



## **Explicit and Specially Designed Instruction: A Special Education Instructional Practice Guide and Reflection Tool**

This reflection tool is intended as a flexible guide to support the collection of meaningful data and to promote reflective conversations around instructional practices related to special education. It may be used by supervisors, administrators, peers, or as a self-reflection tool. This is not an evaluative instrument and is not intended to assess individual teacher performance.

1. The observer may focus on one, two, or all three sections of the tool, based on the purpose of the walk-through and context of the visit.
  - a. Safe and Accessible Environment
  - b. Functions and Elements of Explicit Instruction
  - c. Specially Designed Instruction
  
2. The sections do not need to be completed simultaneously. In fact, users may opt to focus solely on the "Safe and Accessible Environment" section if desired. This tool is designed for use in a variety of educational settings, including general education classrooms with co-teaching, resource rooms, self-contained classrooms, and small group intervention spaces. Observers are encouraged to select a range of classrooms where students with disabilities are served to gain diverse insights and inform instructional growth.

## Safe and Accessible Classroom Environment:

For students to fully benefit from instruction, they should receive that instruction in a safe and accessible classroom environment. This means the special or general education setting should ensure all students can navigate and participate in classroom activities without physical, sensory, or emotional barriers.

Classroom Management	Notes
1. Staff use verbal and/or non-verbal prompts to cue expected behavior during instruction.	
2. Staff explicitly acknowledge specific appropriate behavioral responses more frequently than inappropriate responses.	
3. Staff use verbal and/or nonverbal prompts to cue student transitions between instructional tasks.	
4. Three to five positively stated behavioral expectations are prominently posted in the classroom (i.e., they can be read from any point in the room). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Staff reference the posted behavioral expectations verbally and/or nonverbally.</li> <li>b. Staff provide specific acknowledgements of student demonstrations of these expectations.</li> </ul>	
5. Staff collect data on student behavior during the observation (e.g., hash marks, time on task, # of students responding to questions).	
6. Both proactively and as a response to disruptions, staff use strategies like scanning, interacting frequently with students, and purposeful movement (e.g., proximity control).	
Positive Classroom Climate	Notes
7. Students are greeted as they enter the classroom, and students are encouraged to interact with their teachers and peers	
8. Staff make statements that are welcoming, caring, and encouraging and use students' names when interacting.	
9. Staff make connections to students' interests and/or goals.	
10. Students are praised for both performance and effort. Staff make positive statements to encourage student success.	
Physical Organization	Notes

12. Materials and space are organized (e.g., with clearly delineated and labeled areas). Staff and students are able to move throughout the classroom with ease.	
13. Equipment is adapted so that students with disabilities can actively participate in the instructional activity	
14. Students with disabilities and teachers have the necessary materials at hand.	
15. Students with disabilities can see and be seen by the teacher.	

## Explicit Instruction:

**Explicit instruction is a teaching method where teachers use a direct, structured approach to guide learning, breaking down complex concepts into smaller steps and providing clear explanations and demonstrations.**

Explicit Instruction: Teaching Functions	Notes
<b>1. Access to Curriculum</b>	
a. Students with disabilities are working on content aligned with the content of the work of their grade-level peers.	
<b>2. Review &amp; Introduction of the Lesson</b>	
a. Teachers engage students in an activity to activate students' prior knowledge of the lesson skill/content to determine what they already know.	
b. The objective of the lesson is visible and stated in co-taught and in self-contained classrooms.	
c. The objective is specific to that lesson and tied to a standard.	
d. The teacher provides purpose for <b>content, strategies and skills</b> being taught, including "what and why".	
e. The teacher checks that students with disabilities understand the objective accurately.	
<b>3. Active Teaching - I Do (teacher demonstrates a skill or concept)</b>	
a. Teacher explicitly, with intentionality and in multiple ways, uses a step by step approach to begin the instruction on the skill or concept to be learned <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. i.e. for vocabulary lesson: teacher pronounces and guides decoding of words, introduces meaning by breaking word into meaningful parts, shows and discusses examples of how the word is used</li> </ul>	
b. Teacher checks that students with disabilities understand a new skill or concept by actively involving students with that skill or concept (e.g., asking students to distinguish between examples/non-examples, generate their own examples, ask questions that require deep processing of the skill or concept).	
c. The teacher uses verbal explanation and visual prompts to explain new content or skill.	
d. The teacher models application of new content or skill by making thinking visible through use of a think aloud or similar strategy.	

