

SDI Methodology Adaptations: What You Need to Know

Summary

What is specially designed instruction (SDI)? According to [IDEA Sec. 300.39\(1\)](#), special education means SDI to meet the needs of the child with a disability, including

- Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and
- Instruction in physical education.

What are [SDI methodology adaptations](#)? Adaptations to *how* the teacher guides students' learning of academic and functional knowledge and skills

- to address the unique needs of the child that result from the disability, and
- to ensure access to and progress in the general curriculum.

How do I know what methodology adaptations are needed? To identify appropriate SDI methodology adaptations, individualized education program (IEP) Teams should refer to the following:

1. The evaluation report, which describes the areas of need for special education.
2. The IEP [present levels of academic achievement and functional performance \(PLAAFP\) statement](#), which describes how the disability affects, or impacts, the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum or, for preschool students, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities.
3. Evidence of the student's response to different instructional methodologies.

What questions should the IEP Team consider?

- How does the disability impact the child's access to and progress in the general curriculum?
- Is there a method that has proven to be more effective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills?
- Are there methods that have been ineffective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills?

Examples of Evidence-based SDI Methodologies for Students with Disabilities

1. **Systematic and Explicit Instruction** - Explicit instruction is defined as a way of teaching where the teacher selects an important objective, specifies the learning outcome, designs structured instructional experiences, explains directly, models the skills being taught, and provides scaffolded practice to help a student achieve mastery. For more information, check out the [Features of Explicit Instruction Course Content from the National Center on Intensive Intervention](#).
2. **Social Stories or Social Narratives** - Social stories or narratives describe various social situations consisting of individualized phrases or stories that specify how a person should act in certain contexts or situations. Evidence suggests that it can improve understanding of and performance in social situations and reduce disruptive behaviors for children with autism.
3. **Peer mediated Instruction and intervention (PMII)** - PMII is used to teach typically developing peers ways to interact with and help learners with disabilities acquire new social skills by increasing social opportunities within natural environments. With PMII, peers are systematically taught ways of engaging learners in social interactions in both teacher-directed and learner-initiated activities. Research has shown it to be effective for [students with intellectual disabilities](#) and [autism](#).
4. **Time Delay (Progressive or Constant)** - Time delay is used when the goal is to produce errorless learning. This is done by systematically increasing the amount of time inserted between the task direction and prompt. Evidence suggests it is an effective approach to [teaching academics to students with severe developmental disabilities](#).
5. **Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT)** - DTT is a structured Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) technique that breaks down skills into small, "discrete" components. The teacher systematically teaches these skills one by one and uses tangible reinforcements to reward for desired behavior. The practice has been shown to be effective in increasing social, communication, attention, behavior, school-readiness, adaptive, and academic outcomes for learners in preschool (3-5 years) to elementary school learners (6-11 years).
6. **Pivotal response training (PRT)** - PRT takes place in a natural setting rather than clinic setting. The goal of PRT is to improve a few "pivotal skills" that will help the person learn many other skills. One example of a pivotal skill is being able to initiate communication with others.
7. **Video Based Instruction** – Video-based instruction uses different types of videos – including pre-made content, short video clips, interactive videos, and live video

- to provide instruction. It has been associated with improvement in many skills (e.g., including social skills and communication, academic, daily living, and vocational skills) particularly for students with [autism](#) and [intellectual disabilities](#).
8. **Task Analytic Instruction** - Task analytic instruction breaks down complex skills into manageable, discrete steps. Students learn the individual steps in sequence in order to master the overall skill. Evidence suggests it is an effective approach to [teaching academics to students with severe developmental disabilities](#), [teaching students with autism](#), [teaching daily living and transition skills](#), and [promoting independence and mastery of academic and social instructional goals](#).
 9. **Multi-Sensory Approach** - Multisensory approaches use visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways simultaneously to enhance memory and learning of written language. Links are consistently made between the visual (language we see), auditory (language we hear), and kinesthetic-tactile (language symbols we feel) pathways in learning to read and spell. [Orton-Gillingham](#) is considered an example of a multi-sensory approach.
 10. **Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI)/Technology Integration** – CAI refers to instruction presented on a computer and has been shown to improve instruction for students with disabilities. CAI provides immediate feedback and moves at the students' pace, often preventing the students from moving until they have mastered the skill. For some students, computers capture the student's attention which can lead to increased engagement and performance.

