



Specialized Instruction (SI)

New Lenox School District 122

Program Description

The SI program serves students (grades 1-8) with significant academic, social, and functional needs who require a more structured environment to make progress in the curriculum. A small class size and staff to student ratio is maintained with each classroom consisting of a certified special education teacher, classroom paraprofessional(s) and 1:1 paraprofessionals as deemed necessary on the student's IEP.

Our SI program uses elements of structured teaching and environmental supports to increase predictability of their day and to foster independence. In addition, these strategies help promote ease of transitions, increase student availability, and decrease frustrations and anxieties.

The SI curriculum is designed to integrate the development of real life skills into academics. In addition, students are provided instruction focusing on communication, language, social and self-management skills, self-help skills, independent living, health/safety, and pre-vocational skills.

A unique combination of modified core curriculum and alternative programs are created based on the needs of the individual learner.

Instruction is provided across multiple contexts, staff members, and settings which include whole group, small group, and structured independent work centers to facilitate generalization of skills. In addition, experiences within the community are incorporated through objective-based community outings to further generalize skills.

We strive to help facilitate positive interactions and friendships with our students' non-disabled peers. Each SI classroom develops partnerships with general education classrooms to plan inclusive activities. In addition to activities within the general education classroom, peer buddies often join the SI class to participate in classroom activities in a smaller setting.



Haines Elementary (Grades 1-3)

The SI program for grades 1-3 is located at Haines Elementary. Haines is located at 155 Haines Avenue in New Lenox. Student attendance hours are 9:15-3:40.



Oster-Oakview (Grades 4-6)

The SI program for grades 4-6 is located at Oster-Oakview. Oakview is located at 809 N. Cedar Rd. in New Lenox. Student attendance hours are 7:35-2:00.



Liberty Junior High (Grades 7-8)

The SI program for grades 7-8 is located at Liberty Junior High. Liberty is located at 151 Lenox Street. Student attendance hours are 8:25-2:50.

What curriculum is used?

Our teachers instruct from a variety of curriculum to meet the unique needs of each student. District core curriculum is utilized at a modified level and pace when it is deemed appropriate. In addition, students are taught using a variety of alternative curriculum based on progress noted through assessment data. All curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards or Essential Elements.

Students also receive education on community-based skills with a focus on real life academic skills, communication, language, social skills, self-help skills, independent living, and pre-vocational skills. Each class participates in community outings to reinforce and generalize skills taught within the classroom.



What related services are offered?

All students within the SI program receive weekly related service groups in the areas of speech and language, social work, and occupational therapy. In addition, individual students may receive additional therapy based on the student's IEP. Service delivery for therapy is provided as a combination of within the classroom (to help instruct generalization of skills) and therapy provided within the therapeutic setting.



How are students exposed to their non-disabled peers?

Each SI classroom develops partnerships with general education classrooms to join grade-level activities including (but not limited to): peer buddies, field trips, assemblies, lunch/recess, classroom special events, read alouds, and arts/crafts. Each student's IEP team will help determine participation and the appropriateness of each activity for each student's unique comfort level. Ongoing collaboration between the general and special education teachers ensures a well-rounded school experience.

In addition to joining grade-level events within the general education classroom, each classroom invites peer buddies into the SI class to join activities. These activities range in focus but can be academically or socially based.



How are elements of structured teaching provided?

WHAT IS STRUCTURED TEACHING?

Structured teaching is a system for organizing a student's environment, developing appropriate activities, and helping students understand what is expected of them.

Structured teaching utilizes visual cues which help children focus on the relevant information which can, at times, be difficult for a child to distinguish from the non-relevant information.

Structured teaching addresses challenging behaviors in a proactive manner by creating appropriate and meaningful environments that reduce the stress, anxiety, and frustration which can be experienced by many children with disabilities.

There are three primary components of structured teaching: physical structure, visual schedules, and teaching components.

PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

The physical structure refers to organizing the environment to give meaning and context to each area. Physical structure helps the child understand where different activities take place and where materials are kept. In addition, materials and space are organized so that sensory input or extra stimulation is reduced.

VISUAL SCHEDULES

A daily visual schedule is a critical component in a structured environment. A visual schedule will tell the student what activities will occur and in what sequence. In addition, a schedule decreases obstacles caused by poor receptive language, time, and organizational skills.

TEACHING COMPONENTS

Teaching components includes **work systems** and **visual structure**.

Work systems refers to the systematic and organized presentation of tasks/materials in order for students to learn to work independently, without adult directions/prompts. Four basic questions are answered when creating a work system:

What is the work to be done?
How much work? When am I finished?
What comes next?

Visual structure is the process of incorporating concrete visual cues into the task/activity itself. By doing so, the student will not have to rely on the teacher's verbal or physical prompts in order to understand what to do.



Physical Structure

The teachers within our SI program divide up the environment so that each activity is associated with a particular physical space. Furniture is arranged to establish clear boundaries between areas while minimizing visuals and auditory distractions.



Visual Schedules

A variety of visual schedules are taught and reinforced within the SI program based on the individual student. These can range from individual student schedules with real objects, photographs, realistic drawings, commercial picture systems (ie. Boardmaker), and/or written words/lists.



Teaching Components

Daily activities/tasks are modified to incorporate visual instructions. These visuals help the student combine and organize a series of steps to obtain a desired outcome.