

9

Selected Instructional Interventions



Standard #2: Learning Differences
Standard #8: Instructional Strategies

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 9-1** Define and give examples of selected interventions, accommodations, and modifications.
- 9-2** Describe how to decide when to build in and when to add on interventions, and give examples of selected interventions.
- 9-3** Summarize the five-step process for planning selected interventions.
- 9-4** Explain how long to use selected interventions.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- 9-1 SELECTED INTERVENTIONS DEFINED**
 - 9-1a** Accommodations and Modifications
- 9-2 CHOOSING UNIVERSAL OR SELECTED INTERVENTIONS**
 - 9-2a** Examples of Selected Interventions
- 9-3 HOW TO PLAN FOR SELECTED INTERVENTIONS**
 - 9-3a** Step One: Write a Lesson or Activity Plan
 - 9-3b** Step Two: List Skills Students Will Need in This Lesson or Activity
 - 9-3c** Step Three: List Students Who Lack These Skills
 - 9-3d** Step Four: Plan Selected Interventions to Support Student Success
 - 9-3e** Step Five: Plan How to Deliver the Selected Interventions
- 9-4 HOW LONG TO USE SELECTED INTERVENTIONS**



Introduction

In preceding chapters, you learned many teaching strategies that are generally considered **universal interventions**—they are built in to help most of the students in your class. For example, when teachers plan to say *and show and write* the key ideas of the lesson, every student will benefit. Similarly, every student benefits when teachers consider cultural diversity and use evidence-based critical teaching skills. In spite of

all of the up-front planning that teachers do to address classroom diversity, however, some students are likely to need more support in order to reach lesson or activity objectives, due to learning or behavioral differences. Chapter 10 focuses on behavioral interventions, while this chapter focuses on selected instructional interventions.

9-1 Selected Interventions Defined

A **selected intervention** is any intervention (i.e., accommodation or modification) used for one or a few students rather than the whole class. These interventions are designed to make a lesson more accessible to a student. Any particular student may need a selected intervention in one lesson but not in others.

A selected intervention may not be appropriate for all students and may even be detrimental to some students. For example, it would not be appropriate for a teacher to provide reading material on a content topic at a reduced reading level to the whole class when only one or two students need such an accommodation. This strategy could be detrimental to the grade-level readers in the classroom. However, many interventions can be used either universally or selectively, depending on the makeup of the class. For example, a teacher may provide reading material on a content topic with key ideas highlighted and important terms defined when he believes that all of his students would benefit from support in comprehending difficult text.

9-1a Accommodations and Modifications

Selected interventions can be accommodations or modifications. Accommodations and modifications affect teaching and learning in different ways, so it is important to understand how they are different. An **accommodation** is a change in the *how* of teaching. All students are expected to meet the same objective, but the path to the objective varies. Accommodations are a way to level the playing field (TN Department of Education n.d.). Look at Example 9.1. Notice that none of these accommodations change the learning outcome; they simply change the route one takes to reach the outcome.

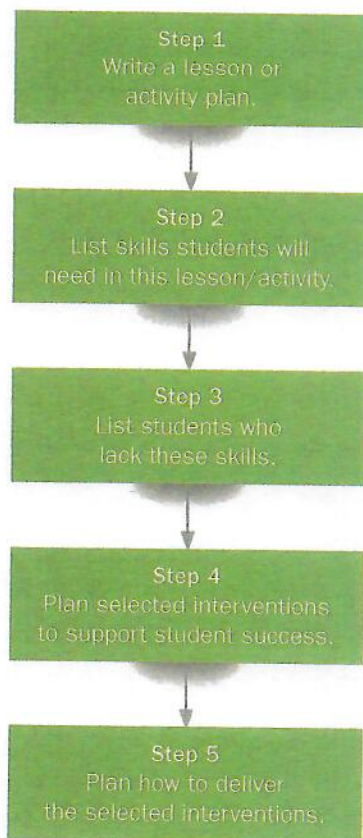
On the other hand, a **modification** is a change a teacher makes to *what* is taught. It may be a change in

EXAMPLE 9.1: ACCOMMODATIONS

- More instructional time
- Note-taking guides
- More practice opportunities
- Peer tutoring
- Preferred seating
- Templates for written responses

curriculum or in expectations. For example, a teacher may teach the same subject matter but at a different level of difficulty (she may have one student work on locating named cities on a map while the rest of the class learns to predict the locations of cities based on natural features such as rivers). Other examples include reducing the criterion in an objective (accepting 75 percent rather than 100 percent accuracy on capitalizing), or teaching different content (functional academics or life skills). These strategies change the expected outcome for the students for whom the modification is made. We focus on accommodations, not modifications, throughout this book.

