THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY, NY 12234

OFFICE OF P-12 EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

QUALITY INDICATOR REVIEW AND RESOURCE GUIDES for SPECIAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

1. **Instructional Environment and Practice**
2. **Committee on Special Education (CSE) Process and Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development**

The Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Center (RSE-TASC) network is one of the Office of Special Education's primary resources for school improvement in New York State. This Quality Indicator Review and Resource Guide is one of a series that has been developed for use by the RSE-TASC network to guide their work in assessment of programs and provision of professional development, support and technical assistance to districts and schools to improve results for students with disabilities.

The Guides are intended to be used to support a process that includes:

- Assessing the quality of a school district's instructional programs and practices in the areas of literacy, behavioral supports and interventions; and delivery of special education services;
- Determining priority need areas; and
- Prescribing and planning activities to change practices and improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

NYSED gratefully acknowledges participation of the following individuals in the development of these documents:

Current Specially Designed Instruction Work Group

Cyndi Clark – Western RSE-TASC
Valerie Cole – Mid-South RSE-TASC
Kelly Endres – Mid-West RSE-TASC
Susan Goldberg – New York City RSE-TASC
Barbara Kestenbaum – Lower Hudson RSE-TASC
Lauri McCoy – Mid-South RSE-TASC
Sally McGuirk – Capital Region/North Country RSE-TASC
Cathy Quackenbush – Central RSE-TASC
Lori Skelton – Mid-West RSE-TASC
Valerie Valenti – Long Island RSE-TASC
Roseanne Westgate Pesola – Central RSE-TASC
Dr. Dee Berlinghoff, Mount Saint Mary College

Past Special Education Delivery Work Group

Cyndi Besig – RSE-TASC, Monroe I BOCES
Elizabeth Fallo - SETRC, Delaware Chenango Madison Otsego BOCES
Cathy Quackenbush - RSE-TASC, Herkimer Fulton Hamilton Otsego BOCES
Cecilia Dansereau Rumley - RSE-TASC, Dutchess BOCES
Elizabeth Cutter - NYSED/VESID
Lisa Luderman - NYSED/VESID
Mark Ylvisaker, Ph.D.- The College of St. Rose

James P. DeLorenzo
Statewide Coordinator for Special Education Services
NYSED

Patricia J. Geary
Coordinator, Special Education Policy and Professional Development
NYSED

Instructional Environment and Practice

KEY QUESTION:

What are the basic assumptions about the general instructional practices in a school that serve as the foundation for the effective delivery of special education supports and services for students with disabilities?

General education and special education have for too long been considered separate entities within the educational system. They are in fact interdependent and the relative strength of one directly impacts the strength of the other. It is difficult to assess the strengths and needs of a district and/or school without consideration from both lenses. If special education is truly the most intensive level of intervention for students, then its effectiveness cannot be measured without consideration of the universal structures that support its foundation. The quality indicators found in this document are based upon the following set of assumptions. When problems with low performance can be traced in part to systemic issues, these issues need to be addressed in concert with improvement efforts that address instruction.

Assumptions:	**Resources:**
Curriculum is based upon NYS Learning Standards for all instruction (general and special education).	*NYS Learning Standards and Core Curriculum Guides* http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/home.html
High quality instruction for all students regardless of ability/need is a norm in the school/district.	*What Works Clearinghouse*http://www.whatworks.ed.gov/ *School Improvement Planning* http://www.annenberginstitute.org/tools/guide/index.php
School/district values inclusive practice.	*Stetson, Frances. 2003.* School Based Practices Profile. Stetson and Associates, Inc. *National Institute for Urban School Improvement* http://www.urbanschools.org\publications\core_concepts.html
Special education is a service not a place that provides individualized, intensive instruction.	The Access Center http://www.k8accesscenter.org/index.php/category/background-info/
School/district policy and practice demonstrate a system of supports for all students.	*Dr. Cummins ESL and Second Language Learning Web* http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins/index.htm *Intervention Central Tools; Curriculum Based Measures Warehouse* http://www.interventioncentral.org *Critical Issues in At-Risk Students* http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/at0cont.htm
Culturally responsive practice is a norm in the school/district.	*NYU Metro Center for Urban Education http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter* Civil Rights Project at UCLA http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/ *Cross Cultural Developmental Education Services* http://www.crosscultured.com
Instructional practices are based on scientific research or are evidence based.	*NCREL: Using Scientifically Based Research to Guide Educational Decisions* *http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/go900.htm* *USDOE: Identification and Implementation of Educational Practice Supported by Rigorous Evidence: A User Friendly Guide* *http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousevid/rigorousevid.pdf*

