INCLUSION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION: A Resource for Teachers

TEA Texas Education Agency | Texas SPED Support

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Acknowledgments

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Purpose of this Document

The intent of this document is to provide information to teachers who deliver special education services to students with disabilities and participate in the preparation and implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Specifically, this guide includes resources that help teachers understand, develop, implement, and evaluate the specially designed instruction (SDI) students with disabilities need to access and progress in the general curriculum. In addition, it clarifies concepts related to, but distinct from, specially designed instruction, including accommodations, modifications, and high yield instructional strategies.

What is Specially Designed Instruction?

The core of special education is the specially designed instruction (SDI) a student receives. IDEA defines special education services as "specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability" (34 CFR 300.39). In Texas, the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines the specially designed instruction needed for each student as part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Even though many professionals across our state are responding to the educational needs of diverse students with innovative practices and increasingly flexible methods of teaching, the requirement for delivering SDI still exists. **Exemplary practices of general education are not a substitute for specially designed instruction (Musgrove 2012).**

Determining what is provided to a student as specially designed instruction (SDI) is sometimes confusing (Friend and Barron 2021). Educators should begin by understanding that SDI must be in addition to all the other high-yield instructional strategies available to all students (this topic is addressed in more detail in a later section). That is, SDI is in addition to general education, not in lieu of it, and instruction that is for all students generally is not considered SDI. Further, SDI is individualized and based on information in the IEP, and it is intended to help that student master IEP goals and objectives. By mastering the goals and objectives, most students with disabilities should then be able to meaningfully access the general curriculum and demonstrate proficiency on the same standards as typical learners.

Examples of special education and related services (SDI) provided to a student in the general education instructional setting include, but are not limited to:

- direct instruction,
- helping teacher,
- team teaching,
- co-teaching,
- use of an interpreter,
- education aides,
- curricular or instructional modifications or accommodations,
- special materials or equipment,
- consultation with the student and the general classroom teacher(s),
- staff development, and
- reduction of ratio of students to instructional staff members

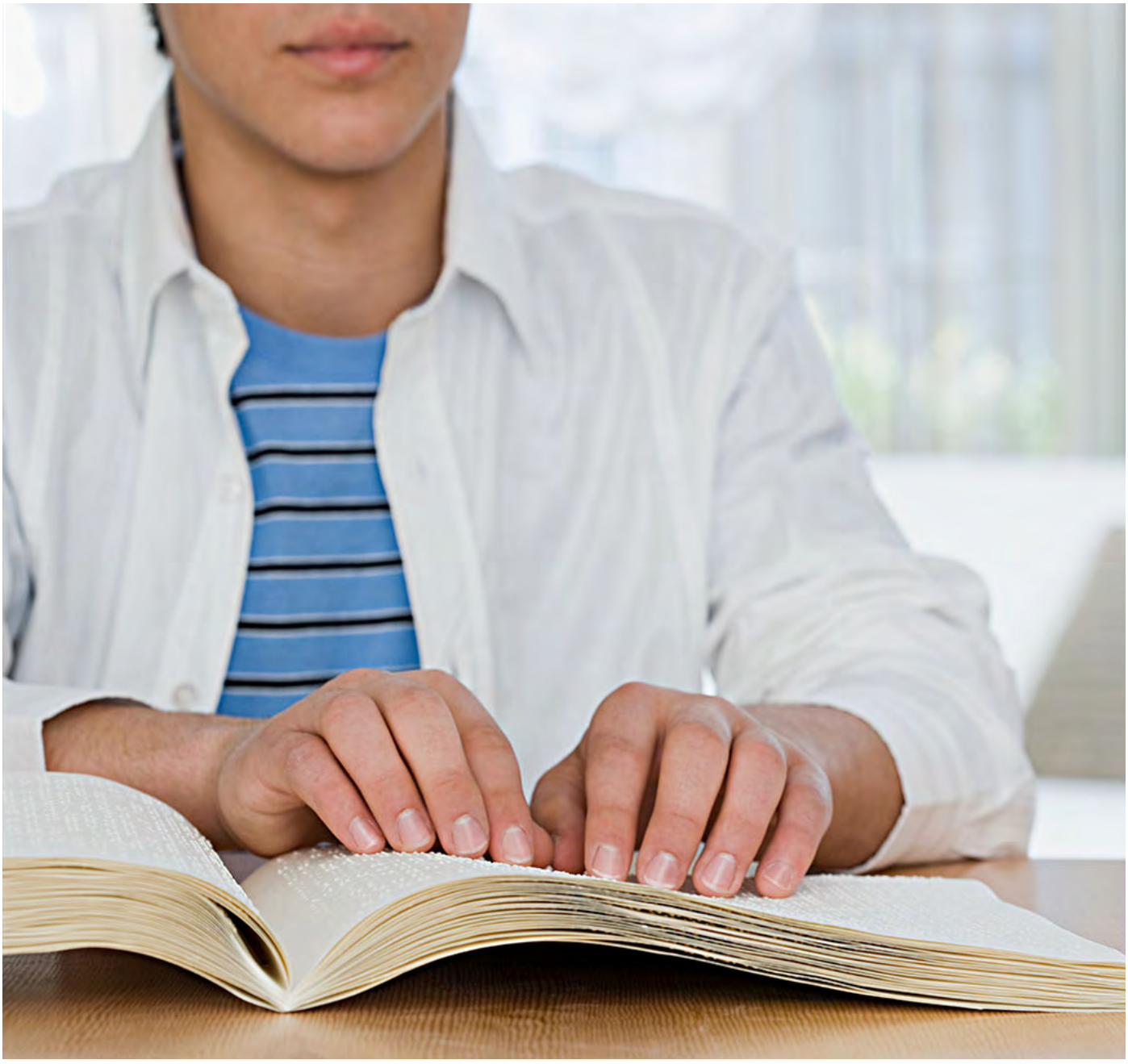
(19 TAC §89.1005(c)(1))

