



Specially Designing Instruction

At its core, special education focuses on an area of need – a barrier – that impedes a learner's ability to get the most from their education. Once identified, this barrier becomes the focus of the child's IEP team as they begin their work designing instructional opportunities for the learner to develop need-related skills while simultaneously minimizing the need's impact on the student's ability to learn in other areas. This specially designed instruction is the magic that makes special education so effective!

[Read on to learn more!](#)

What is "Specially Designed Instruction?"

The legal definition as found in [Section 300.39 \(b\) \(3\) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)

"Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction—

(i) To address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability; and

(ii) To ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children."

Required as a component
of an eligible child's IEP.

Action Driven Education's Barrier-Moving Mindset

A Barrier-Moving Mindset for effective pre-referral and special needs programs:

- Step 1: Recognize the presence of a barrier - a learner's need.
- Step 2: Work the learner through their need by developing opportunities to learn and rehearse barrier-related skills.
- Step 3: Maintain their involvement in general education by supporting them around their needs with [just-right accommodations](#)®.
- Steps 4 and 5: Collect data to verify the effectiveness of efforts.

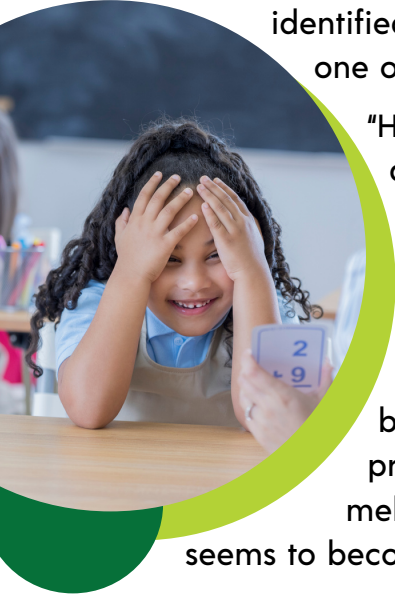
Harnesses the power of
specially designed instruction
for any child who struggles!

Specially Designing Instruction - Anyone Can Do It!

Tell me the story...

A barrier to learning

It's mid-October, and Ms. Garcia has her 5th-grade science curriculum in full swing. The students seem to grasp the classroom procedures necessary for a productive year, except for Sophie. As Ms. Garcia shares, "Sophie has good days and bad days that seem to depend on her mood." Sophie's other teachers, both past and present, seem to agree that when things aren't going well, she lacks the coping skills necessary to roll through a situation and not let it ruin her entire day. Having identified this barrier to her learning, Ms. Garcia approaches her colleague, Mr. Harris, one of the school's emotional support teachers.



"Hey Jayden, how are you today?" Ms. Garcia asks as she peers into Mr. Harris' room.

"Oh, hey, Rosie. I'm doing well. What's up?" Jayden inquires.

"I'm struggling with a student, Sophie, who seems to lack the coping skills necessary to handle the bumps in her day. No matter how big or small the problem is, her entire day goes off the rails the minute something happens. She melts down over the smallest things, blames her classmates for everything, and seems to become frustrated way too easily," Rosie explains.

"It sounds like coping skills are the right way to describe the area where Sophie struggles. Let's talk about ways you might be able to design some special instruction to help Sophie."

Mr. Harris and Ms. Garcia discuss a variety of instructional activities and strategies that can be separated into two groups:

Ways to build Sophie's coping skills

- Completing a workbook during homeroom ([Free Kids Mental Health Workbook](#)).
- Build coping skill instruction as an element of science instruction. Holding a thermometer, Ms. Garcia talks about how increasing pressure causes an increase in temperature. She then shares an analogy explaining how we experience pressure in our lives. This pressure causes our "thermometer" to rise. Our job is to recognize this pressure and respond appropriately.
- Sophie is assigned to watch [coping skills videos](#) for homework.
- Learn and rehearse relaxation techniques taught at a local yoga studio with her mother once a week.
- Participate in a coping skills group run once a week by the school's counselor.



Barrier-Moving Mindset

Step 1: Identify the presence of a barrier

Accommodations to support Sophie

- Do not engage Sophie in learning competitions
- Allow for breaks
- Do not eliminate recess as a punishment
- Ignore behaviors that aren't seriously disruptive
- Develop cues to remind Sophie when a behavior is not appropriate

What's the context?

