Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Guide

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TEA Texas Education Agency | Texas SPED Support | Meaningful Access

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Guide

Meaningful Access ensures that students with disabilities who receive special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have equal opportunities to engage with and make progress in the general education curriculum and environment. This concept is deeply rooted in inclusive practices, which involve intentional, systematic actions designed to meet the individual needs of each student. Inclusion is achieved when these practices are implemented with fidelity, allowing students with disabilities to learn, participate, and make progress alongside their peers without disabilities in a meaningful and equitable manner throughout their entire school experience.

This document contains citations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), and the Texas Education Code (TEC). For more information regarding these statutes and rules or further reading and research, you can access them by using the following links or QR codes:

IDEA

TAC

TEC

Scan the QR codes or click on the links below to explore related resources and expand your learning at your own pace:

Collaboration and Flexible Grouping for Educators

Collaboration and Flexible Grouping for Instructional Leaders

Texas SPED Quick Learns

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Introduction to Specially Designed Instruction

The purpose of **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)** is to ensure that students with disabilities can access the general education curriculum, make meaningful progress, and meet the same academic standards as their nondisabled peers. SDI is tailored to each student's unique needs, as outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP). **SDI is always linked to one or more IEP goals** and involves adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to support the student in meeting those goals. The Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee determines the SDI that each student needs as part of their IEP. Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §89.1050 provides details about SDI.

> *SDI can address a wide range of student needs, including academic, behavioral, communication, health, functional, and transition needs (Riccomini et al., 2017).*

This guide is designed to help districts and schools develop a shared understanding of SDI, including how it applies to IEPs, the roles of different providers in designing and delivering SDI, and examples of SDI in practice.

Defining SDI

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA, defines SDI as follows:

> *[A] Adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child . . . the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction—*
>
> *(i) To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and*
>
> *(ii) To 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.*
>
> *As a component of special education, specially designed instruction must be provided at no cost to the parent.* [§300.39(b)(3))]

The US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) clarifies that special education services delivered through a Title I schoolwide plan or multitiered system of supports (MTSS) may qualify as SDI. However, SDI must always be implemented in the least restrictive environment (LRE), which includes a continuum of placement options (Williams, 2024). While SDI may resemble strategies used with other students, it must still be individualized to address the specific needs resulting from a student's disability. The regular education program is not a replacement for the unique instruction required by a child with a disability to meet educational standards within their jurisdiction. Districts are responsible for providing SDI and ensuring all students can access the general curriculum (Musgrove, 2012).

Developing SDI

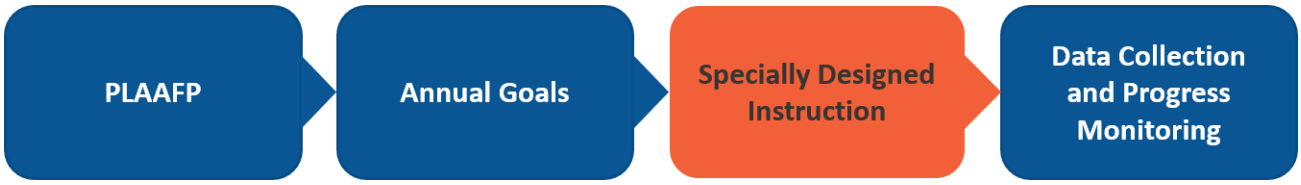
SDI and Other Instructional Practices

The fact that some…services may also be 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. (US Department of ED, 2025)

The student's ARD committee determines the appropriate SDI based on the student's needs and documents it in the student's IEP. The committee also monitors progress toward IEP goals.

To implement effective SDI, teachers should begin by reviewing the student's **present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP)**.[1] The PLAAFP provides information on the student's academic and/or functional skills and describes how the student's disability affects access to and progress in the general curriculum. This description should be individualized, using specific examples related to the student, not just the disability category. This statement should be informed by a review of specific, objective, and measurable **baseline data** that can also be collected and reviewed frequently as part of the progress monitoring plan. Each **annual goal** in the IEP must include four components: timeframe, condition, behavior, and criterion.[2] The condition (e.g., given visual supports) and behavior (e.g., will solve multi-step equations) help determine the type of **SDI** needed (Tralli, 2024). The criterion (e.g., 80% accuracy over three trials) guides how progress will be measured and what data needs to be collected, and the timeframe (e.g. by the next annual IEP) identifies the amount of time needed to master the goal. A well-defined **progress monitoring plan** allows for ongoing review and adjustment of goals and instructional strategies to meet the student's evolving needs. The following graphic illustrates the SDI development and review process.

SDI Development Process



SDI may involve one or more adaptations to the **content**, **methodology**, or **delivery of instruction**. These adaptations must be clearly documented in the student's IEP and must include the frequency, duration, and location of each service. The student's IEP should document how each SDI will help the student advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goal(s)[3]. This requirement applies to all

[1] Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) is a key component of an IEP that describes a student's current abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs in academic and functional areas (§300.320 (a)(1)).

