

Quarterly Newsletter

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Paths to Accessing Curriculum

By Amy Topmiller, Multiple Disabilities Specialist

Students come to our classrooms with a variety of learning needs, both with and without disabilities. There are varying levels of evidence-based support that can be provided based on student needs. Direct, explicit instruction for students with low incidence disabilities, including those with multiple disabilities, is often necessary for students to gain skills and make progress in targeted domains. At the elementary level, materials can oftentimes be modified to provide access to curriculum at the student's instructional level in the general education setting. As students age, the complexity of the academic content increases, creating a larger gap between grade-level content and the students' abilities. Essential Elements (links attached) is an instructional road map that takes the guesswork out of what content to focus on in the areas of English language arts, math, and, most recently, science, from kindergarten to high school, allowing students access to grade-level content at their ability levels.

According to the Council for Exceptional Children and the CEEDAR Center, High-Leverage Practices (domain four) indicate increasing the intensity of instruction when needed, that is:

- thoughtfully paced
- explicit
- well organized (scope and sequence)
- with clearly defined learning or behavioral goals

This explicit instruction can be delivered using a well-designed curriculum that is modified or developed to meet the learning needs of students with low incidence disabilities. Not sure where to start with a curriculum to meet the needs of your student? Your SESA Specialist can help recommend resources available in our lending library based on student needs. You can also check out some of the [curriculum](#) available on our Multiple Disabilities Curriculum page. Direct instruction implemented with fidelity is necessary to optimize outcomes for students. Positive results and increased skills/achievements are often not obtained through random, unorganized supplemental materials.

[Universal Design for Learning](#) (UDL) is a research-based framework that guides teachers on how to make learning more accessible and beneficial for all types of learners. Guidelines for UDL continue to evolve, with the most recent update being made in July 2024. UDL reframes the lens through which educators look to redesign the instructional environment rather than perceiving the problem with the student with learning difficulties.

Evidence-based practices and resources are essential in providing quality instruction for students with disabilities. Reach out to your SESA Specialist for additional information about evidence-based practices to better support learning outcomes.

Additional Resources:

[SESA MD Curriculum & Instruction](#)

[Essential Elements Math](#)

[Essential Elements Language Arts](#)

[Essential Elements Science \(new\)](#)

[High Leverage Practices](#)