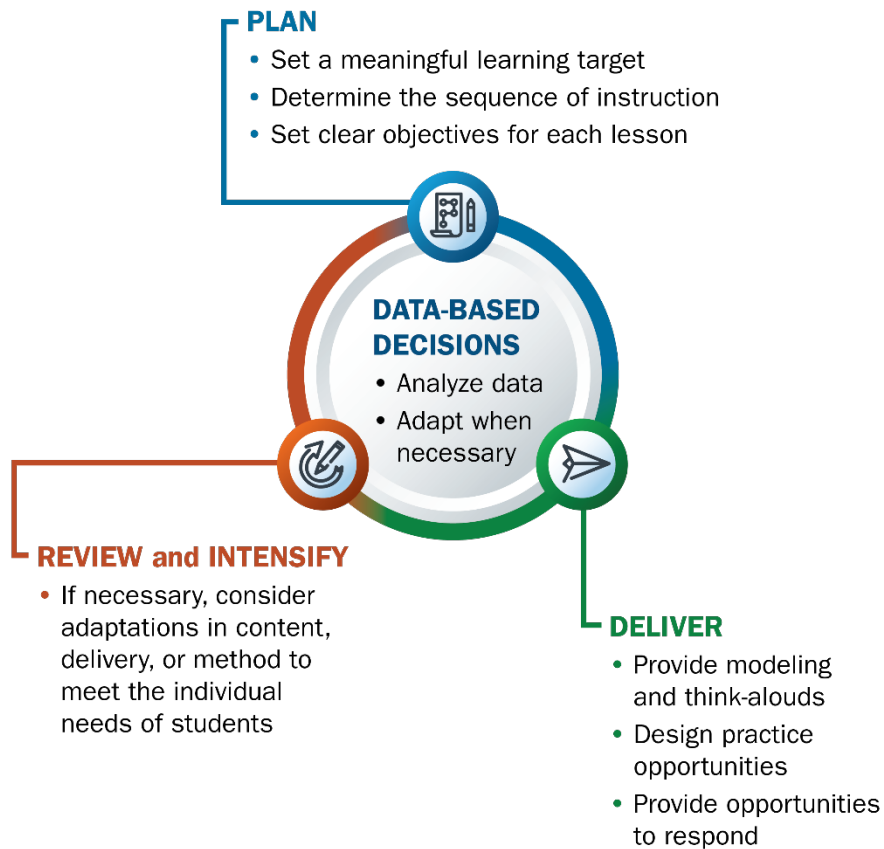# Delivering Instruction

What Do Teachers Need to Know About Delivering Instruction?

When delivering instruction for students with disabilities, teachers should consider the following three-phase cycle for individual, small-group, and whole-group instruction:

PLAN
- Set a meaningful learning target
- Determine the sequence of instruction
- Set clear objectives for each lesson

DATA-BASED DECISIONS
- Analyze data
- Adapt when necessary

REVIEW and INTENSIFY
- If necessary, consider adaptations in content, delivery, or method to meet the individual needs of students

DELIVER
- Provide modeling and think-alouds
- Design practice opportunities
- Provide opportunities to respond

In this brief, we focus on the DELIVER phase of the three-phase cycle. See the PLAN brief and the REVIEW and INTENSIFY brief for information about the other phases.

In special education, teachers should deliver instruction within academics and behavior that is *explicit*. We define the term "explicit instruction" as a meaningful combination of modeling and practice with embedded supports. Instruction that is explicit may be referred to with other terms, such as systematic instruction (Smith et al., 2016) or direct instruction (Stockard et al., 2018).

Researchers have identified benefits to using this instructional approach within the teaching of reading (Foorman et al., 2016), writing (Graham et al., 2016), and mathematics (Fuchs et al., 2021). Furthermore, researchers have noted that people learn through modeling and practice—both in and outside the

classroom (Kirschner et al., 2006; Rosenshine, 2010). Researchers also have noted an explicit approach to instruction is an improved teaching method compared with discovery-based approaches (Alfieri et al., 2011), especially when teaching students with disabilities (e.g., Jitendra et al., 2018).

