The Teacher 🔗 Para Learning Connection

Progress Monitoring – A scientifically based practice used to assess individual student's academic and behavior performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. Progress monitoring can be used for an entire class. To implement, the student's current levels of performance are defined and goals identified for future learning. Data is collected on a regular basis to measure performance. Progress toward student's goals is measured by comparing expected and actual rates of learning; thus measuring progression of achievement. Instructional techniques may be adjusted to meet the student's individual learning needs.

Resources for Teacher – Paraprofessional teams

- National Center on Student Progress Monitoring – www.studentprogress.org

- Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Center at Orleans/Niagara BOCES - www.onsetasc.org provides progress monitoring toolbox with downloadable templates to monitor IEP goals.

Reference

Etscheidt, S.K. (2006). Progress monitoring: Legal issues and recommendations for IEP teams. *Exceptional Children 38* (3), 56-60.

Progress Monitoring and Data Collection

Progress monitoring is a means of determining a student's progress and is an essential component of the IEP process. IEP teams define a student's present level of academic and functional performance, write measurable annual goals, develop measurable post-secondary goals and transition services to be provided, define how a student's progress toward the annual goals will be measured, and specify how the student's parents will be informed of their child's progress. These components of progress monitoring help the IEP teams address progress and lack of progress toward the annual goals and make decisions regarding the effectiveness of the student's program (curriculum delivery, interventions & strategies used). The IEP team selects the appropriate progress monitoring approach or data collection measure and is responsible for the decision making process of whether the student's progress on a goal is sufficient (Etscheidt, 2006).

Paraprofessionals may assist with data collection for the progress monitoring process. Many different methods are available to use for progress monitoring aligned with the approach selected by the IEP team. The key is accurate data collection including the assistance provided to the student such as an accommodation, verbal prompting, or if the task was completed independently. With the method for data collection provided by the supervising teacher, coaching by the teacher provides the paraprofessional with on-the-job training to learn how to collect data with a degree of fidelity or consistency. The teacher's role is to explain the method with clear directions, opportunity to observe its use then a practice opportunity with feedback prior to collecting data independently. The paraprofessional's role is to listen carefully, take notes, pose questions, and follow the procedure for the method of data collection consistently.

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Data Collection Methods

Direct measures of data collection include observations of behaviors or curriculum-based assessments (CBA). Techniques for behavior observation include frequency recording, duration recording, interval recording, and time sampling. CBA evaluates a student's performance in a specific curriculum and use a set of standard, simple, short-duration fluency measures such as reading fluency or math fact assessments.

Prior to collecting data, the teacher defines the behavior to be measured so that the paraprofessional clearly identifies the specific behavior to ensure the results of the observation are accurate. Teachers need to state the behavior in observable and definable terms for the paraprofessional. Observable means being able to see or hear the behavior and definable/measurable means two people agree on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of the behavior.

Example: John looks at his paper, writes on his paper to define 'on task' behavior versus John is attending to his work. The location to collect data on the defined behavior (where), the time of the observation (when), and the method/tool for collecting the data are defined by the teacher.

Example: Collect data on Denise's behavior during math class in Mrs. Jones' classroom when students are asked to complete their worksheet independently. Document whether Denise is looking at her paper or writing on her paper using the interval recording method.

The paraprofessional as the observer and collector of accurate data needs to be sure data is collected objectively, without personal perceptions of the individual or of specific behavior. Objective observation means watching events without being affected by personal biases, watching what is happening without guessing at the reasons that cause the action or judging whether the behavior is good or bad, and providing an objective record that states exactly what was seen or heard.

Frequency recording is the number of times a behavior occurs within a specified period of time.
Example: During the 5 minutes that Mary was waiting for her lunch tray, she stomped her feet four times.

Duration recording is the amount of time a behavior occurs from the beginning to end.
Example: Sam took six minutes to line up to leave for art class when asked to do so. Missy's seizure lasted seven minutes from the time her eyes rolled back to the time her eyes looked at me and she smiled.

Interval recording measures whether or not a behavior occurs within a specific time interval. The total observation time is divided into smaller intervals of time and the paraprofessional records whether or not the behavior occurs within each interval.

Example: Kate throws her toys during a 15 minute period of free time play. During the 15 one-minute intervals, she throws a toy nine separate intervals. If she throws three toys in one interval, that one-minute interval is only marked once.

Time Sampling is recorded if the behavior occurs at the end of a given time period/interval. Similar to interval recording with the total observation time divided into intervals and the paraprofessional records only at the end of the defined interval whether or not the behavior is occurring.

Example: The behavior identified is Manny is out of his seat and away from his assigned desk and the observation time is 15 minutes divided into one-minute intervals. The paraprofessional marks at the end of each one-minute interval whether Manny was out of his seat or in his seat.

Paraprofessionals are meaningful members of the school team. Their role is to provide assistance with data collection while the IEP team remains responsible for the decisions regarding student progress and the establishment of frequency of the data collection. Critical to the paraprofessional's role in providing assistance is their training. To begin the training process, provide clear directions for the collection of specific data on an individual student and state the purpose. Modeling of the method, support to practice the method, and the critical component of performance feedback to improve skills are essential. Time to accomplish this training will need to be created with administrative support.

Based upon feedback from participants who attended the 2014-2015 Paraprofessional Series, paraprofessionals collect data using task analysis forms, CBM for functional reading skills, frequency counts, checklists such as counting to 50 and identifying sounds & letters of the alphabet, and behavior rating scales, homework charts, and behavior charts.

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Alignment with the CEC Paraprofessional Standards

Standard 8: Assessment – Record information in various formats as determined by the instructional team and Assist in collecting and providing objective, accurate information for the instructional team

What information supports the collaborative teams of teachers and paraprofessionals for progress monitoring and data collection?

Paraprofessionals are valuable support personnel who are often the front-line assistants for our teachers and the students whom they serve. We commend them for their daily work, assist them in understanding the students' goals, and offer them training opportunities to develop their skills to assist in providing special education services to our children with disabilities. Discussion items within teams to assist the paraprofessional in their role may include:

- What is the paraprofessional's role in progress monitoring?
- How is data collected?
- What forms will the team use?
- Who, when, and how will training be conducted for the paraprofessional to learn data collection practices?

Questions from paraprofessionals in the SST9 Paraprofessional Series

Why are paraprofessionals often not included in IEP meetings? Districts are responsible for determining who is invited to an IEP meeting. Mandatory participants at an IEP meeting include the child's parents; not less than one regular education teacher of the child; not less than one special education teacher or where appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child; district representative; an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results; when appropriate, the child with a disability; and at the discretion of the parent or the agency, other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child.

Why are there not "standards" required for para-pros? Standards for paraprofessionals do exist. The Council for Exceptional Children validated *The Common Core Professional Development Standards for Paraprofessionals in Special Education* as the set of knowledge and skills that all paraprofessionals assisting children with disabilities should possess. As promoted in research and professional literature, these standards prepare paraprofessionals to have a knowledge of evidence-based instructional strategies and skill set to utilize these strategies for assisting in their instructional role.

What other resources are available for professional learning? OCALI (www.ocali.org) has several internet modules available to assist with learning about autism and assistive technology. When using these modules, remember to *discuss the content learned with your supervising teacher* to link your new knowledge to your experiences in the classroom and with specific students to apply your learning.

Please send feedback, comments or questions for possible inclusion in The Teacher-Para Learning Connections newsletter to Denise Uitto at duitto@uakron.edu.