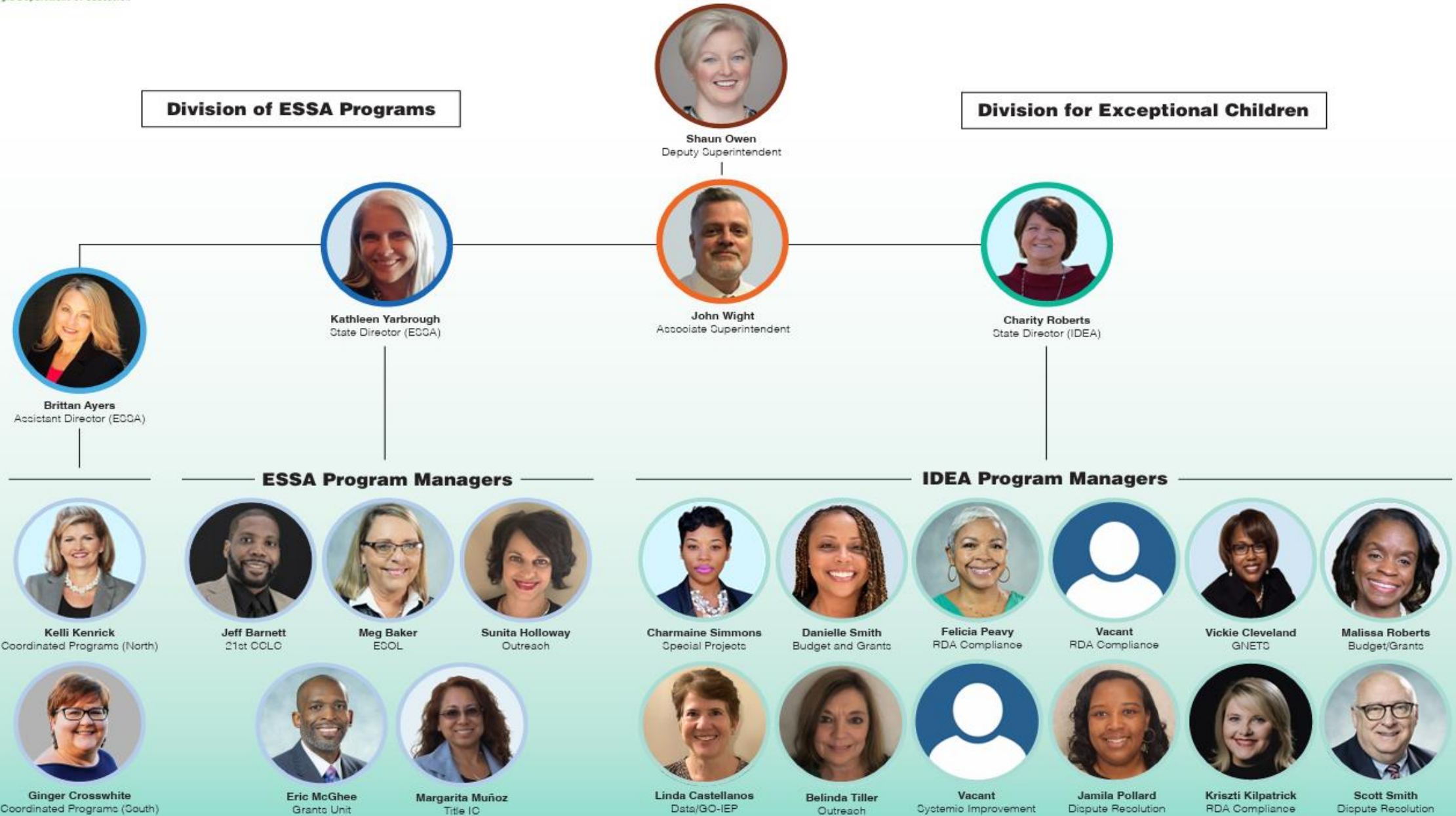


# Putting the Spotlight Where It Belongs: Specially Designed Instruction in Co-Teaching

Fall GCASE 2025

# Office of Federal Programs

## Organizational Chart



# Office of Federal Programs



The Georgia Department of Education's Office of Federal Programs partners with schools to ensure every child — including students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing poverty and homelessness, migratory students, and students in foster care — receives the support they need to succeed. Through guidance, resources, and oversight of ESSA and IDEA grants, we work alongside districts to deliver services that make a difference for students.

