

Chapter 5: Student-based Guidelines

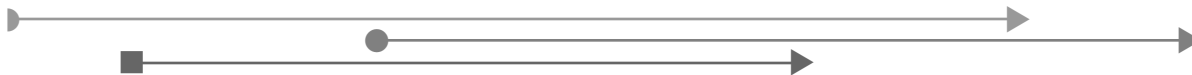
What's Included in This Chapter

- Introduction
- Role of the Low-Incidence Teacher
- Providing Accommodations and Modifications
- Adapting or Providing Alternative Tasks
- Adaptations and Accommodations Through Assistive Technology
- SETT Related to Standards
- Using GS SETT



*Creativity is a matter of perspective.
There's always more than one right answer.
Re-frame problems into opportunities.
Don't be afraid to make mistakes.
Break the pattern.
Train your technique.*

— Dewitt Jones



Student-based Guidelines

Introduction

Students whose low-incidence disabilities may hamper their access to the general education curriculum receive student-based services in special education. Students with disabilities in low-incidence areas present a diverse and unique set of challenges when integrating Minnesota Graduation Standards into their educational programs. Many of these students can access general curriculum and produce their own work with some accommodations. Through the use of accommodations, which, by definition, do not change the level of rigor, students with low-incidence disabilities can participate in classroom learning activities and assessments and demonstrate success within the standards.

Some students cannot perform within the full range of the general curriculum. These students will need modifications to some or all of the standards, or be exempted from some of the standards, in order to assure that the activities are both appropriate to their educational level and relevant to their educational goals. These students can participate in selected classroom learning activities and demonstrate achievement within the standards that have been modified to meet their skill levels and needs.

Areas of Low-Incidence Disabilities

The Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning has identified areas of low-incidence disabilities and criteria for determining those labels. The state has licensure for blind/visually impaired, physical and health disabilities, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The areas of autism, traumatic brain injury and other health impaired do not have specific licenses; however, there are guidelines for staff working with students with these categorical labels. The other special population included in this work are students who use augmentative communication devices. These students often have other labels, but may qualify for services from educational speech language pathologists.



This chapter presents guidelines for making decisions about how students with low-incidence disabilities can access the graduation standards. The guidelines are an adaptation of The SETT Framework developed and introduced to the field of assistive technology by Joy Zabala of the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling, University of Kentucky.

SETT considers the student (S), the learning environments (E), and the tasks (T) required for active participation in the activities of the environments. The next step is to identify the tools (T) needed for the student to address these tasks.



*SETT Related to Standards,
page 5-4.*

Another model has been developed for students with higher incidence special education needs of learning disabilities (LD) or emotional/behavior disorders (E/BD) who are not in center-based programming. The Collaborating to Accommodate Performance Standards (CAPS) model and accompanying training is available through the Minnesota CFL. CAPS presenters are two-member teams of practicing teachers, one from special education and one from general education, who are experienced with implementing the graduation standards in their classrooms. Trained in the collaborative classroom model, they are eager to share their knowledge and expertise with other educators. CAPS training is designed for teams of general and special education teachers. The trainings emphasize collaboration between general and special education in order to make the general curriculum accessible for all learners. CAPS training can be scheduled through the CAPS coordinators. Information on how to contact them can be found on page 7-8.

Role of the Low-Incidence Teacher

The team of educators who developed the student-based portion of this framework defined both their role and the expectations for students in their philosophy about the delivery of standards:

“The goal of education for students with low-incidence disabilities is maximal participation in inclusive school and community environments. This can be promoted through completion of curricular activities related to the Minnesota Graduation Standards. The low-incidence staff are effective IEP team members in their roles as consultants for the implementation of Minnesota Graduation Standards in special education.”

This philosophy reflects the belief that success in implementing graduation standards for students with low-incidence needs will depend on all members of special education teams being familiar with the standards, the procedures for documenting student performance, and the role of technology. When standards are incorporated into the educational plan of all students with low-incidence needs, teams can better prepare students for the world beyond school. Through the standards, which are selected based upon educational and transitional goals, students will have a wider range of educational opportunities and will potentially be exposed to a more challenging curriculum.

Providing Accommodations and Modifications

One of the primary functions of the low incidence teacher is to adapt curriculum to make it accessible. The graduation standards should be approached in the same manner as other curriculum tasks by special education teams since the standards are integrated into content curriculum and are approached as other curriculum requirements. The gen-

eral education teacher can assist the IEP team in understanding the content and rigor of the performance assessments, but the specific accommodations needed to help a student complete the performance assessments will generally be more familiar to the low-incidence teacher on the student's IEP team.



List of Possible Accommodations to Assess the Standards, Appendix 3.

Many students whose only disability is sensory or motor can usually be expected to complete the performance assessments using the accommodations that are already in place as a part of the student's educational plan. These students can often complete their performance assessments at the "Pass State" level with the same rigor as their peers. The low-incidence teacher will collaborate with the general education teacher to offer appropriate accommodations for the specific tasks.

