

Indirect Measures & Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)

Question: *The focus question for this brief.*

How can indirect measures of student learning be used as DDMs for Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP)?

District Readiness: *Work to be completed before answering the focus question of this brief.*

- Identify the district team responsible for making decisions about district-determined measures (DDMs) for SISP educators.
- Identify educator roles for which direct measures of student learning are challenging to identify.
- Develop a process for systematically engaging SISP educators in the DDM selection and review process.

Next Steps: *Suggested next steps for districts after reading this brief.*

- Engage educators in identifying key content and/or responsibilities associated with their roles.
- Brainstorm ways to measure the impact of these educators.
- Finalize approaches and select measures.
- Connect with neighboring districts to share example DDMs and/or develop DDMs for SISP.

DDM Development

This Implementation Brief is relevant to the highlighted steps:

- **Selecting**
- Administering
- Scoring
- Analyzing
- Adjusting

Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP), such as school nurses, school psychologists, school counselors, and occupational and physical therapists¹, play a critical role in educating students. SISP perform a wide-range of services in schools and often serve in multiple capacities across a variety of educational contexts. Developed in partnership with statewide SISP organizations, this brief addresses how indirect measures may play a role in the determination of some educators' Student Impact Ratings. These indirect measures may be particularly appropriate for educators who are not responsible for providing direct instruction to students.

These Implementation Briefs are designed to provide targeted guidance focused on timely questions around the implementation of District Determined Measures. These briefs highlight important questions, resources, and approaches for districts to consider, and are not exhaustive resources on the subject. Please continue to share your own examples, suggestions, and questions with us at EducatorEvaluation@doe.mass.edu.

Four Key Messages about Student Impact Ratings

<p>Use Multiple Measures</p>  <p>DDMs and SGP are part of comprehensive evaluation system</p>	<p>Focus on Students</p>  <p>The focus of measuring student impact is improving student learning.</p>	<p>Build Capacity</p>  <p>Developing DDMs builds knowledge about assessment and data use.</p>	<p>Engage Educators</p>  <p>Educators have expertise developing and evaluating assessments.</p>
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¹ Occupational and physical therapists are not licensed by ESE and, therefore, are not required to be evaluated. In many districts, however, these educators are part of the teacher bargaining unit and are thereby included under the evaluation system.

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Difference between Direct and Indirect Measures

DDMs should assess student learning as directly as possible. As Figure 1 below demonstrates, direct measures, such as writing assessments given in high school English classes, provide a straightforward method for assessing student learning.

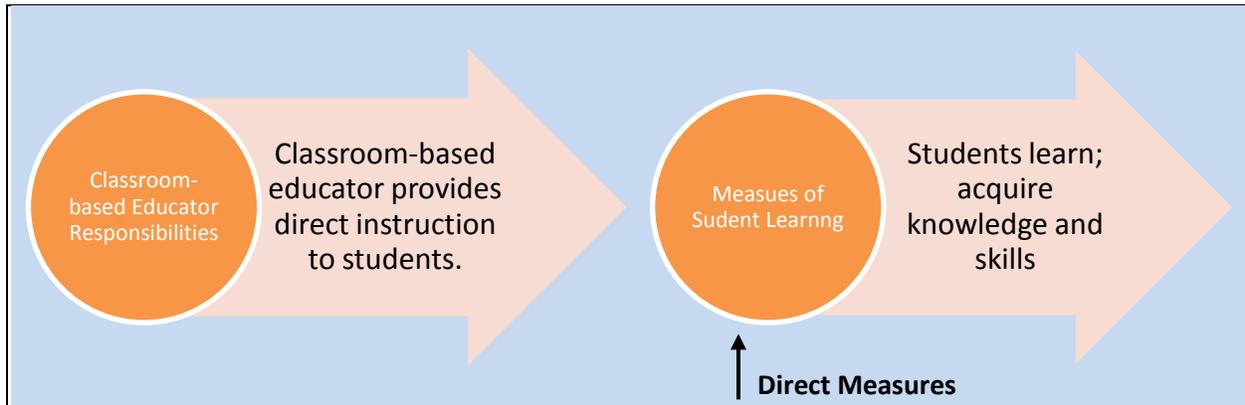


Figure 1. Classroom-based educators can directly measure the impact of their instruction on student learning.