[2] A student's IEP must include a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability [§300.320(a)(2)]. To be considered a measurable annual goal under this statute, a goal must include the components of a timeframe, condition, behavior, and criterion [§89.1055(b)]

[3] IEPs must include a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals [§ 300.320(a)(4)(i)]

types of SDI, including academic and functional skills—and regardless of where the instruction takes place. More information to support high-quality IEP development is available from the Promoting Rigorous Outcomes and Growth by Redesigning Educational Services for Students With Disabilities (PROGRESS) Center. The following table describes and provides examples for each of the SDI components.

Components of SDI

What adaptations are appropriate to meet the needs of a child eligible for special education services so that the child can access and progress in the general curriculum?

Content	Methodology	Delivery of instruction
What students are expected to learn, aligned with age and grade-level standards and expectations.	**How** the instruction is delivered—the instructional approach and research-based strategies that teachers use during instruction.	**By whom, where, and when** the instruction is delivered. Delivery of instruction describes how services and supports are provided.
Examples may include: • Instruction in skills and/or tools needed to access, engage, and make progress in general education • Modifications to content (i.e., reducing or eliminating standards) can only be determined by an ARD committee	Examples may include: • An instructional approach (e.g., inquiry model, direct instruction) • Techniques (e.g., visual supports or note taking guides) for implementing the instructional approach tailored to the students' needs	Examples may include: • Instructional setting (e.g., general or special education). • Grouping (e.g., small group, individual) • Amount (e.g., frequency and duration)
Questions to consider		
How can teachers adjust the curriculum so that students with disabilities have the same access as their nondisabled peers to rigorous standards and grade- level content? • What adaptations are necessary as a result of the disability? • What do the data say? • What content and skills are in the IEP goals? • What are the student's strengths?	Which instructional approach is most successful in fostering student learning? • Direct, explicit instruction is generally the most likely approach to accomplish success. • What techniques are necessary to use for that instructional approach? • What does research say is the best way to teach the content? • What methods work best, and what methods have not worked for this student?	When, where, and by whom is instruction delivered to maximize learning (e.g., general or special education setting or teacher; individual, small group, whole group; daily or three times/week)? • Who is the best person to deliver the instruction? • When and where should instruction occur? • What grouping is most effective? • How much time is needed? • Does the delivery allow for sufficient practice and explicit feedback?

The adjustments that teachers make based on the answers to these questions capture the essence of SDI. Such adjustments relate to the specific needs of students with disabilities as described in the IEP and are applied in the classroom**.** Teachers should use data throughout the school year to determine if the SDI is effective and adjust as needed to meet the evolving needs of the student**.**

Implementing SDI

SDI must be provided to all students receiving special education services, as outlined in their IEP, regardless of the educational setting. If the ARD committee specifies that a service is to be delivered in a general education setting, the student must not be removed from that setting to receive the service.

> *During the initial ARD meeting, the student's SDI needs, including location, frequency, and duration, are determined based on the results of the Full and Individual Initial Evaluation (FIIE)* [4]

As instruction progresses, teachers may need to **adjust the type or intensity of SDI** based on progress monitoring of the student's annual goals, which must be shared with families under IDEA's prior written notice (PWN) safeguard[5].

If the student is exceeding expected progress, the student will master the goal sooner than the timeframe. The special education teacher can increase the rigor of the goal to close the skill gap sooner.

If a student is not making adequate progress, the student will not master the goal within the timeframe. The SDI may need to be adjusted in terms of frequency, intensity, or instructional approach.

Outside of IEP requirements, when using specific curricula or instructional materials, teachers should first implement them with fidelity before making adaptations. For example, Bluebonnet Learning, a set of state- developed high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), offers comprehensive resources aligned with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). These materials include scope and sequence, daily lesson plans, and student supports, allowing educators to focus on aligning instruction with IEP goals and delivering appropriate SDI.

If adaptations are necessary, especially to methodology or delivery, then educators must consider how changes in **frequency**, **duration**, or **location** may affect the fidelity of the instructional approach. Major adaptations, such as removing content, skipping lesson steps, or shortening instructional time, should be based on the student's PLAAFP, progress monitoring data, and findings from the FIIE.

IDEA does not limit who can provide SDI (US Department of Education, 2025). The decision is based on the individual needs of the student, not the provider's role. All school personnel, including administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, and paraprofessionals, play a role in ensuring that SDI is implemented with fidelity. The following table illustrates the responsibilities for each of these individuals to support SDI.

[4] An FIIE is conducted to determine a student's eligibility for special education services. It includes a written report with recommendations and information about the student's strengths, interests, and challenges. An FIIE is required under districts' MTSS plans for academic and behavior supports per 19 TAC §89.1011.

[5] Written notice must be given to the parents of a child with a disability a reasonable time before any initiation or change to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of FAPE to the child [§ 300.50]

Responsibilities for SDI Across School-Level Roles

Administrators	General education teachers	Special education teachers	Paraprofessionals
• Provide shared planning time across personnel serving students with disabilities when developing master schedules. • Allot time for general and special educators to attend ARD meetings. • Offer ongoing support through mentoring, coaching, and professional learning.	• Implement the SDI *as directed and supported* by the special education teacher. • Integrate accommodations into learning activities and assessments with input from special educators. • Collaborate with special educators to adapt curriculum and/or instructional strategies for individualized needs. • Embed SDI-aligned strategies within Tier 1 instruction. • Review IEP for specific responsibilities. • Collect data on IEP goal mastery using the goal criterion.	• Design the delivery and implement SDI as specified in the IEP, including frequency, duration, and location. • Internalize and deliver lessons aligned with IEP goals. • Collaborate and communicate with general education teachers and paraprofessionals to direct and provide support with SDI implementation. • Review IEP for specific responsibilities. • Collect data on IEP goal mastery using the goal criterion.	• Implement SDI supports under the supervision of the special education teacher. • Assist in collecting data on academic and behavioral goals. • Communicate observations to the instructional team.