Students in Texas who have IEPs must receive SDI as outlined in IDEA. Texas state policies and guidance provide additional detail about specially designed instruction. SDI is required regardless of the setting in which a student in special education is educated. When a student is included in a general education setting, instruction is provided from general educators for portions of the school day. Students included in general education settings who receive special education services are therefore afforded both

enrichment and remedial instruction that may be similar to the specially designed instruction outlined in their IEPs. **However, participation in such programs is the student's right as a general education student and does not override the services outlined in their IEPs.**

Each local education agency (LEA) creates a multi tier system of support (MTSS). These programs, include systems of support which encompass academic, behavioral, and mental health supports for all students. Students in general education as well as those participating in special education and related services can participate in MTSS.

For additional information on this process and for resources see the Tiered Interventions Using Evidence Based Research or TIER, which is a TEA funded project.



SDI and IEPs

The Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports Network has created training and guidance regarding the development of standards based IEPs. Specially designed instruction is outlined in the IEP and provides teachers with specificity regarding the changes to the content, methodology and delivery of instruction that result from their disability.

All teachers should remember, the purpose of special education, including the provision of specially designed instruction in the least restrictive environment, is to ensure a student with a disability is able to access the general education curriculum and meet the same standards that apply to all students.

The specially designed instruction is what will be implemented in order to help the student achieve those goals. To emphasize the importance of this discussion, specially designed instruction is the special education service(s) the student needs, supplemental to general education, because of the disability.

Remember that specially designed instruction is needed regardless of the instructional arrangement the ARD committee assigns for the student (for example, general education, resource room, self-contained special education classroom). Specially designed instruction must be designated in the student's IEP. Additionally, the provision of the specially designed instruction (in accordance with the IEP) must be documented to demonstrate that the SDI is delivered to the student, including frequency, duration, and location. This is the case whether the SDI is a direct, indirect, or support service and regardless of location.

Implementing Specially Designed Instruction in the Classroom

This infographic summarizes the components of specially designed instruction and offers questions to guide thinking about selecting and implementing it.

Per the student's IEP, how does the student's disability affect access and progress in the enrolled grade level curriculum?

Per 34 CFR §300.39 (b)(3) what adaptations are appropriate to meet the needs of a child eligible for special education services for the student to access and progress in the current content?

Content

Curriculum that is based on state standards.

Methodology

The research-based or best-practice instructional design of content that is an overall approach to instruction and the techniques to deliver it.

Delivery of Instruction

The way in which instruction is offered in order to meet the needs of individual students with disabilities.

The adjustments to teaching made based on teachers' answers to the questions below capture the specially designed instruction for the student determined by the specific needs resulting from the disability as described in the IEP and applied to classroom content.

How can curriculum be adjusted so that students with disabilities are equitably provided with the same access as their non-disabled peers to rigorous standards and grade-level content?

Which instructional approach is most successful in fostering student learning? Note that direct, explicit instruction generally is considered the approach most likely to accomplish this. What techniques are necessary to use that instructional approach?

When and where is instruction delivered so as to maximize student learning (e.g., special education setting or general education setting; individually, small-group, whole-group; daily, three times/week)?

Examples of Implementing Specially Designed Instruction

The first chart below provides a template of the adjustments that might be made in implementing specially designed instruction. The other charts are applications of the template, illustrating SDI designed for specific students with a variety of disabilities and related needs.

Examples of Implementing Specially Designed Instruction		
Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• A list of the adjustments to content in this subject area • Note that students with disabilities generally are expected to reach state-level standards. Modifications (i.e., reducing or eliminating standards) can only be determined by an ARD committee.	• Instructional approach suited to specific student needs (e.g., some students being taught with an inquiry model while other are provided direct, explicit instruction). • Techniques for implementing the instructional approach • Determined by the teacher in consultation with the IEP document to determine the best fit for the student and reflects the recommendations of the IEP team.	• The setting for the instruction (e.g., in co-teaching this is the general education classroom) • The grouping for the instruction (e.g., individual, paired, small group) • When the instruction is delivered and its dosage (i.e., the amount of instruction needed, including review)
Statement describing the difference between the classroom instructional strategy and the SDI in this scenario.		