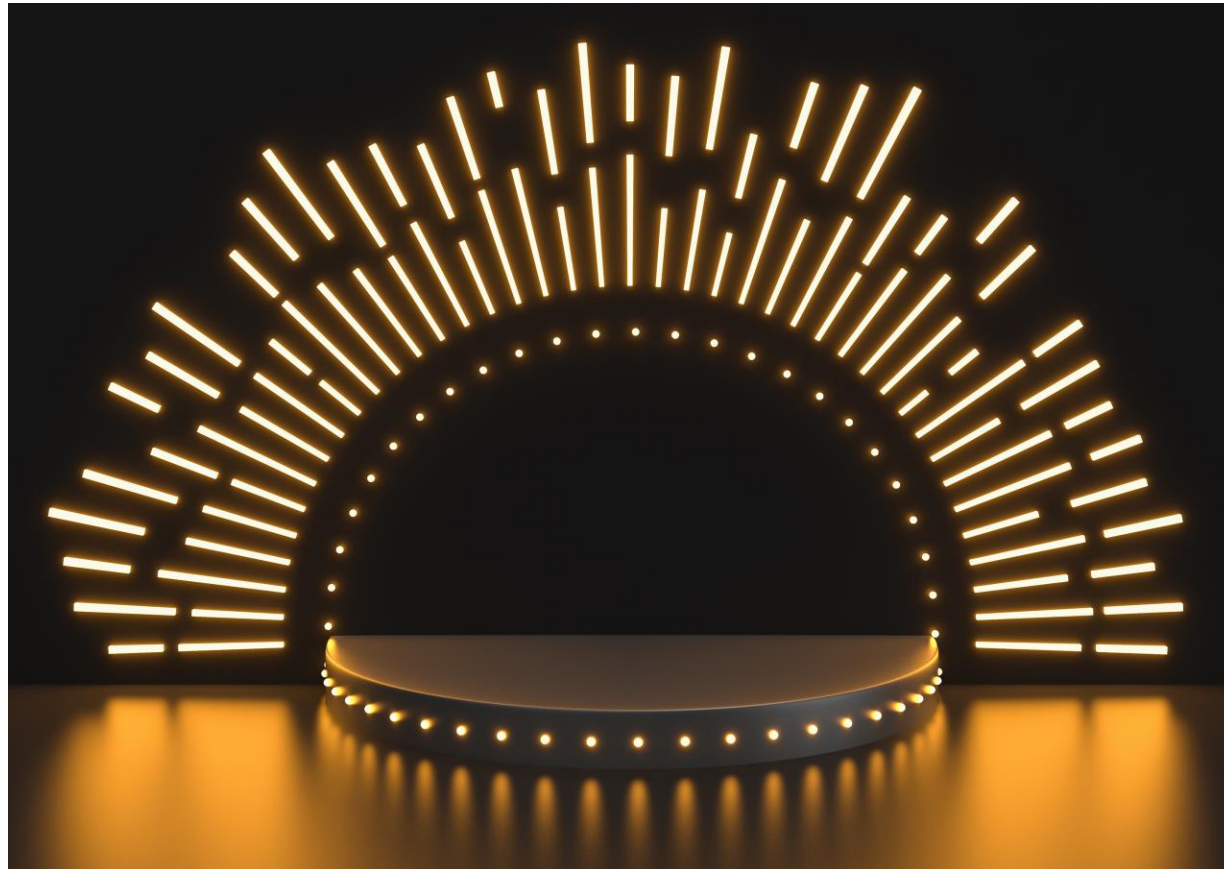
# Learning Targets

Participants will be able to do the following:

1. Identify two key advantages of co-teaching.
2. Prioritize the three essential elements of co-teaching.
3. Outline the steps for developing and implementing SDI.
4. Access resources to measure the achievement of students with IEPs.
5. Determine the supports required for SDI in co-teaching settings.



