

Key: Adaptations (Based on Turkish practice)

One of the six keys in this model that leads to successful inclusion of young children is “adaptations.” This is the process of adjusting or modifying materials, the environment, interactions, or teaching methods to support the individual child.

Adaptations is an umbrella term that includes **accommodations** and **modifications**. In general, adaptations allow children with special needs to participate in inclusive settings by compensating for their weaknesses. **Accommodations** accomplish the objective of compensating the weaknesses without modifying the curriculum, in other words, accommodations make a difference to *how* the child is learning, not *what* the child is learning. **Modifications** refer to adaptations which change or lower expectations or standards, modifications include changes in instructional level, content/curriculum, performance criteria or assignment structure.

Each teacher, child, and classroom is unique, and adaptations are specific to each situation. Identified goals, objectives and expectations that will address the child’s needs lead to the development of modifications and accommodations that address those needs and individual education plan. Ongoing evaluation enables revisions when needed.

There are many reasons to support the children with adaptations in inclusive settings.

- functional adaptations which are related to children’s most basic needs for health, safety, communication, increase the independence and reduce the one-on-one assistance
- adaptations that promote play, learning and accomplish individual goals and outcomes help children engage with the environment through those activities.
- adaptations also assist the children by encouraging socialization. Since the development of social skills and friendship is an important part of early experiences, adaptations that ensure interaction with other children during activities provide more support.

In educational settings, while implementing adaptations for diverse educational needs teachers struggle to meet the needs of all learners within a common setting. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) -a concept for learning as a means of focusing research, development, and educational practice on understanding diversity and applying technology to facilitate learning- is an approach that guides educators to design educational interventions. UDL provides an equitable, flexible, success-oriented curriculum in addition to simple and intuitive instruction, multiple means of presentation and appropriate level of child effort. UDL addresses and redresses the primary barrier to making expert learners of all children.

Meeting the developmental and academic needs of all children in a learning environment is not an easy task. By creating learning experiences that reflect a belief in multiple styles of learning, early childhood educator can effectively differentiate instruction and offer a variety of ways for children to represent their learning by also accommodating and modifying according to their needs.