

Accommodations, Modifications and Remediation: Is There a Need for All 3?



Rina Gupta, Ph.D., C. Psych
Queens University

- **Accommodations** represent the tools that a student is given to access the curriculum, **modifications** allow students to work at their level, and **remediation** is akin to working on the root, or foundation of the problem.

Vanessa



- Grade 3
- LD- language and math, slow processing speed.
- Mom reports that it takes her 4 hours to do homework (done by her peers in 1 hr).
- Vanessa has access to extra time in class and we arranged a reduction in homework volume.
- She participates in a special-Ed group every day and her mother assists her with her homework. Mom said that she often has to re-explain concepts introduced in class.
- Vanessa saw me weekly for emotional encouragement and I also provided guidance to the school and mom.

- Vanessa was told, by me, that she has a learning disability and that she can succeed academically but that means working harder than her peers.
- Vanessa is not give access to a scribe, a reader, or any AT at this point in time.
- Her work level is temporarily modified down by one grade level for math and reading activities. Her writing activities are not modified but expectations (less volume)are accommodated to allow her a sense of success with less frustration.

Jonathan



- LD (language), slow processing speed
- Weak phonetic processing.
- Stopped doing work in school and was labelled by his grade 1 teacher as "a child who cannot learn".
- His parents switched him to a new school in grade 2. An assessment was conducted and an IEP was put in place. He was given a reader, a scribe, and a modified curriculum. His grades were often in the B's.
- He came to me in grade 7. He can not write a sentence or read a paragraph. Functioning at the grade K to 3 level.

- Jonathan was never remediated
- Jonathan never was told he could succeed if he tried harder and he was never encouraged by someone who believed in him.
- His parents trusted the school system and had no idea how weak and behind his skills were.

Here is what is interesting

- Jonathan was guaranteed “success”
- Vanessa was not
- Jonathan coasted through school (but struggled emotionally)
- Vanessa did not. She had to put in a lot of hard work. She had to go to summer school twice.
- Jonathan’s grades through primary school were stronger than Vanessa’s. He never failed a subject, she did.

What do you think?

- Provided they are now both 12 years old, who do you think has a better self-esteem?
- Do you think Vanassa's SE was negatively affected by being placed in special Ed groups (pulled out of class daily), by being told she needs to work harder?
- Do you think Jonathan's SE was preserved by the ability to have a scribe, etc..?

Self-Efficacy

- Who of the two do you think ended up with a healthier sense of self-efficacy?

What is the difference between accommodation and remediation?

- Accommodation allows a student with challenges to access the curriculum. Remediation targets and attempts to strengthen an area of weakness.
- ALL children should have access to some level of accommodation and remediation when needed.
- Accommodations: Extra time (slow processing), preferential seating (ADHD), a reader (reading disability), a note-taker (dysgraphia, broken arm), etc...

Accommodations alone: Problem still exists

- However, none of these accommodations can solve the problem. The arm is still broken; the child still cannot write; the child still has ADHD, the child still cannot read.



Remediation is designed to strengthen the weakness



- Academically, a child with foundation issues (i.e., basic skills issues) will have long-term symptoms.
- Reliving symptoms via accommodation alone only provides a Band-Aid effect.
- Like foundation repair, remediation can be an expensive, lengthy, but worthy investment.

Remediation involves in-depth analysis

EX: Not all reading difficulties have the same origin.

If you can identify the main area of struggle (RAN, Phonetic, visual-spatial), you *can* strengthen it.

If accommodation is the route to addressing the problems at a young age (i.e., a reader), they are able to access the curriculum but often don't gain the skills.

One-size-fits all approach is more cost efficient and is easier on the child in the short-run. Immediate benefits with long term costs.

Remediation is people intensive

- Given the wide variety of causes for academic difficulties, and the wide range of solutions for those problems, there is no one-size-fits-all remedy.
- This necessitates highly qualified teachers in all academic arenas so that the needs of every student are met.

- Research consistently points to the need for small group instruction for effective remediation, and this, too, results in a need for more specially trained teachers.



- Teachers must also have access to other qualified individuals, such as psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and school administrators

Remediation is time intensive

- Teachers are not trained or equipped for this type of teaching, nor do they have the time to tend to students with specialized learning needs.
- True remediation requires a lot of time and effort.
- Teachers also need time to analyze student work and progress so that modifications to the program can be made in a timely manner to best serve the student.

Remediation works because the brain acts like a muscle and reacts to experience.

- Research has demonstrated to us the importance of early remediation interventions, and we now know that through regular practice, the brain can be modified and strengthened at any age.
- Earlier is better...but it is never too late to make changes. I've helped improve reading skills in people with severe dyslexia in their 40's.



National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

- Commissioned the National Reading Panel in 2000
- 480 page scientific report- reviewed all evidence-based reading research
- Concluded the importance of developing early literacy: conventional literacy skills and precursor skills
- Identified 6 variables correlated with later literacy development and maintained predictive power independent of IQ or SES.
- Identified 5 variables (early literacy skills) moderately correlated

Variables correlated with later success

6 highly

- PA phonetic ability
- AK alphabet knowledge
- RAN: letters/digits,
- RAN: objects/colours
- Writing: ability to write letters in isolation of writing their own name
- Phonological memory

5 moderately

- Conventions about print
- Early decoding
- Oral language
- Vocabulary
- Memory

The committee focused on studies of remediation involving 5 styles of intervention

- Code focused- 78
- Shared reading- 19
- Parent-home programs- 32
- Preschool & K programs- 33
- Language enhancement interventions- 28

Results

“ All showed significant and moderate sized effects”.

