

THE CHALLENGE

All students deserve a high-quality education that prepares them for future success. To enable this, all students with disabilities must have equitable access to the full rigor of grade-level instruction. Yet, many educators, especially those who serve a higher proportion of students with disabilities, do not receive the professional learning they need to ensure equitable access to high-quality curriculum and instruction. As a result, school leaders and teachers often inadvertently exacerbate persistent inequities, rather than drive equity, when delivering daily instruction.

This guide is designed to help school leaders and educators overcome barriers to equitable delivery of grade-level instruction through evidence-based strategies that support students with disabilities in general education. To do this:

- Teachers should follow the **Cycle of Student Support** to drive outcomes for all students.
- School leaders should establish **building-wide conditions** that support the learning of all students.

At SPED Strategies, we believe that:

- All students are capable of achieving grade-level learning with the right supports
- All educators are responsible for ensuring students with disabilities achieve grade-level learning
- All special education services should be designed to promote access and progress in grade-level learning

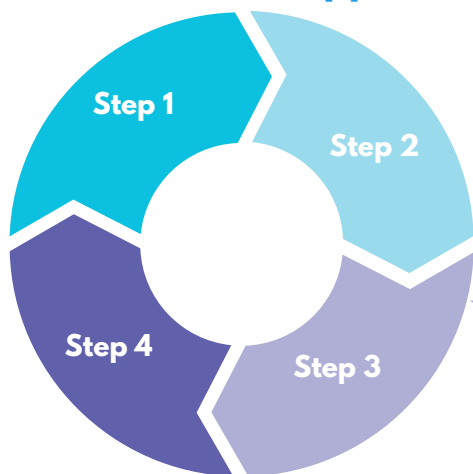
THE CYCLE OF STUDENT SUPPORT

The cycle of student support is intended to provide a process for educators and support staff to collaborate in service of providing access to grade level learning. This collaboration takes place at two levels of instructional design:

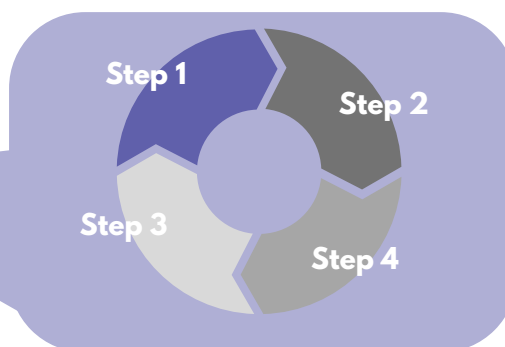
- In this cycle, educators and support staff engage in planning at the **unit level** to understand the grade-level learning within instructional materials alongside required prerequisite knowledge and skills to identify and provide coherent support in service of grade level learning.
- In this cycle, educators and support staff engage in planning at the **lesson level** to reflect on collected data, student strengths and needs and the impact of unit level design choices to adjust the daily delivery of lessons that meet the needs of all learners.

THE CYCLE OF STUDENT SUPPORT

Unit Level Support



Lesson Level Support



Unit Level Supports

Step 1	Identify grade-level and prerequisite skills, standards, and knowledge and compare to current student performance.
Step 2	Collaborate with support staff to identify and plan effective supports* throughout the unit.
Step 3	Deliver lesson level supports.
Step 4	Review efficacy of supports and identify ongoing adjustments.

Lesson Level Supports

Step 1	Gather and review formative student data (e.g. interviews, observations, daily assessments).
Step 2	Identify aligned skill/support needed
Step 3	Identify aligned instructional strategies.
Step 4	Adjust an upcoming lesson

*Supports include curriculum-embedded resources, instructional strategies, **accommodations**, and related services skills. Integrating [Related Services](#). Related services--such as speech, occupational and physical therapies--help students benefit from general education by teaching skills that help them access, participate, and benefit from their education. When teachers collaborate with service providers, they can identify and integrate the knowledge, skills and previous learning necessary to engage with the full rigor of grade-level content.

**The Cycle of Student Support addresses grade-level learning. A small percentage of students will have persistent foundational skill and knowledge gaps that interfere with their ability to learn grade-level content may need supplemental instruction. Supplemental instruction should simultaneously build the background knowledge and skills students need to access grade-level instruction, and provide explicit instruction targeting the foundational gaps that hinder grade-level learning.

BUILDING LEVEL CONDITIONS

School leaders play a crucial role in ensuring that students within their school buildings have access to the support they need to be successful. School leaders ensure teachers are supported in making instructional decisions that close equity gaps for students with disabilities by taking the actions below.

Provide High-Quality Instructional Materials and Aligned Professional Learning

School leaders must commit to providing all students with access to high-quality grade-level instruction every day and supporting general and special education teachers with daily instruction.

- Select instructional materials aligned to grade-level standards, and ensure students with disabilities participate in grade-level instruction, daily.
- Focus observations and coaching to support teachers in ensuring all students, including students with disabilities, engage with the most rigorous components of the lesson.
- Provide planning time and professional learning on the alignment of instructional materials to grade-level standards and the points of rigor students must master.
- Ensure general education teachers understand how to integrate critical components of a student's individualized education program (IEP) into daily instructional planning.

Build Structures to Integrate Special Education Services into Grade-Level Learning

School leaders should develop and implement structures that integrate special education services into grade-level learning, rather than approaching special education as a separate and siloed process.

- Provide curriculum-aligned professional learning to special education teachers that builds their capacity to support students with disabilities in accessing grade-level content.
- Protect routine planning time for related service providers and general education teachers. For example, speech therapists could provide consultative support to teachers during instructional planning focused on integrating speech therapy goals into grade-level instruction.
- Ensure high-quality instructional materials are used during specialized or supplemental instruction (e.g. intervention time, “resource” or “pull out” special educational instruction) that prepare students for grade-level learning.
- Establish a school-wide support team that collaborates to support struggling students. Designate team members with expertise across disciplines to monitor student outcomes and make adjustments.

**Connect with us for additional
resources and support!**

