| Birth – Age 4	Birth – K	Age 3 – K	Birth – 21	Age 3 – 21

Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

PURPOSE

The focus of this technical assistance bulletin is the interdependency of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to deliver specially designed instruction to students with disabilities within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports framework (MTSS). Each of these components has both Federal and State compliance and substantive requirements, which, if implemented effectively, will result in positive outcomes for students with disabilities. As illustrated below, a standards aligned curriculum is the foundation of Maryland's educational framework and informs what is taught as well as what is assessed. Students with and without disabilities are assessed on their achievement of academic content standards; student performance informs instruction which is aligned with the core curriculum (Maryland College and Career Ready Standards, or MCCRS); instruction is differentiated based on student performance; and student assessment results indicate the extent to which schools are effectively educating students to reach the expected State standards. For students with disabilities, both general and specially designed instruction are required. Instruction in the core curriculum in all content areas is essential for all students. A culture of high expectations must exist to prepare all students to succeed in college, career, and community life.

> Refer to A Guide for Implementing Specially Designed Instruction within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports to support the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
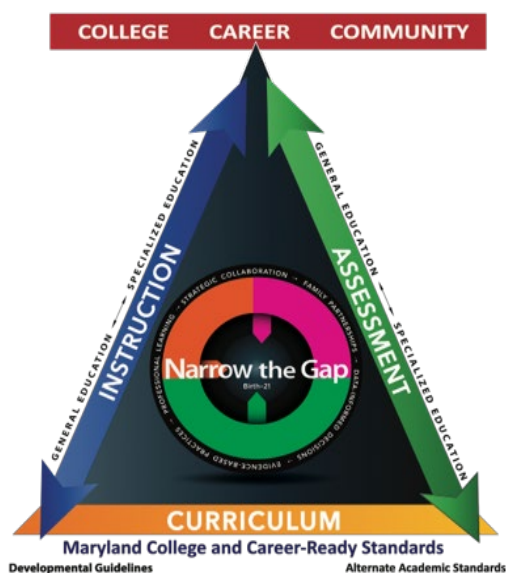
For students with disabilities, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) provides the tool to implement specially designed instruction (SDI). The IEP process and document are developed, implemented and evaluated through the collaborative effort of all adults who support the child, including the family. The IEP team makes critical decisions to design goals and services that are intended to address the unique needs that result from a student's disability and enable the child to make progress in the general education curriculum. Specially designed instruction, the implementation of individualized supplementary aids and services, the provision of accommodations, the implementation of evidence and research-based interventions, and a well written Individualized Education Program (IEP) will narrow the gap between the current performance of a student with a disability and proficiency with respect to enrolled-grade level standards. In the *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017)* decision, the Supreme Court clarified that IEPs must be "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress" appropriate in light of their circumstances, and that while the child's goals may be different, "every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives."

IEP teams should consider:

- a child's previous rate of academic growth (using trend data);

- whether the child is on track to achieve or exceed grade level proficiency;

- any behaviors interfering with the child's progress; and

- additional information and input provided by the child's parents.

Developing the IEP is a collaborative process, whereby general education classroom teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, parents or guardians, and the student work together to design the specially designed instruction and related services that the student will receive, supplementary aids and services the student needs, the goals and objectives the student will achieve, and the means for measuring progress toward goal and objective achievement. Considerations include the past progress and rate of growth of the student, the past delivery of specially designed instruction, interventions, and services or supports that the student has received, and the effectiveness of past services. To develop an IEP that will close or narrow performance gaps, it is also essential to consider the evidence-based practices that will help the student to make accelerated progress. IEP teams must not continue to recommend the same services, supports, and interventions if they expect the student to increase their rate of progress in order to narrow the gap. An increase in the type, intensity, or amount of service must be considered.

The IEP team must ultimately consider **how special education and related services, implemented through an effective IEP, can change the trajectory of a student's growth to reduce or close the gap between the student's present performance and grade-level standards (or age-appropriate functional expectations).**

This technical assistance bulletin highlights critical points about specially designed instruction, including requirements for IEP teams to:

- Develop IEPs that close or narrow academic performance gaps;

- Develop, as appropriate, the following goals:

  - Standard-Aligned Goals- goals that are aligned to academic or content standards of grade level enrollment (**always required**), and

  - Narrowing the Gap Goals- goals that may be aligned to academic content standards from earlier in the learning progressions and are designed to help students close the academic performance gap between their current performance and their enrolled grade level, and

  - Functional Goals- goals that are aligned to age/grade appropriate functional skills impacted by the disability and interfere with, prevent, or affect communication and interpersonal interactions, participation in school and learning activities, and independence in school and potential post-school settings.

- Implement evidence-based instructional practices and strategies or approaches that have proven to be effective in leading to desired outcomes;

- Analyze trend data, the use of Specially-Designed Instruction, and Evidence Based Practices in order to reasonably calculate student progress toward grade level standards and set ambitious IEP goals;

- Regularly review student data to monitor student progress and make data informed decisions about adjustments to instruction and interventions; and

- Consider the information and training needs of parents and school personnel.

CURRICULUM

The Law

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each IEP include, among other things, a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the student's needs that result from the student's disability and enable the student to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum (20 U.S.C. §1414 (D) (1) (A) (i) (II)).

IDEA defines the general education curriculum as "the same curriculum" used for nondisabled students (34 CFR Section 300.320 (a) (1) (i)). In November 2015 the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)issued non legally binding, yet significant guidance in the form of a "Dear Colleague" letter that interprets the general education curriculum as "the curriculum that is based on a State's academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled."

Using the general education curriculum as the reference point for IEP goals is critical to maintaining high expectations and setting ambitious, meaningful, and achievable goals for students with disabilities, considering their unique circumstances. In developing an IEP, the IEP team considers how a

student's disability impacts their ability to make progress toward grade level standards during the period covered by the IEP. While annual goals need not necessarily result in the student attaining grade level proficiency within the year covered by the IEP, the goals should be sufficiently ambitious to help close or reduce the achievement gap (i.e., at a rate significantly increased from their previous rates of progress). The IEP team must also, when appropriate, consider goals that target critical age/grade appropriate functional skills essential to facilitate student independence and enable them to access and participate in grade level instructional and social activities, and progress toward achieving grade-level standards.

To meet its substantive obligation under IDEA, the IEP team must offer an IEP that is "a fact-intensive exercise (that) will be informed not only by the expertise of school officials, but also by the input of the child's parents." *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, 580 U.S. 386, 399 (2017).

The very small number of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who have been determined eligible for participation in the Alternate Educational Framework must also have academic goals aligned to the MCCRS. The alternate academic achievement standards, currently the Essential Elements (EEs), are aligned to the MCCRs in each content area; however they are reduced in breadth, depth, and complexity. Thus, while the MCCRS serve as the basis for instruction for all students, the IEP team also makes an individualized decision for each student with the most significant cognitive disabilities about the potential alignment of his or her annual IEP goals with the alternate academic achievement standards, currently the EEs, applicable to their grade of enrollment.