However, many SISP roles are not focused on direct instruction of students. Instead these educators are responsible for supporting conditions that make learning possible. As a result, direct measures of student learning may not provide meaningful evidence of the professional contributions of SISP educators. In these situations, districts may consider using *indirect measures of student learning*. The services that SISP educators provide translate to positive student learning gains often through an important intermediary step. Indirect measures focus on this intermediary step and may, therefore, provide the best measure of a SISP educator's impact. Figure 2 below demonstrates how indirect measures provide evidence about SISP educator's contributions to student learning. Since these measures are not direct measures of student growth, they may not be growth measures.

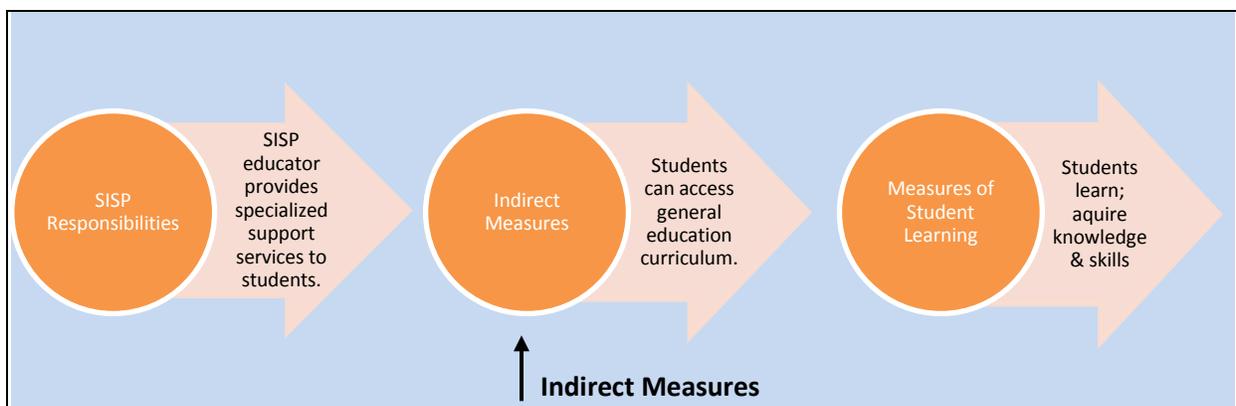


Figure 2. For SISP who do not directly instruct students, this figure shows an intermediary step that exists between SISP responsibilities and student learning, therefore making the SISP contribution indirectly tied to student learning.

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Do Indirect Measures measure student growth?

Often indirect measures will not be measures of growth. For educators responsible for direct instruction, demonstrating student growth is well aligned to the responsibilities of their roles. For educators responsible for an intermediary component, such as SISP, DDMs may not be measures of student growth. For example, if a school psychologist's job is to produce useful reports to parents and teachers, districts will be interested in whether high-quality reports are being produced, not necessarily whether those reports represent an improvement (growth) over past reports. High-quality reports support teachers who are then engaged in producing student growth. As a result, producing high-quality reports is an indirect measure of the school psychologist's contribution to student growth, even though it is an assessment of the quality of a single product.

Some SISP roles do include direct instruction of students. The use of direct measures may be appropriate for educators in these roles. The district must determine whether a direct measure represents a meaningful sample of their work. For example, elementary school counselors who teach guidance curriculum may decide to give the students a pre- and post-test at the beginning and end of each unit to develop a DDM to assess the content they are responsible for teaching (see [Using Current Assessments in DDMs](#) for more examples on how to develop DDMs from curriculum units).

Two Key Questions

As stated in [Technical Guide B](#), DDMs should be **aligned to content and be informative**. This is true of both direct and indirect measures. SISP educators may ask the question, "What does content mean in the context of my position since there are no MA Curriculum Frameworks for my role (i.e., I do not teach a specific academic subject or course)?" For SISP educators, content

should reflect their job functions and responsibilities and should align to what they do to support students, educators, administration, and/or parents.

DDMs should represent a meaningful sample of an educator's role and provide valuable feedback that can be used to inform educator practice. Like for other educators, DDMs for a SISP educator do not have to represent everything that he or she does, nor are SISP educators expected to implement DDMs to measure every aspect of their roles. Chosen measures should provide both educators and districts with actionable information to inform practice and identify both areas of strength and areas where more supports are needed. Districts should also have confidence that the chosen measures provide adequate information about an educator's impact on students.

