

# SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION (SDI)

## *Supports for Admissions and Release Committee (ARC) Members*



*The following is non-regulatory guidance designed to work in conjunction with the procedural safeguard protections for students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is intended to be informal guidance representing the interpretation of the applicable statutory or regulatory requirements in the context of the specific facts presented and is not legally binding.*

*Revision to guidance is reviewed annually and is based on feedback the Office of Special Education and Early Learning (OSEEL) receives from the directors of Special Education, state shareholder groups, the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) interpretation of law, court cases and guidance from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The OSEEL also revises guidance based on on-site monitoring visits, desk reviews and formal written complaints.*



# OSEEL

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## What is Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)?

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA 2004) requires schools and districts provide eligible students with disabilities with special education and related services through an Individual Education Program (IEP). SDI is an important component of a student's IEP and educational program ([IEP & Lesson Plan Development Handbook](#)). SDI is how the teacher adapts, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible student, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs that result from the student's disability [[34 CFR § 300.39\(b\)\(3\)](#)].

In its simplest form, SDI is what the teacher does through instructional practices to support the student's needs.

	<b>What It Is</b>	<b>What It Means for the Student</b>	<b>Examples and Resources</b>
<b>Content</b>	Content is the curriculum, knowledge and skills aligned to Kentucky standards.	Adapting content means, while all students work toward the same standards, that districts and schools provide students with IEPs uniquely tailored instructional strategies and approaches by way of IEP goals to successfully access the general curriculum standards.	<a href="#">Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)</a>  <a href="#">Kentucky Alternate Assessment aligned to the KAS</a>  <a href="#">Kentucky Employability and Foundational Academic Standards: Alternate Assessment (EFASAA)</a>  <a href="#">Kentucky Early Childhood Standards (KYECS)</a>
<b>Methodology</b>	Methodology is the instructional design of content. It is the teacher's approach to instruction.	Adapting methodology means the instructional approaches, strategies or methods used to support the student's access to standards are based upon research and best practices for teaching.	<a href="#">High-Leverage Practices</a>  <a href="#">Evidence-Based Practices</a>

	<b>What It Is</b>	<b>What It Means for the Student</b>	<b>Examples and Resources</b>
<b>Delivery</b>	Delivery is the way instruction is provided to the student.	Adapting the delivery of instruction means how instruction is delivered may be different from how it is provided to typically developing peers. Adapting the delivery of instruction results in student access, participation and progress in the general curriculum.	Teacher <a href="#">Collaboration</a> (e.g. whole group instruction, small group instruction, coteaching, station teaching parallel teaching)

There are multiple considerations for the design and implementation of SDI, including the role of the Admissions and Release Committee (ARC), the student’s least restrictive environment and documenting goals and progress.

## The Role of the ARC in Determining SDI

To determine appropriate SDI for a student, a collective decision-making process is needed. The members of the ARC work together to make data-driven decisions about the student’s educational program. The ARC is responsible for developing, reviewing or revising an individual education program (IEP) for a child with a disability ([707 KAR 1:002, Section 1](#)).

An effective collaborative process requires a thorough understanding of each ARC member's roles and responsibilities. ARC membership is intentionally planned to ensure the ARC has specialized expertise and distinct perspectives to share regarding the development, implementation and delivery of SDI ([707 KAR 1:320, Section 3](#)).

ARC Member	Role in Supporting the Development, Implementation and Delivery of SDI
District Representative (e.g. ARC chairperson)	Qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities. Are also knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the availability of the resources of the Local Education Agency (LEA).
General Education Teacher(s)	<p>Provide insight into grade-level standards, expectations, curriculum and how the student is performing in comparison to same-aged peers. Other examples of data the general education teacher might share include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student records containing grades, assessment results and classroom observations;</li> <li>• Evidence related to Response to Intervention (RtI) in the area of a suspected disability;</li> <li>• A history of applied strategies and interventions that have proven effective or ineffective for the student; and</li> <li>• Anecdotal reports of daily interactions that may impact the student (e.g., communication with family, relationship with the student, the student’s relationship with peers).</li> </ul>
Special Education Teacher(s)	<p>Reviews and analyzes relevant information and data to inform the ARC discussion about SDI including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The delivery of SDI in the student’s least restrictive environment (LRE);</li> <li>• Progress on IEP goals and objectives supported by data, to inform SDI;</li> <li>• Plans for fading, when appropriate, accommodations and modifications;</li> <li>• Considerations for Supplementary Aids and Services (SAS);</li> <li>• Proposals for SDI and the amount of time the student would receive SDI to promote growth and mastery of a skill or an IEP goal in the LRE;</li> <li>• Results from assessments or other evaluative instruments;</li> <li>• Strengths, needs and how to effectively use the student’s strengths to increase learning; and</li> <li>• Prioritization of needs to determine the SDI that will support drafted goals and objectives.</li> </ul>
Interventionist (if applicable)	<p>May consider and communicate relevant information concerning the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The review and analysis of methods of instruction used during the intervention, the ARC gains insight into</li> </ul>