Participation in the Alternate Framework does not mean that student IEP goals must be aligned to alternate academic achievement standards (currently the Essential Elements) EEs. A team should carefully consider the following factors in this decision:

- A student's enrolled grade level; Particularly in elementary school, goals aligned with MCCRS are strongly preferred and encouraged for all students. Using the principle of the least dangerous assumption, it is important that teams recognize how closely aligned the alternate academic achievement standards (currently the EEs) are to the MCCRS and exercise extreme caution when identifying young students for participation in the Alternate Framework.

- What goals are needed to help the student make accelerated progress.

In addition to Standard Aligned goals (goals aligned to the student's enrolled grade level), students participating in the Alternate Educational Framework should have goals that take the form of introductory or pre-requisite skills, also called "Narrowing the Gap" goals. These goals are aligned to standards as applicable and are critical in narrowing the gap for students with disabilities who have a multi-year achievement gap.

Infants begin their lives communicating utilizing pre-linguistic means. The baby cries or smiles, and there is a reaction provided by the caregiver. The concept of cause and effect as it relates to communication is paramount when considering individualized communication systems for students. Children learn cause and effect through behavioral communication. As they get older, behavioral communication continues, but it is shaped and paired with strategies that are more meaningful and useful. As an example, even many adults will continue to point and reach for what they want and pair that with a verbal request, but the expectation is that they will not pair pointing and reaching with crying, grabbing, or aggression if the gesture alone is not understood, although those are also means of communication. If productive communicative strategies are not developed, maladaptive means of

communication may become embedded and communication through negative behaviors may become problematic. Communicative competence may be thought of as "the ability to overcome communication challenges using tools that mitigate barriers." It must be the goal of every individual working with the student, at home, in the community, and in the school, to assist the student to overcome those challenges and mitigate those barriers to enable effective communication.

Implementation

Grade-Level Standards

In order to develop ambitious and achievable IEP goals, IEP team members must first have a firm grasp of the age and grade appropriate skill expectations outlined in the MCCRS, the Maryland Early Learning Standards, and/or the Essential Elements for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who have been found eligible for, and whose parents have consented to, participation in the Alternate Framework. Second, they must review the student's present levels of academic and functional performance (PLAAFP) in light of the grade level standards as well as those unique needs that result from their disability. This knowledge allows the IEP team to analyze the gaps between current skills and the expectations of the grade level standards and allows the IEP team to identify the behaviors and skills that are needed for active participation in school as a learner and for the future as an employee, family and community member. The Maryland Curriculum Frameworks for English/Language Arts and Mathematics can help the IEP team identify the essential skills and pinpoint areas of student need.

Developing IEPs to Close or Narrow Academic Performance Gaps

The core purpose of an Individualized Education Plan is to help students reach grade level proficiency or narrow academic performance gaps, taking into account a student's enrolled grade level, current academic performance, and the services, goals, and specially designed instruction that will help a student accelerate progress. In coordination with the Blueprint Special Education Workgroup, MSDE established a Standard for Developing IEPs to Close or Narrow Academic Performance Gaps to IEP teams to create IEPs that ensure equitable access to grade level achievement for students with disabilities.

IEP Goals

All students should have IEP goal(s) that are aligned to academic content standards of their grade level enrollment for any academic area that the IEP team determines is impacted by a student's disability. These goals are commonly referred to as "**Standard Aligned Goals**."

If a student has a multi-year performance gap, a "**Narrowing the Gap**" goal may also be required. "Narrowing the Gap" goals are aligned to academic content standards that are earlier in the learning progression or are linked to skills that are required to progress to the grade level standard. They do not replace Standards Aligned goals but instead serve as another tool to help students narrow the gap between their current performance and their enrolled grade level. For example, a fifth-grade student who has difficulty adding two-digit numbers will have difficulty all along the math progression. The IEP team may decide that mastering addition is a skill that is a foundation for many future grade level requirements along the math progression, and addressing that foundational gap will accelerate the student's progress over time.

IEP goals may also align to age/grade appropriate functional skills that are impacted by the disability and interfere with, prevent, or affect communication and interpersonal interactions, participation in school and learning activities, and independence in school and potential post-school settings. These goals are called "**Functional Skills Goals**."

When crafting IEP goals, priority is given to skills that support the achievement of multiple standards and/or the student's access to grade level content in multiple areas. The following guiding questions may be useful to consider as IEP teams collaborate to identify the most important age appropriate and grade level standards for a student to learn to make progress in the curriculum and to narrow or close the achievement gap and demonstrate functional skills for access and independence:

- Based on progress monitoring, what gains did the student make during the last IEP? For children transitioning from early intervention, what gains were made during the last IFSP?

- In what content areas did the student make progress and how much progress was made?

- What supports, strategies, evidence-based practices, and specially designed instruction were implemented and how did the student respond?

- What factors influencing progress can be addressed to help a student narrow the gap?

- What instructional changes could be made to increase the rate of learning?

- What skills underlie multiple standards?

- What data must be collected for ongoing progress monitoring?

Once the IEP team has identified the priority skills and an appropriate learning target, they set goals that estimate the student's anticipated growth from receiving evidence-based practices and specially designed instruction. Goals are measurable, ambitious, and achievable.

> *For example:*
>
> *By (date/within a year), given problems involving fractions with unlike denominators, the student will use manipulatives to calculate equivalent fractions with like denominators and solve the problems, scoring at least 80% on two classroom assessments.*

Goals and Objectives describe:

- The conditions under which the skill will be demonstrated;

- A behavioral description of the skill to be observed;

- The criteria for measuring achievement of the skill, including:

- Expected level of performance (mastery) and

- How many times the expected level of performance must be reached (retention)

- The method of measurement; and

- The time frame by which the goal or objective will be achieved.

Objectives reflect sequential targets of increasing proficiency, accuracy, complexity - or reduced supports - across the time period covered by the IEP or list the component skills, which when combined, lead to the achievement of a goal. The number and content of the objectives is based on the needs of the student and how he or she will demonstrate progress toward achieving the IEP goal.

For example:

Objective 1: *By the end of the first quarter, when given a process chart, manipulatives and problems involving fractions with like denominators, the student will solve the problems with 80% accuracy on two classroom assessments.*

Objective 2: *By the end of the second quarter, when given a process chart, manipulatives and fraction expression, the student will generate an equivalent fraction for both fractions in 8 out of 10 trials.*

Objective 3: *By the end of the third quarter, when given manipulatives and a fraction expression, the student will create a visual model and solve the problem in 8 out of 10 trials.*

In summary, the task of the IEP team is to use data to inform decisions about which grade level standard(s) the student is not on track to achieve and why. The IEP team backward maps the development of academic content standards and age appropriate functional skills to isolate the component(s) or underlying skill(s) that are needed to access and make progress in the general education curriculum.

These goals are:

- "Standard-Aligned Goals": Align with the academic or content standards of the grade in which the student is enrolled to enable the student to make progress toward grade-level performance and reduce or close the achievement gap (for students participating in the Alternate Framework this will include grade-aligned goals in Reading, Writing, and Mathematics).

- "Narrowing the Gap Goals": Align with the academic or content standards or skills of below-grade level performance that the student is missing and that the IEP team deems important for development to reduce or close the achievement gap. These "Narrowing the Gap" goals may be aligned with standards from earlier in the learning progression, or they may be aligned to skills determined missing by the IEP team that do not have a neatly corresponding standard. If the "Narrowing the Gap" goal does have a corresponding standard, it should be included in the IEP. The most important part of "Narrowing the Gap" goals is that they are designed to help a student do precisely that – narrow the gap between a student's enrolled grade level and their current academic performance.

