

Progress Monitoring Briefs Series

Brief #4: Common Progress Monitoring Omissions: Reporting Information to Parents

Progress monitoring, one of the essential components of Response to Intervention (RTI), is characterized by repeated measurement of academic performance that is conducted at least monthly. The process may be used to assess students' academic performance over time, to quantify student rates of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate instructional effectiveness. For students with disabilities, progress monitoring may also be used to formulate effective individualized programs (National Center on Response to Intervention [NCRTI], 2010).

This brief focuses on the importance of sharing progress monitoring data with parents to help support student progress.

It should be mentioned that student involvement is of equal importance. The students themselves should understand progress monitoring and, to the greatest extent possible, be involved in the data entry and monitoring process. Students at the elementary and secondary levels should work with school staff and share in the responsibility of marking their graphs and checking their progress. Students who learn to enter data on their graphs and check their progress become more personally involved with the challenge of improving and take pride in seeing their improvements.

Issues to Consider

Data-based systems increase information availability and streamline academic decisions. These systems also provide increased opportunities to communicate information to parents. When reporting data to parents,

issues to consider include educational privacy as well as the type and clarity of the data.

With regard to privacy issues, educators should consider whether their method of communication reasonably preserves student privacy and complies with educational privacy laws such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). For example, though email is a popular mode of communication for many parents and teachers, it is not considered a secure form of communication. Because emails are easily shared with others, accounts are frequently compromised. Instead, many educators use secure websites where students and parents may access educational information, or they choose more traditional forms of communication such as the U.S. Postal Service.

Once issues of privacy and legal compliance have been met, the next aspect to consider is the most clear and efficient method to communicate the data. Reporting student performance data is most successful when the data are reported in the context of educational expectations. Typically, short descriptive statements that accompany simple graphic representations meet most reporting requirements and are easy for parents to understand.

Using Graphs to Communicate Data

Often, educational data exist in forms that are appropriate for parental communication. For example, progress monitoring graphs communicate data clearly, and parents are able to understand the information without additional assistance. The progress monitoring



data in Figure 1 was created in Excel and then copied into this Word document so that descriptive information could be placed around it. Notice that the graph uses both colors and symbols to delineate the data. Colors help to clarify the data, but the symbols are especially useful in cases where the report may be copied in black and white.

All relevant pieces of information should be described in educational reports, but care should be taken to minimize any unnecessary information. For example, when using information such as that in Figure 1, descriptors should provide information about the X and Y axes, Brenda's data, the end-of-year goal, the goal line, and Brenda's trend line. An additional piece of information not included here that some schools might use is comparisons to average student performance. An example of a report follows.

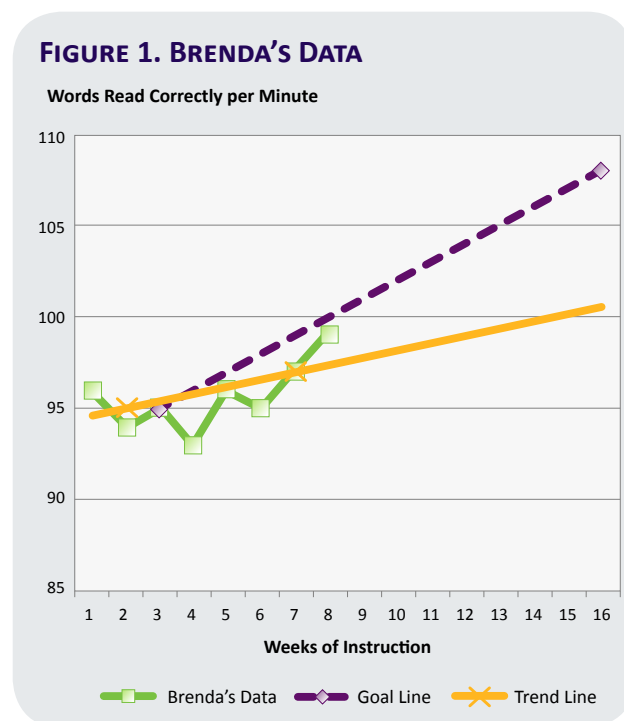
An Example: Feynman Elementary Educational Performance Report

Eight weeks have passed since school began this fall. Since then, the school has been monitoring Brenda's educational growth to determine if teachers are meeting her academic needs. Below you will find a graph containing information about Brenda's educational performance. The graph is created so that you may compare Brenda's performance with grade level expectations at Feynman Elementary. In this graph, the number of words read correctly per minute is represented on the vertical axis, while the weeks of instruction are represented on the horizontal axis.

The number of words read correctly per minute does not mean we are working to have Brenda read faster. The skills are related to using appropriate decoding strategies to sound out unfamiliar words, building vocabulary knowledge so that she is familiar with the meaning of more words, being able to sequence events in a story, and being able to provide clear details when asked about a story she has read. Good readers use all of these skills when they read. When students are asked to read aloud for one minute, they are using these skills to read at an appropriate rate without making errors. The number of words read correctly is an indication of her overall reading skills.

The legend to the right of the graph provides a graphic representation of all relevant pieces of data. The green line containing squares represents Brenda's data. In the initial three weeks of school, Brenda read approximately 93–96 words correctly per minute. During the most recent assessment, she read 99 words correctly per minute. Brenda's goal for Week 16 is 108 correct words per minute. This expectation is represented on the graph by a purple diamond at Week 16.

To meet expectations, Brenda's progression should closely match the goal line, represented here by the purple line containing diamond-shaped markers. Using Brenda's current rate of improvement, it is anticipated that by Week 16, Brenda will be short of that goal and will be reading approximately 101 words correctly per minute.



In order to help Brenda meet her academic expectations, the school plans to increase her instructional reading time from 45 to 60 minutes per day so that she will have more opportunities for improvement.



References

National Center on Response to Intervention. (2010, March). *Essential components of RTI—A closer look at Response to Intervention*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention. Retrieved from http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/rtiessentialcomponents_042710.pdf

Additional Resources

Fuchs, L. S., & Oxaal, I. (n.d.). *Progress monitoring: What, why, how, when, where*. Presentation released by the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. Retrieved from <http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/progressmonitoringwhatwhyhowwhenwhere.pdf>

These PowerPoint slides explain CBM, contrast it with mastery measurement, and show how CBM can be applied to instructional planning, individualized education program development, and learning disability identification.

This module guides participants in using screening data to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the RTI framework and to establish progress monitoring and intervention schedules. Participants also learn to use data to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and to establish an effective progress monitoring system and related decision rules.

National Center on Student Progress Monitoring. (n.d.). *Student progress monitoring* [website]. Retrieved from <http://www.studentprogress.org/>

Although the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring project has concluded its five-year cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, this website continues to be maintained and offers many valuable resources related to progress monitoring.



About the National Center on Response to Intervention

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, the American Institutes for Research and researchers from Vanderbilt University and the University of Kansas have established the National Center on Response to Intervention. The Center provides technical assistance to states and districts and builds the capacity of states to assist districts in implementing proven response to intervention frameworks.



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This document was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Grant No. H326E070004 to American Institutes for Research. Grace Zamora Durán and Tina Diamond served as the OSEP project officers. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be: National Center on Response to Intervention (January 2013). *Progress Monitoring Brief #4: Common Progress Monitoring Omissions: Reporting Information to Parents*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention.

Publication Number 2314d_1/13

