

The Prior Written Notice

April 2023

Specially Designed Instruction

Providing more than just accommodations

Do you know the definition of Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)? Per state and federal regulations,

“Specially designed instruction means adapting...the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction...to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability, and to ensure access of the child to the general education curriculum...”

[OAR 581-015-2000(37); 34 CFR 300.39(b)(3)].

Conversely, accommodations are adjustments that allow a student with a disability to participate in educational *programming*, such as being able to complete assignments, engage in classroom activities, or demonstrate skills.

Accommodations and SDI are frequently confused, by both parents and teachers. The easiest way to separate these two concepts may be this:

- **An accommodation is the *what*** ... What tools or provisions or adjustments will help the student access the general education program? For example, providing a student with manipulatives when working on math is an accommodation; so is providing audiobooks for a science textbook. Another accommodation may involve allowing a student to present a Powerpoint instead of writing a report, as long as “writing skills” are not the standard being assessed. Providing speech-to-text software is an accommodation, while a specialist conducting an instructional session on how to use the software is considered *consultation*.
- **Specially designed instruction is the *how***... How will we teach the student the skills they need? How will the student learn? This may involve adapting the instructional *content*, such as

teaching general education curricular content at a lower reading level. It may involve adaptations to the instructional method, such as providing more systematic, explicit instruction than provided in the general education curriculum; or it may mean adapting the instructional delivery, such as introducing new information at a slower pace or with additional opportunities for repetition than the general education curriculum pacing.

When parents become confused when we talk about SDI, it can help to explain that specially designed instruction often involves being more explicit, more systematic, and more repetition when teaching about a strategy or a topic than most non-disabled students need. For example:

- If the regular education teacher teaches a new math problem-solving strategy over a few days, most students are then able to use the strategy. A student who needs SDI might need a special educator to explicitly explain the strategy, show when to use the strategy and when not to, show the individual steps of employing the strategy, model and practice the strategy with a high level of repetition, and provide consistent corrective feedback until the student can use the strategy independently.
- If the expectation is that students start a task within 15 seconds of a direction being given, simply prompting a student to get started might be effective for most non-disabled students. But for a student who has this skill as a behavioral goal, SDI might involve instructing specifically about what “starting a task” looks like, modeling examples and non-examples, demonstrating how long 15 seconds is, and practicing the new skill to mastery.

Remember, if we need to significantly alter the **content** being taught, the **methodology** used to teach it, or the way we **deliver** that instruction in order for the student to *access* and *make progress* in their general education experience, then we are providing SDI. If we are providing other types of tools, supports, or consultation, it is not SDI.



Upcoming Events

Important dates on the SSD Calendar

All month: *IEP meetings related to ESY decisions.*

This is the time to schedule IEP meetings to determine ESY services for any student whose Service Summary page says: “The team will meet to determine if ESY services are required.” It’s time to meet!

Frequently Asked Questions


Some of your colleagues have been asking...

➤ **When is an IEP team *required* to conduct an FBA and develop a BSP?**

IEP teams are ***required by law*** to conduct a functional behavior assessment (FBA) when:

- A student with a disability is removed/excluded from school (e.g., suspension, sent home early) for disciplinary reasons, *and*
- The removal is for more than 10 consecutive school days (or more than 10 cumulative school days for a pattern of behavior), *and*
- The misconduct is determined by the IEP team to be a manifestation of the student’s disability.

An IEP team has the ***discretion*** to conduct an FBA, and then develop a BSP, any time a student exhibits behavior that impedes learning -- but the team must at least *consider* implementing positive interventions and supports beforehand.



➤ Do we need a parent's signed consent to do an observation in the classroom?