# Act One: Setting the Stage for SDI in Co-Teaching Settings



# The Backdrop: Co-Teaching



**“Co-teaching is not an instructional strategy; it is a delivery model.”**  
*Marilyn Friend*

# Well-Choreographed Act

- “...co-teaching provides the special education teacher opportunities to be directly involved with the planning and teaching of the curriculum rather than just a consultant.”
- “...this model of special education delivery can be less isolating to students with disabilities as they do not need to be removed from the class.”

(Weiss, 2024)



# Co-Teaching: What does the research reveal about student achievement?



# What does the data indicate about the performance of Georgia's audience?

Currently, Georgia's SWDs continue to have significantly lower academic performance levels than their peers without disabilities.

**9%**

Demonstrate proficiency on  
8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA state  
assessments.

**16%**

Demonstrate proficiency on  
8th grade Math state  
assessments.

Source: Georgia Insights, 2025  
Proficiency is defined as proficient and distinguished.

# Improving Outcomes



# Prioritize the Script



Three most important elements of co-teaching:

1. Quality General Education
2. Making Curriculum Accessible
- ★ 3. Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

# Realign our Perceptions

Most students with disabilities, when given appropriate special education aids and services in conjunction with high quality general education instruction, can achieve similar academic and functional outcomes as their non-disabled peers.

Their success often boils down to opportunity and expectations.

# Reflect and Share

What do you believe about the achievement of SWDs? Do all educators hold high expectations for all students with disabilities? Why or why not?



Low Expectations v.  
High Expectations



Negative Beliefs v.  
Positive Beliefs

# Act Two: The Main Event- SDI



# Stars of the Co-Teaching Show

**Two professionals** bring their expertise together to provide **access** to the general curriculum. The strength of co-teaching lies in the ability to blend the **instructional expertise** of two professionals.

The **delivery of SDI** is the core instructional responsibility of special education teachers.



# What is Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

(1) Special education means specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including—

(i) Instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and

(ii) Instruction in physical education.

# What does Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) mean?

(3) 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.”

# SDI

Elements of SDI	What it Means
<b>Content</b>	<b><i>What</i></b> is taught to allow the student to access general education programming
<b>Methodology</b>	<b><i>How</i></b> the instruction is delivered or the practices and approach the teacher uses to teach
<b>Delivery of Instruction</b>	<b><i>Who, where, and when</i></b> the instruction is delivered

[IEP Tip Sheet: What is the Statement of Special Education or SDI?  
\(promotingprogress.org\)](http://promotingprogress.org)

# Content

- **What** is **taught** to allow the student to access general education programming.
- Refers to knowledge and skills being **taught** to the student with an I.E.P. may be different from what is being taught to general education students.
- This includes teaching functional behaviors that are necessary for school success but not necessarily part of the general education curriculum.

# Content Examples

- Academic content adaptations: Vocabulary, phonics instruction, decoding, fluency, foundational math concepts.
- Functional content adaptations: social skills, communication, executive functioning, braille, mobility training, learning sign language or self-advocacy.

\*This is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list, but a few examples.

[SDI Content Adaptations: What Educators Need to Know](#)

# Methodology

- **How** the instruction is delivered or the practices and approach the teacher uses to **teach**
- Utilizing different instructional strategies and approaches to **teach** content to a student with an I.E.P. which may not be utilized by a student who does not have an I.E.P. (general education).

# Methodology Examples

- Explicit, Systematic Instruction- HLP 16
- Intensification of Instruction- HLP 20
- Evidence Based Instructional Routines
- Multi-sensory Approach
- Social Stories
- Scaffolding
- Instruction in using advanced organizers

\*This is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list.