Instructional Environment and Practice

Indicator: Instructional Environment		
Component: Structured, predictable school and classroom environment **Driving Question:** ➢ **Do school/classroom structures support student success or present a barrier to it?**		
Quality Indicators	**Look For**	**Comments/Evidence**
The instructional environment is designed to support individual student needs.	• Physical environment matches student need for visual, auditory and tactile stimulation. • Classroom routines are evident and predictable. • Cues for routines/schedules are designed to support individual student needs (e.g., color-coded, picture schedules). • Instructional materials are available in multiple formats. • Assistive technology is used as necessary to support student learning.	
Student participates in the general education environment including curriculum and instruction, assessment, and social activities based on individual student needs.	• Educators plan and implement instruction designed to include ALL students at their developmental and skill levels.[1] • Students with disabilities participate in voting in elections, social activities, sports, clubs, field trips, assemblies, class projects, etc.	
High expectations for all students are clearly articulated and defined.	• Students are provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate desired expectations in classroom or school routines. • Educators and students understand and can discuss high expectations.	
Classroom climate is conducive to learning.	• Positive, orderly classroom environment is evident. • Students are actively engaged in learning and on task. • Students are explicitly taught skills to manage school/classroom transitions, schedules, routines. • Interactions between and among educators and students demonstrate respect and a desire to build rapport. • Interactions are highly respectful, reflect genuine warmth and caring, and are respectful of individual differences such as age, culture, gender and abilities.[1] • Adults working in the classroom collaborate to provide interventions for any student who struggles, with increasing intensity (frequency, duration, or alternate approaches) as needed.[2] • Classroom roles are defined and implemented to maximize student benefit.	

Resources:

- Danielson, Charlotte; Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching
- Marzano, Robert, Marzano, Jana and Pickerin, Debra. Classroom Management That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Every Teacher
- Rose, David H. and Meyer, Anne. Teaching Every Student in the Digital Age. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Available at http://www.cast.org
- *Strategies to Improve Access to the General Education Curriculum* at http://www.k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/documents/research%20supported%20strategies%20chart.pdf

Instructional Environment and Practice

Indicator: Instructional Practice		
Component: Planning for effective instruction **Driving Question:** ➢ **Do the strengths and needs of each student drive instructional decision-making?**		
Quality Indicators	**Look For**	**Comments/Evidence**
Instruction is individually planned to address student needs.	• Individual student's strength and needs drive instructional decision making. • Instructional activities are planned for varying group sizes and configurations to allow students opportunities to learn, practice, and generalize knowledge and/or skills. • Data from frequent formal and informal assessments inform Instructional decisions. • The justification for use of selected instructional practices is based on research.	
Planned instruction is goal directed.	• Instruction is designed to address IEP goals (and measurable post-secondary goals for students 15 years of age and older). • Instruction is aligned with the NYS Learning Standards. • Students are receiving instruction to address IEP goals.	
The plan includes direct instruction to explicitly teach academic content and skills.	• Direct instruction is provided in academic content areas (e.g., social studies, science) and skill domains (e.g. reading, writing): o Complex tasks are broken down into small steps or components (e.g., task analysis). The components are either taught (1) one at a time or (2) the complex activity remains integrated but the teacher gives the student responsibility for only one component at a time while the teacher contributes the remaining components (e.g. writing a complex story or doing a science experiment). o Formative assessments are ongoing during instruction. o Teachers and therapists model the target skills, processes, and products. o Instruction includes multiple sessions of both guided and independent practice. o Instruction is organized and supported so that students are expected to make few if any errors. o Prompts are faded to support independence in learning. o The instructional pacing provides many learning trials to maintain focused attention. o Students are given opportunities for practice, repeated and purposeful feedback, and explicit review of developing skills designed to meet their	

