classroom and during assessment. Because they are available to all students if required, these are called **universal accommodations** and they don't require an SEP or prior approval for provincial assessments.

A few examples of the many universal accommodations include sound-field systems, extra time, special seating and large print. When UDL and universal accommodations cannot meet a student's individual needs, an SEP will be required.

Justifiable Accommodations and the SEP

When UDL alone is insufficient to meet the individual needs of a student, an SEP is required, identifying justifiable accommodations that will meet the student's needs.

Justifiable accommodations are strategies, technologies or adjustments without which the student would be unable to access the curriculum. For example, a scribe who records a student's answers would be a justified accommodation if the child would not be able to succeed without the accommodation. The SEP documents justifiable accommodations and prior approval may be required to access them during provincial assessments.

Transitions During the 2010-2011 School Year

The 2010-2011 school year will be a transition year for students who have an accommodated (only) SEP. Your child's teacher will meet with teachers and parents to determine whether your child's necessary accommodations are universal and no longer require an SEP, or justified and require documentation in an SEP.

By the end of this school year, accommodated (only) SEPs will contain only justified accommodations. The SEP will require the justified accommodations for all subjects and will ensure that the student has access to the needed accommodation for both informal and formal assessment, including provincial assessments.

For additional information, refer to the *Accommodations for Instruction & Assessment* document or speak with your school principal or the student services learning specialist at the district office.