- "Functional Skills Goals": Address age and/or grade appropriate functional skills that are impacted by the student's disability and interfere with, prevent, or affect communication, interpersonal interactions, self-determination, and self-management, all of which are needed for meaningful participation in life, learning, and work.

Case Study: "Standard Aligned" vs. "Narrowing the Gap" Goals

Meet Robbie:

Robbie is 13-years-old 8th grade student. Robbie is currently performing at the mid-first grade level in reading phonics and reading comprehension. As such, his IEP team has determined that two reading goals are appropriate: a reading comprehension goal aligned to the 8th grade MCCR ELA Standards, and a "Narrowing the Gap" goal aligned to 2nd grade MCCR Reading Foundational standards. After carefully reviewing the required goal components, the team drafts the following goals:

Standard Aligned Goal: By (Date/Year), given a chunked passage of grade-level text and a graphic organizer, Robbie will select the correct central idea of the text and highlight two text-details to support his answers with 80% accuracy on each task (central idea and text details) in four out of five trials as measured by classroom-based assessments and formal observations.

Aligned Standard: RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

"Narrowing the Gap" Goal: By (Date/Year), given a third-grade unfamiliar text, Robbie will read aloud at a rate of at least 50 words/minute with 100% accuracy on at least 4 different passages as measured by classroom-based assessments and progress monitoring tools.

Aligned Standard: RF.3.4: Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

The Importance of Standard Aligned Goals

As an 8th grade student, Robbie has a federally-protected right to IEP goals aligned to his grade-level enrollment. Robbie also has the right to an IEP that includes goals and services that will help him close or narrow the gap between enrolled grade level standards and his current performance levels. In the above example, Robbie's IEP team notes a significant performance gap in reading and determines that he requires both a "Standards Aligned" and a "Narrowing the Gap" goal. In the event that Robbie's team opted not to create a "Narrowing the Gap goal," the rationale for this exclusion should be documented in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) of each broad academic area where Robbie is displaying a multi-year gap (ex: reading, writing, and math) and in the Prior Written Notice.

Whenever a student displays a performance gap between their enrolled grade level and academic achievement, they must have a "Standard Aligned" goal aligned to their grade level enrollment. It would never be acceptable for a team to write an IEP containing only "Narrowing the Gap" goals, as this would deny a student access to grade-level IEP goals.

Compliant:	Compliant:	Non-Compliant:
A Standard Aligned Goal in reading comprehension aligned to 8th grade standard and; A "Narrowing the Gap" reading phonics goal aligned to a standard earlier in the learning progression.	A Standard Aligned Goal in reading comprehension aligned to the 8th grade standard and; Embedded supports through objectives and supplementary aides and services and; A rationale in the IEP area discussion that explains why a "Narrowing the Gap" goal is not being implemented for reading.	A "Narrowing the Gap" reading phonics goal aligned to a 2nd grade level standard and; No Standard Aligned Goal in reading comprehension aligned to the 8th grade standard.

Documenting Rationale and Individualized Considerations:

In nearly all cases, when a student is displaying a multi-year performance gap in an academic area, that student will need both a "Standard-Aligned goal" and a "Narrowing the Gap" goal. If the IEP Team believes that "Narrowing the Gap" goals are not appropriate, based on the individualized circumstances of that student, the reasons must be documented in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP). These reasons must be based on more than the basic nature of disability, as effective specially designed instruction should enable narrowing the gap progress for all students, regardless of the nature of their disability. Rationale must be documented for each impacted academic area (ex: math, reading, and writing) that does not have a "Narrowing the Gap" goal.

Compliant Rationale:	Non-Compliant Rationale:
The size of the performance gap is small, the grade level goal addresses the gap areas, highly individualized considerations	Phonological processing/poor memory, inattention, cognitive functioning, poor student motivation, any reason related to the basic nature of a student's disability

In some cases, an IEP team may follow the process outlined in this section and determine that a specific Narrowing the Gap goal will not be the most effective method of support for a student. In the example above, Robbie's IEP team may consider his needs in reading and determine that he may make more reading progress through a singular reading comprehension goal that has aligned objectives from earlier in the learning progression. This goal might also be supported through evidence-based phonics instruction. In this case, the team is making a determination based on a highly individualized consideration, and not the basic nature of Robbie's disability. The rationale to support this decision must be included in both Robbie's reading comprehension PLAAFP and his prior written notice.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Are all students expected to meet age appropriate or grade level standards within the period covered by the IEP?**

   No. The expectation is that the IEP team develops appropriate annual IEP goals that are aligned with grade level standards, then calculates the growth the student can be expected to achieve based on the student's present levels of performance, previous rate of growth, and the special education services (based on evidence-based practices whenever practicable) that have been provided to the student. The annual IEP goals need not necessarily result in the student's reaching grade level within the year covered by the IEP but should be sufficiently ambitious to enable narrowing the gap progress. The IEP should represent progress appropriate in light of the student's unique circumstances.

2. **Does the IEP team follow the same process for students participating in the Alternate Framework?**

   Yes. The process is the same, except that the annual IEP goals may either be aligned to the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards or the Essential Elements (see page 3 for guiding questions to help IEP teams make this determination). Given the unique needs of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the IEP team may also consider including IEP goals for communication and interpersonal interactions, participation in school and learning activities, or independence in the school and potential post-school environments.

3. **Should the IEP goals address all grade level standards?**

   No. The student should receive instruction, including supports according to his or her IEP, on all grade level standards, but the IEP goals should reflect skills that the IEP team identifies as essential and require specially designed instruction to learn. The IEP goals focus instruction and progress monitoring on the critical skills that will enable the student to meet grade level standards. The standards themselves are not the IEP goal.

4. **Can IEP teams include skills and standards from earlier in the learning progression through embedded IEP objectives and supplementary aides and services instead of writing "Narrowing the Gap Goals?"**

   Yes, but the team's reasons for not including "Narrowing the Gap" goals must be clearly documented in the PLAAFP and Prior Written Notice. Such reasons should be based in evidence and cannot be due to the basic nature of a student's disability. Phonological processing/poor memory, inattention, cognitive functioning, and poor student motivation are not sufficient reasons to not implement "Narrowing the Gap" goals.

5. **Is a "Narrowing the Gap" goal required to be aligned to a below-grade level standard?**

   No; "Narrowing the Gap" goals may align to skills from earlier in a student's learning progression that are deemed essential by the IEP team or skills that the IEP team has determined will narrow the gap in the student's performance. This determination must be based on a deep understanding of the skills needed to close the achievement gap. If the skills selected by the IEP team do align to a state standard, then the standard should be identified in the IEP.

