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## **Integrating Student Progress Monitoring (SPM) into Your Classroom: The Teacher's Perspective**

By: Kathleen McLane (2006)

Is your school planning to implement **student progress monitoring (SPM)**? Are you thinking of using it in your classroom? If so, consider a number of factors to make SPM an integral part of classroom activities, rather than a series of isolated assessments unconnected to other parts of the learning experience. This brief offers some suggestions on how to use SPM in an integrated way.

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### **The value of SPM data**

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SPM offers you, the teacher, an effective and time-efficient way of visually representing data to quantify your students' rates of progress and make informed instructional decisions based on the data you collect. You can collect and graph each student's SPM data in 1-5 minutes per week. The graph provides an easy-to-use visual representation of how well the student is progressing and whether the student is in need of an instructional change to prompt better learning.

SPM data provide you with reliable feedback on your students' progress. After a universal screening is conducted, you may choose to monitor the bottom one-third of your class on a weekly basis. For those students who are succeeding, the SPM graphs show the effectiveness of your instruction. SPM graphs not only show you performance levels, they show you whether the students you are monitoring in this fashion are making *enough* progress to be successful throughout the year.

Two methods to determine whether students' progress is adequate are the four-point rule and the trend-line rule. When using the four-point rule, the teacher looks at the four most recent data points. If all four points are above the goal line, the goal should be raised. If all four points are below the goal line, the teacher should adjust the student's instructional program. To use the trend-line rule, the teacher calculates the trend-line slope using the most recent eight data points. If this slope is steeper than the goal line slope, the goal should be raised. If the trend-line slope is flatter than the goal-line slope, instruction should be adjusted.

For students who show a pattern of insufficient progress, you introduce instructional changes (e.g., smaller groups, longer tutoring sessions, using different learning strategies). One benefit of using SPM is that it allows you to make instructional changes to reverse the pattern of inadequate learning before the school-year ends. As you make these instructional changes, you continue to collect SPM data each week. This enables you to track the effectiveness of those changes.

### **Incorporating SPM into classroom activities**

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Given that SPM data are usually collected weekly, it is helpful to make data collection and graphing a routine part of the class routine. This minimizes disruption and keeps other classroom activities running smoothly. If you are using SPM measures that can be completed automatically at the computer, then you can incorporate the assessments as individual activities. If you are using learning stations, then the computerized assessments can serve as one of these stations. Also, you may be able to train adult assistants to administer the assessments.

Because the graphs provide such a clear picture of learning over time, it's also helpful to teach students how to read the graphs. Then, they can monitor their own progress by looking at their graphs. Whether the SPM assessments are administered by computer, by an adult assistant, or by you, the graphs can serve as a motivational tool for students, as they will naturally be interested in how their graphs change week by week.

An important factor to keep in mind in incorporating the SPM process into your classroom routine is that **you do not have to create the measures** (but you can, if you choose to). Web-based SPM measures have been developed and are readily available from a number of vendors. Read the **Review of Progress Monitoring Tools** to learn about The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring's tool review process. You can also obtain a list of some of the available SPM measurement tools, including information about the measures (e.g., the grades and subject matters to which they are applicable, as well as their availability).

## **Communication benefits of SPM data**

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SPM graphs offer a picture of performance that is much easier to understand than other types of assessments or reports of student achievement. Consequently, they offer the benefit of aiding effective communication with others concerned with your students. You can use the graphs to communicate clearly with other educators, including related service providers, other teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialists (e.g., reading specialists, speech-language pathologists, counselors) about the difficulties or successes of particular students. You will also find your communication with administrators is enhanced with the use of the graphs, helping principals and other supervisors understand individual student performance and appreciate your hard work in implementing instructional changes.

SPM graphs also offer a wonderful opportunity to communicate more effectively with families about their children's challenges or successes. By explaining the graphs to families, you give them concrete information to help them understand their child's progress. SPM graphs provide families, as well as teachers, with communication tools that are valuable at family conferences, IEP meetings, and other discussions with school staff.

**For more information on Student Progress Monitoring, read:**

- **Fact Sheet: Benefits of Curriculum-Based Measurement**
- **What Is Curriculum-Based Measurement And What Does It Mean to My Child?**
- **Student Progress Monitoring: What This Means for Your Child**
- **Chart: Review of Progress Monitoring Tools**

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For more information, visit **The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring** and **The**

**National Center on Response to Intervention.**

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