# Delivery of Instruction

- Refers to how the instruction is actually carried out.
- **Who, where, and when** the instruction is delivered.
- This is where we ask what instructional delivery adaptations are needed?
- Does the delivery (including the group size) provide sufficient opportunities for the student to practice and receive explicit feedback?
- Do the data indicate an adaptation to the provider's specialized knowledge and skills?

# How does a teacher identify needed delivery adaptations for a student?



Evaluation Report (Psychological Report)



IEP Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statement



Data-based individualization

Source: Progress Center

# Specially Designed Instruction is our bridge...



# SDI Takes Center Stage

What an educator does

Teaching specific skills identified as learning barriers

Specific to the student (individualized)

Supporting students in the general education setting and maintaining high expectations

A service or support

Determined by individual student data.

To meet the unique needs of the child should be justified by data in the PLAAFP statement

The "special" in special education

# Planning for SDI



# Step One- Understanding the Student



# Specially Designed Instruction

Let's start here

Impact of disability



Academic Achievement



Considerations

Impact of disability



Functional Performance



Considerations

# Step Two- Leverage the Power of the IEP Team-Development of the PLAAFP

- “. . . the child’s level of academic achievement and functional performance is the foundation on which the IEP must be built. Without a clear identification of [the child’s] present levels, the IEP cannot set measurable goals, evaluate the child’s progress and determine which educational and related services are needed.”
- (*Kirby v. Cabell County Board of Education*, 2006, p. 694)



# Potential Data Sources within the Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

- Most recent Eligibility Report, Psychological Report
- Student Progress Data Analysis
- Formative/Summative e.g., Milestones
- Universal Screening
- Diagnostic
- WIDA
- UPar
- IEP Goal Progress Monitoring
- Benchmark performance
- Behavior/social skills
- Adaptive skills

# What is meant by present levels of academic achievement?

“Academic achievement” generally refers to a **child’s performance in academic areas**. It could vary depending on a child’s circumstance or situation; therefore, a definition of academic achievement is not included in the IDEA regulations.



Math



Science



History



Writing



Reading

Source: 71 Fed. Reg. at 46662 and Progress Center

# What is meant by Functional Performance?

- “Functional performance” generally refers to activities that are not considered academic or related to a child’s academic achievement.
- “Functional” often is used in the context of routine activities of everyday living.
- “The range of functional skills is as varied as the individual needs of children with disabilities.”

Source: 71 Fed. Reg. at 46661

# Step Three: Leveraging the Power of the IEP Team- Development of IEP Goals

- IEP goals should address the academic and functional knowledge and skills the student needs to be involved in and benefit from the general curriculum.
- We need to teach the child something so there is a direct connection between the SDI that we propose and the annual goals.

[IEP Tip Sheet: Measurable Annual Goals](#)

# Step Four- Leverage the Power of the IEP Team- Identification of Delivery Adaptations

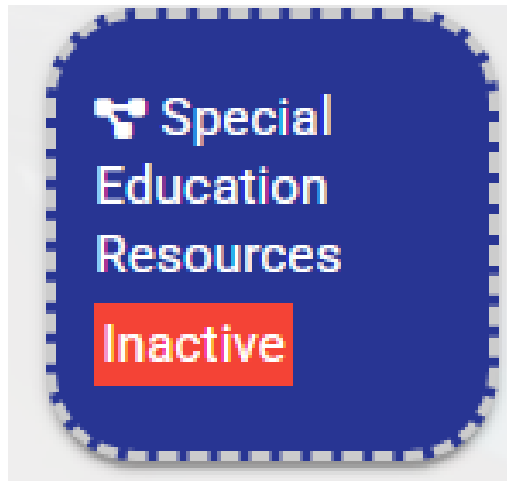
- Delivery adaptations change elements of the delivery approach, including **where** and **when** the instruction will occur or **who** will deliver the instruction, to address the unique needs of the child that result from the disability.
- Examples:
  - Where: Special classroom, quiet location, community-based setting, lunchroom
  - Who: Content or behavioral specialist, braille teacher, educator trained in [specific skills or need area]
  - When: Providing three 10-min sessions distributed across the day; 30-45 minutes daily; morning/after lunch