ARC Member	Role in Supporting the Development, Implementation and Delivery of SDI
	<p>which instructional strategies may prove most effective for the individual student when delivering SDI;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The instructional interventions that most appropriately match the student’s academic and behavioral needs, based on student data, classroom observations and the unique needs of the student; and</li> <li>• The student’s progress and response during the implementation of interventions compared to those of other students receiving similar interventions and targeted instruction.</li> </ul>
Related Service Providers (if applicable)	<p>May consider and communicate relevant information concerning the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide insight into how SDI and services may impact a student’s daily routines, often extending to settings beyond school or the classroom;</li> <li>• Share, review and explain the results from assessments and evaluations;</li> <li>• Prioritize needs and draft IEP goals; and</li> <li>• Propose SDI based off student needs and strengths which may allow the student greater access to the general curriculum.</li> </ul>
English Learner (EL) Teacher (if applicable)	<p>May consider and communicate relevant information concerning the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data related to the student’s English language proficiency (ELP) and interpreting scores from ELP screeners and assessments (e.g. WIDA Screener, ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS);</li> <li>• Common difficulties frequently experienced by English learners versus difficulties manifested by a disability;</li> <li>• Recommendations based on English learner peer comparisons;</li> <li>• Sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors that influence the students learning;</li> <li>• Culturally and linguistically responsive practices that are effective in supporting the linguistic and cultural needs of the learner; and</li> <li>• Alignment of IEP goals with language goals and the relationship to SDI.</li> </ul>
Student (if applicable)	<p>Methods of including the student’s input:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite student to attend ARC meetings. Beginning at age 14, or when the student is in 8th grade, the student must be invited when postsecondary goals and transition</li> </ul>

ARC Member	Role in Supporting the Development, Implementation and Delivery of SDI
	<p>services will be discussed [<a href="#">707 KAR 1:320, Section 3 (4)</a>].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of surveys and interviews (prior to the ARC) may be appropriate to provide information on learning styles, general feelings toward specific learning strategies, behavioral and academic strengths or needs.</li> </ul>
Parent(s)	<p>Parents of the student must be provided the opportunity to participate (<a href="#">707 KAR 1:320, Section 4</a>) and may communicate relevant information concerning the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the student’s strengths, areas for growth and insight into long-term goals of student and family (e.g. future employment, independent living, college);</li> <li>• Share information about the student’s preferences and interests at home;</li> <li>• Provide related information on the student’s medical, developmental and emotional history; and</li> <li>• Assist in the selection of SDI that would appropriately address the student’s needs across educational settings.</li> </ul>

## Selection of SDI Content

The SDI content may address any area of individual need, including academic, behavioral, social, communication, health and functional performance domains. According to the [Guidance Document for Individual Education Program \(IEP\) Development](#), the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) provide the ARC with the basis for generating measurable annual goals and SDI. The PLAAFP includes the student’s strengths, needs, and is the foundation for measuring progress. Using data, the ARC must decide upon the most appropriate SDI approaches and strategies to effectively enable the student to progress on their IEP goals. Included in [Appendix A](#) are examples of SDI planning guides for the ARC team.