Accommodations and Modifications

Under the provisions of IDEA[6] and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA),[7] IEPs must identify the provision of specific accommodations and modifications so that students can access the general education curriculum.

SDI is derived from the IEP goal(s) and may include and be supported by accommodations and/or modifications and services as documented on the IEP. Accommodations and modifications support a student's access to instruction, and the ARD committee makes this determination within the IEP (TAC §89.1050). In addition, allowable accommodations must be available during state assessments to students identified under IDEA and other acts, such as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (DoDEA AI 1365.01). Students should be given the opportunity to use accommodations in their daily instructional routines and classrooms before they use them on an assessment.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides resources to support the accommodations and modifications process, including the following:

- IEP Development Guide
- Training on Standards-Based IEP Development
- Quick Learn on Accommodations and Modifications
- Understanding Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodations

Change how the student accesses learning or demonstrates knowledge and may reduce or even eliminate the effects of the student's disability on academic tasks, while maintaining the objectives of the course or activity.

ARD committees should consider whether changes in presentation, response, setting, or timing/scheduling are necessary **accommodations** for students to access the general curriculum.

Presentation accommodations enable students to access educational materials using presentation methods that make the information more accessible to them, such as varying text presentations, chunking, or repeating instructions.

Response accommodations enable students to answer questions or record their work in alternative ways, or to solve or organize their work using specific materials or devices.

Setting accommodations change the location in which instruction is given or the conditions of the setting.

Timing/scheduling accommodations adjust time and scheduling requirements for instruction, assignments, homework, and assessments. Students may require increased use of breaks, reminders to stay on task, extended time for assignments and assessments, or adjustments to the time of the day for instruction.

Decisions about **modifications** should be data-driven and individualized for each student. ARD committees should keep in mind that using modifications may have adverse implications on postsecondary goals.

Any instructional adjustment may be implemented as an accommodation or modification. The following table illustrates examples of similar activities implemented as both accommodations and modifications.

Modifications

Change what the student is expected to master and typically require a student to learn less material and/ or complete or be tested over simplified, less complex problems.

Examples of Activities as Accommodations and Modifications

Accommodation	Modification
All students are to complete math word problems using problem solving and multiple steps. The focus of this assignment is to analyze the content to determine the steps needed and create a plan to solve a problem. The student uses a calculator to accommodate the slow retrieval of math facts, which interferes with learning the problem-solving process.	All students are to complete math word problems by identifying 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 does not need to learn how to calculate the correct answer, so the calculator supports the student's ability to multiply.
All students are to complete a formative assessment to measure mastery of previously taught comprehension skills. During the assessment, the student uses a blank graphic organizer independently to recall prior knowledge and organize textual evidence to make inferences. The student needs to show mastery of the same comprehension skills as other students.	All students are to complete a formative assessment to measure mastery of previously taught comprehension skills. 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 does not have to show mastery of the same comprehension skills as other students.
All students are to complete 25 math problems consisting of adding numerals, fractions, and decimals. The teacher shortens the assignment for the student by deleting 10 math problems, ensuring that the remaining problems include all three of the instructional components.	All students are to complete 25 math problems consisting of adding numerals, fractions, and decimals. The teacher shortens the assignment for the student by deleting 10 math problems, with the remaining problems including adding numerals and fractions only.

Determinations about needs for accommodations and/or modifications are made and regularly adjusted based on progress monitoring data. As with SDI, changes to accommodations or modifications should be documented in the students' IEPs and should reflect changes to annual goals, as appropriate to meet students' needs.

[6] "Accommodations" are the necessary supports and modifications provided to a child with a disability to enable them to access the general education curriculum and participate meaningfully in school activities, including, for example, assistive technology, modified assignments, extended time, preferential seating, or adjustments to testing procedures—all of which should be outlined in the child's IEP to ensure that they receive a "free appropriate public education" [20 U.S.C. 1401(3)].

[7] States and districts shall provide for the participation in assessments of all students the appropriate accommodations, such as interoperability with, and ability to use, assistive technology, for children with disabilities (ESSA Section 1111(b)(2)(B)(xiii)).

Infusing SDI Into Lessons and Instructional Practice

Assessing Prior Learning

When planning adaptations to instructional plans, including providing SDI, teachers should consider students' prior learning. Prior learning may include **foundational skills**, such as reading and comprehension, as well as **content knowledge** about the lesson's topical focus. Teachers should review data for all students related to prior mastery and conduct remediation or pre-teaching (described next) to ensure that students have the prior learning necessary to meet lesson goals. For districts using Bluebonnet Learning, expectations for prior knowledge are provided in the instructional materials.