[SDI Delivery Adaptations: What Educators Need to Know](#)

# Coming Soon to Inspire



Educating Georgia's Future



## Specially Designed Instruction Where does this belong in the IEP?

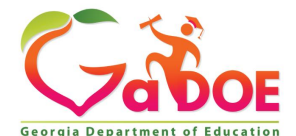
According to IDEA Sec. 300.39(b).(3),

“(3) 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.
- (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 applies to all children.”

Specially designed instruction (SDI) is typically documented in the following key sections of the IEP:

<b>Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)</b>	The PLAAFP describes the student's current abilities and challenges. With data, it provides the foundation for determining what SDI is needed.
<b>Annual Goals</b>	SDI should align with measurable annual goals. The goal may include a description of the instructional methodology, or strategy, and content to be addressed that will be used to help the student achieve the goal.
<b>Special Education and Related Services</b>	This section outlines the specially designed instruction the student will receive. It includes details such as the type of instruction, frequency, duration, and location.
<b>Supplementary Aids and Services/Program Modifications</b>	<b>While not SDI</b> , this section may support the delivery of SDI. It includes accommodations and modifications that help the student access the curriculum as well as support for personnel that work with the student.



# Step 5: Development and Implementation of SDI: How do we set the stage for SDI?

- Design goals and SDI to promote appropriately ambitious growth
- Maintain high expectations
- Articulate what we want the student to do
- Know the child and their circumstances
- [PLAAFP Statement, IDEA Sec. 300.320 (a)(1); *Andrew F.*, 2017]
- Identify the skills, knowledge, and strategies the students **need** to be able to meet ambitious goals (**This is SDI**)

# Collaborative Planning: United in Performance



# SDI Scenario

Mrs. Jackson serves seven students with varying disabilities in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade Lit Comp class. The current focus of instruction is on standard 9-12.L.V.2. Word Analysis which emphasizes understanding root words, prefixes and suffixes.



# More Time, More Turns, More Practice

Mrs. Jackson uses information from her students' IEPs to adapt the methodology of instruction and delivers explicit, intensive instruction in word analysis. Through flexible grouping, she integrates morphological instruction to teach prefixes, suffixes, roots, and base words in a direct, systematic manner. To reinforce understanding, Mrs. Jackson uses morpheme maps and engage students in word sorting activities that promote recognition of word patterns and strengthen vocabulary skills.



# Turn and Talk to your elbow partner....

- Talk about Specially Designed Instruction in action or in practice (scenario).
- Tell your partner something that resonated with you.
- Tell your partner something that has your wheels turning and you want to learn or do more.