Creativity is necessary

Teams should use their creativity when developing specially designed instruction. By being creative and considering ways to incorporate barrier-related skill instruction into the general education classroom, educators can meet both aspects of the law. This creativity permits the learner to develop need-related skills while maintaining involvement in the general education curriculum. When coupled with [just-right accommodations](#)®, building barrier-related skills makes the magic of special education work for any child, preventing the need for additional services by eliminating the barrier before it becomes a problem!



[Building Barrier-Related Skills](#)

Click Me!

Get to the point...

What is specially designed instruction?

Specially designed instruction is the process of planning and implementing instructional opportunities designed to build a learner's skills in the area(s) where they struggle.

However, because building these skills to the level where they are usable to a child can take some time, specially designed instruction also involves using accommodations that support the learner around their need or barrier. These accommodations allow the student to continue their education without their barrier standing in the way!



The story continues...

A specially designed solution

On Monday, Ms. Garcia, who has built an excellent relationship with Sophie, meets with her to share a few ideas. The conversation begins with Ms. Garcia sharing her observations and gaining Sophie's insight. The team then discusses the two-tiered approach to addressing the concern, where the team will work together to develop coping skills that Sophie can use for the rest of her life to deal with challenging situations. Additionally, the team creates a few accommodations that will immediately support Sophie's ability to engage in class. As her skills develop, these accommodations will be modified and even eliminated!

Be action-driven...

1. Work to develop a learner's barrier-related skills. Consider creative and resourceful ways to achieve this task. Action Driven Education's How-To Guide: Building Barrier-Related Skills may help!
2. Develop ["just-right" accommodations](#)® to support your student around the barrier.
3. Jump into [Accomods](#) and explore accommodations that align with a learner's barrier.

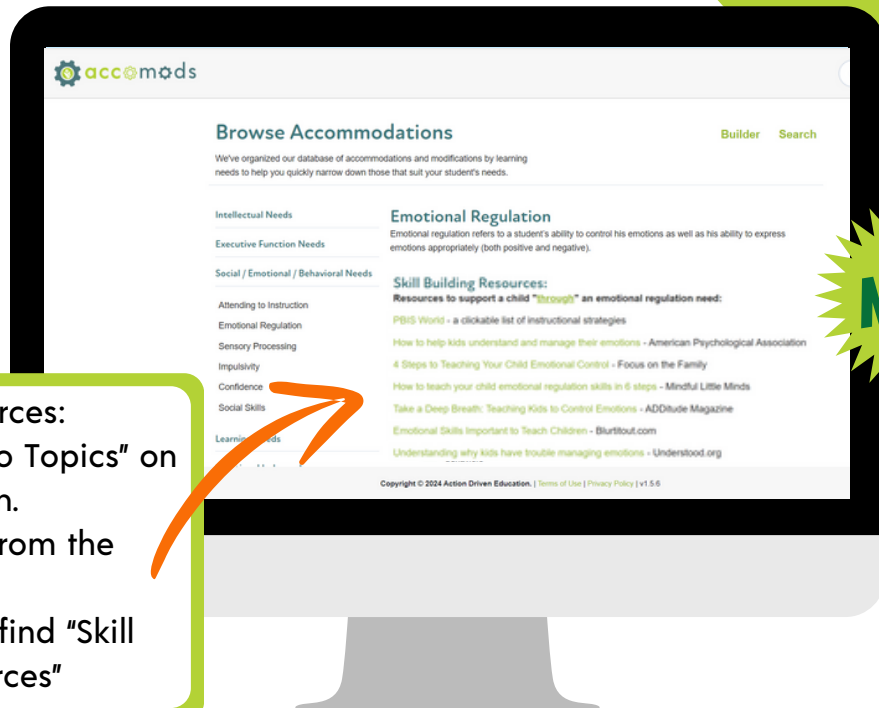
Sign up for future newsletters at www.actiondriveneducation.com/newsletters/

Newest accomods Feature

You know Accomods® is the premier source for adaptations, but did you know it now has barrier-related skill-building resources, too?!

Access these resources:

- Select "Dive into Topics" on the main screen.
- Select a need from the menu
- Scroll down to find "Skill Building Resources"



Action-Driven Professional Development

Action Driven Education has new professional development to offer your school!

"Extending Our Mindset"

Participants:

- Explore how extended (alternative) standards provide a framework for the inclusion of students with significant needs.
- Unearth and extend their current use of breadth, depth, and complexity to modify content.
- Explore methods of grading.

Schedule a Professional Development Consultation to learn more!

Featured Accommodation:

B24- Avoid the use of sarcasm can be a significant adaptation to consider when a child lacks coping strategies. Misunderstandings over poor attempts at humor can quickly escalate into uncomfortable situations for everyone involved.

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