6. **If the IEP team determines that a student has a most significant cognitive disability and is eligible to participate in the alternate assessment (aligned with alternate academic achievement standards), should the student change school placement or enter a self-contained classroom?**

No; it should never be assumed that students participating in the Alternate Framework cannot be educated in a general education classroom alongside their non-disabled peers; nor should participation in the alternate assessment be required for placement in a particular educational setting or classroom. Similarly, placement in the Alternate Framework should never serve as an "entry level" requirement for any specialized, district-wide program of study, especially in early grades. Decisions about the appropriate curriculum for instruction and assessment are separate from decisions about placement. To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities must be educated with students who are nondisabled and only removed for instruction in separate settings if the IEP goals cannot be achieved in the general education classroom even with supplementary aids and services. Although the curriculum may be substantially modified for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, teachers can adapt the lesson for meaningful participation and learning.
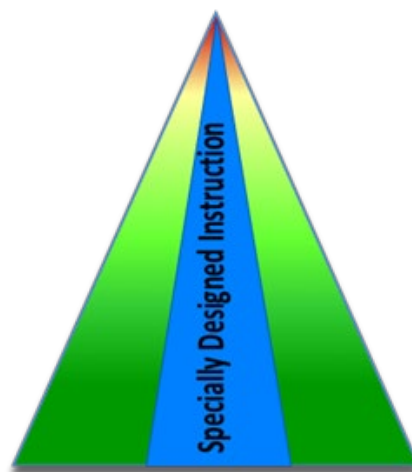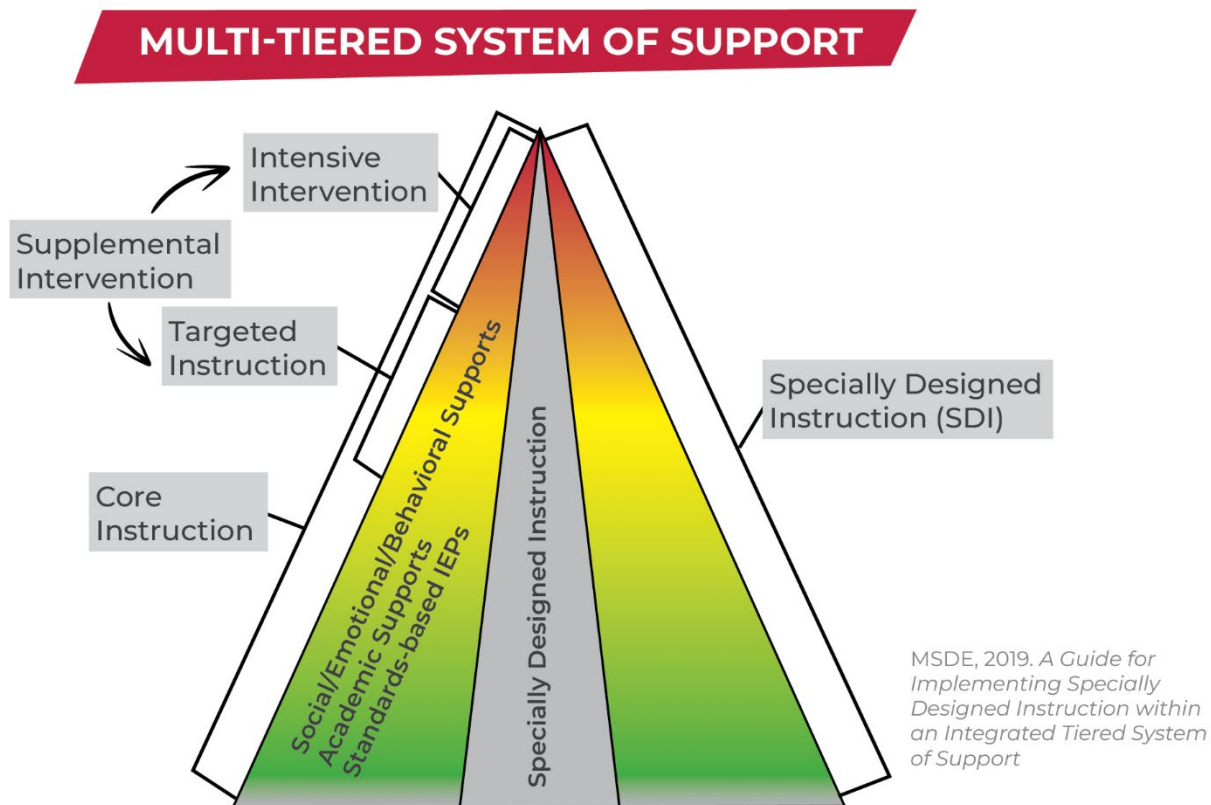
INSTRUCTION

The Law

The hallmark of special education is specially designed instruction. IDEA defines specially designed instruction as adapting, as appropriate to the needs of a student, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to: address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability; and ensure access to the general education curriculum so that the student can meet the educational standards that apply to all students (34 CFR Section 300.39 (b) (3)). The IEP identifies accommodations that are needed by the student to access general education environments and activities. See Appendix A for definitions and Appendix B for the 5-step process for determining accommodations. The IEP document must also identify the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services needed to promote participation in the general education curriculum with peers without disabilities (20 U.S.C. §1414 (d) (1) (a) (iv)). Additionally, the IEP includes program modifications and supports for personnel implementing the IEP. These strategies must be based on peer-reviewed research (to the extent practicable) according to IDEA and State law (e.g., COMAR 13A.05.01.09A(1)(c)).

A focus on the use of evidence-based practices and supports is also emphasized in the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** which requires the implementation of evidence-based practices, strategies, and approaches that have proven to be effective in leading to desired outcomes, namely improving student achievement. Sample supplementary aids, services, program modifications and supports are provided in Appendix C. Supplementary aids, services, program modifications, and supports are provided in all education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable students with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled students (34 CFR § 300.42).

Implementation

When schools have a strong multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), the foundation is laid for teaching to the diverse needs of a variety of learners who may enter the schoolhouse doors. An effective tiered framework employs evidence-based screening, standards aligned curricula, team-based collaborative planning, and a strong evidence-based instructional approach that is based on universal design for learning (UDL) principles and differentiated instruction to address the individual characteristics of the students in each class. UDL and differentiated instruction serve as the instructional base for all students, including students with disabilities.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

Intensive Intervention

Supplemental Intervention

Targeted Instruction

Core Instruction

Social/Emotional/Behavioral Supports
Academic Supports
Standards-based IEPs

Specially Designed Instruction

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

MSDE, 2019. *A Guide for Implementing Specially Designed Instruction within an Integrated Tiered System of Support*

In "advanced" tiers of more intensive instruction and interventions, assessment occurs on a more frequent basis, instruction supplements core instruction and is designed for student groups based on their learning deficits, and collaborative teams review data to inform changes to interventions and supports. All students have access to more intensive instruction when they are at risk for failure or are performing below benchmark targets. Entry and exit decisions are based on student performance and growth or lack of growth in the curriculum.

Specially designed instruction (SDI) is most powerful when delivered within a Multi-tiered System of Supports, as it provides students with disabilities the opportunity for more intensive instruction in areas of skill deficits, alongside their peers with similar learning needs. However, a student with a disability, and unique learning needs stemming from that disability, will require specially designed instruction to make progress in the curriculum. A student's unique SDI is based on individual learning characteristics and combines evidence-based practices, intensive instruction, accommodations, supplementary aids and services, program modifications, and personnel support. The following chart describes the qualities that distinguish SDI.