# Step 6: Evaluate Effectiveness and Adjust

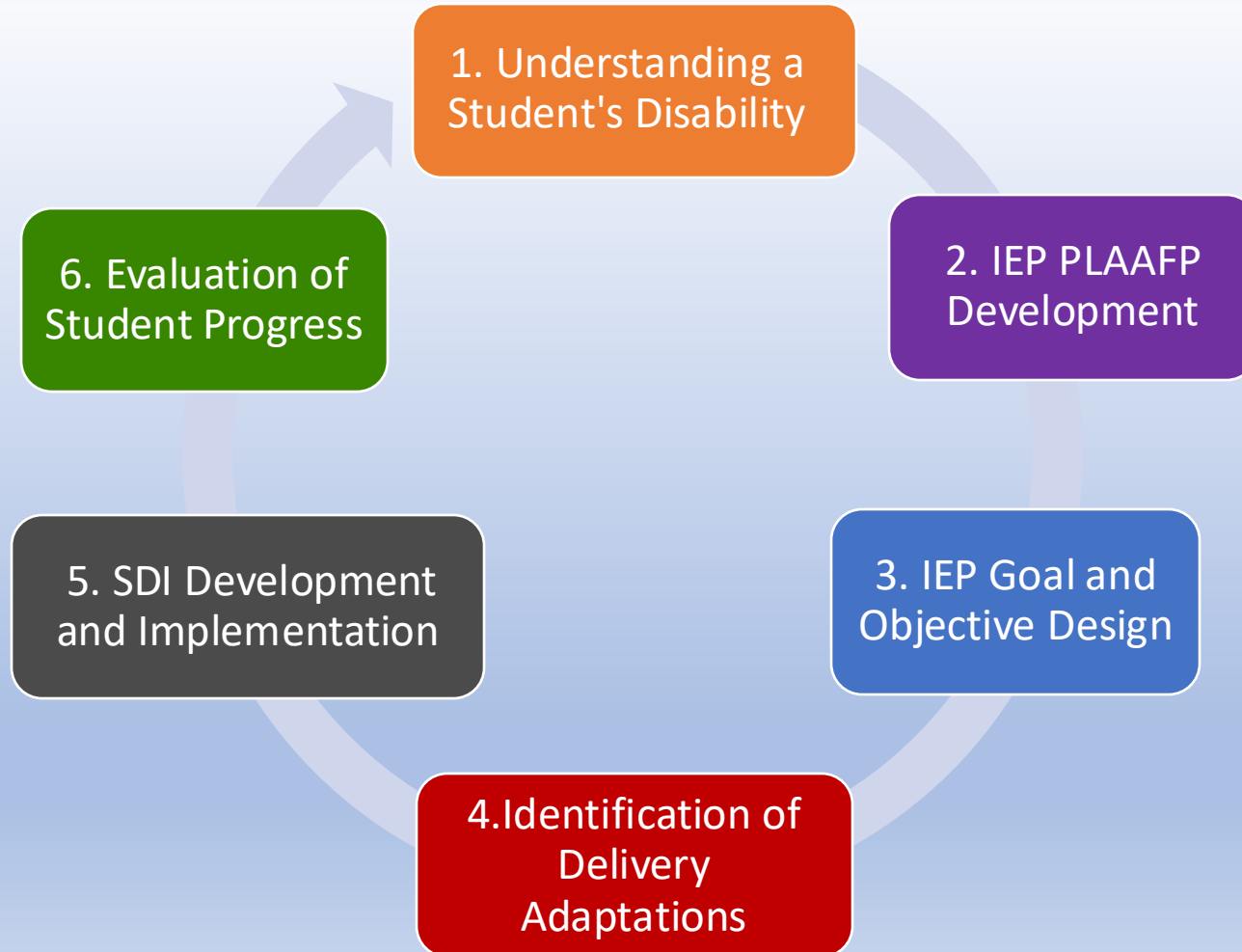
How do we know how our audience is responding?



# Formative and Informal Assessments of Performance

Formative Assessments	Informal Assessments
Planned and ongoing	Flexible and adaptable
Diagnostic	Used to gauge understanding in the moment to guide instruction
Provide feedback to guide instruction	May include discussions, questioning or student behavior
Include quizzes, exit tickets, reflections	Often observational
Tend to be graded	Typically not graded
Higher stakes	Can be spontaneous and unplanned

# Cyclical Process



# Act Three: Behind the Curtain

Evaluate Performance

Structure Support for  
Performers


Make Adjustments



# Know Your Audience



# Student Performance- Data Sources



Special Education Annual Reports

Report Year: 2023-2024 ▼

Georgia Department of Education  
Georgia State-Level 2023-2024

[GADOE Public Reports](#)




## Georgia Student Growth Model

[Georgia Student Growth Model](#)



[Dashboards - GaDOE Insights](#)



### Reading Readiness By Subgroup

- Grade-Level Reading Status
- MetaMetrics Grade Bands
- State Literacy Metric

All Students	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	<b>Students with Disabilities</b>	English Learners	Migrant	
Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	<b>American Literature</b>