	individual needs. • In addition to direct/explicit instruction, the student is given opportunities for distributed practice across varied settings and activities to facilitate transfer or generalization of targeted skills. • Students are given opportunities for review and cumulative review individually designed to facilitate maintenance of learning.[3]	
The plan includes explicit instruction in the use of strategies for learning.	• Teachers and therapists provide direct instruction in the use of specific strategies designed to enhance learning throughout the curriculum, improve the five core areas of literacy,[4] improve writing and written composition, and improve mathematical computation and application. o Strategies are explicitly presented and explained. o Strategies are modeled by teachers. o In the early stages of instruction, strategies are used collaboratively by teachers and students in curricular tasks. o Strategies are associated with mnemonic aids (e.g., acronyms) to facilitate learning. o Strategies are presented visually if possible (e.g., graphic organizers). o A variety of cues are used to ensure that the student uses relevant strategies (e.g., think-aloud models, verbalizing steps/procedures during a lesson, visual and auditory reminders). o Cues are systematically withdrawn as students gain facility in using strategies. o Reviews of strategy use are sufficiently frequent to ensure ongoing use of the strategies. • Relevant strategies are encouraged across content domains for purposes of facilitating generalization and are used from year to year to encourage maintenance. • In groups, students are encouraged to remind one another of their strategies to encourage deeper understanding of the strategies and generalized use.	
Self-regulation/executive functions are an integral part of instruction: compensatory strategies and effective habits of mind are taught.	• Instruction is provided to teach students to: o Communicate their own strengths and needs, and o Understand and advocate for their needs for accommodations, adaptations or modifications (instruction, assessment or environment). • Students are individually involved in personal goal setting[5] (also, http://www.asgc.org/ed-self-determine.htm). • Students are involved in planning and organizing their schedules to meet their learning goals. • Students are involved in monitoring and evaluating their own progress.	

	• Explicit instruction is provided to students in strategies for effectively managing their thought processes (meta-cognition), learning, social and other behaviors. • Adults model self-regulation strategies. • Students are instructed in, and given practice in, the use of meta-cognitive scripts for self-coaching. • Students are given frequent opportunities for guided practice of self-regulatory strategies. • Instructional plans include specific instruction to students on compensatory strategies necessary to address individual student need.	
Instructional and assessment accommodations for learner needs are planned and individualized.	• Accommodations support the student's needs as documented in the IEP. • Accommodations are consistently implemented across all settings and for all types of assessments. • Students are involved in determining their accommodations. • Accommodations are taught to students and practiced to ensure independence.	
Resources: • *Test Access and Accommodations* http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/testaccess/policyguide.htm • *What is Direct/Explicit Instruction? The Access Center at* http://k8accesscenter.org/training_resources/DirectExplicitInstruction_Mathematics.asp		

Instructional Environment and Practice

Indicator: Instructional Practice		
Component: Effective implementation of specially-designed instruction **Driving Question:** ➢ **Does the specially designed instruction improve student learning?**		
Quality Indicators	**Look For**	**Comments/Evidence**
Roles and responsibilities of service providers are clearly defined and implemented.	• Special educators, related service providers and general education staff work together to enhance/unify instructional planning and implementation. • Educators can describe student needs and their implications.	
Delivery of instruction maximizes student learning.	• All educators have realistic, high expectations for student learning. • Decisions about provision of instruction (pacing, frequency, duration, alternate approaches) are based on each student's individual needs. • The learning process is structured to include multiple, varied opportunities for student participation in classroom instruction. • Materials used for student practice are meaningful and lead to the desired learning outcomes. • A variety of instructional strategies are used to address student goals. • Teachers adjust instruction based upon student response to learning. • Instructional groups (composition and size) are fluid and flexible to address student needs as assessed through progress monitoring. • Instructional decisions are data-based and supported by evidence and/or practitioner observations.	
Instructional groups are appropriate to support learner outcomes.	• Instructional groups are based on learner needs in the areas of academics and learning characteristics, social, physical and management needs rather than disability category. • Classroom teaming provides opportunities for increasing instructional intensity for students with disabilities in the general education classroom. • Supplemental instruction addresses student needs for targeted skill development.	
Supplemental supports and services are effectively used	• Students are provided with and taught effective ways to use assistive technology to support their individual learning needs.[6] • Instructional materials are available to students in alternate formats. • The roles of different members of classroom teams, including supplemental school personnel (teaching assistants and teacher aides[7] are designed and implemented for efficiency and effective practice. • Roles of paraprofessionals are clearly defined and support development of	