Students with low-incidence disabilities may also receive other special education services due to unique learning needs. For these students, the low-incidence teacher should work closely with other special education and general education teachers, and related services staff, to determine if the student has both the ability and experience to participate in the performance assessment and if the student's performance can be enhanced through accommodations and modifications. Each teacher has a distinct role. The general education teacher knows the content of the standard and the specific tasks of the performance assessment. The special education teacher adapts the content and makes accommodations/modifications when needed to meet the student's learning needs. Documentation of modifications is required using the state IEP Appendix F.



"Appendix F" and Profile of Learning IEP Planning Forms are reproduced in Appendix 2.

Adapting or Providing Alternative Tasks

Some tasks in the performance assessments will be easy to accommodate. For example, reading materials can be put into Braille. Other tasks are simply inappropriate for a student who is blind. Completing technical drawings for the purpose of teaching another person how to assemble an item is one example for which a suitable alternative task would need to be selected. The student who is blind could be expected to write technical information rather than draw it. Another example would be to allow a student with a physical impairment to use assistive technology for the completion of presentations or writing tasks. Students with low-incidence disabilities should not be penalized or exempted because the task is not appropriate for them.



Suggestions for Alternative Tasks to Assess the Standards, Appendix 4.

The graduation standards should be considered within the IEP planning process for each student. As standards are presented in the curriculum, the tasks for each performance assessment will need to be examined to determine the appropriate accommodations and modifications.

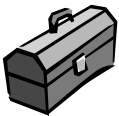


Adaptations for Accommodating Students Who Are Blind/Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Physically Impaired, Appendix 5.



Adaptations and Accommodations through Assistive Technology

Assistive technology can range from a low-tech tool such as a pencil grip to a high-tech augmentative communication device. The range of available assistive technology is growing daily, providing students more options to fully participate in the standards. Intermediate School District 287 has created a web-based assistive technology database which offers specific information on a variety of software and hardware products and devices for the completion of the standards. To access this web site, go to <<http://www.int287.k12.mn.us/main.htm>>. An assistive technology checklist for many of the common devices is included in this framework.



Assistive Technology Checklist, Appendix 7.

SETT Related to Standards

Assistive technology is the means by which many students with low-incidence disabilities can participate in the standards. SETT was first proposed as a collaborative process for making decisions about a student's need for assistive technology, but it also can be effective when teams make decisions about the standards for students with disabilities.

The special education teachers on the low-incidence team linked SETT to the IEP process for the purpose of referencing the graduation standards. This adaptation, called Graduation Standards SETT (GS SETT) will be used throughout this chapter.

GS SETT is ... GS SETT is not

GS SETT is:

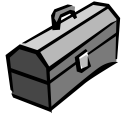
- A model for thinking as a team, internally and externally
- A team process that promotes attaining the Minnesota Graduation Standards at the highest level possible
- A systematic approach for decision making
- A process that is data driven
- A process that shows accountability
- A document to support the IEP due process
- A reference guide

GS SETT is not:

- A replacement for any existing evaluations in a program
- A required set of documents to be filled out and filed
- A model that increases the workload

Using GS SETT

Included in the Appendixes are forms for using GS SETT. The purpose of these forms is to create a format for shared decision making in considering student needs.



Forms for Using GS SETT, Appendixes 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

A. Forms for the IEP Team

1. IEP Planning Worksheets (long form):
Included are note pages with questions for each of the GS SETT areas, including student, environment, tasks, and tools and strategies. Each IEP team member should have received a set of note pages prior to meeting. Individuals can record their observations and other data. This information will provide the context for all contributions at the team meeting. Also included is an assistive technology checklist to give ideas when considering tools.
2. IEP Planning Worksheet (short form):
After a team is familiar with the GS SETT process, the team members may decide to use the short form. It is not recommended to take this shortcut until IEP teams are comfortable with GS SETT.

B. Forms for Parent(s) and Student

These special note pages for the parent(s) and the student are designed to address their specific viewpoints.

C. Forms for the IEP Meeting

1. IEP Conference Recording (GS SETT Group Memory Plan): This plan offers a suggested format for a team meeting. Each box represents one page for a visual display on a flip chart or overhead. It is important for team members to see the information as well as hear it. The display provides a place to record what the team has agreed to and to note the team's consensus.
2. IEP Group Plan Summary: At or following a team meeting, these pages are completed to record the shared ideas from the meeting and offer a shared group memory. A recorder takes complete notes and later distributes them to all the team members. The team can decide whether this summary becomes a part of the student's permanent file.

Some or all of these forms may be used in the three-step process described on the following pages.



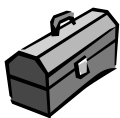
Three Steps for IEP Planning, pages 5-6, 5-7, and 5-8.