Students with Disabilities | American Literature | State Literacy Metric | School Year 2024-2025  
State of Georgia

Buttons: Across Grade Levels, Across the State, By Subgroup

# Supporting Performers



# Build an Infrastructure of Support for Stars and Supporting Cast



# Infrastructure Elements



Ensure teachers receive high quality PD on SDI, EBP, HLP, and HQIM



Establish, frequent, monitored collaborative planning and coaching



Support and monitor IEP goal development



Collectively monitor student progress and apply data-driven individualization



Communicate clearly defined expectations that are rooted in research



Observe and provide feedback

# Don't Forget- Flexible Staging



**SDI is implemented across the continuum.**

# Reflection

- What are your current supports for teachers providing SDI in co-teaching or other settings?
- What could you do to strengthen your development and implementation of SDI?

# Final Act



**Improving student  
achievement.**

# Where Student Success Steals the Show!



# Resources

- [Two Heads are Better than One: Developing Effective Co-Teaching](#)
- [Co-teaching and academic outcomes for SWD: Effective implementation strategies The Relationship Between Co-Teaching Partnerships and Student Achievement IEP Tip Sheet What is Special Education? A Focus on Specially Designed Instruction](#)
- [IEP Tip Sheet: What is the Statement of Special Education or SDI?](#)
- [SDI Content Adaptations: What Educators Need to Know](#)
- [IEP Tip Sheet: Measurable Annual Goals](#)
- [SDI Delivery Adaptations: What Educators Need to Know](#)

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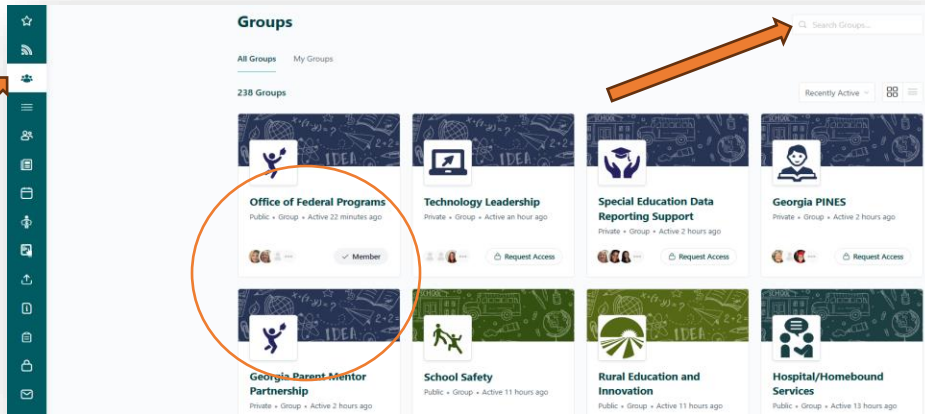
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2. Sign In or “Create an Account”
3. Once you are signed in, click the Groups icon on the left column and type “Office of Federal Programs” into the search bar.