Specially Designed Instruction

IS	IS NOT
Only students with IEPs	All students
A service provided to a student	A place a student goes
In addition to the core instruction (supplemental)	In place of core instruction (supplant)
The IEP translated into action	The IEP itself
What the instructional team does	What a student does
Specific to the student, based on the impact of the disability	A schedule
Instruction that allows a student to make progress in the enrolled grade level standards AND changes the trajectory of growth to narrow/close the gap	Setting low expectations or teaching ONLY below grade level skills
An individually and intentionally designed plan of services and supports	A replacement for Universal Design for Learning (UDL) or Differentiated Instruction (DI)
Uniquely designed instruction that is designed to promote progress toward IEP goal(s)	A commercial program without individually designed supports and services
Based on individual learning characteristics and combines evidence-based practices, intensive instruction, intervention, accommodations, supplementary aids, program modifications and support to personnel	Only available in tier 2 small group, or tier 3 one-to-one instruction
Co-planned, co-implemented, and co-evaluated by a collaborative IEP team	Planned, implemented, and evaluated solely by a special educator

The frequency *(how often a service is provided)* and intensity *(the duration of each session)* of specially designed instruction and related services are important determinations for the IEP team. While the appropriate amount is student-specific, there should be a relationship between the specially designed instruction provided to the student and the IEP goals to be achieved, the gap from the student's current performance, and the grade level standards such that the student can be expected to make reasonable progress in the general education curriculum. The table below (adapted from Fuchs, Fuchs, & Malone, 2017) illustrates dimensions of interventions that can be intensified to accelerate student progress.

STRENGTH	Effectiveness/Evidence that it works
DOSAGE	Number of opportunities to respond and receive feedback and amount of time engaged in instruction specific to target skill area
ALIGNMENT	Match to the targeted skills (goals) and grade-appropriate standards
TRANSFER/ GENERALIZATION	Connections between the intervention focus and skills learned in other contexts and environments
COMPREHENSIVENESS	Comprehensive array of explicit instruction principles
BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT	Strategies that support students with self-regulation, motivation, or externalizing behaviors that impact their ability to learn
INDIVIDUALIZATION	Ongoing use of progress monitoring data and diagnostic data sources to intensify and individualize the intervention based on student need

Evidence-Based Practices are instructional techniques with meaningful research support that represent critical tools in bridging the research-to-practice gap and improving student outcomes (Cook & Cook, 2011). When determining the Specially Designed Instruction that a student needs to narrow the gap between their current performance and their grade level enrollment, a team should carefully evaluate if the SDI being implemented is evidence-based. A strong resource for Evidence-Based Practices is the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center's "High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities." See Appendix D for more information.

The following guiding questions may assist IEP teams when calculating the appropriate frequency and intensity of services:

- Do the services support the implementation of all the outcomes or goals and objectives?

- Do the services take into account the student's history and progress with previous general education, special education, and related services?

- Do the services address the nature of the student's needs, including the gap between the student's grade level and performance level?

- Do the services support the student's cultural and linguistic background?

- Do the services support an accelerated rate of learning?

- Do the services support appropriate implementation of Evidence-Based Practices?

The IEP team should carefully consider how specially designed instruction can change the trajectory of the student's growth. Accelerating the student's rate of learning is critical to reducing or closing the gap. The chart on the next page demonstrates the relationship among UDL, differentiated instruction, and SDI to support teams in the implementation of SDI within an MTSS framework.

	CONTENT	METHODOLOGY	DELIVERY
Definition	The target skills: what will be learned by ALL students, some students, and only a few students.	The research-based and evidence-based instructional strategies and interventions that result in learning academic and behavioral skills.	The personnel, environment, and activity configuration that enable the school staff to deliver the instruction.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – Proactive planning for ALL students	Instructional goals are the same for all students. The content is available through a variety of options for gaining information through visual, auditory, or other sensory inputs.	Some learners may express themselves in written text but not speech, and vice versa. Teachers provide options for action and expression. Teachers create strategies for ways to engage student interest, persistence, and self-regulation.	Activities are designed for some learners to work alone, while others work with peers. Teachers offer multiple means for communicating ideas and scaffold information in a variety of methods.
Differentiated Instruction (DI) – Reactive adjustments for specific student/group	Based on assessed student interests, talents, and current learning performance, teachers vary the content of instruction to increase meaningful connections for students to what they are learning.	Teachers use tiered and scaffolded activities to engage a variety of learners based on their assessed interests, talents, and learning needs. Materials are modified or created to promote engagement and learning.	The learning environment or method of teaching may be modified to allow students varying means for engaging in learning, acquiring information, and demonstrating knowledge/skill. Students have opportunities for flexible learning groups.
Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) – Specific adjustments based on student IEP	Based on the current performance of a student with a disability, the instructional goal will reflect prioritized skills leading to the grade level standards not yet achieved. Goals may also include functional non-academic skills to enable the student to self-advocate, communicate, self-manage or otherwise participate in learning.	Research-based and evidence-based strategies and instruction, intensive intervention, instructional and assessment accommodations, supplementary aids and program modifications are designed to individually implement SDI to enable access to and progress in the general curriculum and school environment.	Aspects of instruction that can be varied based on individual need include: • instructional routines and activities (teacher guided, explicit instruction) • the instructional team (special educator, general educator, related service provider, paraeducator)

			• environment (with peers, during small group instruction)

Frequently Asked Questions

7. **Can the IEP include goals for areas other than English/language arts and mathematics? Do those goals need to be aligned to specific academic content standards?**

   Yes. The IEP should meet the student's needs resulting from their disability to enable the student to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities

   (34 CFR § 300.320 (a) (2) (i) (A)).

   a) As appropriate for the individual student, goals and objectives are written for curricular areas other than English/language arts and mathematics and/or for skills including communication, behavior, social interaction, self-management, and self-care in order to promote engagement, independence, and progress in the student's education.

   b) Such goals should be based on age/grade appropriate expectations and do not need to be aligned to specific academic content standards. In addition, beginning no later than age 14, the IEP should consider the student's desired post-school outcomes and develop transition goals, as appropriate, to prepare the student for postsecondary education, employment, and life in the community (COMAR 13A.05.01.09(A)(3)(a))These goals should be based on the student's priorities and needs for post-school success and do not need to be aligned to particular academic standards.

8. **Who can deliver specially designed instruction?**

   Teachers licensed in special education, in collaboration with general educators, can deliver specially designed instruction. SDI can be delivered by teachers licensed in elementary, secondary, or subject areas, in collaboration with special educators and related service providers with specialization in the area of the student's need. Substitute plans should include information about specially designed instruction and long-term substitutes are engaged in the collaborative development, implementation and evaluation processes. Substitutes must have access to the student's IEP. Beyond access, substitutes (particularly long-term substitutes) must implement the supports and services required by a student's IEP. The IDEA requires that "the child's IEP is accessible to each regular education teacher, special education teacher, related services provider, and any other service provider who is responsible for its implementation." 34 CFR 300.323. Failing to provide substitute teachers with the student's IEP and the necessary supports to implement that IEP can lead to a violation of the student's right to a FAPE under both the IDEA and Section 504.