	student independence.	

Resources:

- Heward, William. Ten Faulty Notions about Teaching Special Education
- *National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals at* http://www.nrcpara.org/
- *Special Connections - Connecting Educators to strategies That Work at* http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/?q=instruction/universal_design_for_learning
- Swanson, H.L. Searching for the Best Model for Instruction Students with Learning Disabilities *at* http://nichcy.org/research/summaries/abstract35
- *The Power of Two (co-teaching) at* http://www.powerof2.org

Instructional Environment and Practice

Indicator: Instructional Practice		
Component: Ongoing assessment of student progress **Driving Question:** ➢ **Are instructional decisions data-based and aligned with standards and curriculum?** ➢ **Do instructional decisions support participation and progress of students with disabilities in general education curriculum?**		
Quality Indicators	**Look For**	**Comments/Evidence**
Curriculum-based assessments (both formative and summative) are used to monitor student progress.	• Formal and informal measures are used to assess student progress. • Information to determine student's mastery of skills is purposefully collected. • Frequent checks, in a variety of ways, are made of student understanding. • Instruction results in students being engaged in learning.	
Assessments are aligned with the clearly constructed/ formulated objectives of the lesson/unit.	• Tools used to measure progress are aligned with the task and the developmental/age of the students.[8] • Assessment provides information on student learning characteristics. • Visual representation of individual student learning is used to better understand student trajectory of learning (speed of acquisition of new skills, plateauing, etc.). • Students are involved in data collection and evaluation of their own progress.	
Teacher uses formative assessments while teaching to inform instruction.	• Teachers use multiple measures of assessment (authentic assessment,[9] review of work products, reflective logs, etc.). • Assessment is conducted before, during and after instruction. • Assessment is conducted across different settings to assess generalization. • Teachers use task analysis and the results of progress monitoring to identify the most effective point of intervention when planning instruction. • Educators track and maintain records on student progress toward meeting goals as indicated in the IEP. • Information from assessments guides decisions to re-teach, change pacing, and plan or adjust activities/strategies.	
Data is recorded and analyzed to inform the instructional planning for students with disabilities.	• Data is collected and recorded to: o inform the planning of instruction; o inform progress towards IEP goals; o communicate progress in student learning; and o determine future IEP goals. • Data is shared with students and parents in multiple formats (e.g., charts, graphs, tables).	

Resources:

- Marzano, Robert, Classroom Assessment and Grading That Works, ASCD
- McMillan, James; Essential Assessment Concepts for Teachers and Administrators, Corwin Press
- McMillan, James; Classroom Assessments, Principles and Practices for Effective Instruction, Allyn & Bacon
- *Research Institute on Progress Monitoring* http://www.progressmonitoring.org/
- Tomlinson, Carol Ann; Differentiation in Practice, ASCD

Hyperlinks:

[1] http://www.k8accesscenter.org
[2] http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/cgi-bin/cgiwrap/specconn/main.php?cat=collaboration&section=teachertools
[3] http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_explicit.html
[4] http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/PRFbooklet.pdf
[5] http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-3/self.htm
[6] http://www.cast.org/teachingeverystudent/
[7] http://www.specialconnections.ku.edu/?q=collaboration/working_effectively_with_paraeducators/teacher_tools/starting_off_on_the_right_foot_getting_acquainted
[8] http://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/resources/articles/assessment/getrightdata/index.php
[9] http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/