

SPECIAL EDUCATION

FALL 2019 | BRIEF 2

WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

Students with disabilities have unique learning needs. Under federal law, special education means **specially designed instruction** (SDI), at no cost to parents or families, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

In its simplest form, SDI is any instructional, assessment or re-teaching needed to close the academic gap between students with disabilities and their peers. It describes what all teachers, not just special education teachers do, to adapt content, methodology or delivery of instruction.

Children with disabilities but no need for unique specially designed instruction are not eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Specially Designed Instruction Resources:

- IEP Guidance Document: education.ky.gov/specialed/excep/forms/Pages/IEP-Guidance-and-Documents.aspx
- SDI Pepper Module: www.pepperpd.com
(Pepper is an online learning community located within OK EDPlan where educators can access high-quality professional development.)
- SDI IRIS Module: iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources/iris-resource-locator/
(The IRIS Center has resources about evidence-based instructional and intervention practices.)
- SDI Guidance Document: p12.nysed.gov/specialed/commoncore/SDI-GuidanceDocument.pdf

WHY IT MATTERS

- Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) is what makes special education “special.” What does the student need that **only** special education services can provide?
- SDI directly focuses on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals that address the child’s unique academic and functional needs resulting from the disability.
- SDI is the individualized instruction provided to students with disabilities so they can achieve their IEP goals and objectives and progress in the general education curriculum to achieve the highest outcomes.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Under IDEA, Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) is a shared responsibility.

- Special education teachers have expertise in the area of specially designed instruction.
- General education teachers have expertise in curriculum.
- Special education teachers, general education teachers and others with knowledge or special expertise about the child work collaboratively to plan, design and implement specially designed instruction.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does my school develop and provide specially designed instruction for our students with disabilities on IEPs?
- How do we measure the success of specially designed instruction?
- How can we improve the specially designed instruction we provide?
- How do we communicate the importance of general education and special education teachers collaborating effectively to provide SDI to students on IEPs?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

Many Supplementary Aids and Services (SAS) are also supported through Specially Designed Instruction. For example, in order for students to access and use a supplementary aid, they will need explicit instruction (SDI) in the use of the specific strategy or device. The intent is to provide levels of support until the students can independently access a supplementary aid.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) practices the teacher uses	Supplementary Aids and Services (SAS) the student uses
Teaching calming strategies	Calming strategies
Explicit instruction and support for specialized software and equipment	Assistive technology
Scaffolded instruction; visual, written, verbal, physical and picture prompts and cues	Visual, written, verbal, physical and picture prompts and cues
Explicit instruction in the writing process – prewriting activities, writing, revising, editing and publishing, including instruction on how to use graphic organizers	Graphic organizers

