

# Iowa's Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Framework



## OVERVIEW

A learner eligible for special education services in Iowa is entitled to Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) at no cost to the family, to meet his/her unique needs as a learner with a disability. This includes *adapting as appropriate to the needs of the individual learner, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to address his/her unique needs that result from a disability and to ensure access to the general curriculum*, so that he/she can meet the educational standards that apply to all children (IAC 41.39). These special education and related services must be designed to meet the learner's unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living (CFR 300.1; IAC 41.1).

Iowa's SDI Framework is intended to engage educators and families in diagnosing, designing and delivering special education services to best meet the needs of learners 3-21 with disabilities and a range of educational needs. "Special Education" means Specially Designed Instruction.

## THE GENERAL CURRICULUM

The general curriculum includes the curriculum expected of all children. In Iowa that may include the Iowa Core, Iowa Core Essential Elements, the Iowa Early Learning Standards, and school-based expectations that may be evident in social-emotional standards, student handbooks etc. References to the Iowa Core throughout this document are referring to the general curriculum most related to the learner and their area of need.

## ABOUT THE SDI FRAMEWORK

The SDI framework is the result of multiple years of work of a variety of Iowa stakeholders (Area Education Agency (AEA) Directors, Directors of Special Education, the Iowa Department of Education, representatives of families, special and general education teachers, AEA consultants, etc.). Absent clearly articulated features of SDI, it is impossible to determine fidelity of its implementation or to efficiently organize resources and ensure that technical assistance and professional development activities are present. Therefore, the stakeholders were convened to develop the key components and critical features that are represented in the SDI Framework. As feedback and data are collected and analyzed, revisions will continue to be made. The Framework was deliberately designed to be applicable across the various needs of learners with disabilities (e.g., literacy, behavior, communication, secondary transition).

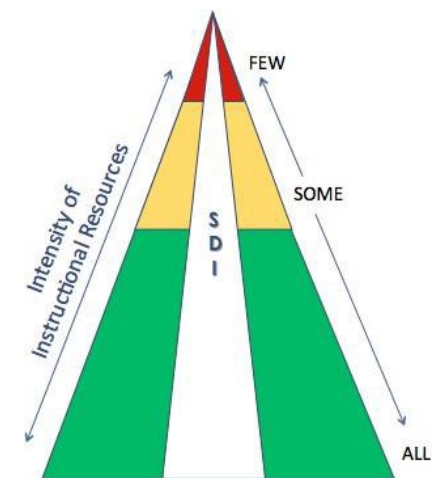
## GUIDING PRINCIPLES ABOUT SDI

The following foundational beliefs are of key importance as we work together to improve our special education outcomes, services and SDI for our learners here in Iowa:

- Learners receiving special education services are general education learners first and always.
- Highly effective special education services and outcomes are dependent on highly effective Universal Instruction and a school-wide intervention system.
- Effective SDI is designed through collaboration between families and highly qualified educators.
- SDI is delivered by special education and general education teachers and professionals in various settings across the day.
- The state and local standards, competencies, and expectations in all domains that apply to each learner drive diagnosis, design and delivery of SDI.
- Highly effective SDI flows from high quality and specific assessment information.
- SDI supports learners to use tools, materials and strategies to access Iowa Core Standards and reach grade-level aligned goals.
- SDI helps learners to address their unique needs as a result of the individual's disability.

## SDI IN AN MTSS FRAMEWORK

Learners eligible for special education services are entitled to SDI to address their unique needs and to ensure access to the general curriculum so they can meet educational standards. Therefore, in many cases learners with disabilities will need supports including targeted and/or intensive interventions. This may include accommodations, modifications, services and supports within and across a continuum of educational supports. For example, a learner with a disability and IEP goal in reading may require accommodations such as books specifically selected for his or her reading level or e-text to be able to access instruction at the universal tier. A learner may also require individualized instruction such as preteaching/reteaching to be able to engage with universal instruction. However, they may also need individualized instruction in specific skills and intensified instruction to progress toward grade level standards. These supports and services are just examples of SDI that a learner may need that extends across the tiers of an MTSS system ranging from more intensive to less intensive. What is most important to know is that SDI can occur in any educational setting and includes all of the unique educational needs of a learner with a disability.



(Adapted from U.S. Department of Education)

The SDI Framework outlines Key Components and Critical Features of the practices to support effective SDI; the Framework does not replace a system's school-improvement process. Effective universal instruction and intervention systems are foundational to effective SDI. Therefore, the practices evident in the SDI Framework should be used within the context of a school's instruction and supports available to all learners. For example, a school's MTSS/PBIS system should be taken into consideration to best support a strong

system of supports for all learners including learners with disabilities. Practices that impact universal instruction and intervention systems impact learners with disabilities as well.

The SDI Framework is a guide to engage educators and families to support the diagnosis, design and delivery of effective SDI. Effective SDI is evident when the Key Components and Critical Features are evident in practice—when learners with disabilities progress toward and meet grade level standards and are actively engaged in their learning across educational settings. The Key Components and Critical Features are aligned with a range of research on effective instruction for learners with disabilities.

Additionally, while the SDI Framework is content free, professionals should use appropriate tools to address specific learner needs. For example, the Intervention System Guide would support diagnosis, design and delivery for literacy and the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices should be used to focus diagnosis, design, delivery and engagement on practices that have the highest expected outcomes for young children.

