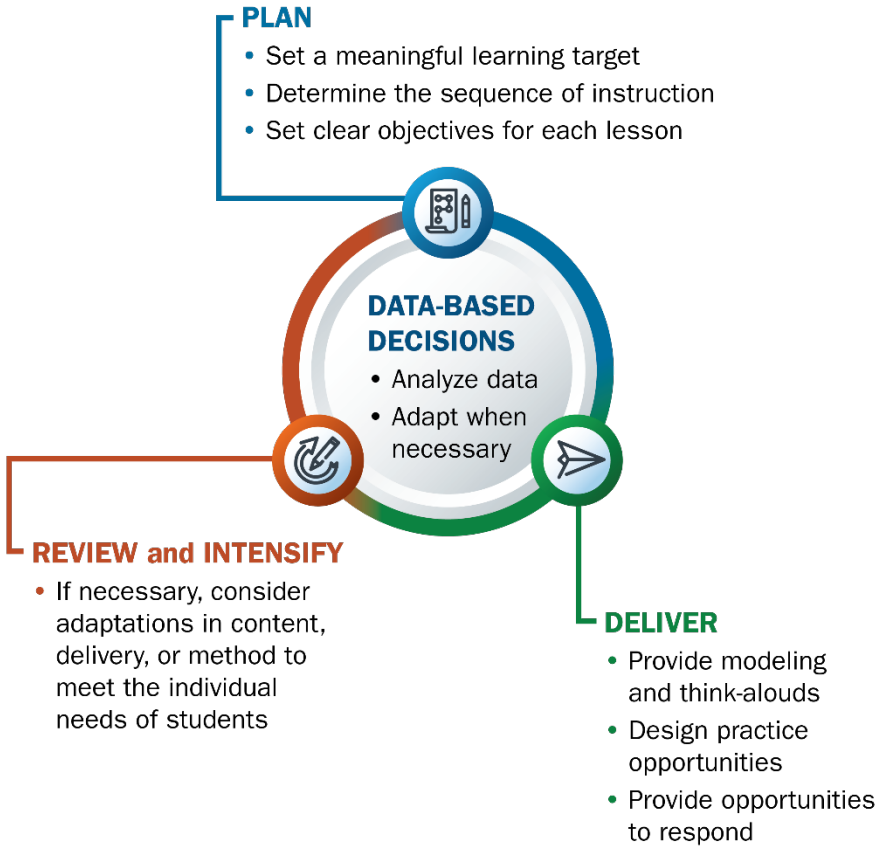
Planning for Instruction

What Do Teachers Need to Know About Planning for Instruction?

When planning instruction for students with disabilities, teachers need to consider elements of explicit instruction that will provide access to the general education curriculum and also meet the unique needs of students with disabilities across a variety of outcome areas (e.g., Dennis et al., 2016; Popham et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2020; Scammacca et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2013; Wanzek et al., 2018). The following three-phase cycle can be used when planning, implementing, and reviewing individual, small-group, and whole-group instruction:



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

Planning Instruction for Students With Disabilities

Teachers can use explicit instruction to (a) design instructional lessons to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities or (b) individualize validated intervention programs (Fuchs et al., 2018; Zumeta Edmonds et al., 2019) to provide more intensive instruction. In either approach, when planning for instruction, teachers should aim to do the following:

- **Set a meaningful learning target**. Using grade-level standards and/or individualized education program (IEP) goals, the teacher identifies a learning target for the student(s). Teachers may set learning targets related to improving academic, social behavior, and or functional behavior outcomes.
- **Determine the appropriate sequence for instruction**. The teacher breaks down the learning target into smaller segments that can be taught sequentially to support students in reaching the learning target. The teacher uses knowledge of students' prerequisite skills, formal and informal data sources, and professional judgment to determine the appropriate sequence, ensuring that skills are broken down to support students' success. When adapting a validated intervention program, the teacher will review the program's content and adapt instruction to ensure appropriate alignment to the learning target (Zumeta Edmonds et al., 2019).
- **Set clear objectives for each lesson**. The teacher decides the content of each individual lesson and sets clear objectives for the knowledge students will gain during the lesson. Once lesson objectives are set, teachers should then do the following:
  - **Plan for modeling**. An essential aspect of explicit instruction includes the use of "think-alouds" to model the skill. Teachers will proactively plan for this by considering how to meet the lesson objective by demonstrating and explaining how to complete the task to meet the lesson objective (Hughes et al., 2017).
  - **Plan for opportunities to respond**. Opportunities to respond are an instructional strategy for increasing student engagement and correct responses (Common et al., 2020; MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015). Teachers can plan to use a combination of individual and/or group opportunities to not only engage students in the learning activities but also monitor students' progress toward meeting lesson objectives. Opportunities to respond can include verbal (e.g., choral responses), nonverbal (e.g., physical gestures, response cards, use of manipulatives or drawings), and/or written responses**.**
  - **Plan for scaffolded practice opportunities**. To ensure that students have multiple opportunities to practice the target skill, the teacher plans opportunities for guided practice (e.g., the teacher performs the skill while the students help; the students perform the skill while the teacher helps) and/or independent practice (i.e., students perform the skill independently with teacher feedback to determine whether objective was successfully met). The teacher also plans for how immediate feedback on practice opportunities will be provided.
  - **Plan to collect data to inform** "**next steps**." After teaching a lesson in the sequence, teachers will review data gathered from the practice opportunities (i.e., guided or independent practice),

to determine whether adjustments need to be made in instruction. For example, if a teacher determines that students did not meet the individual lesson objective, the teacher will plan for reteaching a particular skill or strategy. If students met the lesson objective (based on data gathered), teachers will move on to the next lesson in the sequence. Once students have met the learning target, the teacher will return to the PLAN phase and set another target.

Access to the General Education Classroom

The three phases also can be used to teach in whole-group settings to provide access to the general education curriculum. In addition to the planning steps described in previous sections, teachers should keep in mind the following:

- *To identify a meaningful learning target*, the teacher may unwrap the grade-level standard to identify skills and concepts included in the standard (Morgan et al., 2008).
- When *determining an appropriate sequence of instruction*, the teacher considers both the skills and concepts of the grade-level standards and the prerequisite knowledge required when designing a sequence. When considering explicit instruction related to grade-level content, the teacher must incorporate prerequisite skill instruction and/or plan for integrating background knowledge into the sequence of instruction.
- When *setting clear lesson objectives*, the teacher considers whether all students in the class will work toward the same objective or whether objectives will be modified or adapted to align with the IEP.
- When *planning for practice opportunities*, the teacher considers and incorporates any instructional accommodations and/or modifications for students with disabilities.
- Research indicates that whole-class opportunities to respond (i.e., nonverbal or verbal choral responses) result in greater outcomes than individual opportunities to respond (MacSuga-Gage & Simonsen, 2015); thus, *when planning for opportunities to respond*, teachers should consider how to engage all students in group responses throughout the lesson.

How to Get Started Planning for Instruction

- To get started planning instruction for students with disabilities, teachers should start by using formal and/or informal diagnostic data to determine students' current levels of performance related to the learning target content area.
- Teachers should consider the three-phase cycle: Plan, Implement, and Review. Teachers should map out each phase before implementing instruction. The best instruction is thoughtfully planned and proactive.
- When planning for explicit instruction during synchronous online sessions, teachers may consider how to plan for opportunities to respond using technology features (e.g., chat box or meeting reaction features such as raise hand, thumbs up).

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1400 Crystal Drive, 10th Floor | Arlington, VA 22202-3289
202-403-5000 | www.air.org

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