High-Leverage Practices in Special Education
Glossary

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Academic learning time	"Allocated time in a subject-matter area (physical education, science, or mathematics, for example) in which a student is engaged successfully in the activities or with the materials to which he or she is exposed, and in which those activities and materials are related to educational outcomes that are valued."	EduTechWiki (2007)
Adapting instruction	Changes to classroom instruction in order to allow students equal access to the curriculum and to give students the opportunity to both process and demonstrate what has been taught; instructional adaptations can include both accommodations and modifications.	The IRIS Center (2005, Page 8)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Assistive technology	"Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability."	IDEA, 20 U.S.C. § 1401(1)
	Schools are required to consider assistive technology for students with disabilities when developing students' IEPs.	34 C.F.R. § 300.346(2)(v)
		Parette, Peterson-Karlan, Wojcik, & Bardi (2007)
Augmentative and alternative communication systems (AAC)	Alternative methods of communication, which may include communication boards, communication books, sign language, and computerized voices, used by individuals unable to communicate readily through speech.	Alper & Raharinirina (2006)
Benchmark	"A typical or expected performance level in a given skill (e.g., reading) that serves as a general indicator of a student's overall progress."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Choral responding	Instructional activity in which all of the students in a group provide a response in unison.	Intervention Central (n.d.)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Collaboration	"A style for direct interaction between at least two coequal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal."	Friend & Cook (2017, p. 5)
	In educational settings this typically includes "planning, implementing, or evaluating a specific aspect of an educational program for a student or group of students."	The IRIS Center (2007, Page 3)
		Friend & Cook (2017); Friend, Cook, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger (2010); The IRIS Center (2004c)
Collaborative strategic reading (CSR)	A multi-component approach to reading improvement in which students apply comprehension strategies while reading expository text in small cooperative learning groups.	The IRIS Center (2008a, Page 3)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Comprehensive learner profile	Provides information about a students' academic, social and emotional, functional and motivation strengths and needs as a means of establishing how a student learns best (i.e., how the student gathers, processes, and applies information). Includes information about a students' interests, culture, and language. Teachers use the comprehensive learner profile to craft a robust IEP. In developing the profile, teachers collect and analyze a variety of both summative and formative data gathered from a variety of sources including teachers, administrators, parents, related service providers, and community stakeholders.	Inclusive Education Planning Tool (2011); National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2010)
Content enhancements	Strategies to augment the organization and delivery of curriculum content so that students can better access, interact with, understand, and retain information.	Deshler et al. (2001)
Content scaffolding	Instructional strategy in which educators teach material that is not too difficult or unfamiliar to students learning a new skill.	The IRIS Center (2004b, Page 3)
Cooperative learning	Students of mixed ability levels are arranged into small groups and rewarded based on their collective performance. Cooperative learning includes positive interdependence, individual accountability, equality participation, and simultaneous interactions.	U.S. Department of Education Office of Research (1992)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Corrective feedback	Constructive comments provided as soon as possible following the implementation of an activity in order to help an individual improve his or her performance.	Archer & Hughes (2011)
Co-teaching	"The partnering of a general education teacher and a special education teacher or another specialist for the purpose of jointly delivering instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with disabilities, or other special needs, in a general education setting and in a way that flexibly and deliberately meets their learning needs."	Friend, Hurley-Chamberlain, & Shamberger (2010, p. 11)
Culturally relevant practices	Instruction that incorporates the diverse cultures of the students in order to provide content relative to students' experiences.	Aronson & Laughter (2016)
Curriculum-based assessment (CBA)	"A method of evaluating student performance by directly and frequently collecting data on their academic progress."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Curriculum-based measurement (CBM)	"A type of progress monitoring conducted on a regular basis to assess student performance throughout an entire year's curriculum; teachers can use CBM to evaluate not only student progress but also the effectiveness of their instructional methods."	The IRIS Center (2016a)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Data-based individualization	Gradually individualizing and intensifying interventions through the systematic use of assessment data, validated interventions, and research-based adaptation strategies.	National Center on Intensive Intervention (2013)
Differentiated instruction	"An approach whereby teachers adjust their curriculum and instruction to maximize the learning of all students (e.g., typical learners, English language learners, struggling students, students with learning disabilities, gifted and talented students); not a single strategy but rather a framework that teachers can use to implement a variety of evidence-based strategies."	The IRIS Center (2010a, Page 1)
Disproportionality	The over- or underrepresentation "of racially, culturally, ethnically, or linguistically diverse groups of students in special education, restrictive learning environments, or school disciplinary actions (e.g., suspensions and expulsions), compared to other groups."	Center on Response to Intervention (2014)
	Per IDEA, states must have "policies and procedures designed to prevent the inappropriate overidentification or disproportionate representation by race and ethnicity of children as children with disabilities."	U.S. Department of Education (2007)
Evidence-based practice	Educational practice or strategy that has empirical evidence to support its efficacy.	See Council for Exceptional Children (2014)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Explicit instruction	Instructional approach in which teachers clearly identify the expectations for learning, highlight important details of the concept or skill, offer precise instruction, and connect new learning to earlier lessons and materials.	Archer & Hughes (2011)
Fidelity of implementation	"The degree to which an intervention is implemented accurately, following the guidelines or restrictions of its developers."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Flexible grouping	A fluid or dynamic method of grouping students. Rather than being set, group membership changes to meet the different needs of the students.	Cox (n.d.)