9. **Does this mean a general education teacher can deliver SDI?**

   Yes. When a general education teacher collaborates with a special educator and/or related service provider who is qualified in the area of the student's need, the general educator is capable of and qualified to deliver SDI. In fact, sharing responsibility for ALL students is a critical component for a school-wide systemic approach that ensures all students in a school receive the instruction that

they need, including specially designed instruction for students with disabilities. The student's IEP must indicate that the general education teacher will be a service provider in order for the student's general educator to deliver SDI.

10. **What about paraprofessionals? Can they deliver SDI?**

No, not as the sole provider of SDI. However, yes, if they are trained in the specific SDI and are supporting or reinforcing instruction that was delivered by a qualified educator. Paraprofessionals can assist in the delivery of SDI, however only under the direct supervision of a qualified teacher. This supervision is reflected in scheduling, collaborative lesson planning, notes, and other documentation. The student's IEP must identify an instructional assistant as a provider of instruction in order for the paraprofessional to deliver instructional services.

ASSESSMENT

The Law

All students with disabilities must be included in all general State and local assessments with appropriate accommodations and supports, as necessary, as indicated in their IEP (34 CFR § 300.160(a)). When writing a student's IEP, the team must determine what, if any, accommodations may be necessary to meet that student's individual needs and must include a statement of any appropriate individual accommodations that are needed to measure the student's academic achievement and functional performance (COMAR 13A.05.01.09A(1)(f)). If the IEP team determines that the student meets all the criteria to participate in the Alternate State Assessment, only then will they not take the general assessment.

> *The alternate assessments are only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.*

The IEP document must explain why the general assessments are not appropriate for the student, how the student will be assessed, and why the alternate assessments are appropriate (COMAR 13A.05.01.09 (A)(1) (g). Poor performance on the general assessments, by itself, does not make a student eligible for the alternate assessments. The alternate assessments are only for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for whom the general assessments have been determined to be inappropriate.

Consistent with that principle, the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** requires that the number of students assessed in each subject using the alternate assessments not exceed one percent of the total number of all students in the State assessed in each subject (20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(2)(D) (i) (I)). If a local school system administers the alternate assessments to more than one percent of its students, it must submit a justification and will be subject to appropriate oversight.

Assessment decisions have clear consequences for graduation. To earn a Maryland High School Diploma, a student must, among other things, meet the general assessment requirements (i.e., achieve a passing score or achieve a combined passing score) (COMAR 13A.03.02.09B). A student with a most significant cognitive disability may not meet high school diploma requirements if that student participates in the alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards and continues to receive instruction based on those standards through high school (COMAR 13A.03.02.09E (4)). In that case, the student would be eligible for a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion, instead of a diploma.

Participation in the Alternate Framework does not preclude a student from working to complete the requirements for a Maryland High School Diploma. As a practical matter, the likelihood of earning a diploma decreases as students are assessed based on the alternate academic achievement standards. Therefore, the IEP team should consider multiple data sources when making this decision and must determine eligibility for the alternate assessment each year. Given that the appropriate assessment may change in light of student progress, the final decision to award a student with a Maryland High School Certificate of Program Completion is not made until after the beginning of the student's last year in high school (COMAR 13A.03.02.09E (3)).

- Informed consent is a critical component of the Alternate Framework. Under federal law, if the IEP team proposes to assess a student using the alternate assessments, the IEP team must inform the parent that satisfactory performance on the general assessments – not the Alternate

State Assessments – may qualify the student for a regular high school diploma (34 CFR § 300.160(e)). Additionally, under Maryland law, the IEP team must obtain written consent from the parent to identify a student for the Alternate Framework and/or the Alternate State Assessment (Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 8-405(f)).

Assessment is not limited to end-of-year, cumulative State assessments or standardized tests. It also involves ongoing progress monitoring, which assesses whether the specially designed instruction is effective and whether sufficient progress is being made to meet annual IEP goals. In addition to progress monitoring tools included with curricula, intervention packages, and teacher-created progress tracking methods, the Maryland Online IEP and Student Compass offers several options to track progress on goals and on particular interventions. Such ongoing assessment facilitates the regular adjustment of instructional targets and methods. If a student does not make sufficient progress to meet a goal during one quarter, an IEP team meeting must be convened to discuss the changes that may be made to the student's educational program to enable the student to progress.

Implementation

The role of the IEP team will generally be to determine how, not whether, each student will participate in assessments. Accommodations that the IEP team determines are appropriate for the student for participating in assessments must also be provided during instruction. The IEP team should consult the *Maryland Assessment, Accessibility & Accommodations Policy Manual* to be sure that it identifies, for each assessment, only those accommodations that do not invalidate the score ((34 CFR § 300.160(b) (2) (ii)). If it is determined that the general assessments are inappropriate even with accommodations, the IEP team should consult the *Maryland Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment and Eligibility for the Alternate Framework* to verify that the student has a "significant cognitive disability" and meets the specific eligibility criteria for the alternate assessment.

A well-written IEP provides a framework for monitoring progress by breaking goals into measurable components. Teachers and related service providers should track progress on instructional targets that will lead to the achievement of objectives/benchmarks and the annual goal, not just the goal itself. The nature and frequency of progress monitoring will depend on the skill in question and the needs of the student. In general, the more intensive the supports and/or the larger the gap between the student's present levels of performance and age appropriate or grade level standards, the more frequently data needs to be collected and analyzed. Determination of achievement of IEP goals should be based on objective data of student performance.

The frequency of collecting and reporting objective data is determined by the gap between present levels of performance and grade level skills such that a student with a larger gap will need more frequent progress monitoring and adjustment to instructional interventions than a student with a narrower gap. A formal progress report on IEP goals is typically shared quarterly with the student's family, consistent with the timeframe for district reports on the performance of all students. These progress reports should be based on the criteria for mastery and retention included in each goal. If the IEP team is not seeing growth, the IEP team may need to review and revise the IEP.

There are a number of aspects that should be considered as the IEP team determines the reason(s) for lack of progress. These include, but are not limited to:

- Implementation of the components of specially designed instruction with fidelity;

- Appropriateness of the goals;

- The student's social/emotional needs and behavioral concerns;

- Student-specific factors, such as health, attendance, etc.;

- Appropriateness of the instructional program or intervention for the student;

- Implementation of interventions, instructional techniques, and evidence-based practices with fidelity; and

- Skills that are needed by staff for consistent implementation with integrity.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS FOR CLARIFICATION

- **Access:** Access to the curriculum occurs when students participate in the learning activities designed to teach the general education curriculum, so that they make progress toward grade level standards. This is accomplished when students are valued learners in the school community and provided with instructional tools, environments, supports, and services that are customized to their abilities and unique learning needs.

- **Accommodations:** Accommodations are practices and procedures that provide students with disabilities equitable access during instruction and assessment in the areas of: presentation of content, student response, setting for instruction, and schedule. Examples include communicating through oral speech or a communication device instead of writing, extra time to complete assignments or tests, or reduced distractions in the classroom. The student is expected to demonstrate the same knowledge and skills as other students.

- **Adapted Content** means that the targeted content when teaching a student with a disability is different from the instructional targets of other students, based on the learning needs posed by the student's disability. The instructional content for a student with an IEP is aligned with grade level standards and is intended to help the student move toward that standard.

- **Adapted Delivery** means that the way in which instruction is delivered is different than what is provided to typically developing peers. This may mean reducing instructional group size, using alternative language (e.g., sign language or alternative communication system), or using material or equipment that are different than that offered to all students, even when UDL and differentiated instruction are in place.