“Remediation works”

“Best earlier on”

“Many of the high-impact instructional strategies involved activities and procedures different from those typically seen in early childhood classrooms”

National Early Literary Panel (NELP)

- Convened in 2002
- Screened over 7000 scientific publications (1,824 retained for analysis)
- Similar predictors were identified but they also focused on visual tracking, visual-spatial, form perception.
- They identified 10 variables- strong predictors of later conventional literacy that are reliable and highly stable and can respond to remediation.

Every student is entitled to success- Ontario's policy

- Children in primary school and high-school are over-accommodated in order to ensure good grades.
- I have seen enough evidence of this to speak with certainty.
- Parents sometimes try to compensate with after-school tutoring but this is usually designed to keep up with school work and lacks a remediation focus.

The long-run scenario

- Inevitably, **when accommodation supersedes remediation, the student is certain to fall further and further behind** because he or she lacks the important basics upon which higher level concepts are built.

Early intervention results in..

- Independence later with minimal use of accommodations
- Some issues can not be remediated and do require accommodations, but early intervention allows students to understand their unique needs and allows them to take ownership of their learning (work harder, pick up on tricks and strategies that are effective). **Empowerment is key.**

A 15 year follow-up study of low-income children in primary school

- **Results** Relative to the preschool comparison group and adjusted for several covariates, children who participated in the preschool intervention for 1 or 2 years had a higher rate of high school completion; more years of completed education; and lower rates of juvenile arrest, violent arrests, and school dropout. Both preschool and school-age participation were significantly associated with lower rates of grade retention and special education services.
- Better educational and social outcomes up to age 20
- Arthur J. Reynolds, PhD; Judy A. Temple, PhD; Dylan L. Robertson; et al (2001)



- A coordinated system of *proactive practices* increases the likelihood of improving the outcomes of children vulnerable to learning and behavioral problems because it enables educators to respond in a timely manner to children who are experiencing difficulties meeting the social and academic demands of school (e.g., Bullis & Walker, 1994; Simmons et al., 2000).

Student empowerment

- When students begin to understand their learning profile in detail, they become a much better advocate for themselves in terms of asking for *appropriate* accommodations as well as understanding the role they need to play in order to ensure success.



Moving forward

- The past 2 decades have been very productive in revealing many of the characteristics, causes, and consequences of children's learning and behavioral difficulties.
- Although there is much left to learn, we now know a great deal about how to identify children deemed at risk for school failure and how to effectively intervene.
- As schools struggle to find more effective ways to meet the needs of these children, it is imperative that reform efforts rest on empirically supported, systemic practices *which include remediation.*

Why is this so important?

- Accommodation alone, and pushing students through, does not prepare students for post-secondary education.
- They are getting “good grades” despite functioning years behind their peers.
- They leave high school expecting to receive the same accommodations and supports in college/university, *and the same success.*

Anxiety/ Depression on the rise across Ontario post secondary campuses.

- Ill prepared students (independent living skills, academic skills)
- Can't compete/ cope

Technology / expectation overload

- Students now live in a world where they can't unplug, can't relax, and believe they must stay at the top of their class, no matter what
- Harder now to get jobs. An undergrad degree doesn't cut it anymore. The perception is that you need to do very well.

Are today's young adults somehow less equipped to cope?

- Failure earlier on is important
- The ability to cope, resilience, is an acquired skill
- Kids need to struggle, they need to learn to work hard in certain circumstances.
- They need a host of experiences under their belt (summer jobs, helping around the house, learning to be independent).

Over-accommodating students..

**stunts all the processes just
mentioned.**

Eliminates hardship, kills work ethic, limits resiliency

The learning environment itself represents the
disability.

I've noticed...

Most students who are over-accommodated, who are years behind their peers academically, lag behind their peers in regards to *self-confidence*, *self-efficacy*, and *independent life skills*. They develop a learned helplessness that parents often feel the need to cater to.



Principal Daniel Woolf

- “There’s a generation of students now—and I’m not saying it’s every student—but a tendency to want to be a winner in all that they do. They all get a trophy at field day; they all get a treat bag at the party; and then they get to university and suddenly find they’re now playing in a different league, and no longer necessarily the smartest in their class.”

Ontario University and College Health Association (OUCHA)

- OUCHA published the results from a survey of more than 25,000 students attending Ontario colleges and universities in the spring of 2016.
- The survey suggests rates of anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts, as well as suicide attempts are up from its first survey in 2013.

OUCHA

- 65 per cent of students reported experiencing overwhelming anxiety in the previous year (up from 57 per cent in 2013).
- 46 per cent reported feeling so depressed in the previous year it was difficult to function (up from 40 per cent in 2013).
- 13 per cent had seriously considered suicide in the previous year (up from 10 per cent in 2013).

OUCHA

- 2.2 per cent reported attempting suicide in the last year (up from 1.5 per cent in 2013).
- Nine per cent reported attempting suicide sometime in the past (not restricted to last year).

Over-accommodating is similar to over-parenting

- They both interfere with a person's self-efficacy
- https://www.ted.com/talks/julie_lythcott_haims_how_to_raise_successful_kids_without_overparenting

It's hard to do the right thing at the college or university level

- We need to start earlier. In preschool, in elementary schools and in high-schools.
- We need to teach our students that growth and change are possible, with their buy-in and our support.
- Work ethic and the right attitude will take most students a very long way.
- Every student has a strength and a talent that can be nurtured.

Closing statements

- It' ok for students to experience failure early on. Actually, it's a great opportunity for growth
- A student's self-worth can't be tied into their grades. Students are more than their grades.



- We need to understand that remediation works. With advances in technology we have access to treatment of ADHD (neurofeedback), dyslexia (Fast ForWord and Cellfield), and visual-spatial/visual and short-term memory skills (Cogmed). These programs are the first of their generation.
- These types of programs will become more effective, accessible and affordable. Until then, know that remediation the old-fashioned way makes a difference.