

Specially Designed Instruction and More

Adaptations and Modifications

Supplementary Aids and Services

Accommodations

The foundation for effective special education is the quality and use of research-based curricula and instruction in the general education classroom. Special education services are defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as “Specially Designed Instruction” (SDI) that is: adapting general education instruction. This document is a brief guide to the definitions of various services that are part of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a child with a disability.

Strong Foundational General Education Instruction

Effective general education instruction is based on research that demonstrates various methods and instructional approaches that have been shown to be effective when implemented with integrity. These include a research-based curriculum and use of instructional strategies can be delivered flexibly to make teaching engaging and result in learning by a variety of children and youth with different backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and languages. Some of these instructional types or frameworks are:

- [Explicit instruction](#) for effective and efficient teaching
- [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) framework
- [Differentiated instruction](#) with flexible grouping
- [Peer-mediated instruction](#)
- [Culturally and linguistically responsive](#) teaching
- [High Leverage Practices \(HLPs\)](#)
- [Cooperative Learning](#) and [Kagan Strategies](#)
- [Workshop Model](#) for lessons
- [Scaffolding](#) for different learners - [strategies](#)
- [Chunking](#) to increase learning

Supplementary Aids and Services IDEA Section [300.42](#)

For learners with disabilities to be successful in learning alongside their nondisabled peers in the general education classroom, the IDEA requires that IEP teams identify the supplementary

aids and services needed. By definition, this is: “aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children.” It is generally accepted that supplementary aids may include:

- ◆ **Equipment** such as an FM system and hearing aids, specialized software, close captioning on videos or PowerPoint presentations, or an alternative communication device.
- ◆ **Adapted learning materials** such as an adapted graphic organizer with pictures or specific vocabulary, a visual schedule with picture cues, color coded materials, or an adapted book.
- ◆ **Environmental supports** such as preferential seating, altered desk arrangement, sensory modifications (use of fidgets, headphones to reduce sound, filter over harsh lighting).
- ◆ **Social supports** such as developing a “Circle of Friends,” embedding social skills instruction into academic group work, or intentional social grouping for promoting pro-social engagement with peers.

Accommodations

An accommodation provides learners with disabilities equitable access during instruction and assessment in the areas of presentation of content, learner response, setting for instruction or assessment, and schedule. They help “level the playing field,” ensuring that students can participate and demonstrate their knowledge without altering the fundamental content or expectations. Examples of accommodations are:

- ◆ Sign language interpreter
- ◆ Use of braille
- ◆ Large print materials
- ◆ Extended time to complete assignments or to process instructions
- ◆ Manipulatives or equipment
- ◆ Audiobooks
- ◆ Special lighting
- ◆ Breaks built into the schedule
- ◆ Use of highlighter

Accommodations are listed on an IEP and must be provided for an equitable learning opportunity.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) IDEA Sec. [300.39](#) Special education

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) means “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of a child with a disability, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction” to:

- ☑ address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability,
- ☑ ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, and
- ☑ enable the child to meet the educational standards that apply to all children.

What is critical in the definition of SDI is that there is no “alternate” or “parallel” special education curriculum. In a letter from the U.S. Department of Education, the Director of the Office of Special Education Programs made clear that the [curriculum](#) for learners with disabilities is the **same curriculum** as for nondisabled children. Alternate academic standards for those few learners with significant cognitive disability must be aligned to grade-level content standards but may be standards below grade level. This means that teachers begin to plan for a child who takes the alternate assessment by starting with the standards for all learners in the subject area and grade level and use their state’s alternate standards to identify the focus of their learning in the general education lesson. The goals on the IEP are markers of learning but should not be the only thing that the child learns; it is required that the team focus on progress in the grade level curriculum as well as IEP goals.

NOTE: SDI is a responsibility shared between general educators, special educators, and related service providers, according to IDEA. Paraprofessionals can support general education instruction and SDI only under the direct guidance and supervision of a credentialed educator.

Adaptations are changes to general education instruction to promote learning that is impacted by a child’s disability. It is the provision of supports or services that help a student overcome barriers in the curriculum, environment, social setting, or general education teaching method. SDI (adapted instruction) is based on research with learners with disabilities. Questions you can ask to determine if the instruction is differentiated as a tier 1 intervention or is it actually [SDI](#):

- ✓ Are the adaptations needed because of the disability? (yes)
- ✓ Can the child make progress and acquire grade level performance without the adaptation to access the curriculum? (no)
- **Content** is **what** is taught. SDI may alter the way the learner acquires knowledge and skill for the grade level standard. For those who are taking the alternate assessment, the adaptations may modify the content, method, and/or delivery of instruction. For all

other learners with disabilities, the content is not modified, but the adaptations provide different ways to access the curricular content.