Remember, the purpose of special education, including the provision of specially designed instruction in the least restrictive environment, is to ensure a student with a disability is able to access the general education curriculum and meet the same standards that apply to all students.

Methodology is driven by student need. When considering adaptations to methodology and delivery of instruction, the fidelity of the research based methodology may be impacted by changes to the frequency, duration or location of the instruction.

When utilizing specific curricula/programs, best practice is to implement these with fidelity first, and be mindful of program guidelines when considering further adaptations. Major adaptations (removing pieces of content, removing steps in a lesson, changing the duration of instruction, etc.) should be determined with careful consideration of the student's PLAAFP, progress monitoring data, and information provided in the full and individual evaluation. When progress monitoring indicates a lag or lack in growth, supports should be intensified rather than decreased or discontinued.

Tameka is a student with a learning disability that affects mathematics calculations.		
IEP-Determined Adjustments to Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• Simplified digits • Intentional sequence of instruction to build student skill for calculating	• Direct instruction using modeling of calculation process	• General education classroom • Small group for pre-teaching • Teacher-guided practice as other students complete independent practice
Students work in small groups for most instruction; this allows the special educator to work with this student (and several others) using modeling and a sequence of instruction that other students do not need.		

Marcia is a student with a learning disability that affects the area of reading.		
IEP-Determined Adjustments to Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• Science reading materials are presented at instructional level	• Multisensory teaching • Repeated reading as a means of increasing fluency and improving comprehension	• General education classroom • Parallel teaching for discussions so teachers can be sure Marcia is asked questions intended to check her comprehension • Once each week, teachers set up stations, including one for review; this provides an opportunity for extra reading practice and checks on learning
While the teachers may read directions to all students on a regular basis, allow students to read items aloud during class, and utilize graphics and vocabulary posted around the classroom and in the textbook, the IEP team has identified specific strategies and instruction that eliminate or mitigate the impact of the student's reading disability on science instruction.		

Michael is a student with the disability category of Other Health Impairment (OHI) due to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which affects his acquisition of knowledge and skills in the classroom.		
IEP-Determined Adjustments to Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• None	• Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) • Explicit instruction on routines and procedures, including self-regulation	• General education classroom • Both teachers implement the PBIS system, keeping data during station and parallel teaching and providing a reward at least four times/day.
This SDI is designed to address Michael's needs, even though some of the interventions are components of the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) methodology. While PBIS may be implemented school-wide, the specific components the child needs have been identified and defined. The ARD committee has outlined the delivery of specially designed instruction in respect to behavior supports that the student requires due to the impact of his disability on his education. His SDI also is characterized by more data collection and a more tailored reward system than for other students.		

Eddie is a student with a learning disability that affects reading comprehension and written expression.		
IEP-Determined Adjustments to Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• The writing standard for the grade level has been task analyzed so that the special educator can create a learning sequence that eventually leads to mastery of the standard but is responsive to Eddie's precise needs.	• Direct, explicit instruction • Instruction supplemented with extensive use of graphic organizers	• General education classroom • Collaborative writing (i.e., shared writing with a partner) to encourage production • Both teachers "conference" with students as they write. For Eddie, the special educator emphasizes main idea and details; the general educator focuses on selecting topics and doing research to learn about them.

Eddie is a student with a learning disability that affects reading comprehension and written expression.
While the teacher may often request graphic representations of vocabulary words and present students with visuals as they learn novel vocabulary, Eddie retains his journal for use during later assignments and on assessments. The special educator teaches him to use it to master vocabulary across subjects.

Martin is a five-year old student with a speech or language impairment.		
IEP-Determined Adjustments to Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• None	• Modeling of appropriate peer interactions using video modeling as well as live peer modeling	• General education classroom • Repetition in small group during station teaching
While the teacher provides models to all students at this age, Martin requires this instructional approach for all novel vocabulary. He also requires transfer of the knowledge to novel situations; and therefore, must receive instruction in context with constant feedback from the teacher.		

Joey is a 4-year old student with an intellectual disability and speech or language impairment. He is verbal, but he has difficulty with expressive language.		
IEP-Determined Adjustments to Content	Research-Based Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• Curriculum has been broken down into smaller segments. For example, with a goal of counting 10 objects, the first benchmark is to count up to three objects, then five, then seven, and finally 10, the standard for preschool.	• Direct, explicit instruction • Errorless teaching/learning • Multisensory teaching (e.g., using manipulatives, walking from place to place to count objects) • Frequent practice for each segment of instruction and then frequent review	• General education classroom • Daily 1:1 instruction • Supplemental practice with a peer
While the teacher provides small group instruction, repeated practice, and centers for all students, Joey requires explicit instruction with errorless learning and models each time he counts items. To ensure errorless learning, Joey needs adult assistance during repeated practice.		