- **Adapted Methodology** means that different or adapted instructional strategies and approaches are being used to teach skills to the student with a disability. Some evidence-based interventions have been demonstrated to be effective in teaching specific reading, math, or behavioral skills. These may be offered to any student though a tiered system of supports. Other specific interventions, such as the Orton-Gillingham Reading Method, are demonstrated through research to teach skills that are affected by a child's disability. Strategies that are designed to address the learning challenges of a specific disability in addition to the schools tiered intervention system, are modified methods.

- **Differentiated Instruction:** Differentiated instruction is the way in which a teacher anticipates and responds to a variety of students' needs in the classroom. To meet students' needs, teachers differentiate instruction by modifying the content (what is being taught), the process (how it is taught), and the product (how students demonstrate their learning).

- **Evidence-Based Practices:** Evidence-Based Practices (or EBPs) for special education are instructional strategies backed by research and professional expertise to support the learning and behavior of students with disabilities (Cook, Tankersley, & Harjusola-Webb, 2008). EBPs are often content focused and appropriate for students at different developmental levels. For instance, teaching students strategies for summarizing text is a powerful strategy, but the strategy is best taught in third grade and beyond (CEEDAR Center).

- **High Leverage Practices:** The High Leverage Practices (or HLPs) for Students with Disabilities were first introduced in 2017 by Drs. McLeskey and Barringer and published by the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center; these practices are evidence-based and

"represent the essence of effective practice in special education." (Aceves and Kennedy, 2024). The HLPs were updated comprehensively in 2024.

- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports:** A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a school-wide system to provide an equitable education to ALL students in a school community. A school-wide proactive and preventative framework that integrates data, instruction, and intervention to ensure student academic achievement and social, emotional, and behavioral success. It is grounded in equitable access to resources, research-based strategies, and interventions driven by data to algin and flexibly adjust to student progress. All students receive core instruction, and based on their learning progress, may also receive supplemental intervention to achieve grade level standards and expectations. Supplemental intervention includes targeted instruction and/or intensive intervention as needed based on student data. Specially designed instruction is provided to students with disabilities across all tiers.

- **Modifications:** Modifications change, lower, or alter what a student is taught or expected to learn. Examples of modifications may include lowering the reading level of text, simplifying questions on assessments, or reducing the range of skills taught. Modifications may limit the student's ability to master grade level standards and ultimately meet graduation standards. Consequently, IEP teams should carefully consider their impact on student progress.

- **Reasonably Calculated:** Developing a "reasonably calculated" IEP requires a prospective judgement by the IEP Team. This judgement should be based around the core understanding that the purpose of a well-crafted IEP and IEP goal is to help a student close or narrow the gap between their current performance and their enrolled grade level. School personnel will make decisions informed by their own expertise, the child's progress, and the input provided by the child's parents. IEP Team members consider how or if special education and related services have been provided to the child in the past and consider the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies, evidence-based practices, supports and services used with the student. To determine whether an IEP is reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress, the IEP Team considers the child's previous rate of growth, whether the child is on track to achieve or exceed grade-level proficiency, any factors interfering with the child's progress and any additional information provided by the child's parents.

- **Specially Designed Instruction:** Specially designed instruction, or SDI, means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of a child with a disability, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to:

  - address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability;

  - ensure access of the child to the general curriculum; and

  - enable the child to meet the educational standards that apply to all children.

  SDI is planned, organized and meaningful. It is an intentional and systematic process to address the student's needs based on their current performance and the unique impact of their disability on learning. (34 CFR §300.39 (b)(3)).

- **Universal Design for Learning:** Universal Design for Learning, or UDL, is an instructional framework that focuses on teaching learning processes in a way that will serve the needs of the greatest number of students in an educational setting regardless of their learning

characteristics and/or perceived abilities. The UDL framework for teaching and learning includes proactive planning of curricula (goals, assessments, methods, and materials) and takes into account the variability of all learners and is based on research from the learning sciences (e.g., education, psychology, neuroscience). UDL has three guiding principles: engagement, representation, and action and expression (http://www.cast.org):

- **Engagement:** Offer flexible options to engage learners in the learning environment.

- **Representation:** Present information in multiple ways.

- **Action and expression:** Provide students a variety of opportunities and avenues to express what they know.

APPENDIX B: THE FIVE-STEP PROCESS FOR SELECTING ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Selecting, implementing, and evaluating accommodations for student use in instruction and assessment involves a five-step process.
1. Start with a mindset of high expectations. Students with disabilities should be expected to achieve grade level academic content standards.
2. Educators should be familiar with the intention of each accommodation and with Maryland policy regarding accommodations during instruction and assessment.
3. The process of making decisions around the selection of accommodations starts with gathering and reviewing information about the student's disability and present level of academic achievement and functional performance in relation to State and local academic standards. The process of making decisions about accommodations is one in which IEP team members work to provide the student with equitable access to the general education curriculum.
4. Accommodations are intended to reduce or eliminate the effects of a student's disability. The accommodations provided to students must be the same for classroom instruction, classroom assessments, district assessments, and where allowable, on State assessments. The administration of an assessment should not be the first time the accommodation is introduced to the student. It should be noted that, although some accommodations may be appropriate for use in instruction, some accommodations may not be appropriate for use in a Statewide standardized assessment.
5. Accommodations must be selected on the basis of the individual student's strengths and needs. Data on the use, impact, and effectiveness of individual accommodations should be gathered and evaluated regularly. These data drive evidence-based decision making for the selection of, or elimination of, accommodations.
Best practice includes ongoing professional learning to support the appropriate selection, implementation, and evaluation of instructional and assessment accommodations for general and special education staff, including IEP team chairpersons and families, as appropriate.

Source: Maryland Assessment, Accessibility, and Accommodations Policy Manual, October 2017

APPENDIX C: INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPLEMENTARY AIDS, SERVICES, PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS, AND SUPPORTS

Sample

"Supplementary aids, services, program modifications, and supports" means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in general education classes, other education-related settings, including extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable a student with a disability to be educated with students without disabilities.

Equipment

- Wheelchair or adapted chair
- Computer access, special software
- Assistive communication device, voice generating device
- Specialized utensils, cups, plates, pencils
- Adapted toilet
- Hearing aids, FM system
- Braille writer
- Audio-books
- Subtitles/Closed-captioned videos

Materials

- Scanned tests and notes into a computer
- Shared note-taking by peer or instructional assistant
- Large print or Braille
- Highlighting tape
- Graphic organizers
- Modified assignment work sheets (e.g., fewer problems, graphics added)
- Visual / picture schedule on wall
- Personal schedule for self-monitoring
- Manipulative items for math or calculators

- Color code materials (folders, papers, markings)

Environmental Supports

- Preferential seating in the classroom, at lunch, and in other locations
- Altered physical arrangement of desks, chairs, or other material and equipment
- Reduced sound or lighting
- Adapted Assignments
- Shorter assignments
- Recorded lessons
- Less complex assignments
- Alternate methods of demonstrating knowledge through assignments

Instructional Modifications

- Altered or modified assignments
- Additional time to complete work
- Chunking of text
- Pre-teach vocabulary/ content
- Re-teach concepts taught
- Targeted instruction for specific skills

Social Supports

- Advance preparation for schedule change

- Encourage student to ask for help, when needed

- Direct instruction in social interactions

Educator Knowledge and Skill Development

- Specific interventions and instructional strategies

- Use of special equipment and materials

- Adapting materials and modifying lessons

- Understanding the student's disability

- Delivery of specially designed instruction

- Data collection and progress monitoring

APPENDIX D: HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

(Adapted from McLeskey, et al., 2019, updated and revised by Aceves and Kennedy, 2024)

Collaboration

Pillar HLPs

1. Collaborate with professionals to increase student success.

3. Collaborate with families to support student learning and secure needed services

Embedded HLPs

2. Organize and facilitate effective meetings with families.

Data-Driven Planning

Pillar HLPs

6. Use student assessment data, analyze instructional practices and make necessary adjustments to improve student outcomes.