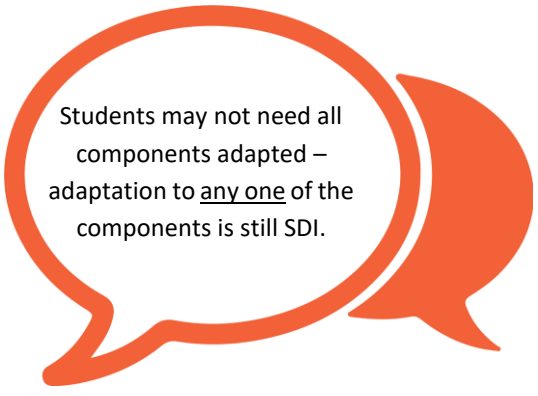
Pre-Teaching

Pre-teaching involves introducing key concepts and skills before a lesson and is one of the most effective strategies to help students with disabilities access grade-level content. This strategy not only supports increased background knowledge but also helps activate prior knowledge and build prerequisite skills, promoting better engagement and confidence in students, as well as a deeper understanding of the targeted instructional needs for teachers (Berg and Wehby, 2013). Strategies that may be incorporated during pre-teaching include the following:

- **Highlighting key terms** to help students understand the language that will be taught.
- **Breaking down complex concepts** into smaller, more manageable chunks and explaining them in advance of the lesson.
- **Providing opportunities to practice foundational skills** before the lesson and learn how to apply those skills in the lesson.
- **Using visual aids**, such as graphic organizers, helps introduce the lesson structure to students, enabling them to organize information and make connections.

Examples of Specially Designed Instruction

The following examples illustrate how SDI can be tailored to support individual students with disabilities in achieving their IEP goals. These examples demonstrate how SDI can be applied across a variety of content areas and instructional contexts to support students in achieving their annual goals, using progress monitoring to determine adjustments. The examples show how educators can adjust one or more of the components of SDI – the **content, methodology, and/or delivery of instruction** – to remove barriers to learning and ensure access to the general education curriculum.



A tool for integrating SDI into lesson internalization and delivery across various instructional roles is included in Appendix A.

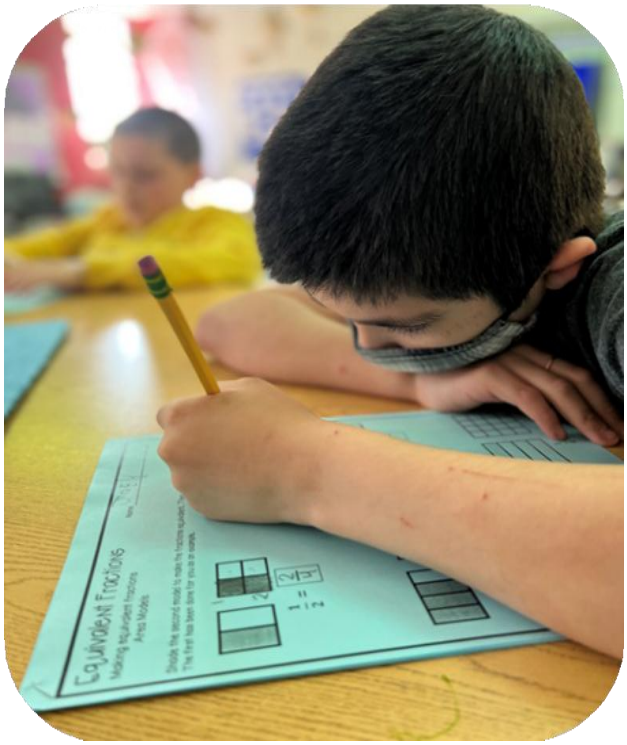
SDI for Math for a 7th Grade Student

PLAAFP: Ryan currently qualifies for special education and related services under the category of other health impairment (OHI) due to symptoms related to his diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). When given an independent academic task or multi-step directions, Ryan may look around the classroom, walk around the classroom, play with any small items he can find, start conversations with others, put his head down on his desk, and ask for a break instead of starting and completing the task on his own.

Baseline Data: A review of behavior data shows that Ryan receives visual and verbal supports to stay on task in each class. On average, Ryan receives 8 to 10 verbal or visual cues per academic task and completes 50% of his assignments. During this school year, another accommodation of a task analysis sheet, or a checklist that breaks tasks into manageable steps for each academic assignment, was introduced to help Ryan follow multistep directions. After five instructional trials introducing Ryan to a task analysis sheet, his completion and submission rate improved to 70% with 8 to 10 verbal or visual cues per academic task.

Annual Goal: By the next annual ARD committee meeting, when given an assignment checklist with tasks broken into sequential steps and five verbal or visual prompts, Ryan will independently complete and turn in math assignments, with 80% accuracy across ten consecutive assignments, measured three times a week.

Adapting content	Adapting methodology	Adapting delivery of instruction
• None.	• Provide Ryan with verbal and/or visual cues throughout academic tasks. • Use explicit instruction to help Ryan continue to use the task analysis sheet (e.g., "I do, we do, you do" model).	• When: For 20 minutes, 3 times a week. • Where: In an individual setting within the general education classroom, but away from potential distractions. • By whom: Ryan will work with a paraprofessional to refine his use of the task analysis sheet for his work.



