

PROGRESS MONITORING

Shelley H. Billig, RMC Research Corporation, 2008

What Is Progress Monitoring?

Progress monitoring refers to a process for gathering information to determine whether there has been movement toward goal attainment. Progress monitoring requires attention to reaching benchmarks to show both advancement toward outcomes and the effectiveness of procedures. Typically, goals are set, along with ideas about expected rates of progress needed to meet goals by a specified time frame. Effective monitoring is “low stakes” and used for improvement purposes only, not for making major decisions about a student, teacher, or program. Sample measurement tools used frequently for monitoring student progress include observations or anecdotal records, analysis of work products, criterion-referenced measures that examine mastery of specific knowledge or skills, and performance assessments. Progress monitoring often includes the use of rubrics or ratings that measure how well the service-learning is aligned with effective practices. Results should be shared with all stakeholders and used for continuous improvement.

Application to Service-Learning

- Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) found that service-learning assessment and program evaluation, including progress and process monitoring, were related to students’ enjoyment of subject matters, civic knowledge, and efficacy.
- Greene and Diehm (1995) demonstrated that students who received more frequent written feedback on their written reflections were more likely than those who received checkmarks to say that the population being served contributed to their education and that they were more personally invested in the service.
- Shumer (1997) conducted a synthesis of the service-learning qualitative research and concluded, “Efforts to plan and control student learning are not always successful. The process of learning from experience is dynamic; it requires methods of reflection and feedback to continually monitor its flow and direction” (p. 36).

Educational Research Supporting This Concept

- Safer and Fleischman (2005), in their review of the research of progress monitoring in educational settings, reported that when teachers implement student progress monitoring, “students learn more, teacher decision making improves, and students become more aware of their own performance.” (p. 82)
- Shannon and Bylsma (2003) noted, “In a supportive school environment focused on continual improvement, feedback allows teachers to make procedural corrections, reteach, and encourage students’ efforts, as well as to change their practices” (p. 27).
- Good and Brophy (2000) noted that in progress monitoring, “Errors are treated as learning opportunities, not test failures, and should lead to additional instruction and practice opportunities” (p. 229).
- Schunk and Pajares (2002) reported that students developed a sense of efficacy based in part on feedback and whether they are given enough opportunity to improve enough to meet standards.
- One form of progress monitoring that has a scientific research base is curriculum-based measurement (CBM). Fuchs and Fuchs (2006) identified more than 200 empirical studies published in peer-reviewed journals that attested to the effectiveness of this type of progress monitoring for helping students improve reading, mathematics, and spelling skills. CBM approaches assess all of the skills covered in an annual curriculum such that each weekly test is different, with different items, but measures a sample of the skills

to be mastered by the end of the year. CBM uses standardized measures, and all tests, administration and scoring procedures, and interpretation protocols are specified. Research on CBM shows its utility for identifying students in need of additional or different forms of instruction, its effectiveness in helping teachers plan more successful instructional approaches and programs, and raising achievement scores.

- Specific conditions that can be influenced as a result of the progress monitoring include instructional time and location, organization of instructional components, specific teaching and learning strategies, assessments, classroom management, school climate, and personal relationships (Bernhardt, 1998).
- Studies of “turn-around” low-performing schools show that many used quality management approaches that featured continuous process and progress monitoring and improvement. Goldberg and Cole (2002), for example, documented the Brazosport, Texas, process that led to greater equity and higher student performance for the entire school district. The focus was on instructional processes and their effects on student learning. The instructional team monitored instructional processes to ensure that quality practices, including high expectations, safe and orderly climate, and ongoing measurement for decision making, were in place. “Process data were then generated to align resources and to continuously improve support process” (p. 10).
- Quenemoen, Thurlow, Moen, Thompson, and Blount Morse (2004) pointed out that the essence of progress monitoring is that data should inform educators when students are not progressing as they should so action can be taken to improve progress. Actions to accelerate progress could include changing instructional approaches, providing more learning supports, and adding reflection activities. These researchers also argued for using multiple forms of progress monitoring to ensure accuracy.

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