Sometimes, a modification is used temporarily, assuming that students will catch up with their peers. Consider the serious implications if students are learning less than their peers in the long run due to modifications. Changing what you teach students can affect their future success in school and employment. Make these modifications very thoughtfully, and involve families in decision making. Teachers should always begin with the assumption that students, including students with disabilities, will learn the same content as their peers. However, if instructional accommodations do not allow the student to progress in the general curriculum and meet state standards, then modifying expected learning outcomes may be in the best interest of the student.

Figure 9.1 How to Plan for Selected Interventions

TEACHERS IN ACTION 9.1: A LOOK AT MR. DAVIS'S PLANNING FOR SELECTED INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTIONS

Mr. Davis wrote a lesson plan (Teaching Plan 6 in the Appendix) on using commas to punctuate a series. He's rather proud of it. He used carrier content that is motivating to his students, included many critical teaching and management skills, and added a selected *behavioral* intervention for one student, Garth. Now he wants to see if he needs to add any selected instructional interventions for any of his students.

Mr. Davis re-reads his plan, noting the skills and knowledge required of students. He lists the following:

1. Prerequisite content knowledge:
 - Recognize and know how to write commas.
2. Prerequisite academic skills:
 - Reading—need to read the sentences.
 - Writing—very little writing required.
3. Learning and study skills:
 - Need to pay attention to teacher directions and discussion.

- Need to see patterns and draw conclusions.
- Need to make contributions in partner work; be able to agree and disagree.
- Need to work independently on a worksheet.

What other student skill or knowledge requirements do you see in this lesson?

Next, Mr. Davis thinks about his students and whether any of them lack the required skills. He lists the following:

- Kurt will have difficulty reading the sentences.
- Hannah will have difficulty paying attention to the teacher presentations.
- Isabella, Jalal, and Paul will have difficulty making contributions in partner work.
- Richard will have difficulty working independently on a worksheet.

Then, Mr. Davis plans selected interventions for these students.

- Partner Kurt with a good reader.
- Seat Hannah close by and use proximity and a touch on the shoulder to regain attention.
- Provide Isabella, Jalal, and Paul with sentence starters for making contributions and have them practice using them.

Can you think of other interventions for these students? What interventions would you plan for Richard?

Finally, Mr. Davis plans how to deliver the interventions.

- Kurt's intervention will occur during the lesson; his partner will be told that one of his roles is to be the reader.
- Hannah's intervention will occur during the lesson; Mr. Davis will remember to regain her attention as needed.

When and how would you deliver the intervention to Isabella, Jalal, and Paul? What about to Richard?

ready for a lesson or activity. For example, a lesson on doing math problems with regrouping requires knowledge of place value; a lesson on incorporating descriptive adjectives requires that students can identify nouns.

- *Academic skills.* Determine what reading, writing, language, and math skills the students must have to be successful in this lesson/activity. In this case, you are thinking about the academic

skills needed when other subject matter is being taught. For example, what writing skills are required in this social studies lesson? What math skills are required in this science lesson? What reading skills are required in this math lesson? What speaking skills are required in this art lesson?

- **Learning and study skills.** Consider the methods you will be using in this lesson or activity and the skills that students will need in order to be successful. Here are four examples of methods commonly used and examples of associated student learning and study skills.
 - Teacher presentations: Will you be explaining, demonstrating, giving directions, reading aloud, showing slides or videos, asking questions? Will students need to be focused and attentive (watch and listen), stay still, think about and remember content, ask and answer questions, take notes?
 - Small group and partner work: Will the students be working together to problem solve, discuss, explore, create? Will they need skills such as listening to peers, asking questions, contributing, reaching consensus, taking turns?
 - Independent work: Will students be completing practice problems, writing, creating other products? Will they need skills such as sticking with tasks? Beginning and completing tasks? Working alone? Understanding and following directions? Organizing? Asking for and waiting for help?
 - Taking tests: Will students be completing written assessments? Will they need skills such as selective attention? Following directions? Dealing with time pressure?

9-3c Step Three: List Students Who Lack These Skills

Now that you have a list of the knowledge and skills needed in this lesson or activity, you need to think about your students. Take time to figure out who is missing needed skills. You will base this decision on your observations, assessment data, work samples, or preassessment information gathered for this particular lesson. If you have students with identified disabilities, look at their individualized education plans (IEPs).