## SUGGESTED USES

The SDI Framework provides a profile of the critical features and effective practices of diagnosis, design and delivery of effective SDI that engages learners. The framework and its associated resources are intended to be used by educators to guide decision-making to support learners with disabilities, to self-assess their own skills in providing SDI, to guide coaching conversations around critical features of SDI and to inform ongoing professional learning focused on SDI. This framework shall not be used as a teacher evaluation tool nor is it intended to be a stand-alone implementation guide.

Key Components	<b>DIAGNOSE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN</b> <i>Use RIOT and SCIL in order to:</i>	<b>DESIGN FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY</b> <i>With a team who has relevant and specialized knowledge, develop a plan which:</i>	<b>DELIVER FOR LEARNER ENGAGEMENT</b> <i>Use evidence-based, high-leverage in instructional practices in order to:</i>
<b>Critical Features</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Define areas of concern and verify potential reasons for the concern</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Gather and triangulate multiple sources of data through the RIOT process</li> <li>b. Thoroughly review the learner's educational history focusing intentionally on the setting, curriculum, instruction and learner's performance to develop a learner profile</li> <li>c. Pinpoint skills and/or behaviors that are not at mastery</li> <li>d. Develop an observable, measurable concern that has a verifiable standard based on the data gathered</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <b>Identify strengths, interests and preferences that sustain learner engagement</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify existing skills in which to build on through specially designed instruction</li> <li>b. Identify preferences for learning, materials, adult instructional behaviors, and activities that will maximize the likelihood a learner will remain engaged</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. <b>Determine critical supports needed for learner success</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Analyze the data collected in order to recommend and outline where specially designed instruction needs to begin</li> <li>b. Make an instructional match which includes the environment and approach/materials needed for the learner to access and make progress in the Iowa Core</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <b>Incorporates evidence-based practices aligned to learner needs</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Apply diagnostic results to select appropriate supports for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access</li> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Increasing specific skills</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Explicitly state learner outcomes</li> <li>c. Determine intensity and frequency of alterable variables (e.g. grouping, materials, accommodations, time, etc.)</li> <li>d. Use high leverage instructional practices that match the concept/skill being taught and the learner's needs</li> <li>e. Maintain high expectations, is coordinated and is inclusive of the necessary services and supports</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. <b>Aligns to the Iowa Core and is age appropriate</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Align learning targets to grade level, learning progressions and foundational skills</li> <li>b. Align the learner's IEP goals, progress monitoring and supports to Iowa Core</li> <li>c. Connect supports and services to instruction the learner is receiving throughout the school day</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. <b>Maximizes opportunities for access and engagement</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Address appropriate accommodations &amp; modifications</li> <li>b. Consider multiple means of engagement, action and expression and representation which are matched to learner need</li> <li>c. Provide instruction in the general education environment and removal is considered only if needed for learner success.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <b>Deliver the instruction as designed and monitor instructional fidelity</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Regularly use implementation fidelity checklists/walkthroughs/observations to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all parts of the instructional plan are implemented as intended</li> <li>• the instructional plan is implemented with the frequency/intensity/duration as planned</li> <li>• instruction includes evidence-based, high-leverage instructional practices</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Intentionally and regularly engage ongoing implementation support for feedback and guidance (e.g., family, coaches, content experts, PLC, etc.)</li> </ol> </li> <li>8. <b>Monitor learner progress</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Use assessments/data sources that link directly to skills taught</li> <li>b. Collect and use formative and summative assessments as planned</li> <li>c. Gather data with sufficient frequency to make instructional decisions.</li> </ol> </li> <li>9. <b>Adjust instruction as necessary based on learner progress and instructional fidelity</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Intentionally collaborate to review/analyze learner data to enhance instructional practices and materials</li> <li>b. Examine implementation data and progress data to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuing the plan as written</li> <li>• gathering more data</li> <li>• improving implementation</li> <li>• reducing supports/services</li> <li>• intensifying/modifying supports</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>INDICATORS THAT SUPPORT ENGAGEMENT FOR LEARNING</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>High Expectations Families and Teachers:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Share high expectations for the learner</li> <li>b. Partner to promote self-determination in the learner</li> <li>c. Have access to and understand the curricular expectations and standards required of the learner</li> <li>d. Advocate for multiple approaches and strategies that will support the learner and hold their interest</li> <li>e. Recognize their roles in the teaching and learning process and stay up to date on pertinent responsibilities in supporting the learner</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. <b>Positive Communication Family and Teachers:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Persistently and clearly communicate high expectations</li> <li>b. Communicate about the learner using preferred methods</li> <li>c. Communicate honestly, openly and with respect</li> </ol> </li> </ol>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Seek to understand by asking questions and actively listening</li> <li>e. Recognize that they are partners in the teaching and learning process</li> <li>3. <b>Active involvement - Families and Teachers</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Engage in collaborative and active problem solving</li> <li>b. Value full participation and support active involvement</li> <li>c. Support and promote positive and trusting relationships with learners</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. <b>Support Learner Learning - Families and Teachers</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Intentionally create and/or support safe, accessible and inviting environments for learning</li> <li>b. Establish and connect learners to real life learning environments</li> <li>c. Support and promote instruction that maximizes access and learner opportunity for growth</li> <li>d. Actively seek means to improve learner engagement</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	