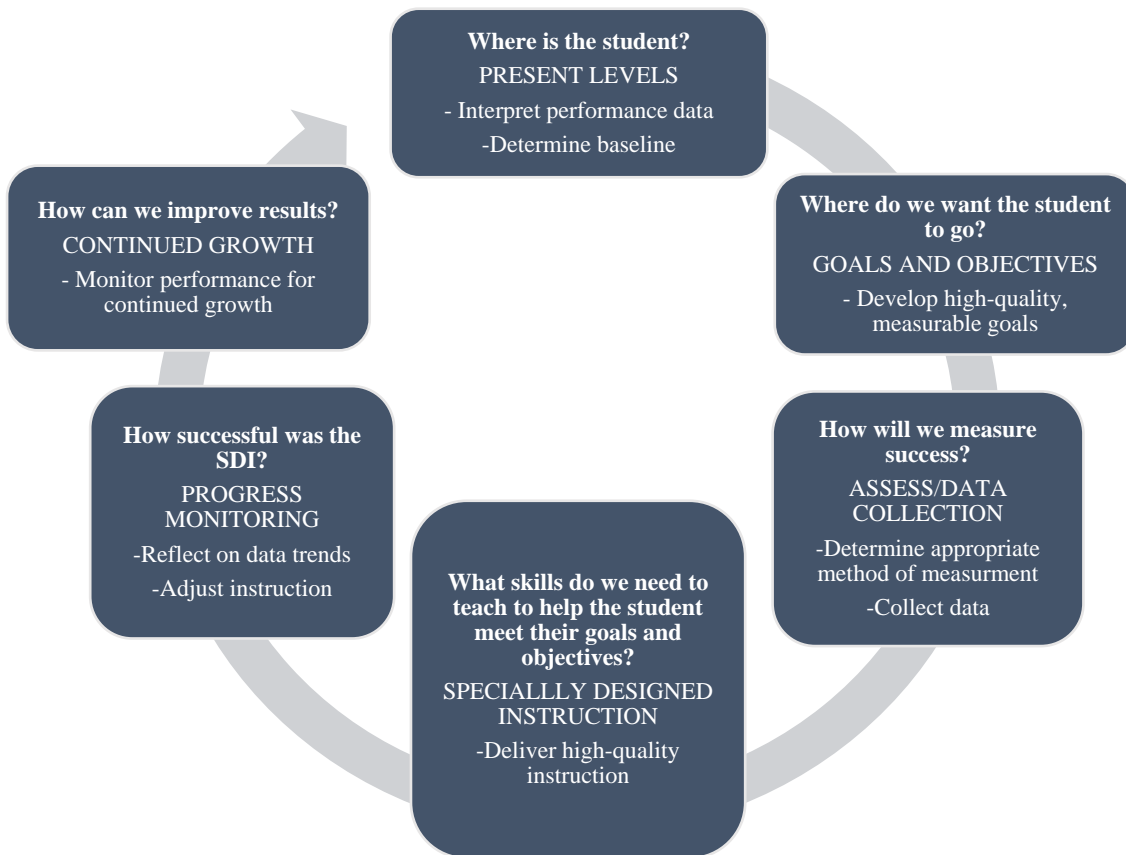
Data informs the interconnected components of a student’s IEP. The parts of the IEP flow and work together to illustrate a reasonably calculated and cohesive program for a student. The student’s IEP goals must be “appropriately ambitious” ([Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, Re-1](#), 2017), measurable and designed to enable the student to meet grade-level content standards or close the achievement gap. The measurable goals should align with the progress monitoring data collected.

Progress monitoring data tells a story about the effectiveness of SDI with the student and the student’s responsiveness within their unique set of circumstances. When the story indicates the SDI is not effective, the ARC and the school or district’s instructional team must modify instruction to promote student growth. Progress monitoring data should be collected consistently, systematically and directly align with the IEP goal being monitored. For additional information,

please see [Collecting, Analyzing and Utilizing Progress Monitoring Data for Students with Individual Education Programs \(IEPs\) Document](#).

The analysis of the data collection is a cyclical decision-making process. When data trends reveal a need for an instructional change, the ARC must review and discuss these changes. The ARC must indicate these changes on the progress monitoring collection tool and the student's IEP. For data collection to support programmatic decision-making when analyzing changes to a student's SDI, ARCs must have data-based discussions.