Next to the skills on your list, write the names of any students who lack that skill. It is possible, but

unlikely, that all of your students will have the necessary skills. If so, *stop here*. You don't need to develop any selected interventions. Conversely, if you find that you are writing the names of many students, you may need to rethink whether your class is ready for this content or able to be successful with these methods. If they are not, you'll need to build in more universal interventions or develop a different lesson or activity. Most likely, you will identify one or a few students who are missing the knowledge and skills needed. In this case, move to step 4.



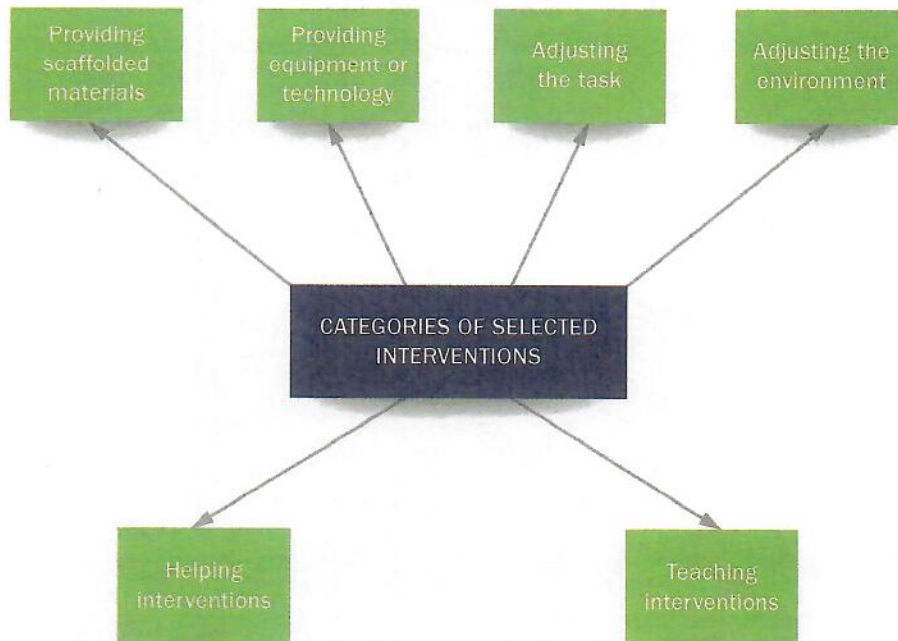
TECH NOTE

There has been an explosion of applications and devices that can help students, including those with disabilities, work and learn independently. Select them carefully to make sure that the content and tasks match your learning objectives and that feedback and progress reporting will be useful to student and teacher.

9-3d Step Four: Plan Selected Interventions to Support Student Success

You now have a list of the knowledge or skills needed for your lesson or activity, matched with a list of students who are missing one or more of those skills. Next, you will plan interventions for those missing skills to help each student succeed in reaching the lesson or activity objective. Using your creativity and problem-solving abilities to find selected interventions for your students is one of the most fun and rewarding parts of teaching. There are many resources of evidence-based interventions available to help you get started. Section 9-2a lists a number of examples of selected interventions organized by student skill deficit. Also, remember that many interventions can be used universally or selectively. Look back at the information on universal design for learning and differentiated instruction in Chapter 3. Also look at suggestions for critical teaching skills and responding to diversity in Chapters 4–8. Many of those interventions can be used selectively. (In Chapters 10–12, you will find suggestions for universal and selected interventions to support appropriate student behavior.)

As you collect ideas for selected instructional interventions to use in future lessons or activities, you

Figure 9.2 Categories of Selected Interventions

may want to organize them. A common method is to categorize them by type, such as:

- Presentation accommodations.
- Response accommodations.
- Setting accommodations.
- Materials and equipment accommodations.
- Time and scheduling accommodations.

See Figure 9.2 for another way of categorizing selected interventions.

9-3e Step Five: Plan How to Deliver the Selected Interventions

You have chosen instructional interventions to use with one or more of your students and are now at the final step of planning for selected interventions. You need to make decisions about the delivery of the intervention. If you are in a co-teaching situation, such as a general education and special education teacher working together, you and your co-teacher will make these decisions together. You'll think about how, when, and who will deliver the selected intervention. Your decisions will vary by the type of intervention. We will discuss four general types of selected interventions.

1. Scaffolded materials, equipment, and assistive technology.
 - Examples of these selected interventions are math worksheets with operation signs

highlighted and boxes to align answers; noise-blocking earphones; text-to-speech software that allows student to “read” words on the screen.

- They are meant to support the student *during* the lesson or activity.
- You will need to decide who will create the materials; train the student how to use the materials, equipment, or technology; and plan for locating and returning equipment. See Section 12-3 in Chapter 12 for information on planning for logistics.