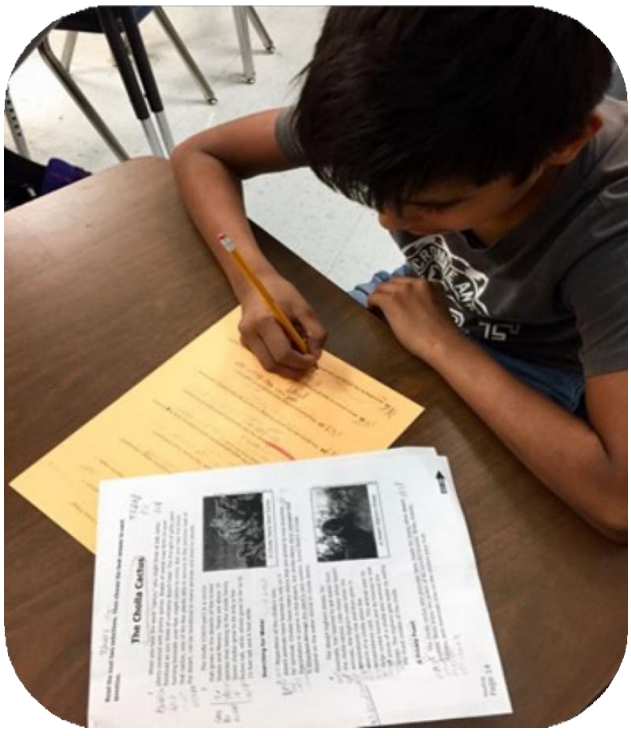
SDI for English Language Arts Reading (ELAR) for a 5th Grade Student

PLAAFP: Johnny is identified as a student with a specific learning disability in reading comprehension, with specific deficits in answering comprehension questions, learning new vocabulary, and responding to texts read.

Baseline Data: When vocabulary is explicitly pre-taught using word-learning strategies, and vocabulary supports are embedded within the passage or vocabulary is simplified, Johnny answers comprehension questions (e.g., inferences, figurative language, comparing and contrasting, and sequential order) at 85% mastery on a teacher-made unit test. When he is not provided these vocabulary supports, he answers comprehension questions at 40% mastery on a teacher-made unit test.

Annual Goal: By the next annual ARD committee meeting, when given additional time (up to twice the amount compared to grade-level peers), vocabulary supports embedded, and oral administration of questions and answer choices, Johnny will accurately answer comprehension questions after independently reading the passage, as evidenced by averaging 85% on the teacher-made unit tests in his ELAR class measured every other week for mastery.

Adapting content	Adapting methodology	Adapting delivery of instruction
• Provide Johnny with embedded vocabulary supports (e.g., using context clues, morphology, and semantic mapping).	• Provide explicit, systematic instruction on dictionary use, morphemic analysis, and contextual analysis	• When: Daily, during designated reading instruction time, with additional time during content area instruction (e.g., science, social studies) to complete assignments. • Where: In an individual setting within the general education classroom. • By whom: Johnny will work with the special education teacher to regularly practice his comprehension.



SDI for Reading for a 2nd Grade Student

PLAAFP: Sophia is a second-grade student eligible for special education and related services as a student with dyslexia and is an emergent bilingual student. Her dyslexia manifests as difficulty with decoding and reading words accurately at an appropriate rate, as well as with prosody and spelling. She is provided bilingual supports (e.g., side-by-side vocabulary cards or picture dictionaries) to bridge understanding between her home language and English.

Baseline Data: On the teacher-created word list based on 2nd grade patterns of phonetic knowledge, Sophia can decode and read 1 out of 25 words accurately. When given 1st grade patterns of phonetic knowledge, she can accurately decode and read 23 out of 25 words. The class average for decoding and reading 2nd grade word patterns was 23 out of 25 words correctly.

Annual Goal: In 36 instructional weeks, when given a review of previously taught skills, and a random list of 25 enrolled grade-level decodable single and multisyllabic words, Sophia will accurately decode 22 out of 25 words across five consecutive trials measured every two weeks for mastery.

Adapting content	Adapting methodology	Adapting delivery of instruction
• Use an evidence-based dyslexia curriculum that is sequential, cumulative, and diagnostic.	• Incorporate oral language development strategies, such as sentence frames, choral reading, and partner talk, to support both Sophia's decoding and language acquisition.	• When: At a consistent time daily when Sophia is most alert and focused. • Where: In a small group setting to allow for individualized pacing and feedback. • By whom: Sophia will work with a provider of dyslexia instruction, in collaboration with an ESL/bilingual specialist.

SDI for Speech for a 1st Grade Student

PLAAFP: Amani is a first-grade student identified with a speech impairment in speech sound production/articulation. Amani's speech impairment impacts her ability to share information and ideas effectively in her classroom.

Baseline Data: With a verbal model paired with a hand signal to prompt correct tongue placement, Amani produces /k/ and /g/ sounds in the initial, medial, and final positions of CVC (e.g., cap, got, tag) and CVCV (e.g., pogo, cocoa, taco) words with 40% accuracy when naming pictures. Without these supports, her accuracy drops to 25%.