e. The teacher models steps of strategy in sequential order without skipping steps.	
f. The teacher presents the content in chunks/segments.	
<b>4. Guided Practice - <i>We Do</i> (teacher guides students as they practice with support)</b>	
a. The teacher leads student with disabilities through step-by-step practice.	
b. Staff provides high levels of prompting by telling students who have not mastered the skill/strategies all of the steps and/or what needs to be done.	
c. Staff fades prompting by asking students who have partially mastered the skill/strategy to state the steps, immediately correcting any errors.	
d. Staff provides only reminders to students who have mastered the skill/strategy.	
e. The teacher conducts a short formative assessment of students' with disabilities level of understanding prior to moving on to independent work (e.g., response cards, thumbs-up, quiz).	
<b>5. Independent Practice - <i>You Do</i> (teacher provides ample opportunities for students to practice independently when they are ready)</b>	
a. Student independent work relates to intended objectives.	
b. The teacher moves through the classroom and checks in with every student with disabilities.	
c. Students with disabilities are able to accurately complete independent work without prompts.	
<b>6. Lesson Closure</b>	
a. The objective of the work is restated by the teacher either verbally or visually.	
b. Teacher conducts a short formative assessment of students' with disabilities level of understanding (exit cards, collects independent work, self-check or peer check of work).	
c. The teacher explicitly connects prior and upcoming lessons.	

Explicit Instruction Elements	Notes
<b>1. Student Engagement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Teachers ensure multiple opportunities for students with disabilities to respond, for example.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Oral responses: (e.g., choral response, think-pair-share; partner response).</li> <li>ii. Unison responses: (e.g., choral response; white-boards; response cards),</li> <li>iii. Team responses: (e.g., numbered heads together; jigsaw).</li> <li>iv. Written responses: (e.g., response cards, white boards, think-jot-share; pair and write).</li> <li>v. Action responses: (e.g., touching/pointing; gestures; acting out; hand signals; facial expressions).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Students with disabilities engage in structured activities designed to allow for processing (e.g., I-time, think-pair-share, numbered heads, elbow partners, think-jot).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. The teacher explicitly teaches strategies for responding to higher-order questions (e.g., problem solving, generalization, evaluative, inferential, application).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Students with disabilities work in groups of varying sizes (e.g., individual, pairs, small group, whole group).</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Staff and students are making explicit connections between lesson and post-secondary opportunities and to students' interests or goals.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Explicit Corrective Feedback</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The teacher gives timely and specific feedback to students with disabilities.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. When students with disabilities give incorrect answers, teacher gives immediate feedback using a correction procedure that concludes with the student giving the correct answer.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. The teacher gives affirmative feedback to students with disabilities when they respond to a question correctly by restating the correct response for the class.</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Instructional Match</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Students with disabilities demonstrate understanding of directions by accurately restating directions and/or completing directions as given by the teacher.</li> </ul>	

b. Students with disabilities correctly answer questions regarding content/strategy.	
c. Students with disabilities are responding to high-order questions; e.g., problem-solving, generalization, evaluative, inferential, and application.	
d. Students with disabilities are monitoring and self-correcting their work.	
e. Staff are collecting data on student performance during the observation; e.g., hatch marks, test scores, time on task, # of students responding to questions.	
<b>4. Pacing</b>	
a. The teacher maintains a steady, brisk pace.	
b. The teacher pauses and uses 3 to 5 seconds of wait time to enable students with disabilities to process responses to questions/directions.	