- **Methodology** refers to adapted **instruction and materials** compared to the methods used with peers. This may mean using different vocabulary, adding visuals such as pictures, using a specific prompting system, reducing unnecessary language from instructions, or using supplemental materials or equipment. It may include supports from peers, unique configuration of learner groupings for engagement, behavioral and participation supports, and other “specially designed” instructional methods.
- **Delivery** includes **where and when** the instruction is delivered as well as **how** instruction is provided. For example, if an intervention designed for learners with a specific disability such as hearing impairment, blindness, or dyslexia, instruction in core content may need to be provided through that specific approach. This can be incorporated into core instructional content and may require unique materials or equipment. Adapted delivery of instruction may be considered a supplement (in addition to) adapted methods within the general education class such as during an intervention period.

Modifications

When teachers modify instruction, they change the expectations for learning curriculum content and change the instructional engagement of the learner. Their instruction may be designed to decrease conceptual difficulty, reduce the vocabulary or standards that will be acquired, and/or teach below grade level standards (aligned to the grade level content being taught). Modifications may limit the student's ability to master grade level standards and ultimately meet graduation standards. Consequently, IEP teams should carefully consider their impact on student progress. Examples of modifications are:

- ◆ Alternate books or adapted books
- ◆ Different test questions
- ◆ Alternate goals embedded within the lesson
- ◆ Reduced content goals (e.g., reduced vocabulary and concepts)
- ◆ Adapted organizer with simplified language or content
- ◆ Reduced expectations for projects or grading rubric

SUPPLEMENT: Adapting Materials

Curricular tasks and materials may present comprehension and access barriers to learners such as the vocabulary, volume of words, number of steps or options within a task, quantity information, etc. Teachers make strategic decisions on content coverage (i.e., essential curriculum elements), meaningfulness of tasks to meet stated goals, and criteria for student success. Below are four specific strategies for adapting curricular tasks and materials:

- > Simplifying Task Directions
- > Altering the Amount of Material Provided to Students
- > Altering the Difficulty Level of Material
- > Highlighting Relevant Information

Simplifying Task Directions

A. Prior to a student completing a task independently, examine the directions for vocabulary, sentence complexity/length, and logical sequencing which may present barriers to a student independently navigating a task.

- > Replace unknown words with familiar synonyms or phrases
- > Shorten length directions by removing superfluous words/information
- > Ensure directions are explicit, logically sequenced, and unambiguous

Example:

- ◆ *Directions:* Prior to composing a summary of the following reading passage, determine the main idea of each paragraph.
- ◆ *Adapted Directions:* Underline the main idea in each paragraph. Then, write a summary of the passage.

B. Consider visual aids within directions to illustrate each step and support comprehension for how to complete the task.

Examples:

- ◆ When asking learners to complete a specific math problem, it is helpful to provide an example problem for students to use as a guide.
- ◆ Problems can include visual aids such as color coding, bold font, and symbols.

C. Consider using technology to facilitate student understanding of concepts.

Examples:

- ◆ Use text-to-speech software such as [NaturalReader](#) or Microsoft's Immersive Reader feature to help students who struggle with decoding text.
- ◆ Video technology can also be used to supplement text to demonstrate concepts.

Altering the Amount of Material Provided to Students

Examine why each piece of information is critical for understanding and what text or illustrations can be removed without impeding student learning. Consider the number of items that need to be completed for the intent of the task. This can also be considered based on the prestatation of questions.

Examples:

- ◆ Reduce the number of math problems or comprehension questions a student must answer.
- ◆ Reduce the number of choices offered in a multiple choice question.

Altering the Difficulty Level of Material

A. Make one task that builds from an easier one to more challenging content to allow entry points, paths for learning, and challenge opportunities based on what you know about your learner. Why use this approach?

- > Making different tasks for varying levels to accommodate individual learners can be time consuming.
- > Providing students with different tasks can stigmatize them, limit access to grade level expectations, and eliminate opportunities for challenge.

B. Simplify reading passages by analyzing and adjusting the vocabulary and sentence structure of text based on what you know about the student and the purpose of the reading passage.

Examples:

- ◆ Use a software to analyze: Readability Calculations, Readability PLUS, Microsoft Word's Readability Program
- ◆ Use software to rewrite passages: Achieve300, Rewordify

C. Pair supplemental materials with text to aid students in understanding complex topics.

Examples:

- ◆ magazine/website articles
- ◆ graphics/pictures
- ◆ video/audio recordings

Highlighting Relevant Information

A. Highlight relevant information within a text, lecture, task/worksheet.

Examples:

- ◆ bold
- ◆ highlight
- ◆ underline

B. Teach students strategies to decipher important features of the text. Explicitly explain how students can benefit from the highlighting.

- ◆ Example: “Before you read this passage, look at the highlighted words and phrases, and consider what this passage will be about.” (Facilitate a discussion: address any misconceptions, make predictions, pose questions to consider while reading, etc.)

Citations:

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