DDMs for "Singletons"

In some districts, there may be only one educator serving in a particular position. Given the highly specialized nature of many SISP roles it is likely that SISP will be some of these district "singletons." Districts should consider the following options to identify and develop DDMs for singletons:

- ✓ Work with neighboring districts to identify and/or create DDMs.
- ✓ Group educators within the district who have similar responsibilities, albeit different roles, to collaborate on DDMs.
- ✓ Look to outside rating entities (such as state or national organization standards).
- ✓ Use DDMs that can be easily interpreted (e.g., for a school counselor, using number of seniors who applied to college instead of number of students who are prepared to apply to college.)

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Distinguishing DDMs and Student Learning Goals

For educators in unique roles (or “singletons”), it may be difficult to distinguish DDMs from student learning goals.

When considering the differences, keep in mind the following:

- ✓ DDMs are set by the district and are typically universal to educators serving in a particular role.
- ✓ A main focus of DDMs is comparability—so student learning and impact can be discussed across schools and educator roles.
- ✓ DDMs should remain relatively stable from year to year because they address key responsibilities for particular educator roles that are unlikely to change dramatically from year-to-year.
- ✓ In contrast, student learning goals are tailored to the specific needs of a student population and are expected to change based on student needs.

Example DDMs for SISP Educators

Identify Commonalities. Since one of the goals of DDMs is to support common measures across a district, one approach to selecting DDMs for SISP educators is to identify commonalities across multiple roles. These commonalities should address key content or responsibilities associated with each role.

For example, a key responsibility of school nurses, school counselors, and school psychologists is to communicate student information relevant to the students’ learning needs to multiple stakeholders including teachers and parents. Communicating timely information to relevant stakeholders could therefore be considered “key content” for these educators. Districts could design DDMs that involve collecting feedback from stakeholders on the quality, usefulness, and timeliness of communications (such as through a common survey on SISP communications). The results of the surveys could then be analyzed and scored (see the [Implementation Brief on Scoring and Parameter Setting](#)). Analyzing the quality of the communications

could provide SISP with valuable information about their communication strategies while also providing schools and districts with meaningful information about the impact of the SISP. Communicating students’ needs with stakeholders supports students’ readiness to learn and is, therefore, considered an indirect measure.

Similarly, some statewide SISP organizations have identified maximizing students’ time in the classroom and their readiness to learn as a responsibility common to multiple SISP roles. Although the services provided by these educators may vary—school nurses conducting vision assessments or a school counselor providing one-on-one counseling—the end goal is for students to be in the classroom learning. A district could convene a team of SISP educators to develop an indirect measure focused on measuring the amount of time students spend engaged in class over the course of providing interventions. For example, as a team these educators could conduct observations of students they have worked with to evaluate students’ engagement in class or review records of return-to-class rates to measure the impact of interventions on students’ engagement and time spent learning.

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Identify Role-Specific Examples. The following DDM examples were developed in consultation with statewide SISP organizations. Please note that these are examples of indirect measures that are aligned to role responsibilities and would yield valuable information related to these responsibilities. Districts are in no way obligated to use these examples as DDMs – they are not exhaustive and ESE recognizes that SISP roles and responsibilities may vary across districts.

School (Guidance) Counselors

- ✓ School counselors encourage students to participate directly in career-related activities across all grade levels based on the appropriate level of development. These career immersion experiences can include exposure to career interests, valued and skills, completion of various career inventories and activities to promote career awareness and encourage career exploration. Additionally, they may include in-depth work in a career-related class, career-related clubs and after-school activities, internships or cooperative education placements, capstone or entrepreneurial projects focused on areas of interest, school-based businesses, school-based or community-based volunteer work, after-school and summer jobs or any other experience in which students are learning through active participation in a career-related role. Quality immersion experiences in Massachusetts incorporate assessment of skill gain, most commonly with the [MA Work-based Learning Plan](#) (WBLP). School counselors can use parts of the WPLB as a DDM to assess student progress in career-related skill development.

Other examples:

- ✓ Delivery of full guidance curriculum – A measure of students participating in a locally-developed guidance curriculum; could include pre- and post-testing.
- ✓ Measure of the percentage of students participating in pre-college or other assessments (e.g., Accuplacer, PSAT).
- ✓ Measure of the enrollment of students in post-secondary education.

School Psychologists

- ✓ School psychologists are trained to provide a wide range of health and psychoeducational services to students, including crisis intervention, counseling services, social skills training, and student evaluations and assessments. One possibility for a DDM for school psychologists is evaluating psychological reports. This could be done according to an agreed upon standard or a district-approved standard devised by the district's school psychologists. Since most districts do not have a School Psychology administrator, reviews could be conducted by an appointed lead school psychologist, or the district's school psychologists (or psychologists from multiple districts) could meet as a group and evaluate each other's reports (perhaps blindly).