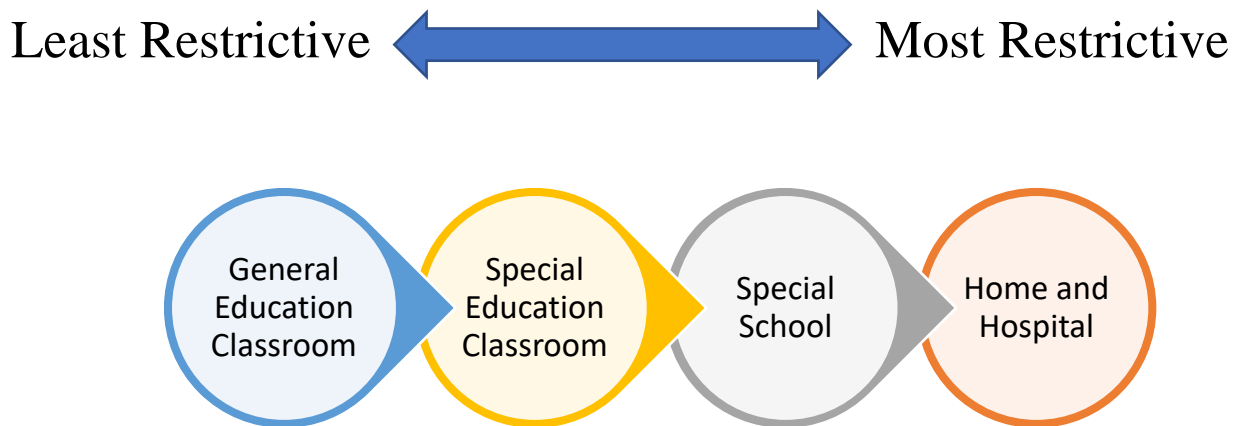
The following guiding questions may help the ARC in planning and evaluating effective SDI and PM (see [Appendix B](#) for printable version):





## LRE and SDI

The LRE should be carefully considered to determine which setting allows for the delivery of SDI while permitting the student to learn alongside peers to the greatest extent. The LEA shall ensure that special classes, separate schooling or other removals of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment only occurs if the student is unable to participate in the regular education environment, even with the use of supplementary aids and services, due to the nature and severity of the disability [[707 KAR 1:350, Section 1 \(1\)](#)]. ARC placement decisions cannot be made without discussions about the SDI, including consideration of the continuum of services that spans the least to most restrictive settings.



Graphic adapted from: [IRIS Center: Information Brief-Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\)](#) and [707 KAR 1:350, Section 1 \(3\)](#)

SDI must be provided by a special education teacher or qualified related service provider ([34 CFR §300.156](#)), even when the student’s LRE includes placement in the general education classroom. When a student requires SDI within the general education classroom, the SDI is planned, designed and may be delivered through an integrated and collaborative format or co-teaching model. In a co-teaching or collaborative instructional setting, the special education teacher must take the lead in the planning, designing, initial delivery and monitoring of the SDI as outlined in the student’s IEP. The general education teacher supports SDI after initial delivery by the special education teacher. The general education teacher may replicate and extend an SDI method or strategy to provide for the generalization of targeted skills and behaviors in the general education environment ([Guidance Document for Individual Education Program \(IEP\) Development](#)).

# Methodology for SDI

When making decisions regarding the student's educational programming, the ARC should consider that SDI must be delivered intentionally through direct, highly structured and carefully monitored processes. Based on the IEP goals and needs of students, the method for delivery of SDI may include High Leverage Practices (HLPs), explicit instruction, intensive instruction or other Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs).

HLPs and EBPs are essential tools for ARCs to consider when selecting SDI. HLPs can be used to teach EBPs in specific content areas. The resources below provide information specific to the pairing of HLPs and EBPs in special education:

- [Situating High-Leverage Practices and Evidence-Based Practices in Literacy \(OSEP and CEEDAR\)](#): This resource includes a presentation with visual representations of the efficacy of combining HLPs and EBPs.
- [High-Leverage Practices and Evidence-Based Practices: A Promising Pair \(CEEDAR\)](#): This document further explores the connection between HLPs and EBPs across a MTSS.
- [HLP/EBP and Standards Correlation Map in Reading \(Arizona\)](#): This resource includes correlation maps in the areas of phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

## *High-Leverage Practices*

When making decisions about teaching methodologies, educators should search for practices proven to positively impact student achievement. Researchers and education experts refer to this set of practices as HLPs. These practices are a set of essential fundamentals of quality teaching and are critical to helping students acquire content across different content areas, grade levels and contexts. They also are central to supporting students' social and emotional development.

In education, the need for highly effective teaching practices is vital. Teachers must ensure instruction is targeted and able to accelerate learning so achievement and learning gaps do not continue to grow. Research-based studies have identified specific HLPs that are focused on successfully addressing the needs of students with disabilities receiving special education services. These HLPs are supported by research on student learning or policy/legal foundations in the IDEA. These resources and practices span four domains:

- a. Collaboration;
- b. Assessment;
- c. Social, emotional and behavioral practices; and
- d. Instruction (McLeskey et al., 2017).