Brayden is a student who has a learning disability in basic reading.		
Content	Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• Specific scope and sequence of instruction starting with foundational prerequisite skills and building to more complex concepts • Pacing is adjusted so that lessons are spread over two days to provide student additional processing time and practice.	• Simultaneous and multisensory instruction that is explicit, direct, systematic, and cumulative • Diagnostic teaching to automaticity • Synthetic and analytic instruction	• Small group setting - 50 minutes daily, 5 days each week • Repetition in small group instruction with additional repetition provided by the general educator in the general education classroom • 1:1 instruction for pre-teaching skills provided by the special educator • Explicit instruction to transfer and generalize skills to other grade level content
While all students benefit from structured literacy instruction, Brayden requires this specific methodology and sequence of introducing literacy skills in order to access grade level content and make progress across all academic areas.		

Taylor is a student with a disability category of Autism which impacts her emotional regulation skills and is motivated by adult attention.		
Content	Methodology	Delivery of Instruction
• Taylor uses a Check-In/ Check-Out (CICO) daily progress report to target specific classroom expectations and related behaviors for which she is most frequently redirected. • Present level data is used to determine her personal targets.	• Taylor receives feedback from their teacher several times per day through a points rating scale with concrete behavioral definitions. • They receive increased feedback on behavior which includes teacher praise and interaction for appropriate behaviors. • Her teacher utilizes planned ignoring to target challenging behaviors. • Taylor also receives feedback from a familiar adult at both the beginning and end of her day to review her goals for the day (morning) and progress towards the goal (afternoon). • Progress is reported home daily. • A collaborative team reviews her data periodically. • Unfamiliar expectations or behaviors are modeled for Taylor.	• Taylor uses their daily progress report to check-in with the physical education teacher, Mr. Swanson who is one of Taylor's preferred adults. • Daily CICO meetings occur one on one. • Feedback is provided during each part of Taylor's day. • Upon reaching their daily goal, they receive a tangible reward.
While many students may benefit from a CICO approach to improve behaviors, without daily intervention Taylor struggles with compliance and classroom disruptions. **By providing frequent adult-student feedback and accountability between home and school, Taylor has a greatly increased level of behavioral success at school.**		

High Yield Instructional Strategies and Specially Designed Instruction

High yield instructional strategies are techniques that have been reliably demonstrated to improve student learning when they are consistently implemented (Fisher, et al. 2016; Marzano 2017). Exemplary teachers use high yield instructional strategies every day; the strategies are built into their instructional plans.

These are examples of high yield instructional strategies:

- Cooperative learning
- Use of nonlinguistic representations
- Clearly identified objectives
- Detailed feedback to students in a timely manner
- Praise that builds students' sense of confidence

These and other high yield strategies are effective for all students, regardless of their eligibility for special education. The strategies can facilitate learning across students' ability levels, and they take into account students' background and linguistic diversity. In addition, because the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) requires educators to tailor instruction to student needs, high yield strategies are essential in today's schools. They are not just a professional responsibility; they are also an ethical obligation.

A companion to high yield instructional strategies is differentiated instruction (Tomlinson 2014). Based on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (CAST 2020), a framework for proactively designing instruction to make it accessible to all learners, differentiation is the process of creating learning options, scaffolding instruction, using ongoing formative assessments, and providing choice to learners. As with high yield instructional strategies, differentiated instruction is a key aspect of exemplary teaching, and it is beneficial for all students.

Schools are filled with learners who come to school with different levels of readiness, enthusiasm, background knowledge, family support, and academic success (e.g., National Center for Education Statistics 2019). Students are sometimes socially skilled and sometimes not, and they sometimes understand the expectations of the school environment and sometimes experience behavior challenges. Teachers know that these are their students, and the location of the school district, age of the students, or the particular area of teaching expertise do not change the need to have skills to effectively reach diverse students and maximize their learning.

How Do High Yield Instructional Strategies and SDI Fit Together?

For all the benefits of high yield instructional strategies, they are just as they have been described—techniques valuable for all students. That means students with disabilities will learn more when teachers use them. However, these strategies are not specially designed instruction. By virtue of having an IEP, a team has indicated that even the best general education teaching is not adequate to meet such students' needs. In addition to the high yield instructional strategies, students with disabilities must also receive the instruction described earlier in this guide. That is, instruction tailored specifically to their assessed needs and individually designed to enable them to meet grade level and course standards or aligned standards. It is SDI, not other instructional strategies, that is the requirement of IDEA.

The following chart summarizes and provides examples of the key characteristics of high yield instructional strategies and specially designed instruction.