4. Once you access the Office of Federal Programs group, click the “Join Group” button

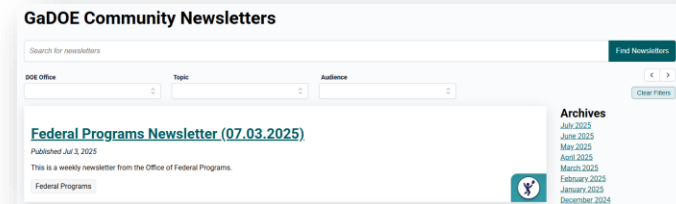
+ Join Group

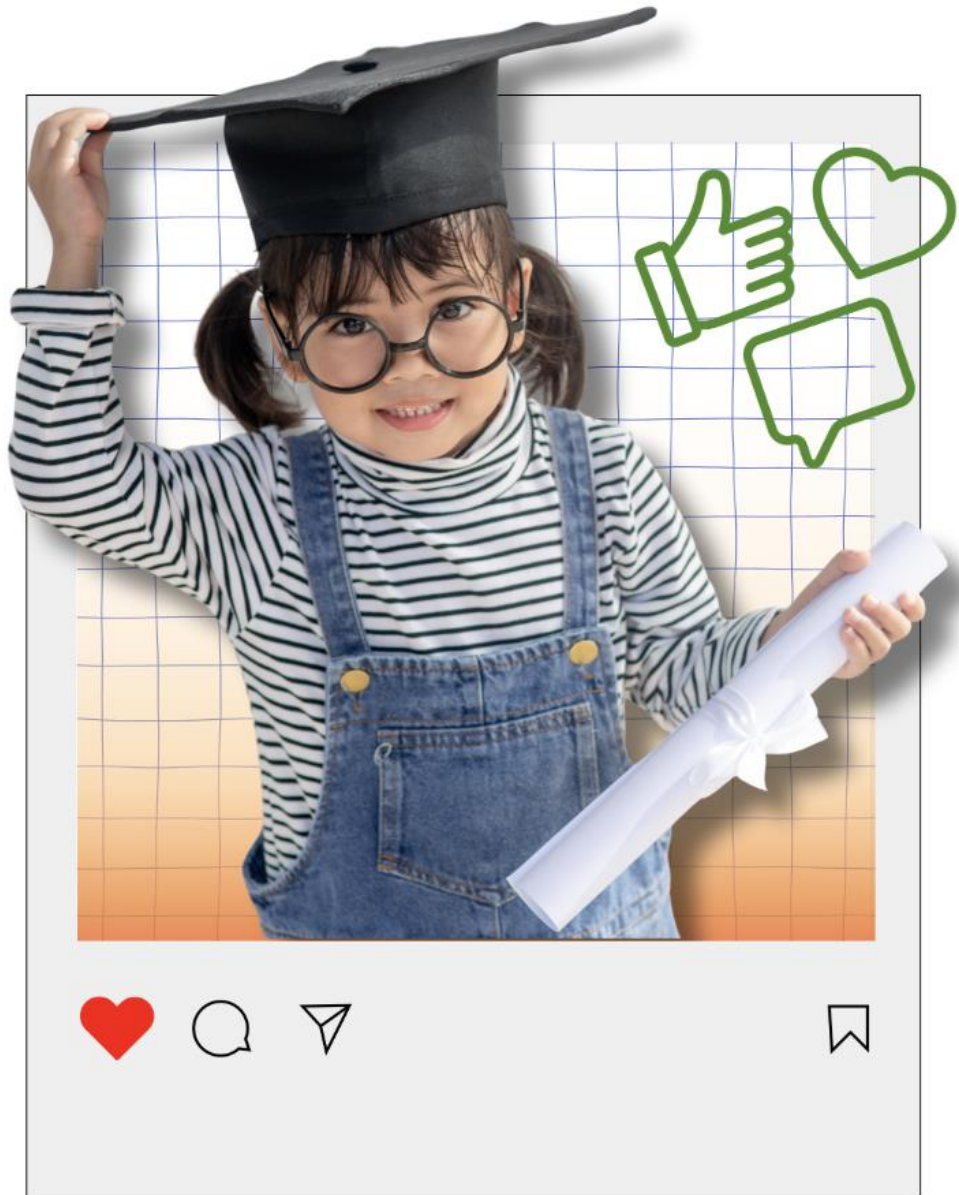
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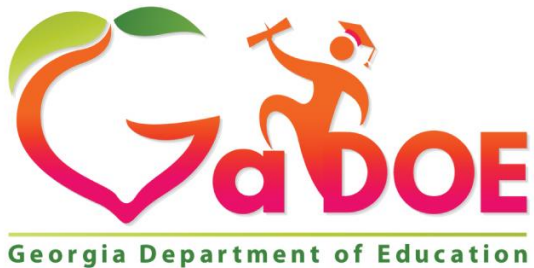
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STUDENTS FOR LIFE**