2. Adjusted task or environment.

- Examples of these selected interventions are allowing the student to alternate where she writes responses (on paper, on board, on computer); for a long presentation, put the student's desk at the side of the room so he can stand and move without disturbing others.
- They are meant to support the student *during* the lesson or activity.
- You will need to plan how and when to communicate changes and expectations to the student; decide who will adjust the task or environment and when.

3. Helping interventions.

- Examples of selected helping interventions are *teacher* signals the student to regain attention; *teaching assistant* checks in with the

student at beginning of seatwork to help get him started; *peer* reads assignment directions with the student.

- Helping interventions are usually meant to support the student *during* the lesson/activity.
- If you, the teacher, are providing the help, you'll need to remind yourself to do so—perhaps make a note in your plan or on the materials you'll be using. If someone else is providing the help, you'll need to communicate and perhaps structure the help.
- Peer help can be very effective, but it is important to use it correctly. Students shouldn't be overused as free labor in the classroom as their main focus should be their own learning. However, helping and teaching others is a valuable learning experience and contributes to a positive community. Make sure that everyone has the chance to be a helper and a receiver of help.

4. Teaching interventions.

- Examples of selected teaching interventions are preteaching the student the *prerequisite knowledge or vocabulary* needed for the lesson/activity to catch him up; preteaching the student the *learning/study skills* that will be needed in the lesson/activity (see Teaching Plan 18); increasing exposure to the *lesson content* by preteaching or reteaching.
- Teaching interventions are usually provided *before* or *after* the lesson or activity.
- If several students need to learn the same content, they can be grouped together for instruction.
- Decide who will do the teaching and how you'll schedule and structure this. Consider whether the instruction could be provided through technology.
- If the student will need longer-term instruction on content knowledge, academic skills, or learning/study skills, then use other accommodations (such as adjusting the task) until they catch up.
- *Preteaching* can be a very effective approach. When you preteach content, for example, the student will get more out of the class lesson on the same content. The class lesson becomes a second exposure. He has learned

enough to be able to follow the lesson and has more confidence to participate. Repeated exposure to the content makes it more likely he will comprehend and remember it. If you wait to reteach after the lesson, the student may have spent the class lesson time totally confused and his first experience with the new content will have been one of failing.

- *Reteaching*, on the other hand, offers an opportunity for building on the class lesson by clarifying explanations and using more examples and checks for understanding. It can also be a way to teach the same content using a different model, such as explicit instruction. Reteaching can also be very effective when the student primarily needs additional or different practice and feedback.

See Teacher Checklist 9.1 for a summary of the steps used for planning selected instructional interventions.

TEACHER CHECKLIST 9.1: PLANNING SELECTED INTERVENTIONS

- ✓ Have I written a lesson or activity plan in which I built in universal interventions for my class?
- ✓ Have I reexamined the plan and noted what skills and knowledge will be required of students throughout the lesson or activity?
- ✓ Have I listed prerequisite *content knowledge* required of students?
- ✓ Have I listed prerequisite *academic skills* required of students?
- ✓ Have I listed *learning and study skills* required of students?
- ✓ Have I identified students who lack any of the required knowledge or skills?
- ✓ Have I planned selected interventions for students with missing knowledge or skills?
- ✓ Have I planned *how* to deliver the selected interventions?
- ✓ Have I planned *when* to deliver the selected interventions?
- ✓ Have I planned *who* will deliver the selected interventions?



9-4 How Long to Use Selected Interventions

The easy answer to the question *How long should I use a selected intervention?* is *As long as it is needed*. But the rest of the answer must be *And no longer than it is needed*. We do a disservice to students when we continue to provide help beyond what they need rather than fostering their independence. We can avoid this by being diligent in our efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of any given accommodation through (1) completing ongoing assessment of student performance and (2) recording progress on lesson objectives and longer-term activity objectives. This essential information helps us avoid automatically and permanently grouping and labeling students based on one point in time. With it, we can determine whether what we are doing is working or not. Of course, if a selected intervention is *not* working, then try a different one.

The length of time for using a selected intervention varies according to the student and the situation. There are certainly cases where a student will always need certain selected interventions—for example, an accommodation is likely to be needed permanently when the student has a sensory or physical disability. A student with a visual impairment may always need large print, and a student permanently in a wheelchair may always need an adjusted table height. There are also situations where a selected intervention is needed just occasionally. This is typically because of missing background knowledge or vocabulary for certain subject matter.