## *HLP Resources*

The resources below will help ARC members think critically about SDI as they consider which practices and strategies are also HLPs. In conjunction with the [IEP Lesson Plan and](#)

[Development Handbook](#), the ARC can consider which SDI is most likely to yield efficient and effective progress on the student’s IEP goals and objectives and in the general curriculum.

- [High-Leverage Practices in Special Education \[Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform \(CEEDAR\)\]](#): This resource contains information on HLPs in Special Education. Materials include supplemental resources, video and conference presentations. The [High-Leverage Practices in Special Education Flyer \(CEEDAR\)](#) summarizes HLPs in special education across the four domains.
- [High-Leverage Practices Crosswalk \(CEEDAR\)](#): This document shows alignment points between [High-Leverage Practices in Special Education](#) and [Promoting Principal Leadership for the Success of Students With Disabilities](#).
- [High-Leverage Practices \(from IRIS Center\)](#): This interactive alignment tool, developed in collaboration with CEEDAR, identifies which IRIS resources provide information on HLPs.
- [5 Dimensions of Teaching and Learning-Correlation to High-Leverage Practices in Special Education \(University of Washington Center for Educational Leadership\)](#): This resource provides a chart that reviews the correlation between the five dimensions of teaching and learning and HLPs for Special Education.

### *Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)*

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are instructional strategies backed by research and professional expertise to support the learning and behavior of students with disabilities (Cook, Tankersley, & Harjusola-Webb, 2008). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires school improvement efforts to be rooted in “evidence-based activities, strategies or interventions” and breaks intervention categories down into four levels: Strong Evidence, Moderate Evidence, Promising Evidence and Demonstrates a Rationale ([Evidence-based Practices](#)). When selecting SDI to impact student achievement of IEP goals and maximize progress across standards, ARCs should thoughtfully consider the use of EBPs.

### *EBP Resources*

The resources below will help ARCs think critically about SDI as they consider which practices and strategies also are EBPs. The [IEP and Lesson Plan Development Handbook](#) is one resource that may assist the ARC by providing a list of SDI options for consideration when used in conjunction with other data sources.

- [Evidence-Based Practices Summaries \(IRIS Center\)](#): These research summaries cover instructional strategies and interventions and offer additional information, including the level of effectiveness and the age groups for which a given strategy or intervention is designed.

- [Evidence-Based Practices: Modules and Resources \(IRIS Center\)](#): This resource provides three modules to lead participants to a deeper and more thorough understanding of EBPs. Modules include [Identifying and Selecting Evidence-based Practices](#), [Implementing a Practice or Program with Fidelity](#) and [Evaluating Learner Outcomes and Fidelity](#).
- [Evidence-Based Practices in Instruction \(OSEP\)](#): This resource contains additional information on identifying, selecting and using evidence-based practices. It also includes evidence-based strategies for teaching in the areas of English Language Arts, Math and Science.

## Delivery of SDI

The table below provides examples of do's and don'ts for the delivery of SDI:

SDI	Do	Don't
<b>Service Provider</b>	Remember that SDI must be initially delivered by a special education teacher or a related services provider.	Expect paraprofessionals or parents to deliver SDI. They serve in a supportive role only.
		Expect general education teachers to initially provide SDI. However, a general education teacher may work with a special education teacher to implement SDI with students for whom they share responsibility ( <a href="#">Guidance Document for IEP Development</a> ).
<b>Service Location</b>	Remember that special education is a service, not a place. SDI should be delivered in the student's LRE [ <a href="#">707 KAR 1:002, Section 1 (56)</a> ].	Forget that SDI is specific, targeted instruction that is delivered to the student, and is not the same as differentiated instruction.
	Remember a student's LRE may include multiple settings or locations during the school day ( <a href="#">Guidance Document for IEP Development</a> ).	Predetermine the student's Service Minutes/Duration using a one-size-fits-all approach.
	Ensure the ARC discusses and decides upon the LRE for the student so, to the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are non-disabled [ <a href="#">707 KAR 1:350, Section 1 (1)</a> ].	Predetermine the student's LRE or Service Minutes based upon the student's eligibility determination category or available scheduling, neglecting to consider a student's unique, individual needs.