Annual Goal: In one year, when given a visual cue and 10 pictures to name, Amani will use /k/ and /g/ in the initial, medial, and final positions of consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) and (CVCV) words correctly with an average of 80% accuracy across three consecutive trials as measured weekly.

Adapting content	Adapting methodology	Adapting delivery of instruction
• Amani will be taught CVC and CVCV words, emphasizing the /k/ and /g/ sounds using picture-based word lists.	• Use visual cues and pictures to support correct articulation. • Provide frequent, structured practice with immediate feedback during speech and language activities. • Incorporate multisensory strategies, such as tapping, clapping, or using manipulatives to represent sounds.	• When: Multiple times per week in short, focused sessions (e.g., 15–20 minutes) that are integrated into classroom routines, such as morning meetings or literacy centers, to promote generalization of skills. • Where: In both pull-out and push-in settings, allowing Amani to practice in structured and naturalistic environments. • By whom: Delivered by a speech-language pathologist (SLP) in collaboration with the classroom teacher.

SDI for Science for a 10th Grade Student

PLAAFP: Paulo is a 10th-grade student eligible for special education services as a student with autism and intellectual disability. The depth and breadth of his ability to understand oral communication, language, and vocabulary significantly impacts his ability to understand concepts in biology due to the large amount of content-area vocabulary and oral instruction.

Baseline Data: On teacher-developed multiple-choice unit tests (with the supports listed below), Paulo's scores range from 45% to 73% correct and average approximately 55%. The passing standard for these assessments for same-aged peers is 70%. On a recent district-developed benchmark (with the supports listed below), Paulo obtained a score of 73%. On the multiple-choice section, he correctly answered 20 out of the 25 questions correctly. On the short-answer section, he answered two of the five questions correctly. The teacher reports that these scores are reflective of how he generally performs in the class.

Annual Goal: In one year, when give a biology lab investigation and the following supports of bulleted list of steps with icon supports, deletion of extraneous vocabulary, simplified sentence structure, and a lab report template in cloze format with a word bank, Paulo will independently complete his lab journal entries by accurately documenting information learned during the lab investigation with an average of 75% accuracy across four lab investigations, as measured every two weeks.

Adapting content	Adapting methodology	Adapting delivery of instruction
• Use explicit instruction to teach Paulo how to document information from lab investigations in his lab journal.	• Provide Paulo with a bulleted list of steps with icon supports, deletions of extraneous vocabulary, simplified sentence structure, a lab report template in a cloze format with word bank, and specific questions related to the lab investigation with three choices.	• When: During science lab activities, with additional time as needed for processing and completion. • Where: In the general education classroom with supports, or a small-group setting for pre-teaching or reinforcement. • By whom: General education teacher with direction from the special education teacher and support from a special education teacher or paraprofessional.

Progress Monitoring and Data Collection

According to IDEA (34 CFR §300.320(a)(3)), each child's IEP must include a description of how the child's progress toward meeting annual goals will be measured. Progress monitoring ensures that the SDI effectively supports the student and allows for ongoing review and adjustment to meet the student's needs.

Progress monitoring provides a **structured, data-driven process** for evaluating whether instructional strategies and supports ensure the student accesses and progresses in the general education curriculum. Data should be collected objectively and consistently. Progression to more intensive supports should be informed by **data-based individualization (DBI)**, a systematic use of assessment data to monitor student progress and provide intensified interventions.

Key components of a progress monitoring plan include:

Frequency: Identify how often data will be collected (e.g., daily, weekly, every other week). The more frequently data is collected, the sooner teachers will know if the SDI is effective.

Roles and responsibilities: Specify who will collect the data and who is responsible for monitoring progress (e.g., general education teacher, special education teacher, paraprofessional, related services provider) and ensure they are properly trained. These may be the same or different individuals.

Setting: Identify where and when data will be collected (e.g., during math class, during small-group reading instruction).

Additional information about progress monitoring is available within the Standards-Based IEP training, in the Texas Sped Support (TSS) resource collection on data and progress monitoring, and within the Question and Answer Document on Measurable Annual Goals document.

SDI and Instructional Strategies and Supports

While SDI complements other instructional strategies used with all students, it should still be distinct in that it is individualized and tied to IEP goals (Friend and Barron, 2021). Instructional strategies should be effective for all students and account for variance related to disability status and level of mastery of the content being taught (Pham, 2012). IDEA requires that these components (adaptations to content, methodology, and/or delivery of instruction) be combined within a school into a comprehensive continuum of services (§300.115).

SDI can be provided at any of the three tiers within an MTSS framework (Evans et al., 2024), and SDI may be integrated into MTSS programs that address students' academic, behavioral, and/or mental health needs. Students receiving both general education instruction and special education services can fully participate in MTSS. Therefore, each district's MTSS plan should include strategies for infusing SDI

where appropriate to support students with disabilities. For additional guidance on implementing SDI within an MTSS framework, educators can refer to resources from the TEA Special Education Support MTSS resources page and National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII), which offer tools and best practices for aligning intensive interventions with individualized supports.

