

Tips from the Special Education Division: IEP Services-Every Minute Counts!

October 2024: Part 1

Question: How do teams determine the specially designed instruction, accommodations, and modifications needed to support students in making progress in the general education curriculum?

Answer: Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams play a critical role in ensuring students with disabilities can meaningfully participate, access, and make progress in the general education curriculum. Understanding the distinctions between services provided to students eligible for special education is essential for educators, administrators, and support staff. This understanding aids in thoughtfully planning for the level of services students need throughout their day.

Determining what and how much specially designed instruction and what modifications and accommodations are necessary to support students to make progress in the general education curriculum and how to provide those services can be challenging. This tip is part one of two that will provide definitions and examples of specially designed instruction (SDI), accommodations, and modifications, as well as examples of resources to guide teams in planning a student's day. Part two will include recommendations and considerations for related services and supplementary aids and services (SAS).

What is (& is not) Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)?

SDI <u>Adapts the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction</u> to address a student's needs related to disability	Accommodations Supports that help students access general education curriculums <u>without changing the level of expectation</u>	Modifications Supports that <u>adjust the content or level of expectation</u> to help the student learn and demonstrate understanding
Teaching a student to break down tasks using a step-by-step checklist	Providing a graphic organizer, such as a blank step-by-step checklist	Providing a pre-completed step-by-step checklist
Teaching context clues to identify the meaning of unfamiliar words when reading informational texts	Providing grade-level informational text in an electronic format with a built-in dictionary feature	Providing informational text on the same/similar topic in a shortened format or lower reading level
Providing step-by-step instruction and practice on two-digit by two-digit multiplication	Providing graph paper to support independent completion of two-digit multiplication	Providing graph paper to support independent completion of foundational math skills (e.g., two-digit by one-digit multiplication instead of two-digit by two-digit)



*REMEMBER: Special Education is a **service**, not a **place**!*

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

SDI means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of a student eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the **content**, **methodology**, or **delivery** of instruction. SDI should be designed to address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability and to ensure the student has access to the general curriculum, so that the student can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all students. [WAC 392-172A-01175\(3\)\(c\)](#).¹

Critical in the definition of SDI is that there is no "alternate" or "parallel" special education curriculum. The curriculum for learners with disabilities is the **same curriculum** as for children without disabilities. SDI, according to the IDEA, is a responsibility shared between general education teachers, special education teachers, and related service providers. SDI is not a curriculum; SDI instead may alter the way the learner acquires knowledge and skills. The adaptations modify the content, method, and/or delivery of instruction.

- **Content** is **what** is taught. The content of instruction should ensure access to the general curriculum and align with grade-level learning standards.
- **Methodology** refers to adapted **instruction and materials** compared to the methods used with peers. This adaptation may mean using different vocabulary, adding visuals such as pictures, using a specific prompting system, reducing unnecessary language from instructions, or using supplemental materials.
- **Delivery** includes **where and when** the instruction is delivered and **how** it is provided. Adapted delivery of instruction may be considered a supplement (in addition to) adapted methods within the general education class. It may include support from peers, or the unique configuration of learner grouping, such as small group or one-on-one instruction.

¹ See also, *Specially Designed Instruction, Supplementary Aids and Services, Accommodations & Modifications Overview*. Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, page 3 (2023).

Accommodations²

Accommodations are changes offered to students with disabilities to lessen the impact of a disability in the teaching and learning environment. Accommodations relate to accessing services and removing barriers so the student can achieve the same goals as their peers. Accommodations ensure equal access to learning and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge without altering instructional expectations, content, or performance standards.

- Examples include ***sign language interpreters, use of braille, large print material, extended time to complete assignments, manipulatives, audiobooks, breaks, preferential seating, etc.***

Modifications³

Modifications are changes that are made to instructional content. A modification adjusts the expectations for an assignment or test: It permits a change in what a test or assignment measures and may change grading criteria. Modifications do not fundamentally alter expectations or standards in instructional level, content, or performance criteria while still aiming to provide a student with meaningful and productive learning experiences tied to grade level curriculum and learning standards but also based on individual strengths and needs.

- Examples include ***alternate books, different test questions, reduced content.***

Documenting SDI, Accommodations & Modifications in the IEP

When meeting as an IEP team, the team will discuss and carefully assess a student's individual needs to determine when they require SDI, supplementary aids and services (SAS), related services, accommodations, and/or modifications throughout their day. This process begins with a thorough evaluation of the student's strengths, areas of need, and specific challenges related to their disability. The IEP team then identifies specific areas where the student requires additional support to fully engage and make progress in the general education curriculum.

² See, Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, 2023, p. 2 (**Accommodations** are changes offered to students with disabilities to lessen the impact of the disability in the teaching and learning environment. An accommodation relates to accessing services, reducing limitations, and removing barriers so the student can achieve the same goals as his or her peers. Accommodations allow a student to complete the same assignments as other students, but permit a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response, or presentation. An accommodation does not alter what the test or assignment measures.); See also, OSPI Evaluation and IEP Technical Assistance Module (April 2008).

³See, Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, 2023, p. 4 (**Modifications** are changes that are made to course content. When course content is modified (e.g., criteria altered to the degree it changes the intended outcome), the student is not pursuing the required content standards. The student's IEP should address course content modifications as well as grading and other forms of assessment. The activity is completely changed to meet the unique needs of a student with a disability. A modification adjusts the expectations for an assignment or test. It permits a change in what a test or assignment measures.); See also, OSPI Evaluation and IEP Technical Assistance Module (April 2008).