As educators, we are all very aware that "individual evaluation" activities require parental consent. However, there are a few exceptions. For example, OAR 541-015-2095 describes that written parent consent is *not* required before:

- Conducting tests and procedures already identified in an IEP to measure progress
- Conducting a screening of a student by a teacher or specialist to determine appropriate instructional strategies for curriculum implementation


Therefore, if the purpose of an observation is to gather information about progress on IEP goals or to help educators better understand how to provide instruction to the student, then that observation may take place without parental consent. However, if the observation is for the purpose of considering a disability or make other decisions about a student, that observation would require written parental consent before it occurs.

➤ Once paperwork is finalized in Synergy, do I need to do anything else?

Why, yes! Yes, you do! Once an Evaluation/Eligibility process, an IEP process, or an IEP Amendment process is finalized in Synergy, the case manager must do the following:

- **Print** all of the documents in the process (including any Ad Hoc documents and additional attachments, like a BSP, Safety Plan, or private evaluation provided by parents).
- **Include** any signed documents (like *Consent for Evaluation, Release of Information, Consent for Initial Provision of SpEd Services*).
- **Add** the appropriate Coversheet on top of the stack and check all the documents that are included. Coversheets can be found in the [Appendix](#) of the SpEd Procedural Manual.
- **Create** a CMA ticket and check "Upload/Mail/File."
- **Write** the resulting CMA ticket number on the top of the Coversheet.
- **Send** the entire stack to the CMA assigned to your region.

Why do we do this? There are three primary reasons we must do this: upload, mail, and file.



Mail: We are responsible for making sure the parents receive a copy of every finalized document, and we can ensure this by having the CMA send a copy of the document stack.

File: At this time, the *legal record* of our students' special education documents are the physical copies located in the SSD Records room, and the CMAs will file them here. (Despite its ability to create documents, Synergy is not actually a document storage system – it only stores documents as raw computer code, which can technically be hacked or altered).

Upload: CMAs upload a PDF of the full stack of documents, which provides both a back-up to the paper records and as evidence of what final documents were sent home.

To review these and other procedures, please check out the SpEd Procedural Manual, [here](#).

Breaking News

2023-24 School Calendar

On March 15, the 4J School Board approved the school calendar for next school year.

August 22nd: Nurses, School Psychologists, & SpEd Consultants start

(contract start date of Aug 24th + 2 mandatory PD days)

August 25th: All other Licensed Staff start

(contract start date of Aug 29th, + 2 mandatory PD days)

September 6th: Kindergartners, 6th graders, & 9th graders start

September 7th: All other grades start



SSD Spotlight

Autism Consultants

4J is unique in that we have our very own Autism Consultants, while most districts rely on their ESD Autism professionals. Our five Autism Consultants engage in a wide range of activities. They are key team members for initial special education evaluations when Autism Spectrum Disorder is suspected. Consultants may conduct observations, direct interactions, and parent or teacher interviews, then participate in the Eligibility team to help determine if a student has characteristics of ASD. When licensed and classified staff need to learn more about the needs of, and support for, students with autism, consultants can provide in-service, training opportunities, or coaching. Consultants can also provide classroom presentations to help peers understand autism.

Autism Consultants spend a great deal of time helping teacher with program planning and ongoing support. They consult with IEP teams regarding behavioral and academic concerns for students with ASD eligibility, and they attend IEP, Eligibility, and other team meetings to provide input. For special education and general education teachers, they can assist with instructional design and curriculum suggestions for social skills and academic instruction for students with autism. Similarly, they can collaborate with interdisciplinary teams to develop and provide suggestions regarding Universal Design for Learning and how it can support neurodiverse students.

As IEP team members, Autism Consultants often assist with designing and implementing data collection systems, planning for students transitioning between schools, and post high school transition planning. They can also be very helpful assisting with the design of classroom routines, structures, and visual supports with individual students with autism, as well as assisting teams with the functional behavior assessment and behavior support planning for their students.

If you work with a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder and would like to consult with an Autism Consultant, please contact them!

Have an idea or a topic for a future newsletter? Contact Karen Apgar at apgar_k@4j.lane.edu

