

SDI Methodology Adaptations: What Educators Need to Know



According to IDEA Sec. 300.39(b)(3), “[s]pecially designed instruction [SDI] means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the *content*, *methodology*, or *delivery* of instruction (i) to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and (ii) to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children [emphasis added].”



Key Considerations for Adapting Methodology



- ✓ Adapting methodology is one element that an IEP Team may consider when developing SDI.
- ✓ Methodologies may vary based on content area, student age, and impact of disability.
- ✓ No one methodology is effective for all students with disabilities, but most students respond to explicit, systematic instruction.
- ✓ Methodology adaptations change *how* the teacher guides students' learning of academic and functional knowledge, skills, and strategies to address the unique needs of the child that result from the disability.

When identifying needs for methodology adaptations, what questions should the IEP Team consider?



IEP Team

- How does the disability impact the child’s access to and progress in the general curriculum?
- Does the student need an adaptation to the instructional methodology?
- What instructional methodologies have proven to be more effective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills?
- What instructional methodologies have been ineffective for this student when acquiring knowledge and skills?
- What are effective methodologies for teaching students with similar instructional academic and functional content needs?



What are examples of evidence-based SDI methodologies for students with disabilities?

This section lists and describes several examples of methodologies that have been shown through evidence to address the unique needs of some students with disabilities.



Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI)/Technology Integration. CAI refers to instruction presented on a computer and has been shown to improve instruction for students with disabilities. CAI provides immediate feedback and moves at the students' pace, often preventing the students from moving until they have mastered the skill. For some students, computers capture the student's attention which can lead to increased engagement and performance.



Discrete Trial Teaching (DTT). DTT is a structured Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) technique that breaks down skills into small, "discrete" components. The teacher systematically teaches these skills one by one and uses tangible reinforcements to reward for desired behavior. The practice has been shown to be effective in increasing social, communication, attention, behavior, school-readiness, adaptive, and academic outcomes for learners in preschool (3-5 years) to elementary school learners (6-11 years).



Explicit and Systematic Instruction. Explicit instruction is defined as a way of teaching where the teacher selects an important objective, specifies the learning outcome, designs structured instructional experiences, explains directly, models the skills being taught, and provides scaffolded practice to help a student achieve mastery. For more information, check out the [Self-Paced Features of Explicit Instruction Course](#) from the National Center on Intensive Intervention and the [Evidence-Based Instructional Practices Course Collection](#) from PROGRESS Center.



Multi-Sensory Approach. Multi-sensory approaches use visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways simultaneously to enhance memory and learning of written language. Links are consistently made between the visual (language we see), auditory (language we hear), and kinesthetic-tactile (language symbols we feel) pathways in learning to read and spell. [Orton-Gillingham](#) is considered an example of a multi-sensory approach.



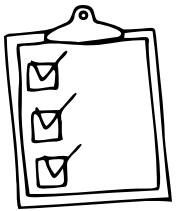
Peer mediated Instruction and intervention (PMII). PMII is used to teach typically developing peers ways to interact with and help learners with disabilities acquire new social skills by increasing social opportunities within natural environments. With PMII, peers are systematically taught ways of engaging learners in social interactions in both teacher-directed and learner-initiated activities. Research has shown it to be effective for [students with intellectual disabilities](#) and [autism](#).



Pivotal response training (PRT). PRT takes place in a natural setting rather than clinic setting. The goal of PRT is to improve a few "pivotal skills" that will help the person learn many other skills. One example of a pivotal skill is being able to initiate communication with others.



Social Stories or Social Narratives. Social stories or narratives describe various social situations consisting of individualized phrases or stories that specify how a person should act in certain contexts or situations. Evidence suggests that it can improve understanding of and performance in social situations and reduce disruptive behaviors for children with autism.



Task Analytic Instruction. Task analytic instruction breaks down complex skills into manageable, discrete steps. Students learn the individual steps in sequence in order to master the overall skill. Evidence suggests it is an effective approach to teaching academics to students with severe developmental disabilities, teaching students with autism, teaching daily living and transition skills, and promoting independence and mastery of academic and social instructional goals.



Time Delay (Progressive or Constant). Time delay is used when the goal is to produce errorless learning. This is done by systematically increasing the amount of time inserted between the task direction and prompt. Evidence suggests it is an effective approach to teaching academics to students with severe developmental disabilities.



Video Based Instruction. Video-based instruction uses different types of videos – including pre-made content, short video clips, interactive videos, and live video – to provide instruction. It has been associated with improvement in many skills (e.g., including social skills and communication, academic, daily living, and vocational skills) particularly for students with autism and intellectual disabilities.

For more information, view the PROGRESS Center's

- [IEP Tip Sheet: Overview of Statement of Services and Aids](#) and the companion tip sheet [What is Special Education? A Focus on Specially Designed Instruction](#)
- [Online Learning Course: The What and Why of the Statement of Services and Aids](#)
- [Evidence-Based Instructional Practices Course Collection](#)