STEP 1: Compile the Performance Assessments Related to Student's Coursework

What will be required of the student?

Reviewing the performance assessments clearly focuses the decision making for the team. The Appendixes contain forms provided to the student, parent(s), and staff for preparation and notetaking at the meeting. Following this process ensures good communication and effective collaboration among the student, parent(s), and staff.



Forms for Using GS SETT, Appendixes 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

STEP 2: Identify the Team and Supports

Who can assist in supporting completion of the performance assessments within one or more student learning environments?

At times the team may not be thoroughly knowledgeable about the assessments or other resources. If this is the case, they need to obtain additional input from knowledgeable individuals who can assist in this process. For instance, decision makers on the IEP team should include general education staff in whose classes students will be expected to complete performance assessments. With proper representation, the IEP team can identify the supports a student needs to complete the required educational tasks of the specific performance assessment.

The IEP team is responsible for answering the questions about the **student**, the learning **environment**, and the **tasks**. They will also need to provide information about what adaptations have previously been implemented and note their effectiveness. This information should include learning strategies, the assistive technology devices ranging from “no tech” to “low tech” to “high tech,” and comments about the effectiveness. *Only if additional support or information is needed, initiate Step 3.*

STEP 3: The Decision-Making Process

Can the student complete the performance assessment as written?

Answer yes or no to the following question:

Will the adaptations (learning strategies, accommodations, and assistive technology devices) already in place enable the student to meet the rigor of the district's performance assessments of the standard at the same level, desired independence, and expectation as his or her peers?

YES

If the answer is YES, the current plan is working and documentation regarding accommodations should be written into the IEP. This may include documentation of use of assistive technology. The student will be expected to achieve the standard at the "Pass State" level.

NO

If the answer is NO, then four options are possible:

1. Accommodations

The team may create new accommodations through the addition of teaching or support strategies. Assistive technology may also be identified and put into place with the expectation that the student will complete the performance assessment with the same rigor as his or her peers. The student will achieve the standard at a "Pass State" level.

2. Alternative Tasks for Assessment

The team may create an alternate performance assessment. Brainstorming solutions through the tools and processes offered by GS SETT may give new options to students. A trial plan (e.g., setting up a six-to-eight-week trial of a portable notetaker) may be one of the solutions. Implementation of the trial plan is next. A team member monitoring the student progress during this extended consideration should record student progress and document on the IEP that the student is working at the "Pass State" level.

3. Modifications

After using GS SETT, the team may decide that the student cannot meet the standard using only accommodations or by creating an alternate performance assessment. Altering the expectations by modifying the standard may consist of eliminating the requirements of a portion of the performance assessment or reducing the rigor expected for the individual student.

The team may change the rigor of the performance assessment in order for the student to succeed. The result of the student's work will be evaluated using an individual rating procedure and recorded as "Pass Individual" on the IEP.



Accommodations for a Content Standard, Appendix 12.

4. Exemptions:

An option for “Exempt,” not requiring a student with an IEP to complete a particular standard but work toward an individual goal, is decided by the IEP team when a student’s disability prevents success on a specified content standard. A team may only consider an exemption if the IEP has specifically modified the educational goals of a student at a cognitive level considered significantly below the range or scope of the standards.

Consider the following in determining whether an individual student is incapable of participating in the specific content standard.

- The special education statewide guidelines define incapable as “a total lack of cognitive ability to participate within the subject area.”
- The team may consider exemption for a student if participating in a content standard would be detrimental (e.g., cause extreme anxiety) to the student. This is not a wide door and does not include reasonable levels of stress or anxiety in an instructional or testing situation.
- A team may consider an exemption if the IEP has specifically modified educational goals so that a student has not been exposed to material within the range or scope of the standard.

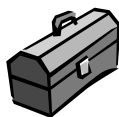
Teams need to remember that an exemption should be based on the student’s inability to complete the standard, not a district’s inability to deliver the standard to the student. A student may only be exempted when individual needs dictate this decision. It should also be noted that a student has a right to refuse exemption(s) and may pursue graduation without the

proposed exemption(s). Minnesota Graduation Rule Profile of Learning/High Standards requires written parent consent whenever the standards are exempted, adjusted, or modified.

A student should not be exempted because of:

- His/her disability category
- Anticipated low scores
- History of low test scores
- Cognitive, physical, sensory, emotional, or communicative disabilities
- Program placement or setting

If a team decides a student is exempt from a content standard, they should consider whether there is another content standard or an IEP goal specific to that area of learning that is appropriate for the student and include the goal(s) in the IEP. In some cases, the student may be incapable of addressing any of the standards for the school year. The decision to exempt is documented on the student’s cumulative report and progress of the student’s goal and level of progress is documented in the student IEP.



“Appendix F” and Profile of Learning IEP Planning Forms, Appendix 2. This Appendix includes a sample of the optional standards worksheets (revised) available from CFL for each content standard.