Features of Effective Instructional Strategies

There is an abundance of research on instructional strategies that are effective for all students (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2019; Rosenshine, 2012; Shemshack & Spector, 2020). **Scaffolding** and **differentiation** are two effective instructional strategies that are especially relevant to the implementation of SDI for students with disabilities. More information can be found at TEA's effective instruction resource page.

> ***Scaffolding*** *is the intentional practice of attending to content, students, and other contextual factors in the design or implementation of temporary, student-specific instructional supports that maximize access to grade-level concepts and tasks. Teachers may implement scaffolding to support students in reformatting complex concepts into individual steps, improving accessibility, and supporting students struggling with memory, attention, focus, or comprehension of a concept.*
>
> ***Differentiation*** *is a process used to recognize the varying background knowledge, readiness, language, learning preferences, and interests of a student. The intent of differentiated instruction is to maximize each student's growth and individual success. Differentiation may be implemented in the form of daily checks for understanding, daily formative assessments, or infusing universal access tasks into lessons.*

Research-Based Instructional Strategies

Research-based instructional strategies (RBIS) are practices that highlight common misconceptions in the field. They cover topics that may require conceptual or philosophical changes to instructional approaches, and they form a set of practices supported by research that should be present in classrooms, regardless of the instructional materials. The RBIS are based on the science of how students best learn math and reading in K–12 classrooms and provide a **foundation for effective instruction** that SDI can build upon (Borrego et al., 2012; Courville et al., 2023). More information can be found at the TEA RBIS resource page.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) includes strategies to ensure that all learners can access and participate in the general education classroom. The goal of UDL is "**learner agency** that is purposeful and reflective, resourceful and authentic, strategic and action-oriented" (CAST, 2024). The UDL guidelines provide suggestions for **engaging students, presenting information in various ways, and offering students ways to demonstrate their learning**—all organized by examples and explanations for their implementation (CAST, 2024). More information can be found at the TEA UDL resources page.

Administrator Support for Educators Implementing SDI

There are three ways that administrators can support SDI implementation with fidelity.

1. Preparing the Campus Master Schedule

School administrators can ensure that the campus master schedule promotes effective planning and support for SDI. Considerations for master scheduling to promote effective SDI implementation include the following:

- **Create the ARD meeting schedule to allow all personnel serving students with disabilities to attend** without being pulled from their service to students – this includes special and general education teachers and related service providers.
- **Use students' IEPs to determine required special education services**, including SDI, accommodations, modifications, and other supports in the campus master schedule.
- **Consider the level of support and intensity of individual student needs when determining classroom rosters**, as to not overload any roster beyond the capabilities of the personnel.
- **Provide shared planning times in the master schedule** for co-teachers, general and special education teachers, and teachers and paraprofessionals to collaborate.
- **Maintain a manageable student-teacher ratio** according to the needs of the students in the class.
- **Place students with disabilities on class rosters** before placing students without disabilities.
- **Balance class rosters according to student needs**—not only for students with IEPs but also other special populations, such as emergent bilingual students and those with 504 plans.
- **Consider where paraprofessionals will be allocated** in master scheduling.
- (For higher grade levels) **Give students multiple class options** for content blocks and/or extracurricular courses.
- (For co-teaching arrangements) **Maintain consistency in co-teaching partnerships** to make planning more efficient.

2. Supporting Teachers

School administrators should ensure that teachers serving students with disabilities have the appropriate training and certifications as required by IDEA and the state.[8] They can also provide **ongoing professional learning** for teachers to implement SDI with fidelity, ensuring it meets the needs of students as outlined in a student's IEP. This professional learning can include face-to-face training, ongoing coaching, and asynchronous learning, such as from various TEA modules, including those provided earlier in this guide.

3. Ensuring Integration Across Instruction

School administrators can further reinforce SDI implementation by **ensuring that SDI is integrated** alongside effective instructional strategies, RBIS, UDL, and accommodations and modifications, as specified in students' IEPs and embedded in daily lesson delivery.

Key Takeaways

As this guide illustrates, SDI is essential for ensuring students with disabilities have meaningful access to the general education curriculum. There are four steps to implementing SDI:

- Identify the impact of the disability (from the PLAAFP statement)
- Develop annual goals
- Design and implement SDI
- Create a progress monitoring plan

SDI may occur through one or more of the three components of adapting instruction:

- Content: What is taught
- Methodology: How instruction is delivered
- Delivery of Instruction: When, where, and by whom instruction is delivered

All school faculty play roles in ensuring the effective implementation of SDI. Administrators can provide shared planning time, allocate time for ARD meetings, and offer ongoing mentoring, coaching, and professional learning. General education teachers integrate accommodations into instruction, collaborate with special education teachers, and review IEPs to adjust instructional approaches to meet student needs. Special education teachers implement SDI as outlined in the IEP, internalize and deliver SDI-aligned lesson plans, and monitor and report progress. Paraprofessionals support SDI implementation under the supervision of the classroom teacher.

There are additional resources available to support SDI implementation. Those resources appear next.

[8] All special education and related service personnel must be certified, endorsed, or licensed in the area or areas of assignment in accordance with 34 Code of Federal Regulations, §300.156; the Texas Education Code (TEC), §§21.002, 21.003, and 29.304; or appropriate state agency credentials (§89.1131).