Formative assessment	A form of formal or informal evaluation "used to plan instruction in a recursive way," providing regular assessment of student progress. Formative assessment enables teachers to "diagnose skill, ability, and knowledge gaps; measure progress; and evaluate instruction. Examples … include curriculum-based measurement, curriculum-based assessment, pretests and posttests, portfolios, benchmark assessments, quizzes, teacher observations, and teacher/student conferencing."	Center on Response to Intervention (2014)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Functional behavior assessment (FBA)	A systematic approach to address a student's specific behavior to identify the behavior's function using informal and formal methods of observation. Following the FBA, the IEP team develops an individual behavior support plan.	Behavioradvisor.com (n.d.)
Generalization	Performing a behavior in environments that differ from where the behavior was originally learned.	Lee & Axelrod (2005).
Grade equivalence	Grade-level equivalent scores are determined by giving a test that is developed for a particular grade to students in other grades.	Eissenberg & Rudner (1988)
Graphic organizer	A visual aid designed to help students organize and comprehend substantial amounts of text and content information.	The IRIS Center (2012, Page 11)
Guided notes	"A strategic note-taking method in which teachers provide their students an outline containing the main ideas and related concepts in order to help guide the students through a lecture."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Guided practice	A method of practice that involves working with students on activities that focus on a previously modeled or taught skill.	Study.com (2003–2017)
Heterogeneous grouping	To place students of varying abilities (i.e., lower achieving, typically achieving, higher achieving) together in a small instructional group.	Lewis (2016a)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Homogeneous grouping	To place students of similar abilities together into groups; can be used by teachers to provide more intensive instruction to students who are working at a similar level and who can benefit from instruction that is designed for their specific learning needs.	Lewis (2016b)
Individual behavior support plan	A plan developed following a functional behavior assessment to specify how the pro-social behavior will be taught and any modifications to the classroom and other environments needed to reinforce the appropriate behavior.	See OSEP Technical Assistance Center's templates at https://www.pbis.org/resource/804/behavior-support-plan-template
Individual family services plan (IFSP)	A means of providing early intervention services for children with developmental delays or disabilities, from birth through age 3. The IFSP is based on an in-depth assessment of the child's needs and includes information on the child's level of development in all areas, outcomes for the child and family, and services the child and family will receive.	PACER Center (2011)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Individualized education program (IEP)	A written statement for the child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with federal law and regulations. The IEP must include a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, a statement of measurable annual academic and functional goals to meet the child's needs and enable the child to make progress in the general education curriculum.	IDEA regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.320–300.324 See U.S. Department of Education (2006)
Instructional scaffolding	"A process through which a teacher adds supports for students to enhance learning and aid in the mastery of tasks. The teacher does this by systematically building on students' experiences and knowledge as they are learning new skills."	The IRIS Center (2005, Page 1)
Instructional technology	"Any device or instrument that exists in a classroom and that teachers use for the purpose of day-to-day instruction; such devices, when assigned to an individual student through an IEP, are known as assistive technology."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Intensive intervention	Additional instruction designed to support and reinforce classroom skills characterized by increased intensity and individualization based on data.	The IRIS Center (2015, Page 1)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Key word method	A mnemonic strategy in which students use a keyword and a related sentence or image to help them to remember new information.	Mempowered! (n.d.)
