

Key Considerations for Determining a Need for Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

Several factors must be taken into consideration when determining if a learner with a disability needs specially designed instruction. Teams must understand what Specially Designed Instruction is, how it differs from General Education Instruction, and the types of supports a learner with a disability may need but are not SDI.

Defining Specially Designed Instruction

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) are adaptations to the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction:

1. To address the unique needs of the learner that result from the learner's disability; and
2. To ensure access of the learner to the general curriculum, so that the learner can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all learners.

“Special education” means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a learner with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and instruction in physical education.

Special education includes support services, related services, and supplemental aids and services, that are specially designed instruction or required to assist an eligible individual in taking advantage of, or responding to, educational programs and opportunities; travel training; and vocational education.

What is the Difference Between Special Education and General Education?

Special education includes specially designed instruction defined as adaptations to content, methodology or delivery of instruction to meet the unique needs resulting from a disability, and instruction from related service providers (i.e., occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing, speech and language services, vision and/or hearing services, et cetra.).

Not all instruction is specially designed instruction. Instruction that is part of the general education instruction's allowance for the differing needs of diverse learners is not SDI.

General education includes universal instruction, differentiated and remedial group instruction that is routinely provided to learners without disabilities and routinely available leveled, repeated or slower-paced instruction, all educational interventions implemented while schools are attempting to resolve concerns prior to a full and individual evaluation, and non-instructional adaptations (281 IAC 41.39; A.W. vs Urbandale C.S.D., HAEA, IDOE, 2018, IDEA Due Process Hearing Decision, 28 D.o.E. App. Dec. 419, 2018) such as:

- removing time restraints
- special seating
- checking for understanding
- chunking assignments
- warning/cueing a change in routine
- assessments in a small group setting
- large-print books
- transportation

Examples of Eligible/Not Eligible Based on Need for Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

To be eligible for special education or, in the case of a reevaluation, to remain eligible, a learner must need special education because of a disability. There are cases where a learner has a disability but does not need specially designed instruction. In these cases, the learner is NOT eligible for special education services.

Below are several examples depicting situations where a learner with a disability may and may not be eligible for special education. **This is NOT an exhaustive list.**

Hearing Examples

Eligible: A learner who has a disability and requires the services of an itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard-of-hearing (specially designed instruction) and a classroom amplification system either as a supplementary aid or service (i.e., provided ... to enable learner with disabilities to be educated with a nondisabled learner to the maximum extent appropriate) or as a related service (required to assist a learner with a disability to benefit from special education).

Not Eligible: A learner who has a disability and requires a classroom amplification system to benefit from general education instruction but does not require specially designed instruction.

Eligible Individual: A learner who has a disability and requires the services of an itinerant teacher of the deaf and hard-of-hearing (specially designed instruction) and interpreting services either as a supplementary aid or service (i.e., provided ... to enable learners with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled learners to the maximum extent appropriate) or as a related service (required to assist a learner with a disability to benefit from special education).

Not Eligible: A learner who has a disability and requires interpreting services to benefit from general education instruction but does not require specially designed instruction.

Assistive Technology Example

Eligible: A learner who has a disability and requires assistive technology and specially designed instruction to utilize and benefit from that technology.

Not Eligible: A learner who has a disability and requires assistive technology, only, and does not require specially designed instruction.

Physical Example

Eligible Individual: A learner who has a disability and requires physical and occupational therapy services to enhance the motor functioning needed to meet the standards applicable to all learners and special transportation (a related service).

Not Eligible: A learner who has a disability and requires special transportation, only, and does not require specially designed instruction.