Progress Monitoring
for
Informed Instructional Decision-making For All Students

Progress monitoring is the ongoing process of collecting and analyzing data to determine student progress. It can be used to determine progress on specific skills and general outcomes when compared to grade-level norms for all students in the school population. It can also be used to determine progress on IEPs (annual goals and short-term objectives) for students in special education programs.

The process begins by setting goals for each student, based on where the student is presently functioning (current level of educational performance or baseline level) and expected levels of progress. Connecting the baseline and the goal or target performance provides an aimline. Student performance on regularly administered probes is compared with the aimline to determine if the student is progressing toward the goal. When necessary, instructional interventions are designed and implemented to improve student progress.

The Seven Steps of Progress Monitoring

1. Writing Annual Goals and Objectives
2. Making Data Collection Decisions
3. Determining Data Collection Tools & Schedule
4. Representing the Data Visually
5. Evaluating the Data
6. Making Instructional Adjustments
7. Communicating Progress

1. Writing annual goals and objectives

Teachers must write precise and measurable goals that provide a clear basis for monitoring student progress. The goals estimate what progress can be expected in a set period of time based on where the student is presently performing. Students in special education programs have annual goals and short-term objectives. The annual goals estimate what outcomes can be expected in an academic year based on the student's present level of performance. The objectives provide steps for meeting the goal. Each goal and objective should include:

- The condition under which the behavior is performed,
- The student's name,
- Clearly defined, observable behaviors, and
- The performance criterion (i.e., the number of times the behavior is performed at criterion level, and the frequency of assessment).

2. Making data collection decisions

Data collection serves as a day-to-day guide for making adjustments in instruction, and provides the information needed to determine student progress toward goals and, in the case of students in special education, objectives. Data must be collected often enough to provide for timely intervention and student progress toward the goal. The following questions can guide decisions:

What type of data will be collected?

- Frequency or rate
- Percentage
- Duration
- Latency
- Quality of product or performance
- Level of assistance
- Fluency

Where will data be collected?

- Classroom
- Cafeteria
- Playground
- Job-site

How often will data be collected?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly

Who will collect data?

- Classroom teacher
- Parent
- Job coach
- Student
- Paraeducator
- Others

3. Determining data collection tools and schedule

Tools must be selected or designed to collect data. A schedule to review the data must be established. The type, location, and frequency of data to be collected, as well as who will collect the data, determine the tools or methods to be used. Commonly used data collection tools/methods include:

- Structured interviews or surveys
- Observations
- Teacher-made tests
- Rubrics
- Assessment checklists
- Rating scales
- Task analytic recording
- Portfolio assessment
- Curriculum-based assessment
- Anecdotal records

4. Representing the data visually

Visual representation of data provides a picture of student progress, and helps to clarify the written word (description of student progress) or list of numbers used to make decisions. Ways to show data visually include:

- Graphs
- Charts
- Checklists

5. Evaluating the data

Data collection provides information used to drive instruction. Collected data must be reviewed regularly and on a predetermined basis.

The data must be evaluated to determine if the student is making progress toward the goals and, in the case of students in special education, objectives, and to determine how well the student is responding to the intervention being implemented.

Decision rules should be applied when analyzing the graph. For example, a decision to intervene should be made if four consecutive data points are below the aimline or four of the last six data points are below the aimline.

6. Making instructional adjustments

When the data patterns indicate the need to intervene, simple instructional interventions should be used. If these adjustments still do not yield results, moderate and then more intensive interventions should be tried. When instructional interventions do not result in the expected progress being made for students in special education programs, the IEP team should be reconvened to reevaluate the goal and objectives.

Examples of data patterns and suggestions for interventions include:

- If the data patterns show that the student is making adequate or better progress, the program is working, and the teacher should continue the present instructional program.

- If the data patterns show that the student's progress is stalled, and the student can do some, but not all, of the task, the teacher should provide more direct or intensive instruction on difficult steps.

- If the data patterns show that the student's progress is at or near zero, the task is too difficult, so the teacher should teach prerequisite skills.

- If the data patterns show that the student's progress has stalled close to the goal, the teacher should provide increased repetitions and frequent opportunities for practice.

- If the data patterns show that the student's goal has been accomplished, then the instructional program is successful, and the student should move on to a new goal.

7. Communicating progress

Communication about student progress should actively involve the parent and the student. Such communication is a motivational tool for students and strengthens home-school bonds with parents. For students in special education programs, the IEP team determines how progress will be communicated and the method and schedule is noted on the IEP. Progress on IEP goals must be reported at least as frequently as progress is reported for students who do not have disabilities. Ways to keep lines of communication open include:

- Communication books and data logs
- Parent/teacher conferences
- Progress reports and report cards
- Phone calls