Texas Resources

Texas SPED Support: https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/

SPED Quick Learns Collection: https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/resource-library/texas-sped-quick-learns

STAAR Alternative 2 Assessment: https://tea.texas.gov/student-assessment/staar-alternate-2

Standards-Based IEP Process Training: https://spedsupport.tea.texas.gov/learning-library/new-special-education-teacher-toolkit/standards-based-individualized-education

TEA Dyslexia Handbook: https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/dyslexia-and-related-disorders

Other Resources

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

SWIFT Center: https://swiftschools.org/

Unlocking Time Resource for Master Scheduling: https://unlockingtime.org/school-schedules

Glossary

Adaptations Changes made to curriculum, instruction, or assessments to provide students with disabilities equal access to learning and opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge.

Data-based individualization (DBI) The systematic use of assessment data to monitor student progress and provide intensified interventions.

Direct instruction A structured, evidence-based teaching method focused on explicit, systematic instruction to improve student outcomes.

Explicit instruction A teaching method that uses clear objectives, teacher modeling, and student practice to promote support student learning.

High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) Materials aligned to academic standards, are content-rich with clear learning outcomes, reflect evidence-based practices, and provide a full suite of teacher and student materials.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) A key component of IDEA, a principle that ensures students with disabilities are educated in general education classrooms to the greatest extent possible.

Literacy foundation skills The building blocks of reading and writing mastery; typically includes concepts of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Math foundation skills The basic building blocks of mathematics, including arithmetic operations, number understanding, and geometric concepts.

Multisensory strategies Instructional methods that engage more than one sense at one time to allow students multiple ways to connect their learning. It may involve any combination of practices that engage sight, hearing, movement, and touch.

Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) An integrated framework for the systemic alignment of evidence-based prevention and intervention practices to support all the needs of all students.

Paraprofessionals Employees who provide instructional support, including those who provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher; assist with classroom management, such as organizing instructional and other materials; provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory; conduct parental involvement activities; provide support in a library or media center; act as a translator; and/or provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a teacher. (20 USC, §6319(g)(2))

Progress monitoring The evidence-based ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data to determine student progress.

Related services A wide array of developmental, corrective, and other supportive services required for a child to benefit from special education. Related services include but are not limited to assistive technology, audiology services, counseling services, interpreting services, medical services, music therapy, occupational therapy, orientation and mobility services, parent counseling and training, physical therapy, psychological services, recreation, rehabilitation counseling services, school health services, social work services in school, speech-language therapy, and transportation.

Systematic instruction A structured, step-by-step approach to teaching or learning a skill or concept, moving from simpler to more complex elements.

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Appendix A. SDI Lesson Internalization and Delivery: Guiding Questions and Considerations

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?
Prerequisite skills or knowledge:	What prerequisite skills are necessary for this instruction? Does the student currently possess these skills? If not, how can instruction on prerequisite skills be provided to prepare students to access and meet grade-level objective?
IEP requirements:	What does IEP require so that the student can access and progress in the general curriculum?
In each section, clarify what SDI the student needs as a result of the disability and what will be used for instruction and assessment. Specify any changes in how the student will be taught (i.e., instructional approaches, techniques, strategies) and tools that will be used (i.e., organizers or checklists).	
CONTENT	Does the student's disability impact access to the grade-level content? If so, how? Does the student need alternative content representations (visuals, simplified language, repeated vocabulary instruction)? What knowledge and skills does the student need to be taught to increase access to and progress in the general education programming? What does the evidence/data suggest are content adaptations for teaching students with similar needs? What are the academic and functional goals in the student's IEP that need to be addressed during instruction to provide access to the grade-level curriculum?
METHODOLOGY	How does the disability impact the student's access to and progress in the general curriculum? What are effective methodologies for teaching students with similar instructional academic and functional content needs? What instructional methodologies have proven to be more effective or ineffective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills? Does the student need adaptation to the instructional methodology such as multisensory, task analysis, explicit instruction, or visual supports due to the nature of the disability? Are there disability related needs requiring content to be retaught, frontloaded, spiraled, or previewed? Does the student need instruction that is more intensive, more scaffolded, or follows a different instructional sequence? Does the student need a specialized approach to learn skills (e.g., social skills teaching, sensory regulation routines, behavior instruction)?
DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION	Who is the best person to deliver the instruction? What specialized knowledge and skills does the person need to instruct the student? When and where should instruction occur? Does the data suggest that the student requires instruction at specific times or increments? How much time is needed for skills to be mastered? Does the student need instruction delivered at a different pace, duration, or intensity? Does the delivery, including the group size, provide sufficient opportunities for the student to practice and receive explicit feedback?
Progress Monitoring Plan	What specific data will be collected during this lesson? What tool or method will be used to collect the data (e.g., checklist, rubric, probe, observation form)? What is the criterion for success (e.g., 80% accuracy, 4 out of 5 trials)? How often will data be collected (e.g., daily, weekly, biweekly)? Who will collect the data, and are they trained to do so? Where and when will the data be collected (e.g., during small-group reading, independent work)?

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