



PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #32

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Progress Monitoring

What is Progress Monitoring?

“Progress Monitoring” is just what it sounds like—a way to monitor a child’s progress! Progress monitoring tools allow for direct, frequent, and continuous assessment. By using progress monitoring tools, teachers can assess how a child is doing academically and the effectiveness of their instruction. Progress monitoring tools can be used with whole groups of students or with one student at a time.

Why use Progress Monitoring?

There are many benefits to progress monitoring. Some of these include:

- Students receive more appropriate instruction.
 - Learning outcomes improve.
 - Teachers can make more informed instructional decisions.
 - Student progress is monitored and documented.
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- Families and school professionals can communicate more effectively about students’ progress.
 - Teachers have higher expectations for students.
 - Special Education referrals decrease.

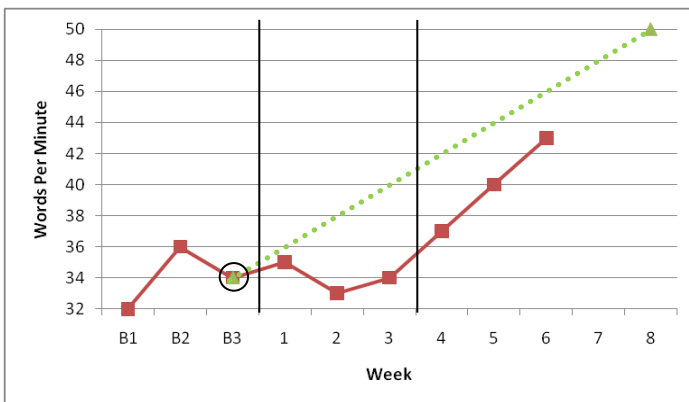
How does Progress Monitoring work?

As previously stated, progress monitoring tools can be used with entire classrooms or with individual students. A teacher might use progress monitoring tools to assess the progress of all students in her classroom and to identify those who might need additional help. Teachers may also monitor the progress of individual students to address their unique learning needs.

The following example shows how progress monitoring tools might be used to address a child’s reading needs. Maria is a child who struggles with her reading rate. Maria’s teacher, Mr. Hill, and the progress monitoring team work with Maria’s parents to discuss the need for some additional instruction or interventions. Here are some steps the team might use to track Maria’s performance and to evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions using progress monitoring.

- **Choose a progress monitoring tool.** Several formal tools for progress monitoring exist, such as the Dynamic Indicators of Early Basic Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and AIMSweb. These are brief assessments that provide a snapshot of a child’s academic development. Progress monitoring tools can also be informal, such as the number of words a child reads in a minute or the number of math problems a child solves in a minute. In this example, the team decides that they will monitor Maria’s progress by determining how many words she accurately reads in one minute.
- **Decide how often to measure progress.** The team decides that Mr. Hill will measure Maria’s progress each week on Friday.
- **Establish a baseline.** A baseline is like a pre-test. It is the initial assessment that shows where a child is performing, before the teacher provides instruction or interventions. In Maria’s case, the team wanted to see how many words Maria could read in one minute before trying additional interventions. To get a good baseline, Mr. Hill measured Maria’s reading rate 3 different times using 3 different passages. The first time, Maria read 32 words per minute. The second time, she read 36 words per minute, and the third time, she read 34 words per minute. Mr. Hill graphed each of these *data points* on a chart and then circled the median number. The *median* is found by putting all of the numbers in order, from lowest to highest, and then finding the middle number. In this case, the median was 34 words per minute. This number will serve as Maria’s baseline. (See chart below.)

- **Set a goal.** The target reading rate for a child Maria's age is 50 words per minute. In order to reach this target, the team wants Maria to increase her reading rate by 2 words per minute each week. With a baseline of 34 words per minute, it will take Maria 8 weeks to reach this goal. Mr. Hill draws a line on his graph from Maria's baseline to the target. This line (see dotted line below) is called the "aim line." It will help the team to see if Maria is on track for meeting her goal.
- **Decide on the interventions or instruction that will be used.** Progress monitoring tools don't just measure the child's progress; they also measure how well the strategies being used in the classroom are working. Keeping track of the interventions and strategies being used are an important part of progress monitoring. For their intervention, the team decides that Mr. Hill will do 10 additional minutes of sight word drills with Maria each day.
- **Measure progress using the selected tool.** After a week of doing the additional sight word drills, Mr. Hill once again measures Maria's reading rate. She reads 35 words per minute, showing little progress from her baseline. After an additional week, Maria reads 33 words per minute, and after another week, she reads 34 words per minute. Mr. Hill graphs these data points on his chart.
- **Analyze the data to see if the interventions are working.** As the chart shows, Maria showed no improvement after 3 weeks, even with the additional drills. The data points from her weekly assessments were not near the aim line. Therefore, the team decided that the drills were not a helpful way to increase Maria's reading rate.
- **If needed, select different interventions.** Since the drills were not working, the team decided that Maria will instead participate in a daily, research-based repeated reading program. Mr. Hill draws a vertical line on the graph after the last data point to signal that there has been a change in interventions.
- **Measure progress.** Mr. Hill measured Maria's progress at Week 4, the first week after beginning the repeated reading program. Maria read 41 words per minute. She read 43 words at Week 5, and 45 words at Week 6. Mr. Hill graphed these results on the chart.
- **Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and monitor progress.** After looking at the graph, the team could see that Maria was making progress with the repeated reading program--the data points on the graph were approaching the aim line. Therefore, the team determined that the repeated reading program was an effective intervention. The team will continue to monitor and discuss Maria's progress on a weekly basis to ensure that she continues to move toward her goal.



Response to Intervention (RTI)

Progress Monitoring is an important feature of a system known as "Response to Intervention," or "RTI." RTI is a framework for making decisions about instruction and/or curriculum based on student response. For additional information about RTI, call the Parent Education Network or refer to the resources listed below.

Where can I learn more about progress monitoring?

- Visit the National Center on Student Progress Monitoring at <http://www.studentprogress.org> for a

variety of resources on progress monitoring, or the National Center on Response to Intervention at <http://www.rti4success.org>

- The National Center on Response to Intervention has published *The ABCs of RTI, A Guide for Parents*, available at <http://www.rti4success.org>
- www.interventioncentral.org has a variety of progress monitoring tools and intervention ideas.

Some information from www.studentprogress.org and www.specialconnections.ku.edu

"PEN Notes" are publications of the Parent Education Network, a project of Parents Helping Parents of WY Inc., funded by a grant from the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Parent Options and Information. Views expressed in "PEN Notes" are not necessarily those of the US Department of Education.