Summary of SDI and High Yield Instructional Strategies

SDI

Definition:

Instruction that targets the unique needs of a child that result from a disability. The instruction must be designed in such a way that the student can access the general curriculum to the same extent as non-disabled peers and make progress toward grade level standards (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

For Whom:

Students with disabilities who are eligible for special education services.

Documentation:

Student IEP

Examples:

- Techniques, strategies intentionally designed to address IEP goals
- Related Services
- Accommodations & Modifications
- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

Implementation:

- Must be implemented per the student's IEP
- Provision must be documented, including the frequency, duration, and location of the service(s), in accordance with TEA standards. Data should document delivery and also impact of SDI.

High Yield Instructional Strategies

Definition:

An approach to teaching essential content in ways that address the varying learning needs of students with the goal of maximizing the possibilities of each learner.

For Whom:

ALL students, including students with disabilities.

Documentation:

Teacher decision

Examples:

- Small group instruction
- Graphic organizers
- Peer tutors
- Cooperative learning
- Heterogeneous groups
- Nonlinguistic representations
- movement
- Hands on activities and learning experiences
- Student choice
- Flexible grouping
- Rubrics
- Technology
- Differentiated instruction

Implementation:

- Best Practice
- Documentation determined by LEA
- Needs of students may effect what strategies are chosen (e.g., strategies that require visualization may not be effective for a student with a visual impairment).

Accommodations and Modifications

In addition to understanding SDI and high yield instructional strategies and their importance for educating students with disabilities, two other terms are relevant: accommodations and modifications.

Determining the difference between accommodations and modifications can be confusing. The same instructional adjustment can be categorized as an accommodation or a modification depending on the intent of the grade-level standard being taught. The chart below provides examples of how the same instructional adjustment can be both an accommodation and a modification.

Instructional Adjustment	Accommodation	Modification
Assignment for all students: 25 math problems consisting of adding numerals, fractions, and decimals **Adjustment:** The teacher shortens the assignment for the student.	After deleting the 10 math problems, the teacher ensures that the remaining 15 problems include adding numerals, fractions and decimals. Shortening the assignment adjusts **how** the student demonstrates mastery of the content.	After deleting the 10 math problems, the remaining problems include adding numerals and fractions only. In deleting the problems that require the student to add decimals, changes are made to **what** the student is expected to master.
Assignment for all students: A formative assessment intended to assess mastery of previously taught, comprehension skills. The students are asked to answer comprehension questions after reading and make inferences using text evidence to support understanding. **Adjustment:** The teacher provides the student a graphic organizer to support text based inferences.	During the assessment, the student uses a blank graphic organizer independently to recall prior knowledge and organize textual evidence to make inferences. The student is expected to show mastery of the same comprehension skills as the other students. The use of the graphic organizer only adjusts **how** the student demonstrates comprehension.	During the assessment, the student uses a partially completed graphic organizer to recall prior knowledge and organize textual evidence to make inferences with adult assistance. The student is not expected to show mastery of the same comprehension skills as the other students. The use of a partially completed graphic organizer with adult assistance adjusts **what** the student is expected to master independently.
Assignment for all students: Five math word problems **Adjustment:** The teacher provides the student with a calculator.	All students are asked to complete math word problems that require problem solving and multiple steps. The focus of this assignment is to analyze the provided content to determine the steps needed and create a plan to solve a problem. The student uses a calculator to accommodate for the slow retrieval of math facts which interferes with learning the problem-solving process. The student is expected to learn the same problem-solving strategies as the other students. Providing a calculator adjusts **how** the student learns the content.	All students are asked to complete math word problems that require the identification of the necessary numbers and the appropriate mathematical operation to calculate the correct answer. The student uses a calculator because of the slow retrieval of math facts. The student is not expected to learn how to calculate the correct answer. Therefore, **what** the student is expected to learn is changed.

SDI Lesson Planning: Guiding Questions and Considerations

Once the Specially Designed Instruction is determined from all sections of the IEP, it is best practice that teachers use this information in their daily lesson planning. It is a critical step in implementing the student's IEP. Lesson plans can include these design features for individual students. The following Five E (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation) lesson plan example includes notes that may prove helpful when considering what to include and consider when teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom. The 5 E Lesson Plan is not a required format. It is used here as one example of how to plan SDI for individual students.

