High-Quality Literacy Instructional Practices for Students with IEPs

About

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and West Virginia Board of Education (WVBE) Policy 2419 defines "specially designed instruction" (SDI) as adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. This ensures the child can access the general curriculum and meet educational standards applicable to all children. This means changing the way we teach to fit the unique needs of the child. We do this to make sure all students can learn the same subjects and succeed in school.

Due to the specific and diverse needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing, please refer to the Science of Reading for D/HH Research Document for instructional support.

Evidence-Based Practice #1 - Provide support in word recognition/decoding.

Efficient word recognition skills are required for successful reading and writing. Students need to be able to sound out words based on phonics rules so that they can read words accurately and fluently enough to enable comprehension. Students also need to be able to spell words accurately to strengthen their written communication skills.

Instructional Practices

Phonemic Awareness Practices

- Incorporate multisensory teaching strategies involving gross and fine motor skills to reinforce phonemic awareness skills. (Examples: *Edutopia-Early Literacy Strategies That Work*)
- Have students repeat words and listen to see if they are hearing and pronouncing them properly. If not, provide immediate corrective feedback and then help them to hear and produce the individual sounds in the words (phonemes).
- Reinforce word-recognition by helping students make sound-symbol connections when they are reading and writing.
- Administer letter sound fluency assessments to determine skills students have in place and which skills need reinforcement.
- Use flexible grouping strategies so that students who need similar support can work on those skills in small groups.

Phonics Practices

- Incorporate multisensory teaching strategies involving gross and fine motor skills to reinforce correct decoding and encoding of phonics skills.

Specially Designed
INSTRUCTION
The Heart of Special Education

- Teach prefixes, roots, and suffixes, and provide students with practice in using this knowledge to decode and encode words.

- Do not allow students to guess words as they are reading. Focus their attention on all the letters in the word and support them in sounding out the word.

- Administer a phonics assessment to determine which decoding skills students have in place and which skills need reinforcement. Then, follow a logical scope and sequence to teach or reinforce the deficit skills.

- Use flexible grouping strategies so that students who need support with decoding/encoding words can work on those skills in small groups.

- Teach syllable types and the rules of syllabication. Then provide students with practice using this knowledge to decode or encode multi-syllabic words.

Fluency Practices

- Chorally read sections of connected text to help students build their fluency. Focus on accuracy of word reading, appropriate reading rate, and appropriate expression while reading (prosody).

Additional Resources

- [Kilpatrick – How We Remember Words and Why Some Children Don't](#)
- [Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction Teaching Phoneme Awareness in](#)
- [2022: A Guide for Educators](#)

Evidence-Based Practice #2 - Provide direct and indirect instruction using organizational structures.

Organizational structures include language conventions, text types, text structures, graphic organizers, and strategies for reading comprehension and writing.

Instructional Practices

Use Grade-Level Texts

- Help students understand how the text is structured. (e.g., narrative, sequential order, cause and effect, problem and solution, comparison, description). Assist students with using the text structure to locate information.

- Provide explicit instruction in using comprehension strategies when the concept is originally introduced for no more than six lessons. Model these strategies through think-aloud activities. Then allow students to practice strategies with partners or in small groups before using them independently. Following that, use the instructional text to illustrate and practice comprehension strategies while reading (e.g., summarizing, predicting, clarifying confusion, inferencing, questioning, visualizing).

- Preview the text and locate challenging sentences and pre-teach them. Help the students deconstruct difficult sentences and then paraphrase their meaning.

Use Graphic Organizers

- Provide students with graphic organizers on which they can take notes that match the text structure. Model the note-taking process for students who are able to independently take notes.

- Provide students with partially or fully completed graphic organizers or support their note taking in other ways such as through peer assistance.

- Provide explicit instruction on the use or creation of graphic organizers that can be generalized across the content areas (e.g., Venn Diagrams for science, social studies, math, literacy).

Additional Resources

- *Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers Sentence*
- *Structure: A Complete Guide*

Evidence-Based Practice #3 - Provide direct and indirect instruction in vocabulary development.

Developing students' word knowledge is critical for both reading comprehension and for written expression. Instruction should actively involve students in learning word meanings and in considering the relationships among words.

Instructional Practices

Select Important Vocabulary Words to Focus Instructional Time

- Select words from the text or content that are relevant and important to the unit of study. Ideal words for explicit vocabulary instruction are frequently used words that are important to understand the text or content.

Use Student or Class-Generated Definitions

- Assist students with defining the words using student or class-generated definitions rather than having them look up words in a dictionary or glossary.

Use Word Study Methods

- Help students make connections among words such as identifying synonyms, antonyms, examples, and non-examples. For example, use the *Frayer Model*.

- Have students sort vocabulary words into designated categories.

- Provide students with several opportunities to interact with vocabulary words, including hearing and using the words in multiple contexts orally and in writing, repeating the words, providing illustrations, and having students act out the words.

- Teach prefixes, roots, and suffixes, and provide students with practice in using this knowledge to define words.

Use Recall Strategies

- Create and display anchor charts with vocabulary words and meanings in the classroom for students. Some students may benefit from individualized anchor charts kept at their desk clipped on a ring or in a binder or composition book.

- Revisit previously learned words often. For example, play vocabulary games or build vocabulary reviews into daily routines.

Additional Resources

- [Target the Problem: Vocabulary](#)
- [5 Vocabulary Games that Build Content Knowledge](#)
- [Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers Relying on Context](#)
- [Job One: Build Knowledge](#)
- [The Influence of Vocabulary on Knowledge Acquisition](#)

Evidence-Based Practice #4 - Provide holistic and integrated grade-level instruction to support reading comprehension.

