



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

The purpose of this document is to help define and increase the capacity for understanding about specially designed instruction (SDI) as it relates to students with disabilities in Indiana. This issue of Spread the Word serves as guidance for Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams, administrators, educators, and practitioners as they determine the need for and work to plan and implement SDI for students with disabilities who require IEP services.

Special education must include specially designed instruction. Under the definition of Special Education, Article 7 states,

“ *Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parent, designed to meet the unique needs of a student eligible for special education and related services under this article.*

(511 Indiana Administrative
Code 7-32-86)

”

What is SDI?

SDI means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and 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 (511 IAC 7-32-88) (IDEA §300.39). Students who receive special education services must receive SDI in order to be in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Indiana Article 7.

What are supplementary aids and services (SAS)? SAS are aids, services, and other supports that are provided in (1) general education classes; (2) other education-related settings; and (3) extracurricular and nonacademic settings to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate (511 IAC 7-32-95).



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

SDI IS

In addition to core instruction (supplemental)
A service or support
Provided at no-cost to the parent
What an educator/staff/school personnel does
Teaching specific skills identified as learning barriers
Important features of a program and/or unique instruction
Specific to the student (individualized)
Maintaining high expectations and supporting students in the general education setting
Carefully planned
Promoting independence
Presumed competence

SDI IS NOT

In place of core instruction (supplant)
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement
Funded by the parent or family
What a student does
A restatement of the academic content standards being taught
Naming a specific program that replaces a special education service
Driven by programs or schedules
Lowering expectations and/or removing students from the general education setting
Reactive
Promoting dependence
Presumed incompetence



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

Many SAS are supported through SDI. For example, in order for a student to access and use a supplementary aid independently, the student will need explicit instruction (SDI) in the use of the specific strategy or device. **The intent is to provide levels of support until the student can access a supplementary aid independently.**

SDI Instructional Practices the Teacher Uses

- Guided practice of listening strategies
- Scaffold instruction, visual, written, verbal, physical, picture prompts, and cues
- Modeling
- Instruction of calming strategies
- Grapho-phonetic strategies (visual/auditory) including letter/sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, decoding
- Explicit instruction how to use a graphic organizer
- Direct instruction and support for specialized software and equipment
- Explicit instruction of the writing process including pre-reading activities, writing, revising, editing, and publishing
- Explicit instruction of behavioral skills
- Multi-sensory teaching strategies
- Direct instruction in computation and reasoning strategies

SAS Aids or Services the Student Uses

- Visual Prompts
- Visual, written, verbal, physical, picture prompts, and cues
- Self-monitoring checklists
- Calming strategies
- Graphic organizers
- Prompting and cueing
- Recorded materials
- Extended time
- Study guides
- Magnifier
- Copy of notes written on the board
- Editing checklists
- Cue cards with problem-solving strategies, definitions, examples, models, flowchart, process steps
- Modified tests/assignments
- Graph paper
- Calculator
- Assistive technology



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

Instructional Strategies: The following strategies should be tailored to the individual needs of the student. SDI strategies provided are not an exhaustive or limited list.

Academic

Phonemic awareness strategies, multi-sensory teaching strategies, modeling, instruction in the use of organizers, small group instruction, direct instruction, guided practice, word problem strategies

Communication

Auditory discrimination training, environmental prompts, social scripts, mirror training, guided responding, video self-modeling, system of least prompts, direct instruction, verbal/guided repetition, computer assisted instruction

Physical (OT/PT)

Hand over/under hand guidance, modeling, one-on-one instruction, adapted physical education, instruction in the use of equipment or assistive technology, direct instruction, and support

Behavior

Explicit social instructional skill instruction, relaxation strategies, de-escalation strategies, direct teaching of replacement behaviors

Vocational

Task analysis, differential reinforcement, direct instruction, verbal prompts/cues, graduated guidance, self-monitoring, corrective feedback/reteaching



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

Is it necessary for the special education teacher to provide SDI for the special education student, or can it be provided by the general education teacher?

SDI is a shared responsibility under IDEA.

- A special education teacher has expertise in the area of specially designed instruction (SDI).
- A general education teacher has expertise in the curriculum.
- A public agency representative supervises the provision of SDI.
- A special education teacher and a general education teacher work collaboratively to plan, design, and implement specially designed instruction for students.

Can SDI be provided by a paraprofessional? What are paraprofessionals able to do involving SDI?

Paraprofessionals serve an important “supportive” role in providing SDI. A paraprofessional acts under the direct guidance and supervision of a special education teacher or credentialed related service personnel.

The following conditions must be in place:

- The general and/or special education teacher designs and delivers core instruction and SDI for the student.
- Adequate training is provided to the paraprofessional to support SDI (e.g., reinforcement/review of skills or concepts, data collection).
- On-going communication occurs between the paraprofessional and the special education teacher or related service personnel.

For example, paraprofessionals may provide the following:

- Facilitate the use of assistive technology.
- Lead a review of the concepts
- Monitor student academic progress and/or behavior.

A paraprofessional may not:

- Replace the special education teacher.
- Plan, deliver, or lead initial instruction.



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

What does SDI look like for a student receiving consultation services?

A special education teacher and a general education teacher work collaboratively to plan, design, and implement specially designed instruction for students whom they share responsibility. Consultation services may include collaboration on:

- The academic or behavioral needs of a student
- Specific instructional strategies or supports
- Curriculum development
- Modes of learning/communication
- Accommodations and assistive technology

Where and when is SDI delivered?

- In any setting or time, school-related activities occur.
- To the maximum extent appropriate, with peers in the general education setting

How is SDI delivered?

- Intentionally, directly, and highly structured
- Through customized changes to the content, methods and/or instructional delivery based on the student's needs



SPREAD THE WORD: TOPICS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

References & Resources

- **Article 7** - (2024) Title 511, Article 7. Indiana State Board of Education; 511 IAC 7
- **ESSA** (2015). Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L. No.114-85
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** - (2004). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq
- **Council for Exceptional Children** - High Leverage Practices #12: Specially Designed Instruction Toward a Specific Learning Goal
- **Indiana Department of Education** - The state of Indiana's education agency
- **Indiana IEP TA Center** - (2024) SDI: What, Where, When, How? Presentation [Video](#) and Resources [Padlet](#)
- **PACER Center** - PACER Center is a parent training and information center for families of children and youth with all disabilities from birth to young adults.
- **PROGRESS Center** - Leveraging Data-Based Individualization (DBI) to Design and Deliver Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) [Video](#) and [IEP Tip Sheet](#)
- **SWIFT Center** - SWIFT is a national K-8 technical assistance center that builds school capacity to provide academic and behavioral support to improve outcomes for all students through equity-based inclusion.
- **What Works Clearinghouse** - An initiative of the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) that works to be a central and trusted source of scientific evidence for what works in education.