Embedded HLPs

4. Use multiple sources of information (data) to develop a comprehensive understanding of student strengths and needs.

5. Interpret and communicate assessment information with stakeholders to collaboratively design and implement educational programs.

11. Identify and prioritize long-and short-term learning goals.

12. Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal.

Instruction in Behavior and Academics

Pillar HLPs

7. Establish a consistent, organized and respectful learning environment.

16. Use explicit instruction.

Embedded HLPs- What to Teach

9. Teach social behaviors.

14. Teach cognitive and metacognitive strategies to support learning and independence.

21. Teach students to maintain and generalize new learning across time and settings.

Embedded HLPs- How to Teach

13. Adapt curriculum tasks and materials for specific learning goals.

15. Provide scaffolded supports.

17. Use flexible grouping.

18. Use strategies to promote student engagement.

19. Use assistive and instructional technologies.

8/22. Provide positive and constructive feedback to guide students' learning (HLP 22) and behavior (8).

Intensify and Intervene as Needed

Pillar HLP

20. Provide intensive intervention for academics and behavior.

Embedded HLP

10. Conduct functional behavior assessments to develop individual student behavior support plans.

> To access a comprehensive guide of high leverage practices, visit: https://highleveragepractices.org/

APPENDIX E: RESOURCES

General Information

- *Maryland Online IEP Learning Modules*: A dynamic website developed by the Division of Special Education that provides stakeholders, including families and professionals, with modules that provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of developing standards-aligned IEPs. https://elevates.marylandpublicschools.org/maryland-online-iep-learning-modules/

Standards

- *Essential Elements for ELA:* Maryland's alternate achievement standards for English Language Arts for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. https://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/ELA_EEs/DLM_Essential_Elements_ELA_(2013)_v4.pdf

- Essential Elements for Math: Maryland's alternate achievement standards for Math for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. https://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/Math_EEs/DLM_Essential_Elements_Math_(2013)_v4.pdf

- *Essential Elements for Science:* Maryland's alternate achievement standards for science for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/Science/Science_EEs_Combined_final_Sept_2017.pdf

- *Maryland Content Standards*: Maryland College and Career Ready Standards for English/Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as previously adopted standards for other content areas. http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/commoncore/

- *Maryland Curriculum Frameworks*: Descriptions of the component skills required for students to master the standards, which may be used to scaffold goals and develop objectives.

- *English Language Arts (ELA)/Literacy:* http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/curriculum/reading/index.html

- *Mathematics:* http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/instruction/curriculum/mathematics/index.html

- *Maryland Early Learning Standards*: Key aspects of development and learning for the youngest learners (birth to 48 months), which may be used to align goals for preschool students. https://marylandpublicschools.org/Documents/MD-EarlyLearning-Standards-2024-a.pdf

- *Next Generation Science Standards*: Maryland standards for science. https://www.nextgenscience.org/

Standards Aligned IEPs

- Hedin, L., & DeSpain, S. (2018). SMART or Not? Writing Specific, Measurable IEP Goals. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 51(2), 100–110.

- Maryland State Department of Education: *Maryland Assessment, Accessibility & Accommodations Policy Manual*. https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/IEP/MAM508102017.pdf

- Maryland State Department of Education: *Standard for Developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to Close or Narrow Academic Performance Gaps.* https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/Standard-for-Reasonably-Calculated-IEPs-A.pdf

- U.S. Department of Education, 2004. *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* (2004): US Department of Education resource site including the text of IDEA and related documents and guidance. http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title20/chapter33/subchapter2&edition=prelim

- U.S. Department of Education (Dec. 7, 2017). *Questions and Answers (Q&A) on U. S. Supreme Court Case Decision Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District Re-1.* Interpretation of the impact of the recent US Supreme Court decision on goals and programs for students with disabilities. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/qa-endrewcase-12-07-2017.pdf

- Yudin, M. and Musgrove, M. (2015, Nov. 15). *Dear Colleague Letter. Washington DC: United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.* Guidance from OSEP on the alignment of IEPs to state content standards. https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/idea/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-fape-11-17-2015.pdf

Alternate Assessment

- Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment and Eligibility for the Alternate Framework- Maryland's guidance to support IEP teams as they determine whether participation in the Alternate Framework is appropriate for individual students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/Guidance-for-IEP-Teams-Working-with-Students-v5a.pdf

- National Center and State Collaborative website contains information for parents and professionals relating to the alternate assessment system and related content to assess the English Language Arts and Mathematics achievement of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. http://www.ncscpartners.org/

Family Engagement

- *Building IEPs With Maryland Families: What a Great IDEA*! A family-friendly resource on the IEP team process.http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/olms2/data/ck/sites/315/files/BuildingIEPswithMarylandFamilies_WebVersion(1).pdf

- *MSDE DEI/SES Parental Consent Under Maryland Law Technical Assistance Bulletin, November, 2017-* Guidance on complying with the new requirements for parental consent for certain IEP team

decisions. http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/MDTABulletinParentalConsentUnderMdLaw112017.pdf

- *MSDE DEI/SES Native Language Technical Assistance Bulletin, August, 2017* – Guidance on complying with requirement to make special education documents available to families in their native languages. https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/17-04_Native_Language_508_rev_2023.pdf

- A Parent's Guide to Understanding Your Individualized Education Program (IEP) Rights and Responsibilities in MD. https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/ParentsGuidetoIEPRightsinMaryland.pdf

- *Parent Information Series*: Series that provides information for families of students with disabilities from ages 3 through 21 on various special education topics. https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Pages/Special-Education/FSDR/ParentInformationSeries-2.aspx

- *U.S. Department of Education Family Partnership and Engagement* - Resources for families and educators on family-school partnerships (not specific to special education). https://www.ed.gov/birth-grade-12-education/resources-families/family-partnership-and-engagement

Specially Designed Instruction

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- Fuchs, L.S., Fuchs, D., & Malone A.S. (2017) The taxonomy of intensive intervention. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 50(1), 35-43.

- Riccomini, P.J., Morano, S., & Hughes, C. A. (2017). Big ideas in special education: Specially designed instruction, high-leverage practices, explicit instruction, and intensive instruction. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 50*(6), 1-8.

- *Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity Overview*, *July 2019* - National Center on Intensive Intervention webinar on using the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity to select and adjust intervention to accelerate student progress https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/taxonomy-intervention-intensity-overview

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