Learning strategies	"Instructional methods employed to help students to read, comprehend, and study better by helping them to strategically organize and collect information."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Maintenance	In behavior assessment, term used to describe the extent to which a student's behavior is self-sustaining over time.	Potterfield (2009– 2013)
Meta-analysis	Method of reviewing research on a given practice or program in which a systematic and reproducible literature search is conducted, specific criteria are used for including research studies in the analysis, and the combined statistical results of these studies yield an effect size for the practice or program across the studies reviewed.	Israel & Richter (2017)
Metacognition	The processes used to plan, monitor, and assess one's understanding and performance.	Chick (2017)
Mnemonics	"A learning strategy in which a verbal device is employed to help promote the memorization of names or other information."	The IRIS Center (2016a)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Multitiered system of support (MTSS)	A "prevention framework that organizes building-level resources to address each individual student's academic and/or behavioral needs within intervention tiers that vary in intensity." The intention is to enable "the early identification of learning and behavioral challenges and timely intervention for students who are at risk for poor learning outcomes. It also may be called a *multi-level prevention system*. The increasingly intense tiers … represent a continuum of supports."	Center on Response to Intervention (2014)
Norm-referenced assessment	"A standardized assessment tool that compares a student's test scores to the average score of a representative group."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Paraprofessional	Sometimes also referred to as a paraeducator, teacher's aide, or instructional assistant, a paraprofessional may assist in providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. They are appropriately trained and supervised in accordance with state law, regulation, or written policy.	IDEA, 20 U.S.C. 1412(a)(14)(b); see Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle (2010)
Peer tutoring	A cooperative learning strategy that pairs a student with disabilities with a typically developing student; either student may adopt the role of teacher or learner.	The IRIS Center (2010b, Page 7)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Pegword strategy	A *mnemonic* strategy in which students use common rhyming words for numbers (e.g., one = bun; two = shoe) and link this word to the information being learned.	AdLit.org (2017)
Progress monitoring	Used to assess a student's performance and improvement in response to intervention. Allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions adjust instruction to meet students' needs. Progress monitoring can be implemented with individual students or groups of students (e.g., whole class).	Center on Response to Intervention (2014); The IRIS Center (2004a, Page 1); Stockall, Dennis, & Rueter (2014)
Reciprocal teaching	"Instructional activity in which students become the teacher in small group sessions. Teachers model, then help students learn to guide group discussions using four strategies: summarizing, question generating, clarifying, and predicting."	Reading Rockets (2017)
Scientifically validated interventions	"Instructional procedures or methods proven by careful and systematic research."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Self-regulated strategy development	A scientifically validated framework for explicitly teaching academic strategies that incorporates steps critical to a student's ability to effectively use those strategies.	The IRIS Center (2008b)
Self-regulation	"A person's ability to regulate his or her own behavior."	The IRIS Center (2016a)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Special education process	The activities that occur from the time a child is referred for evaluation through being identified with a disability and provided with special education services via an IEP. These activities include request for an evaluation, a multidisciplinary evaluation, eligibility determination, and the development of the IEP. Families of students who are being evaluated must be informed of all activities and have opportunities to participate in meetings and decisions about their child.	Center for Parent Information and Resources (2014); PACER Center (2006)
Strategies instruction	Instruction designed to teach students the elements or steps for implementing successful strategies.	Gaskins, 2009
Summative assessment	"An evaluation administered to measure student learning outcomes, typically at the end of a unit or chapter. Often used to evaluate whether a student has mastered the content or skill."	The IRIS Center (2016a)
Targeted instruction	Instruction that "takes into account what students understand and teaches them according to their ability levels, rather than strictly adhering to what they are expected to know based on their grade level."	Center for Education Innovations (n.d.)

Term	Definition	Reference/Resource
Testing accommodations	A change in the way that a test is administered or responded to by the person being tested. Accommodations are intended to offset or "correct" for distortions in scores caused by a disability. These changes do not modify the intent of the test. Allowable accommodations may include such things as extended time, use of read-aloud software, text-to-speech and speech-to-text software, and calculators.	Cawthon et al. (2009); Elliott, Kratochwill, & Schulte (1998); Fuchs & Fuchs (1999); Fuchs, Fuchs, Eaton, Hamlett, & Karns (2000); Kettler et al. (2011)
Transition services	Instruction, related services, and community experiences designed to support the student with a disability in developing academic and functional skills suited to the student's postschool goals. Per federal regulations, this is a results-oriented process that considers including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation, as appropriate for the individual student's needs and taking into consideration the child's strengths, preferences, and interests.	IDEA regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 300.43(a)
Universal design for learning (UDL)	A research-based framework for teachers to incorporate flexible materials, techniques, and strategies for delivering instruction and for students to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways.	The IRIS Center (2016b)

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