Teacher:	Student A:
Date:	**Dates may be extended to accommodate a longer period of learning**
Subject/grade level:	
Materials:	**Do planned materials need adjustment or addition to meet the needs of the student as required in the IEP?**
TEKS Supporting and Readiness Standards:	**Does the student's IEP require modification of the grade level TEKS?**
Lesson objective(s):	**Do the objectives remain the same for this student as for the rest of the class?**
Differentiation strategies to meet diverse learner needs:	**What is required by this student's IEP in order for him to access and progress in the general curriculum? What are strategies beyond those that would be available to any student in the class?**
ENGAGEMENT • Describe how the teacher will capture students' interest. • What kind of questions should the students ask themselves after the engagement?	**In each of the 5 E sections, clarify what the student needs as a result of the disability and will be used for instruction and assessment. Specify any changes in how the student will be taught (i.e., instructional approaches, techniques, strategies) as well as tools the student needs (i.e., accommodations such as organizers or checklists).** **Determine if prerequisite skills are required for this instruction and if the student currently possesses these skills. If the student does not, instruction on those pre-requisite skills is necessary prior to initial instruction on the current topic and should be addressed with this student before instruction on grade level concepts begins.**
EXPLORATION • Describe what hands-on/minds-on activities students will be doing. • List "big idea" conceptual questions the teacher will use to encourage and/or focus students' exploration.	
EXPLANATION • Student explanations should precede introduction of terms or explanations by the teacher. What questions or techniques will the teacher use to help students connect their exploration to the concept under examination? • List higher order thinking questions, which teachers will use to solicit student explanations and help them to justify their explanations.	
ELABORATION • Describe how students will develop a more sophisticated understanding of the concept. • What vocabulary will be introduced and how will it connect to students' observations? • How is this knowledge applied in our daily lives?	
EVALUATION • How will students demonstrate that they have achieved the lesson objective? • This should be embedded throughout the lesson as well as at the end of the lesson	

(Adapted from Bybee, Pwell & Trowbridge, 2008)

Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations

Accommodations change how the content is taught, made accessible, and/or assessed.

Accommodations DO NOT change what the student is expected to master. The objectives of the course/activity remain intact. (Texas Project First) http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/node/173

Accommodations are part of the specially designed instruction that allow the student access to the general curriculum.

Accommodations for instruction should be based on the needs of the student and as captured on the IEP. These accommodations may or may not be allowed on state assessment, but should still be used for classwork. Allowable accommodations for the state assessment should be reviewed each school year on the TEA website.

Examples of accommodations include but are not limited to

Presentation
- Shortened Assignments
- Oral/Signed Administration
- Audio text
- Reminders to stay on task (visual, verbal, or tactile)
- Large-print or Braille materials

Response Format
- Calculator
- Use of word processing software
- Use of word prediction software
- Use of a scribe

Setting
- Preferential Seating
- Small-group instruction
- Special education setting
- Setting with distractions removed (e.g., desk carrel)

Timing/Scheduling
- Extended Time
- Frequent breaks
- Cooling-off period
- Assignments due in segments

Modifications

Modifications change what the student is expected to master. Course, activity, and/or TEKS objectives are altered to meet student needs.

The TEA STAAR Alternate 2 Vertical Alignment documents align all the TEKS by content in order from kindergarten through high school. Educators can use these documents to identify prerequisite skills needed by any student to progress toward grade level standards.This document is not just for students taking STAAR Alternate 2.

Examples of modifications include but are not limited to

- Use of the same materials but for a different purpose (e.g., circling all the numerals that are 5s as other students add the numbers in columns.
- Introduction of only vocabulary that will be encountered more commonly, instead of all vocabulary required for the unit of instruction (e.g., battery, electricity, magnet versus ampere, volt, semiconductor, and others)
- Writing standard of a 5-paragraph essay with claims, evidence, and analysis changed to a 1-paragraph essay with a main idea and details.
- Grading based on a different criteria than what is used for other students

General and Special Educator Roles and Responsibilities for High Yield Instructional Strategies and SDI

Both the general and special educator's roles differ depending upon the setting in which they are teaching. This list is not exhaustive, and teachers should consider their own strengths when determining their roles and responsibilities as it relates to high yield instructional strategies and SDI. This is not meant as a guide of who instructs what portion of the lesson in co-teaching, but how to collaborate regarding high yield instructional strategies and SDI.

