

## When to Adapt Assignments

- When the student's disability negatively affects his/her ability to obtain or retain information, express ideas or knowledge, focus and concentrate on tasks or instruction or complete assignments. This could be a result of:

specific learning disabilities

disorders such as Bipolar Disorder or Schizophrenia that cause fluctuations in brain chemistry that can result in cyclically varying levels of control

Attention Deficit Disorder (with or without hyperactivity) which interferes with the brain's ability to discriminate between essential and non-essential stimuli and therefore interferes with the student's ability focus

changes in medications or in the interaction of the medication with the student's body chemistry (this can occur throughout the day or from day to day or from week to week...) or in the therapeutic levels of the medications

emotional conditions such as depression (which often appears as agitation and/or aggression in younger children), trauma or other situations which make it difficult or even impossible for the student to focus on school for periods of time

- When the student can handle the concepts being taught but not length or format of particular assignments or methods of instruction.

Looking at and making accommodations for individual learning styles and abilities, levels of motivation, scheduling needs, and the functionality of the curriculum is often essential when trying to help a student be successful in his/her education. It is not a matter of "giving in" to the student, but a matter of allowing him/her to use his/her strengths to balance areas in which he/she has difficulty.

- When, as a result of his/her disability and/or mindset, the student is not completing assignments. Many students need to relearn success and to do that, they may need to start back at the beginning and take small steps forward.

Particularly when working with students exhibiting non-compliant or oppositional behaviors, it is important to start interventions where the student is currently functioning (emotionally, behaviorally and academically) rather than where we think they should be. If a student is on task for ten minutes at a time, it is appropriate to design work sessions in ten minute increments until such time as he/she is able to attend longer. This is usually a gradual process and is generally directly correlated with the student's level of interest in the task assigned. Most of us attend longer to things in which we have a high level of interest. If what we are doing isn't working, then we need to look at the situation from the student's perspective and start there.