



**MODULE 9**

**Working with Exceptional Learners in a Standards-based System**

**OVERVIEW**

To differentiate instruction and assign meaningful grades to exceptional students (students with disabilities, EL students, gifted and talented students), it is necessary to create proficiency scales that include appropriate levels of support referred to as accommodations or modifications (i.e., RTI). Preassessments, based on general education proficiency scales, should be administered to determine students' baselines before adapting the scales to their particular needs.

Accommodations are supports put in place to help students achieve grade-level expectations, including changes to how information is presented, how students are asked to respond, where instruction takes place, and the timing or scheduling of instruction. Students who receive accommodations are still expected to achieve the same levels of proficiency as students without accommodations; the accommodations simply allow students to demonstrate their learning in ways that work best for them. Accommodations, then, do not result in lower or higher expectations and do not require a different grading scale or system.

Modifications, on the other hand, shift the expectations either up or down from the grade-level expectations. Creating a modified scale involves adjusting the standard at the 3.0 level and the simpler goal at the 2.0 level, as well as the assessment activities for levels 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0. Some options for modifying scales include moving the level descriptors up on the scale so that score 2.0 descriptors become score 3.0 descriptors and score 3.0 descriptors become score 4.0 descriptors, changing the activities on the scale to make them simpler, and inserting descriptors from lower-grade-level scales. The opposite would work for gifted and talented students.

To determine grades for exceptional students, follow the same guidelines as for the general population; however, report student progress based on the proficiency scale used for instruction/assessment. When modifications are made, grades show progress toward the modified standards, which are different from those of the general population. Modifications change what students' grades mean.

**READ**

Heflebower, T.; Hoegh, J. K.; Warrick, P. B.; & Flygare, J. (2019). *A teacher's guide to standards-based learning*. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research.

Chp. 7

<https://www.amazon.com/Teachers-Standards-Based-Learning-Instruction-Curriculum/dp/1943360251>

**DO**

- [PPT to support this module](#)

**Facilitation Guides:**

- [Accommodations or Modifications](#)
- [Assessment Guidelines for Exceptional Learners](#)

**Templates:**

- [Proficiency Scale Template for Exceptional Learners](#)

**Handouts:**

- [Module 9 Terminology](#)

**REFER**

**Examples/Additional Reference Items:**

- [Examples of Accommodations for English Learners](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Accommodations for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Accommodations for EL Students](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Accommodations for EL Students—second part](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Accommodations for Gifted Learners](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Modifications for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Modifications for EL Students](#)
- [Sample P-scale with Modifications for Gifted Learners](#)

**Videos:**

- [Differentiation](#)
- [Differentiation plus Personalized Learning](#)

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. In what ways can educators modify and accommodate proficiency scales for exceptional learners? Why should educators do that?
2. What kinds of modifications and accommodations are commonly used in differentiated instruction?
3. What guidelines should educators follow when assigning grades to exceptional students?