	General Education		Special Education Setting	
	General Educator	**Special Educator**	**General Educator**	**Special Educator**
High Yield Instructional Strategies	Utilizes high yield instructional strategies when instructing.	Utilizes high yield instructional strategies when instructing.	Supports the special educator in utilizing high yield instructional strategies to instruct all students in their special education setting.	Utilizes high yield instructional strategies when instructing.
	Understands the strengths and weaknesses, and present levels of academic performance of all students.	Understands the strengths and weaknesses and present levels of academic and functional performance (PLAAFP) of students receiving special education services. Supports the general educator in understanding the students' PLAAFPs.	Not relevant: General education teachers do not provide instruction in a special education setting.	Understands the strengths and weaknesses and PLAAFP of students receiving special education services.
	Focuses on mastery of grade-level TEKS.	Focuses on access to and progress toward grade-level TEKS.	Not relevant: General education teachers do not provide instruction in a special education setting.	Focuses on access to and progress toward grade-level TEKS.
	Utilizes special educator's knowledge of the student who receives special education services and appropriate strategies to implement in the general education classroom.	May assist the general educator in accommodating or modifying assignments and instructional materials. May model strategies for general educators to use with students.	Supports the special educator in understanding and addressing general curriculum concepts and skills.	As appropriate, adheres to general curriculum content and pacing so that curriculum access is assured. As appropriate, provides instruction supplemental to the general curriculum, and ensures the transfer of supplement skills to general curriculum content.
Specially Designed Instruction	With special educator input, integrates SDI into the lesson planning process and considers SDI, especially accommodations, when creating learning activities and assessments.	Supports the general educator in understanding the details of the students' IEPs and the SDI they should receive during instruction. Develops plans for providing SDI within the context of the general curriculum instruction. Implements SDI as appropriate on an individualized basis as specified in the IEP, including frequency, duration, and location.	Collaborates with special educator regarding curriculum and proper adjustments to meet individualized needs.	
			Not relevant: General education teachers do not provide instruction in a special education setting.	Develops plans for providing highly intensive, individualized SDI as specified in the IEP.
			Not relevant: General education teachers do not provide instruction in a special education setting.	Implements highly intensive SDI, as supplemental instruction, part of core curriculum, or in aligned curriculum, with students receiving special education services as per their IEPs.
	When co-teaching, includes SDI throughout instruction by implementing high-use co-teaching approaches.	When co-teaching, includes SDI throughout instruction by implementing high-use co- teaching approaches.	Not relevant: A general education and special education co-teaching team generally does not occur in a special education setting.	When co-teaching with a special services provider, includes SDI throughout instruction by implementing high-use co-teaching approaches.
	Reviews IEP for specific responsibilities.	Reviews IEP for specific responsibilities.	Reviews IEP for specific responsibilities.	Reviews IEP for specific responsibilities.

For information on when a paraprofessional can provide SDI, please reference the Frequently Asked Question number two of this document or Working with Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Teachers of Students with Disabilities located on the Texas Sped Support Network website spedsupport.tea.texas.gov.

For additional information on co-teaching, reference, Guidelines for Co-Teaching in Texas.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Questions		Answers	
Q1	Does a teacher providing SDI in a particular setting need to be highly qualified?	**A1**	Beginning with the 2016-2017 school year, schools and teachers only need to meet state requirements for certification. The federal term of "highly qualified teacher status" no longer applies. It is important to note that all state certification requirements adopted in State Board for Educator Certification rule remain in place. A special education teachers who deliver direct instruction to students with disabilities in core academic subject areas must meet the appropriate state special education certification requirements for the grade level that they are teaching. When students' services are offered in general education through co-teaching, the special educator must have the appropriate special education credential, but is not required to have a specific subject area credential. For example, special educators may co-teach in English even though they do not have an English credential.

Questions		Answers	
Q2	Are paraprofessionals able to provide specially designed instruction to students?	**A2**	Paraprofessionals may deliver specially designed instruction to students receiving special education services when a certified special education teacher designs the specially designed instruction, the paraprofessional is under the supervision of the certified special education teacher, and holds a level two or three certification. However, a paraprofessional may not: • develop lesson plans • introduce new material/content • provide direct teach portion of the lesson • select materials for implementation of the lesson • assign final grades • be responsible for any IEP-related responsibilities without supervision of a certified special educator • Design the classroom management system • be responsible for determining or reporting student progress (general class progress or IEP-goal progress. For additional guidance on supporting students who receive special education services from paraprofessionals, please refer to Working with Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Teachers of Students with Disabilities, a helpful guide located on the Texas Sped Support website at **spedsupport.tea.texas.gov**

Questions		Answers	
Q3	Must a student be in a special education setting to receive specially designed instruction?	**A3**	No. Deciding where the child receives special education services is a decision made by the ARD committee. The ARD committee determines the location of special education services, along with service frequency and duration. Specially designed instruction must be provided in whatever location (general or special education) the ARD committee determined necessary. No matter the location determined by the ARD committee, if for some reason a change in the location for services is needed, the decision to make that change must be made by the ARD committee. If the ARD committee specifies a general education setting for a special education service, the student cannot be removed for the purpose of delivering that service. Any removal must be reflected in the IEP and supported by an annual goal.
Q4	Is there a requirement for the implementation of specially designed instruction to be documented?	**A4**	Delivery of all special education services should be documented in order to show the delivery of the services was provided in accordance with the ARD committee's established frequency, duration, and location as stated in the IEP.

Questions		Answers	
Q5	What is the difference between high yield instructional strategies and specially designed instruction?	**A5**	All students (including students with IEPs) have access to and could benefit from the high yield instructional strategies a teacher decides to use. Specially designed instruction, which could include high yield instructional strategies, is designed specifically to address the needs of one student as captured in the PLAAFP and IEP goals. It is a crucial part of instruction that enables a student with a disability to access and progress in the general curriculum. High-yield instructional strategies cannot substitute for specially designed instruction. For examples see pages 15-16.