Most often, students need a selected intervention temporarily. Consider this “rule”: The teacher-provided accommodation is no longer needed if the student has caught up or learned to use the accommodation or assistive technology herself. For example:

- The student has *caught up in an academic skill*. He has learned a needed skill in reading, writing, math, or language. For example, Rory received specialized instruction in reading comprehension and no longer needs a reading accommodation (oral summaries from the teaching assistant) in social studies lessons. Selena has memorized the basic math facts and no longer needs a calculator as an accommodation in geometry lessons.
- The student has *caught up in a learning or study skill*. She has learned a needed skill for memorizing, organizing, taking tests, and so on. For example, Divya was taught to highlight impor-

tant words in assignment directions, and she now does that consistently. She no longer needs someone to explain the directions to her.

- The student has *learned to use an accommodation* independently. He uses an accommodation for staying focused or keeping still or beginning tasks, and so on. For example, Ben moves to a study carrel to avoid being distracted when doing independent work. He initiates this and no longer needs the teacher to tell him to move.
- The student has *learned to use assistive technology* independently. She uses an adaptive keyboard for word processing assignments that require more than just a little typing. For example, as she deems necessary, Amira Belle goes and gets the keyboard and sets it up herself with no reminder or help from the teacher.

The switch from the teacher being responsible for the accommodation to the student taking responsibility must happen gradually. See Example 9.2 for examples of how this transition can take place.

EXAMPLE 9.2: FROM TEACHER TO STUDENT: THE TRANSFER OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACCOMMODATIONS

The following examples describe how two teachers orchestrated a transition of responsibility for use of accommodations from themselves to their students.

1. Ms. Jones knows Alex has difficulty sticking with independent writing tasks, so she decides to use a selected intervention with him. At the beginning of seatwork, she breaks his task into smaller segments, tells him to let her know when he has finished a segment, and then gives him a short break. Once both Ms. Jones and Alex are comfortable with this accommodation, Ms. Jones decides to begin to release responsibility for this accommodation to Alex. Initially, she breaks the task into segments for him, and they talk together about how much he can do before a break. Gradually, he begins to make this decision on his own, but he still checks with Ms. Jones first. Finally, he divides his tasks into smaller segments on his own. Eventually, he takes charge of his breaks as well.
2. Mr. Stoothoff uses various selected interventions with Kelly to help her stay focused: preferential seating at the front of the class near him, an

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individual desk rather than at a table with other students, a study carrel, and headphones. Gradually, he decides to give her more responsibility. He begins by giving her a choice among several of these interventions (explaining how each might be of benefit) once during the day. She chooses, and he approves. When Kelly is comfortable with choosing an accommodation appropriate to the situation, he has her make choices twice during the day, then three times, then every time. Gradually, she initiates the accommodations herself, and Mr. Stoothoff gathers data regarding her progress.

Students are more likely to assume responsibility for implementing their own accommodations if they feel confident about doing so. A couple of factors may play a part here. The student needs to be carefully taught when the accommodation is helpful and how to implement it correctly. Equally important, she needs to feel confident that the accommodation is okay to use; that is, she won't draw unwanted attention because of it. Once a student has the knowledge and confidence regarding the accommodation, she or he can be independent in its use.

Summary

This chapter is about meeting the needs of students in a diverse classroom. Fuchs et al. (2014) note that all students should have access to a core instructional program, made possible through differentiation and accommodations provided as part of tier 1 or the primary prevention phase of the RTI approach. To this end, we have provided many specific ideas for selected interventions matched to student challenges. Many more selected interventions are described in the professional literature.

The sheer number of options helps to illustrate how plentiful tier 1 interventions create a strong base for preventing and solving problems. We also presented a five-step problem-solving process for helping you think through and select the best interventions for your students. When you select strategies that you think will benefit one or a few of your students, be sure to determine whether the strategy would, in fact, benefit many students in the class. If it would, build it in rather than adding it on.

Key Terms & Definitions

Accommodation: A change in the *how* of teaching; all students are expected to meet the same objective, but the path to the objective varies.

Modification: A change to *what* is taught; may be a change in curriculum or in expectations.

Selected intervention: An accommodation or modification used for one or a few students rather than the whole class; it is added on rather than built in.

Universal interventions: Methods and strategies that are built in to lessons and activities to help most of the students in the class.

Portfolio Pointers

- Include planning documents that showcase both universal and selected interventions used to address each student's diverse strengths and needs. (InTASC Standard 2: Learning Differences)
- Select student assignments to show accommodations for the needs of individuals and groups of learners, such as accommodations for reading or writing, selective attention, completing tasks, and so on. (InTASC Standard 8: Instructional Strategies)