SDI	Do	Don't
	<p>Consider maximizing access to the general curriculum within the general education setting before considering or adopting other more restrictive placement options (<a href="#">Guidance Document for IEP Development, 2019</a>).</p>	<p>Place students in a more restrictive setting based solely on the intensity of SDI needed.</p>
<p><b>Documentation of Minutes</b></p>	<p>List the number of SDI minutes provided per session. This is the anticipated amount of time in terms of minutes, hours or blocks of time the teacher will spend delivering the SDI (<a href="#">Guidance Document for IEP Development, 2019</a>).</p>	<p>Forget to consider the intensity and complexity of instruction needed for implementing SDI when considering Service Minutes/Duration.</p>
	<p>List the number of minutes a student is present in the special education or resource setting. The special education teacher is solely responsible for instruction in this setting.</p>	
	<p>In a co-teaching or collaborative setting (general education classroom), list the number of minutes for SDI. Service minutes may not be the whole class period. Service minutes represent a subset of time within the class period needed to provide SDI to a specific student, within the larger curricular framework planned for the entire general education classroom.</p>	
<p><b>Selection</b></p>	<p>Select High Leverage Practices (HLPs) and Evidence-based Practices (EBPs) that promote the skills the student needs to achieve greater mastery and understanding of the general curriculum (<a href="#">Guidance Document for IEP Development, 2019</a>).</p>	<p>Lower expectations or exposure to grade-level content for the student.</p>
<p><b>Data Analysis</b></p>	<p>Closely monitor, regularly review and analyze collected student data (<a href="#">Guidance for Progress Monitoring, 2021</a>) to determine if the student is making adequate progress or the need for instructional adjustments</p>	<p>Continue providing the same instruction when collected evaluative or progress monitoring data indicates a lack of progress or improvement in the target skill.</p>

SDI	Do	Don't
	<a href="#">(Guidance Document for IEP Development, 2019)</a> .	Implement SDI not currently included in the IEP without ARC team consensus.

For more information on specific strategies, the [IEP and Lesson Plan Development Handbook](#) includes examples of SDI and SAS that may support the student's goals, benchmarks and short-term objectives within the IEP.

## Documenting SDI and Progress

Specially designed instruction must be documented in the student’s IEP. Due to the SDI being indelibly linked to the student’s annual measurable IEP goal(s), the content, methodology and delivery of instruction are listed in the goals/objectives section of the IEP.

When documenting the student’s holistic services, including SDI, the ARC must clearly specify the frequency, duration and location of services. The ARC also should document its review and analysis of the student’s progress monitoring data ([Guidance for Progress Monitoring](#)). The ARC’s review and analysis of progress monitoring data can help team members determine the effectiveness of the SDI to facilitate instructional programming decisions and changes when needed. Documentation by the ARC is essential when determining the least restrictive environment and planning for the next steps. In summary, the ARC will need to actively review and analyze the student’s progress monitoring data when evaluating the effectiveness of the student’s SDI and making educational programming decisions.

## References

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## Appendix A:

### ARC Tool for SDI: Considering How the Disability Affects the Student (Version 1)

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Area of Eligibility: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Student Strengths</b>	<b>Student Concerns</b> <i>(Related to Area of Eligibility)</i>	<b>How Disability Affects Learning or Behavior</b>

<b>Goal</b> <i>(Instructional Target)</i>	<b>Possible SDI</b> <i>(Include Data to Support Need)</i>	<b>Possible Accommodations</b> <i>(Include Data to Support Need)</i>	<b>Possible Modifications</b> <i>(Include Data to Support Need)</i>

Figure 1 Adapted from “Specially Designed Instruction: What does it look like in 2019?” by Carol Kosnitsky, 2019, KY Council for Exceptional Children Conference



*ARC Tool for SDI: Considering How the Disability Affects the Student (Version 2)*

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Area of Eligibility: \_\_\_\_\_ Case Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Student Strengths</b>	<b>Area of Concerns</b> <i>(Related to Eligibility)</i>	<b>How the Disability Affects Learning or Behavior</b>	<b>Goal</b> <i>(Instructional Target)</i>	<b>Possible SDI</b> <i>(Include Data to Support Need)</i>	<b>Possible Accommodations</b> <i>(Include Data to Support Need)</i>	<b>Possible Modifications</b> <i>(Include Data to Support Needs)</i>

*Figure 2* Adapted from “Specially Designed Instruction: What does it look like in 2019?” by Carol Kosnitsky, 2019, KY Council for Exceptional Children Conference

## Appendix B: ARC Tool: Considerations and Guiding Questions Process Chart