Questions		Answers	
Q6	Is SDI affected by the Endrew F. Supreme Court decision?	**A6**	In January 2017, the Supreme Court issues a decision considered very significant for the field of education in the case of Endrew F., a student with autism. He had made minimal progress while enrolled in his public school and substantial progress when his parents enrolled him in a private school. The Court ruled that IDEA requires that a child's education enable him to make appropriately ambitious rather than "de minimus" progress, based on the child's circumstances. Although subject to various legal interpretations, this decision indicates that professionals should be diligent in writing meaningful, rigorous IEP goals and documenting students' services and the effectiveness of instruction. It is not so much that these are new expectations, but this decision highlights their importance.

Questions		Answers	
Q7	What is the difference between methodology and delivery of instruction?	**A7**	According to 34 CFR §300.39 (b)(3), "Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction…" Content refers to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) required for the grade level (K-12) in which the student is enrolled. For younger students, The Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines, and the Pre-Kindergarten Guidelines are available for districts to use; however, at Prekindergarten grade levels districts may develop their own curriculum standards (content). Methodology refers to the instructional approach and research-based strategies teachers use during instruction. Direct, explicit instruction is an example of a methodology. Within that methodology, use of repeated reading to increase student fluency and comprehension would be a research-based strategy. In other words, what does research say is the best way to teach the content? Delivery of Instruction describes when and where the instruction occurs. In what setting does the instruction need to occur—a general education classroom, resource room, self-contained classroom, or a more restrictive location? How much instruction is needed? Should it be daily, or is less than daily sufficient? For how much time should each session be? 30 minutes? 45 minutes? An instructional block? And in what grouping arrangement should the SDI occur, whether individual, partnered, small group, or large group?

Legal References

The Legal, Legislative, Policy, and Research Basis for Specially Designed Instruction

The starting point for understanding the requirement for specially designed instruction is the language included in the federal statute and related regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004). Below are selected definitions from 34 CFR § 300.39,the Federal Regulation that defines Special Education and outlines its requirements.

Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction.

The specially designed instruction must address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability. The SDI must also ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children. In Texas, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills are the educational standards that apply to all children.

Additional Federal Guidance

Professionals, parents, and others sometimes request an interpretation of IDEA from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). This is the bureau in the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) responsible for national oversight of special education. The replies provided are considered informal guidance for those working to implement IDEA in a way that is legally defensible. Additional OSEP Policy Documents

One such guidance letter is directly related to two specific reasons that specially designed instruction is distinct from the general education programs, including federal and state initiatives, received by all students. The letter dated May 9, 2012 and authored by then Director of the Office of Special Education Programs Dr. Melody Musgrove, outlines two reasons that SDI is distinctive from the general education program delivered to all students:

1. The fact that some services provided to students eligible for special education and related services are considered "best teaching practices" or "part of the district's regular education program" does not preclude those services from meeting the definition of "special education" or "related services" and being included in the child's IEP; and

2. Many learners' needs can be met using those methods, but they do not supplant the need of a child with a disability for unique, individualized instruction that addresses the disability and enables the child to meet the education standards within the jurisdiction.

The point made in this letter is straightforward: Students with disabilities benefit from contemporary recommended teaching practices, but those practices do not substitute for specially designed instruction.

State Legislation

The Texas Administrative Code (TAC §89.1005) and the Student Attendance Accounting Handbook provide guidance on SDI in Texas.

A student with a disability receives specially designed instruction as outlined in the IEP. Special education personnel provide specially designed instruction. One teacher, even if dually certified, must not serve in both a general education and a special education role simultaneously when serving students in grades K–12. The only context in which a dually certified teacher may serve in both a general education and a special education role is in an early childhood program for students aged 3 or 4 years (TEA 2019. 4.7.10.1).

Since the beginning of the 2016–2017 school year, schools and teachers only need to meet state requirements for certification. The federal term "highly qualified teacher status" will no longer apply. It is important to note that all state certification requirements adopted in State Board for Educator Certification rule remain in place (TEA 2019. 4.17).

A special education teacher who delivers direct instruction to students with disabilities in core academic subject areas must meet the appropriate state special education certification requirements for the grade level being taught (19 TAC Chapter 231).

Monitoring student progress in and of itself does **not** constitute a special education service (TEA 2019. 4.7.10.1).

Internet Resources

Texas Websites

Texas Education Agency
http://www.tea.texas.gov

Inclusion in Texas Network
spedsupport.tea.texas.gov

Student Attendance and Accounting Handout (SAAH) https://tea.texas.gov/finance-and-grants/financial-compliance/student-attendance-accounting-handbook

Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports Network
spedsupport.tea.texas.gov

Other Websites

High Leverage Practices in Special Education
https://highleveragepractices.org/

IDEA 2004
https://sites.ed.gov/idea/

IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University
https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/

National Center on Intensive Intervention
https://intensiveintervention.org/

Project Forum
https://www.nasdse.org/project_forum.php

What Works Clearinghouse of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)
https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

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