## Specially Designed Instruction:

**Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) means adapting, as appropriate, to the needs of an eligible student relative to content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to meet the unique needs of the student AND to ensure access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment (LRE).**

<b>Specially Designed Instruction: Direct Instruction of Targeted Skills, Accommodations, Re-Teaching</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>1. For students with disabilities who have difficulty with basic academic skills in reading, writing, and/or math:</b>	
a. Staff explicitly teach and/or re-teach necessary reading, writing, and/or math <b>skills</b> in a direct, clear manner to students who have difficulties with basic academic skills.	
b. Staff explicitly teach and/or re-teach necessary reading, writing, and/or math <b>strategies</b> , including the what, why, how and when; e.g. the use of mnemonic aids, self-questioning, self-monitoring, think-aloud.	
c. Staff takes into account the learning needs of each student when planning for instruction in all areas. This is documented via a lesson plan.	
d. Staff routinely use the Priority Missouri Learning Standards when planning for instruction, accommodating and modifying them as appropriate.	
e. Students have immediate access to text in alternative format(s); i.e., audio, digital, Braille, large print.	
f. There are structured accommodations for reading, writing and/or math tasks such as charts, reference tables, manipulative, individual work folders and student grouping.	
g. Accommodations to the reading, writing and/or math tasks are used by students who have difficulties with basic academic skills.	
<b>2. For students with disabilities who are not able to independently manage behavior requirements of class:</b>	
a. Staff explicitly teach and/or re-teach behavioral expectations to students with behavioral difficulties.	
b. Staff explicitly teach and/or re-teach behavior self-regulation strategies; e.g. self-talk, self-rating, scripting, social stories.	
c. The teacher gives timely feedback (feedback that is given as soon as possible after an action, event, or behavior) to students with disabilities.	

<p>d. There are structured accommodations that enable the student(s) with behavioral difficulties to manage his/her participation; e.g., behavior report card, student-specific acknowledgement system, check in-check out card, seating arrangement.</p>	
<p><b>3. For students with disabilities who are not able to communicate in standard ways:</b></p>	
<p>a. Staff explicitly teach and/or re-teach communication strategies; e.g., practicing with partners, using nonverbal cues, using picture/symbol cards, specific vocabulary needed to participate in the lesson.</p>	
<p>b. Students, staff and peers are using alternative modes of communication; e.g., interpreter, sign language, picture symbol cards, communication boards or devices, longer wait time.</p>	
<p><b>4. For students with disabilities who are not able to independently organize self or materials:</b></p>	
<p>a. Staff explicitly teach and/or re-teach the use of organizational strategies.</p>	
<p>b. There are structured accommodations which are both provided and used by students with organizational difficulties to manage classroom participation; e.g. personal assignment/homework book, color-coded folders, visual schedule, PDA, checklists.</p>	
<p><b>5. For students with disabilities between 15 and 21 who are working on post-secondary transition goals:</b></p>	
<p>a. Staff and students make explicit connections between lesson and post-secondary opportunities and to students' interests or goals.</p>	
<p><b>6. For English language learners with disabilities</b></p>	
<p>a. Bilingual glossaries, native language materials (including signage, classroom rules and assignment directions) and ESL materials are readily available in the classroom.</p>	
<p>b. Students use these materials independently and/or with guidance.</p>	
<p>c. There are structured language comprehension support for English language learners; e.g., practicing with native speakers of English or speakers of their native language, use of nonverbal cues, picture symbol cards, pre-teaching specific vocabulary needed to participate in the lesson.</p>	

<p>d. Students are provided with more than 3 to 5 seconds of wait time to process information given in English and to respond and ask questions in English.</p>	
<p><b>7. Paraprofessionals</b></p>	
<p>a. Paraprofessional(s) are actively engaged in supporting instruction and behavior.</p>	
<p>b. Paraprofessional(s) are provided with instruction on how to support student learning and behavior.</p>	

***The above tool is adapted from New York City Technical Assistance Resource Center - New York City Department of Education***