Comprehension is the ability to make meaning from text, and it includes knowledge of words (vocabulary), their definitions, and how different word parts can be added or removed to change meaning as well as knowledge of the world that incorporates content from the arts, sciences, culture, history, and literature. This body of knowledge is the biggest driver of reading comprehension and the content students need for effective writing. Additionally, comprehension requires proficiency with organization structures and comprehension strategies, which should primarily be taught in the context of grade-level texts, topics, and tasks with differentiated support to give all students access.

Instructional Practices

Build Background Knowledge and Provide Clarity in Learning

- Prior to beginning a reading task, be sure that students are aware of their purpose for reading and can articulate what they are to learn from the text.

- Build or activate students' background knowledge prior to reading through multiple modalities (e.g., images, short video clips, artifacts, maps, hands-on experiments).

- Structure brainstorming activities so that relevant knowledge is activated, and inaccurate knowledge is revised.

- Provide study guides in advance that feature the most important content from the text.

- Provide a glossary of content-related terms.

Chunk Material

- Chunk the material to be read so that smaller portions are read at a time.

- Use highlighting strips or blank paper to visually chunk longer texts.

- Ask students to orally paraphrase sections of the text before they read further. This can be done in partners or small groups.

- Have students draw images to represent their understanding of the text as they read portions of the text.

Use Read, Annotate, Paraphrase (RAP) Strategy

- Use the *RAP Strategy* to support students' reading comprehension.
  - **Read:** Read a paragraph or section of text silently, focusing on understanding the content.
  - **Annotate:** After reading that section, ask yourself what the main idea of the paragraph is and what two key details support that main idea. Allow students to highlight and annotate directly on the text, if possible. If it is not possible to write directly on the text, students may use sticky notes or highlighter tape for annotations.
  - **Paraphrase:** Encourage the students to self-monitor their comprehension by having them pause periodically to summarize what they have read so far in their own words.

Provide Opportunities for Repeated Readings

- Provide recorded or digital versions of the reading material or allow students to read with capable partners.
- Provide opportunities for several re-readings of the same text.

Facilitate Access to Grade-Level Text

- Provide recorded/digital versions of the reading material or allow the students to read with capable partners.
- Provide opportunities for several re-readings of the same text.

Facilitate Student Discourse

- Provide opportunities for quality discussion of text. These discussions could occur with the whole class, in small groups, or with partners.
- Provide students with the questions ahead of time so that they come to the discussions prepared to participate.

Provide Multiple Options to Demonstrate Learning

- Allow students choice in how they will demonstrate their comprehension of the text (e.g., in writing, through drawing, through multi-media presentation, through speaking, through acting).

Additional Resources

- *Seven Strategies to Teach Students Text Comprehension Effective*
- *Instruction For Adolescent Struggling Readers*
- *Taking the Complexity Out of Teaching Complex Texts*
- *How Close is Close Reading?*
- *Rethinking How to Promote Reading Comprehension*

Evidence-Based Practice #5 - Provide explicit instruction in writing.

Effective writing relies on students having strong foundational skills (handwriting, spelling, capitalization, punctuation, sentence structure) as well as strong composition skills (understanding of topic, purpose, and audience; collecting and organizing ideas; drafting and revising). Instruction in all these sub-skills will strengthen the quality of writing.

Instructional Practices

Provide Foundational Spelling and Handwriting Instruction

- Students should only be held accountable for spelling phonics patterns they have mastered.

- Students should be offered alternatives to handwritten work.

- Students should continue direct instruction and practice of handwriting letter, word, and sentence formations and should not be penalized for lack of age-appropriate skill mastery.

Use Pre-Writing Strategies

- Allow students to orally rehearse or record what they are going to write prior to committing their thoughts to paper or screen.

- Brainstorm vocabulary that would be effective to use in a writing task prior to the students beginning to write. Allow students to refer to the list as they are writing or require them to use certain words from the list in their composition.

- Be sure that students know the task, purpose, and audience for all writing assignments. If appropriate, have them orally share that information before they begin writing.

- Assist students with brainstorming ideas prior to writing. For example, consider using prompting questions, mind mapping, and student-to-student discussions.

- Provide graphic organizers that allow students to collect and organize their ideas prior to writing.

- Provide sentence stems, sentence frames, or paragraph frames to help students organize their thoughts and reduce the writing load.

Provide Success Criteria

- Provide writing exemplars and non-exemplars and discuss components of effective writing.

- Provide a rubric or checklist of success criteria to the students prior to their writing so that they know how their composition will be evaluated.

Use Goal Setting

- Support the students in setting goals for their writing. Teachers may model goal setting with students prior to asking them to set their own goals. For example, write at least five sentences.

Chunk Writing Tasks and Provide Ongoing Feedback

- Break down writing tasks into incremental steps. Provide feedback on each step, as appropriate.

- Provide specific feedback on the writing that supports the students in effective revision.

- Guide students through processes of effective peer sharing and revision.

Provide Explicit Instruction on Writing Skills

- Explicitly teach text and paragraph structure.
- Explicitly teach sentence structure and variety.
- Explicitly teach punctuation and capitalization rules.

Provide Individualized Accommodations

- Provide speech-to-text software or allow students to dictate their ideas to a scribe who writes them down. The students can then still work to revise and edit their work.
- Teach students how to use accommodations such as speech-to-text and text-to-speech software.
- Allow students to type their compositions and encourage the use of spelling and grammar checks.

> ### *Additional Resources*
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> - *Prevention and Intervention of Writing Difficulties for Students with Learning Disabilities What Teachers Can Do*
> - *To Support Writers with Learning Disabilities*
> - *Sentence Structure: A Complete Guide CEC High*
> - *Leverage Practices*
> - *WVDE Sentence Frames Progression K-12*