

IMPLEMENTING DATA-DRIVEN SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

Specially designed instruction (SDI) is both the lynchpin of an effective special education program and the most overlooked and underrated component. Students receiving special education support and services need more than accommodations - they need instruction that is intentionally adapted to address their unique, disability-related needs. This session equips educators with the knowledge, tools, and frameworks to design and deliver high-quality SDI with confidence.

Course Description

This half-day professional learning session (approximately 3 hours) provides educators with a foundational understanding of Specially Designed Instruction as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Participants will explore the three levers of SDI — adapting content, methodology, and delivery — and learn how to make intentional, data-informed decisions that preserve grade-level rigor while meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities. Through collaborative learning and structured application, participants will leave with a repeatable process they can use immediately in their schools and classrooms.

Feedback from Course Participants

“It was definitely collective learning that needed to happen. It was by far the most impactful PD throughout the two weeks [of summer institute]. It was extremely applicable to my role and helped fill the content knowledge gaps I have.”

- Elementary School Academic Specialist

“I loved The Ability Challenge’s workshops. There were so many resources and a-ha moments...that was phenomenal.”

- Special Education Teacher Leader

Learning Outcomes

Throughout the course, participants will:

- Understand what strong, high-quality Specially Designed Instruction looks like in practice
- Evaluate how content, methodology, and delivery are intentionally adapted in response to specific disability-related needs
- Understand how to implement a step-by-step process for analyzing barriers and designing instruction that preserves grade-level rigor
- Identify meaningful data collection practices and determine what evidence would demonstrate that SDI is accelerating student progress

Course Breakdown

- **Defining SDI:** the IDEA definition, why SDI matters
- **Evidence-Based Content, Methodology and Delivery Adaptations:** definitions, examples, and practical tools
- **Making Adaptation Decisions:** practice applying the SDI framework to real student scenarios
- **Monitoring for Impact:** identifying data collection practices and determining what evidence demonstrates that SDI is accelerating student progress