Additional Resources

1. [Instructional Technology: What Teachers Need to Know](#) (PROGRESS Center)
2. [Effective Teaching Strategies for Students with LD](#) (National Association of Special Education Teachers)
3. [Evidence-Based Instructional Practices Course Collection](#) (PROGRESS Center)
4. [Instructional Practice Briefs](#) (PROGRESS Center)
5. [Successful Strategies for Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities](#) (Learning Disabilities of America)
6. Practice Guides (What Works Clearinghouse): [Teaching Math to Young Children](#)
7. Practice Guides (What Works Clearinghouse): [Teaching Strategies for Improving Algebra Knowledge in Middle and High School Students](#)
8. Practice Guides (What Works Clearinghouse): [Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers](#)
9. [Wyoming Vision Outreach](#)
10. [Wyoming Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services](#)

11. Practice Guides (What Works Clearinghouse): [Teacher-Delivered Behavioral Interventions in Grades K-5](#)



IEP Tip Sheet

What is Special Education? A Focus on Specially Designed Instruction

This tip sheet introduces and briefly defines special education with a focus on specially designed instruction (SDI), and provides tips for implementation. To learn more, review the additional resources and check with state law for supplemental requirements. This is one of four tip sheets in a collection of the statement of services and aids in the individualized education program (IEP; Sec. 300.320(a)(4)). The overview tip sheet provides a summary of the complete statement.

What Does IDEA Say?

According to [IDEA Sec. 300.39](#),

“(1) Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including—

- (i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and
- (ii) Instruction in physical education.

(2) Special education includes each of the following, if the services otherwise meet the requirements of paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

- (i) Speech-language pathology services, or any other related service, if the service is considered special education rather than a related service under State standards;
- (ii) Travel training; and
- (iii) Vocational education.”

What is specially designed instruction (SDI) according to IDEA?

According to [IDEA Sec. 300.39\(b\)\(3\)](#),

“(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—

- (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.”

Elements of SDI

SDI Element

What it Means

Questions to Consider



Content

What is taught to allow the student to access general education programming

- Are adaptations needed for the content as a result of the disability?
- Do the data indicate that the student needs specialized instruction in a specific academic or functional area?
- What are the content and skills needs outlined in the IEP goals?
- How can we leverage the student’s strengths and current knowledge as we identify needed adaptations to the instructional content that will be provided?



Methodology

How the instruction is delivered or the practices and approach the teacher uses to teach

- Is there a method that has proven to be more effective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills?
- Are there methods that have been ineffective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills?

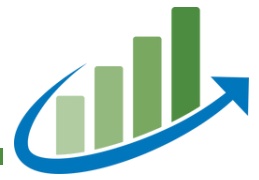


Delivery of Instruction

By **whom, where,** and **when** the instruction will be delivered

- What instructional delivery adaptations are needed?
- Does the delivery (including the group size) provide sufficient opportunities for the student to practice and receive explicit feedback?
- Do the data indicate an adaptation to the provider's specialized knowledge and skills?





Who delivers?

SDI is typically delivered by the special educator or related service provider but may be delivered by another educator or provider based on the needs of the child.

Why?

Ensure child's access to the general curriculum so that the child can meet the educational standards.

Where?

SDI is a service, not a place. SDI can be provided in any location, as long as the location is consistent with the student's IEP and the student's least restrictive environment.

Tips for Design and Implementation

- ✓ Determine SDI on an individual basis and justify based on the student's needs identified in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statement.
- ✓ Clearly outline the SDI content, methodology, and delivery adaptations in the student's IEP.
- ✓ Engage the student, the student's family, special and general educators, and other service providers in discussions about instructional approaches that have and have not been successful.
- ✓ Use data throughout the development and implementation of SDI to ensure that it addresses the special education needs outlined in the evaluation report and the evolving needs of the student.
- ✓ Ensure that team members understand the difference between SDI, accommodations, modifications, intervention programs, and instruction provided to all students.

Where Can You Learn More?



The What and Why of the Statement of Services and Aids (PROGRESS Center). The course explains the IDEA requirements for the statement of services and aids and the critical role of the statement in the development of a high-quality IEP.



Leveraging Data-Based Individualization (DBI) to Design and Deliver Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) (PROGRESS Center and National Center on Intensive Intervention). This webinar recording shares how practitioners can use DBI to develop and implement SDI for students with disabilities.



PROGRESS Center Website. The PROGRESS Center website includes additional information about developing high-quality IEPs and additional tip sheets in this series.



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