



Instruction: DEC Recommended Practices

Instruction

Instructional practices are a cornerstone of early intervention and early childhood special education. Teachers, other practitioners, family members, and other caregivers use instructional practices to maximize learning and improve developmental and functional outcomes for young children who have or are at risk for developmental delays/disabilities.

Instructional practices are intentional and systematic strategies to inform what to teach, when to teach, how to evaluate the effects of teaching, and how to support and evaluate the quality of instructional practices implemented by others.

Instructional practices are a subset of intervention activities conducted by practitioners and parents. We use the term “instructional practices” rather than the terms “teaching practices” or “intervention” because instruction is the predominant term used in the research literature to refer to intentional and systematic strategies to maximize learning.

The recommended instructional practices below are written from the perspective of the practitioner. They may also be implemented by families or others who interact with the child, often with support of the practitioner. We recommend the following practices to support instruction:

- INS1.** Practitioners, with the family, identify each child's strengths, preferences, and interests to engage the child in active learning.
- INS2.** Practitioners, with the family, identify skills to target for instruction that help a child become adaptive, competent, socially connected, and engaged and that promote learning in natural and inclusive environments.
- INS3.** Practitioners gather and use data to inform decisions about individualized instruction.
- INS4.** Practitioners plan for and provide the level of support, accommodations, and adaptations needed for the child to access, participate, and learn within and across activities and routines.
- INS5.** Practitioners embed instruction within and across routines, activities, and environments to provide contextually relevant learning opportunities.
- INS6.** Practitioners use systematic instructional strategies with fidelity to teach skills and to promote child engagement and learning.
- INS7.** Practitioners use explicit feedback and consequences to increase child engagement, play, and skills.
- INS8.** Practitioners use peer-mediated intervention to teach skills and to promote child engagement and learning.
- INS9.** Practitioners use functional assessment and related prevention, promotion, and intervention strategies across environments to prevent and address challenging behavior.

INS10. Practitioners implement the frequency, intensity, and duration of instruction needed to address the child’s phase and pace of learning or the level of support needed by the family to achieve the child’s outcomes or goals.

INS11. Practitioners provide instructional support for young children with disabilities who are dual language learners to assist them in learning English and in continuing to develop skills through the use of their home language.

INS12. Practitioners use and adapt specific instructional strategies that are effective for dual language learners when teaching English to children with disabilities.

INS13. Practitioners use coaching or consultation strategies with primary caregivers or other adults to facilitate positive adult-child interactions and instruction intentionally designed to promote child learning and development.

Source:

Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014. Retrieved from <http://www.decsped.org/recommendedpractices>