

## Specially Designed Instruction Handout

### Purpose

This document provides the Federal definition for special education and clarifies considerations for what constitutes Specially Designed Instruction.

### Federal Rule: Sec. 300.39 Special Education:

[Statute/Regs Main](#) » [Regulations](#) » [Part B](#) » [Subpart A](#) » [Section 300.39](#)

300.39 Special education.

#### (a) General.

(1) Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including—

(i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and

(ii) Instruction in physical education.

(2) Special education includes each of the following, if the services otherwise meet the requirements of paragraph (a)(1) of this section—

(i) Speech-language pathology services, or any other related service, if the service is considered special education rather than a related service under State standards;

(ii) Travel training; and

(iii) Vocational education.

#### (b) Individual special education terms defined. The terms in this definition are defined as follows:

(1) At no cost means that all specially-designed instruction is provided without charge, but does not preclude incidental fees that are normally charged to nondisabled students or their parents as a part of the regular education program.

(2) Physical education means—

(i) The development of—

(A) Physical and motor fitness;

(B) Fundamental motor skills and patterns; and

(C) Skills in aquatics, dance, and individual and group games and sports (including intramural and lifetime sports); and

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(ii) Includes special physical education, adapted physical education, movement education, and motor development.

(3) Specially designed instruction 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.

(4) Travel training means providing instruction, as appropriate, to children with significant cognitive disabilities, and any other children with disabilities who require this instruction, to enable them to—

(i) Develop an awareness of the environment in which they live; and

(ii) Learn the skills necessary to move effectively and safely from place to place within that environment (e.g., in school, in the home, at work, and in the community).

(5) Vocational education means organized educational programs that are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment, or for additional preparation for a career not requiring a baccalaureate or advanced degree.

## **Specially Designed Instruction**

- It is planned, organized and meaningful and is delivered in an explicit, intentional and systematic manner.
- It can be provided in any location, including multiple locations during the course of the school day, as long as the location is consistent with the student’s IEP and the student’s least restrictive environment.
- It directly addresses the goals in the student’s IEP, which, in turn, are “sufficiently ambitious” and designed to enable the student to achieve grade-level content standards or close the learning gap.
- It is specific instruction that is delivered to the student, not differentiated instruction, accommodations, active learning strategies or other activities designed to facilitate learning for all students.
- It is closely monitored to ensure that the intended results, i.e., a reduction in the learning gap, are being achieved.
- It can address any area of individual need including academic, behavioral, social, communication, health and functional.
- It does not involve lowering standards or expectations for the student.
- Specially designed instruction is similar to, different from and inter-related with core instruction and tier two and three interventions in a number of ways.

Generally, specially designed instruction *differs* from core instruction and interventions in the following ways:

- Specially designed instruction is defined and guaranteed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and implemented in accordance with an individualized education program (IEP);
- SDI teaches specific skills a student does not have but needs to access and progress in the general education curriculum;
- SDI is individualized, i.e., it is specific to the student;
- SDI must be delivered by a qualified provider;
- Students who receive SDI need sustained intensive support in order to maintain adequate rates of progress;
- Students who receive SDI may also receive instructional and testing accommodations;
- It is delivered in the student's LRE, which may be a location other than the general education classroom.

Specially designed instruction is similar to core instruction and interventions in these ways:

- It is aligned with the standards and instructional expectations for all students;
- It may be delivered in the general education classroom;
- It may be implemented together with general education strategies such as differentiation, universal design for learning, school-wide positive behavior supports;
- Assessment practices used in general education classrooms such as formative assessment, screening, and progress monitoring are used.