Other examples:

- ✓ Use of progress-monitoring data for a targeted area of impact (such as Goal Attainment Scaling²).
- ✓ District-developed holistic evaluation rubric applicable to responsibilities of school psychologists (see [Technical Guide B](#), page 14 for more information about using holistic evaluation to measure growth).

² Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) will be addressed in the DDM Implementation Brief on Special Educators. Please see [Implementation Brief page](#) of the Educator Evaluation website for more information.

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School Nurses

- ✓ School nurses help students manage chronic health conditions in order to improve students' readiness to learn. Therefore, one potential DDM might be assessing how students are able to articulate and manage their conditions as a result of the nurse's guidance. A potential performance task could be a developmentally appropriate self-care chart. Similarly, a **school social worker/school adjustment counselor** might be able to use a coping skills checklist to measure how a particular student is managing a health diagnosis.

Other examples:

- ✓ Change in amount of time it takes for students to return to class upon visiting the nurse's office.
- ✓ Change in students' comprehension of beneficial physical activity and nutrition (measured by one-on-one interviewing, 24-hour nutrient intake, and/or physical activity measurement – respiratory/pulse rates).

Speech-Language Pathologists

- ✓ Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) serve students who exhibit a range of communication impairments across all levels, in both special and general education. Students with communication impairments are likely to have difficulty mastering the MA Curriculum Frameworks. The SLP's role is to use [Evidence Based Practice](#) to develop the speech and language skills needed to access the curriculum and to teach skills and strategies necessary to learn the curriculum. Another role of SLPs is to educate teachers and parents about how the standards rely heavily on those underlying language abilities, making language and literacy support an essential part of treatment for those students with language impairments. One potential DDM for SLPs is an agreed-upon or district-approved standard for conducting appropriate evaluations for students who may be experiencing communication disorders. Reviews of (anonymous) case files could be conducted by a group of SLPs who blindly review and score each other's evaluations.

Other examples:

- ✓ Measure of the quality of collaboration with students, teachers and/or families (as a starting point for developing this DDM, sample [student](#), [teacher](#), and [parent](#) checklists can be found on the Performance Assessment of Contributions and Effectiveness of Speech-Language Pathologists (PACE) [website](#)).
- ✓ Progress monitoring data collection and analysis.

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Occupational and Physical Therapists

- ✓ Occupational and physical therapists support students' ability to access, participate and progress, academically and functionally, in the life of the school. Interventions are designed with consideration of the least restrictive environment (LRE) mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA), and to this end are provided within the naturally occurring contexts of the school day whenever appropriate (e.g. classroom, cafeteria, gym, recess). A potential DDM for OTs and PTs might involve looking at a change in the amount of services that are provided within the naturally occurring contexts of the school day as determined through a review of student Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Service Delivery Grids.

Other examples:

- ✓ Use of progress-monitoring data through Goal Attainment Scaling for a targeted area of impact.
- ✓ Critiquing student evaluation procedures/reports to determine degree that student school participation is directly assessed in the OT/PT evaluation process.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do all educators have to use direct measures of student learning as DDMs?

No. When selecting DDMs, districts and educators should prioritize measures that are aligned to content (or an educator's work and responsibilities) and informative. For educators who do not have direct instructional responsibilities, direct measures of student learning may not be the most appropriate measures and indirect measures should be considered.

Do districts/educators have to use the example measures identified in this brief?

No. The information in this brief is intended to serve as a resource and to stimulate conversations between SISP educators in districts. Districts and educators are not required to use the examples provided. In most cases, the information provided is just a starting point and will need to be further developed by educators and districts.

ESE partnered with statewide SISP organizations to identify these examples, including members of the [Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy](#), the [Massachusetts School Counselors Association](#), the [Massachusetts School Nurse Association](#), the [Massachusetts School Psychologists Association](#), , the [Massachusetts Speech-Hearing Association](#), as well as the [Department of College and Career Readiness](#) at ESE.

Where can I find out more about implementing the new evaluation system with SISP educators?

Statewide organizations have taken a leading role in developing role-specific resources for their members. [Resources](#) include role-specific indicators (school counselors) and elements (school psychologists) as well as "look for" resources aligned with the SISP Model Rubric (school nurses and OTs/PTs). ESE is actively engaged with these organizations as they continue to work with their members to identify more examples and resources. For the most up-to-date information, visit our [website](#).