



Planning for Instruction: What Teachers Need to Know Module Note-Taking Guide

Module Overview

This course focuses on planning for instruction. It is part of a series covering evidence-based instructional practices. When developing and implementing instruction and supports for students with disabilities, within individual, small-group, or whole-class instruction, teachers should consider following a three-phase cycle: planning, delivery, and reviewing and intensifying instruction and supports. At the center of this cycle is data-based decision making because it is critical across all three phases. The module is broken into two parts. The first part will describe the steps for planning for instruction. The second part will provide a case scenario to illustrate the steps in action. These practices were identified through an extensive, systematic meta-analysis* of high-leverage practices for students with disabilities.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you will be able to

- identify the three key steps in planning for instruction;
- describe how to set meaningful learning targets using individualized education program (IEP) goals and/or grade-level standards;
- identify learning targets to set a clear sequence for instruction; and
- establish clear lesson objectives with aligned practice opportunities.

Using the Note-Taking Guide

As you engage in the module, **take notes on the key themes and answer the summary questions** at the end of each section. After you complete the module, check your responses against the responses given at the end of this document.

*Nelson, G., Cothren Cook, S., Zarate, K., Powell, S. R., Maggin, D. M., Drake, K. R., Kiss, A. J., Ford, J. W., Sun, L., & Espinas, D. R. (2021). A systematic review of meta-analyses in special education: Exploring the evidence base for high-leverage practices. *Remedial and Special Education*, 43(5), 344–358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325211063491>

Section 1: Steps for Planning Instruction

This section outlines the three key steps in planning effective instruction: setting meaningful learning targets, determining appropriate instructional sequences, and establishing clear lesson objectives. It provides a comprehensive guide for teachers to create structured, focused, and aligned instructional plans.

Notes

Key themes	Notes
Step 1: Set a meaningful learning target	
Step 2: Determine the appropriate sequence for instruction	
Step 3: Set clear objectives for each lesson	

Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
What are the three key steps in planning for instruction, and why are they important?	



Questions	Responses
How do teachers set meaningful learning targets?	
How do teachers determine appropriate instructional sequences?	
What factors should be considered when setting clear lesson objectives, and how do these inform instructional planning?	

Section 2: Case Example: Ms. Ryan and Ms. Sage

This section presents a practical application of the planning steps through a case study involving Ms. Ryan, Ms. Sage, and their student Damien. It demonstrates how teachers can adapt their planning to meet both grade-level standards and individual student needs, particularly for students with learning disabilities.

Notes

Key themes	Notes
Student case details	
Reviewing long-term goals	
Determining student performance levels	



Key themes	Notes
Establishing class wide learning targets	
Setting specific learning targets	
Identifying prerequisite skills	
Determining sequence of instruction	
Developing measurable lesson objectives	
Developing specific learning objectives for students	
Planning instruction based on objectives	

Summary Questions

Questions	Responses
How do Ms. Ryan and Ms. Sage adapt their instructional planning to meet both grade-level standards and Damien's individual needs?	



Questions	Responses
What process do the teachers follow to establish learning targets, identify prerequisite skills, and sequence instruction for Damien?	
How do the teachers develop measurable lesson objectives and plan instruction based on these objectives to support Damien's learning?	



Sample Responses

This section presents sample responses to the questions provided after each section. You may use these responses to compare them with your own responses.

Sections	Summary questions	Sample responses
Section 1: Steps for Planning Instruction	What are the three key steps in planning for instruction, and why are they important?	The three key steps in planning for instruction are setting a meaningful learning target, determining the appropriate sequence for instruction, and setting clear objectives for each lesson. These steps are crucial because they provide a structured approach to ensure instruction is focused, well sequenced, and aligned to students' needs and educational standards. By following these steps, teachers can create a coherent instructional plan that builds logically towards desired learning outcomes, maximizing student engagement and achievement.
	How do teachers set meaningful learning targets?	Teachers set meaningful learning targets by reviewing grade-level standards and IEP goals, assessing students' current performance levels, and identifying prerequisite skills and concepts. This process ensures that targets are both challenging and attainable for students.
	How do teachers determine appropriate instructional sequences?	To determine appropriate sequences, teachers break down the learning target into smaller, teachable segments, consider students' prior knowledge and skills, and use data and professional judgment to order instruction logically. This approach allows for a progressive buildup of knowledge and skills, facilitating deeper understanding and mastery of the subject matter.



Sections	Summary questions	Sample responses
	What factors should be considered when setting clear lesson objectives, and how do these inform instructional planning?	When setting clear lesson objectives, teachers should consider the specific skills or knowledge students should demonstrate, how students will show their understanding, and alignment to the overall learning target. These clear objectives then inform instructional planning by guiding the selection of instructional strategies and activities; helping teachers plan for modeling, practice opportunities, and assessment; and ensuring lessons build progressively toward the learning target. This approach allows for more focused and effective instruction, increasing the likelihood of student success.
Section 2: Case Example: Ms. Ryan and Ms. Sage	How do Ms. Ryan and Ms. Sage adapt their instructional planning to meet both grade-level standards and Damien's individual needs?	Ms. Ryan and Ms. Sage adapt their instructional planning by aligning instruction to grade-level writing standards while simultaneously considering Damien's IEP goals. They set a modified learning target for Damien, requiring him to write a two-paragraph essay instead of the three-paragraph essay expected of his peers. In addition, they plan for additional support to address Damien's specific needs in writing mechanics. This balanced approach ensures that Damien is working toward grade-level expectations while receiving the individualized support he needs to progress.
	What process do the teachers follow to establish learning targets, identify prerequisite skills, and sequence instruction for Damien?	The teachers follow a comprehensive process that begins with reviewing state standards and Damien's IEP goals. They then assess Damien's current writing abilities to establish a baseline. Next, they identify prerequisite skills that Damien needs to master. They sequence the instruction from basic concepts to more complex writing tasks.



Sections	Summary questions	Sample responses
	How do the teachers develop measurable lesson objectives and plan instruction based on these objectives to support Damien's learning?	The teachers develop measurable lesson objectives by setting specific, achievable goals for each lesson, such as distinguishing fact from opinion. They also create additional objectives aligned to Damien's IEP goals to address his specific needs. When planning instruction based on these objectives, they incorporate modeling, opportunities to respond, and practice. They adapt their instruction to address Damien's specific needs in writing mechanics and plan for data collection to monitor his progress. This approach allows them to provide targeted support and make necessary adjustments to ensure Damien's continued growth in writing skills.

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