Teams must use data to determine duration and frequency of SDI. It is important to note that teams should not **allow building schedules or other administrative barriers** to dictate the minutes on an IEP. Teams should also be careful not to pull students from electives and specialists for their SDI, as these are general education opportunities. As described in the [Every Minute Counts Technical Assistance Guide](#):

- Return to the intent of the IEP, making student-centered decisions;
- Consider the workload, and shift educators' roles and responsibilities;
- Carefully consider the appropriate provider to provide the services when completing the service matrix;
- Consider a re-design of the school's inclusive building schedule, particularly if the schedule becomes a barrier to including students with disabilities. This re-design may include providing time for an inclusionary period in the inclusive building schedule for all students to receive added support and enrichment.⁴

Student schedules and progress monitoring data are valuable information for the IEP team to determine the appropriate "mixture" of SDI, SAS, related services, accommodations, and modifications. Teams should consider using a tool like the one outlined in the resources section below to help calculate services directly into the service matrix on the IEP.

Supports for IEP Team Decision Making

As described above, OSPI has partnered with the Center for Technology in Education at John Hopkins University on Every Minute Counts: Calculating IEP Services to Improve Student Outcomes in Washington State. Since the [Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District \(2017\)](#) decision, OSPI understands that district IEP teams are seeking additional guidance and structure for determining the service minutes for students with disabilities in order to develop an individualized program that is reasonably calculated to enable the student to make progress appropriate considering their circumstances. The guidance provided by this project is intended to support teams in utilizing best practices for *all* students with disabilities in *all* learning environments. These resources can be found at the links below:

- [Every Minute Counts Flyer](#) – brief guide of the resources, including a step-by-step visual;
- [Every Minute Counts Technical Assistance Guide](#) – comprehensive guide for planning;
- "Putting it all together" – *Module I, Module II, Module III, and Webinars (coming soon)*.

The TIES Center⁵, in collaboration with the Haring Center for Inclusive Education at the University of Washington, developed the "Comprehensive Inclusive Education: General Education & the Inclusive IEP" process. This framework offers three key components to guide planning for a student's day and ensure access to the general education environment. These three overarching learning components include:

1. Participating in routines and transitions;

⁴ Kouo, Harkins-Brown, & Phung, 2023.

⁵ TIES stands for Increasing **T**ime, **I**nstructional effectiveness, **E**ngagement, and state and district **S**upport for inclusive practice. See the [TIES Center webpage](#).

2. Engaging in grade level academics and other essential skills; and,
3. Interacting with others.

For more information on the 3 Overarching Learning Components see: TIES "[5C Process: Planning for Instruction both at School and Distance Learning](#)". And, for more information and resources for teams see: [Comprehensive Inclusive Education: General Education & the Inclusive IEP | Comprehensive Inclusive Education: General Education & the Inclusive IEP | Institute on Community Integration Publications \(umn.edu\)](#)

*What about planning for related services and supplementary aids and services?
Look for, next month: "How do teams determine the related services and
supplementary aids and services needed to support students in making
progress?"*

Resources

Mapping Individual Student Support Needs

This resource is intended to be an example to support case managers and educators in mapping out the level of needs for individual students, classrooms, and/or caseloads, based on needs across different class/activity settings and times of the school day.

To complete this tool:

1. Begin by putting in the student's daily schedule along the side.
2. Determine whether the time frame requires SDI, SAS, related services, accommodations, and/or modifications for the student to make meaningful progress, according to any data the team has provided.
3. If there is a goal to be worked on during this timeframe, address which goal(s) under the column for "embedded goals."
4. Under the third column, you may consider providing the "how" and/or "what" this student needs during this timeframe.
5. Lastly, you may determine what level of support the student may need during each timeframe, based on data provided by the team, using a key that has a hierarchy of support outlined on it.

Student Name: Jane Doe

Grade: 4th

Daily Schedule

Activity:	Embedded Goal:	SDI/Accommodation/Modification: (duration)	Level of Support:
8:30-8:45 Transition to School (example)	1. Adaptive IEP Goal 1- Transition (5 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checklist and visual for routines (5 min)	V-visual
8:45-9:15 Class Meeting (example)	1. Adaptive IEP Goal 1- Transition (5 min) 2. Social IEP Goal 5- Flexibility and collaborative interactions (5 min) 3. Adaptive IEP Goal 7- Whole group multi-step direction (5 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directions reworded and/or simplified to ensure comprehension (10 min)• Checklist and visual for routines (5 min)• Problem solving visual	GE- General Ed Teacher
Time/Task	1. Goal Area-Goal (minutes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SDI explanation (minutes)• Accommodation• Modification	(identify support hierarchy)

For other resources and guidance cited in this tip, please refer to:

- **Kouo, J., Harkins-Brown, A., & Phung, V.** (2023). *Every Minute Counts: Calculating IEP Services to Improve Student Outcomes in Washington State Technical Assistance Guide*. Center for Technology in Education, Johns Hopkins School of Education.
 - [Every Minute Counts Flyer](#);
 - [Every Minute Counts Technical Assistance Guide](#);
- **Vandercook, T., Bowman, J., Ghere, G., Martin, C., Leon-Guerrero, R., & Sommersness, J.** (2021). *Comprehensive Inclusive Education: General Education & the Inclusive IEP*. TIES Center, University of Minnesota. Retrieved from <https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/comprehensive-inclusive-education/main>
 - [5C Process: Planning for Instruction both at School and Distance Learning](#)
 - [Comprehensive Inclusive Education: General Education & the Inclusive IEP | Comprehensive Inclusive Education: General Education & the Inclusive IEP | Institute on Community Integration Publications \(umn.edu\)](#)