Delivering Instruction for Students With Disabilities

Explicit instruction is a combination of modeling and practice. Within both modeling and practice, teachers use several supports. The following diagram provides a general overview (National Center on Intensive Intervention [NCII], n.d.):
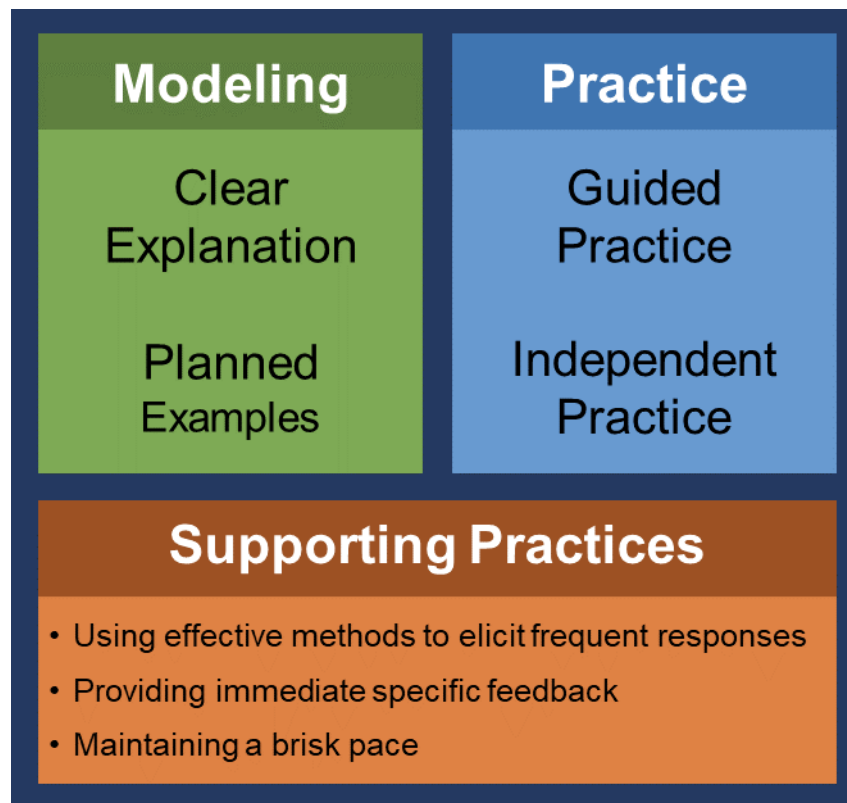
In **modeling**, the teacher models.

- **Clear explanation**. Teachers demonstrate (i.e., model) and verbally explain how to perform a skill. This modeling shows students how to do a skill step-by-step. Modeling is a think-aloud process for solving a problem.

- **Planned examples**. During modeling, an educator carefully plans which examples to use. Teachers may choose to use worked examples or nonexamples within modeling. A teacher may model with one or several examples.

During **practice**, students rehearse what the teacher modeled. Practice is where students *learn*, so practice is essential (Gersten et al., 2008). Practice may occur in several formats, as follows.

- **Guided practice**. With guided practice, students practice with the teacher. Everyone is working on the material focused on the same learning goal. Guided practice provides scaffolding for students as they learn new material. Sometimes, guided practice occurs with other peers as students work on material together.

- **Independent practice**. With independent practice, students practice individually with teacher support. This releases the scaffold for students so that they can begin to master the material on their own. Teachers may lean on technology to vary the types of independent practice opportunities.

During both modeling and practice, teachers should employ several **supports** to engage students and check for understanding. These supports provide the opportunities to respond that increase student engagement and correct responses (Common et al., 2020; MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015).

- **Ask questions**. Teachers should ask students a mix of high-level (e.g., why or how questions) and low-level (e.g., what or when) questions to check for understanding.

- **Elicit frequent responses**. Teachers should involve the students frequently, often referred to as opportunities to respond (Haydon et al., 2012). Students should be active participants in the learning during practice and modeling.

- **Provide feedback**. As students respond to questions, teachers need to provide immediate feedback. Some of the feedback may be affirmative, and some may be corrective. If students demonstrate a misconception or error, it is important to provide immediate corrective feedback.

- **Maintain a brisk pace**. To keep students' attention, teachers must be prepared for instruction and have all materials organized and ready for use.

Access to the General Education Classroom

In some cases, instruction in the general education classroom may not always use instruction that is a combination of modeling and practice, especially in classrooms that emphasize problem-based learning. That's okay. Different students require different teaching methods.

Communication with general educators is key. Have conversations about content and strategies for learning; then use the instructional strategies highlighted here to help students with disabilities learn the content and strategies. Special educators may want to show general educators how they use instruction to teach students with disabilities because general educators may want to incorporate some or all components of this instruction when teaching these same students.

How to Get Started Delivering Instruction

- Plan for delivery by setting a meaningful learning target, determining the sequence of instruction, and setting clear objectives for each lesson.

- Plan for modeling. Decide which problem(s) to model and how to model each problem. Plan for Opportunities to respond during modeling.

- Plan student practice opportunities. Decide how to engage students in guided practice. Determine how students will work on independent practice. Plan for Opportunities to respond during practice.

- Determine questions to ask students. Determine how frequently students will be asked to respond. Plan for providing affirmative feedback and/or corrective feedback.

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