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What Is Curriculum-Based Measurement and What Does It Mean to My Child?

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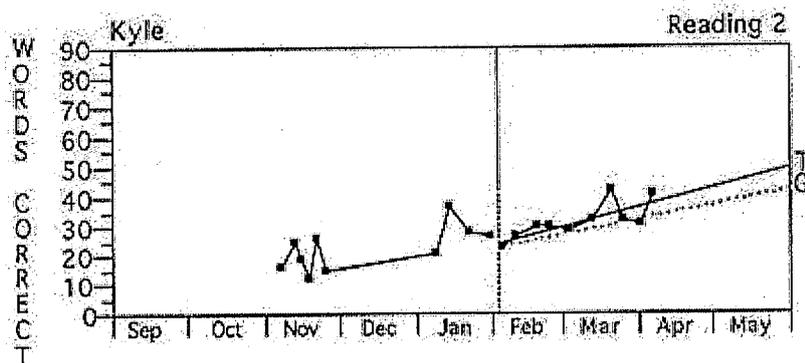
Not only must schools teach academic skills, but they must measure how successful each child is acquiring these skills. One way to do this is Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM), which uses brief, timed tests made up of academic material taken from the child's school curriculum.

Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) is a method teachers use to find out how students are progressing in basic academic areas such as math, reading, writing, and spelling.

CBM can be helpful to parents because it provides current, week-by-week information on the progress their children are making. When your child's teacher uses CBM, he or she finds out how well your child is progressing in learning the content for the academic year. CBM also monitors the success of the instruction your child is receiving – if your child's performance is not meeting expectations, the teacher then changes the way of teaching your child to try to find the type and amount of instruction your child needs to make sufficient progress toward meeting the academic goals.

How does CBM work?

When CBM is used, each child is tested briefly each week. The tests generally last from 1 to 5 minutes. The teacher counts the number of correct and incorrect responses made in the time allotted to find the child's score. For example, in reading, the child may be asked to read aloud for one minute. Each child's scores are recorded on a graph and compared to the expected performance on the content for that year. The graph allows the teacher, and you, to see quickly how the child's performance compares to expectations. (The figure below is an example of what a CBM graph looks like.)



After the scores are entered on the graphs, the teacher decides whether to continue instruction in the same way, or to change it. A change is called for if the child's rate of learning progress is lower than is needed to meet the goal for the year.

The teacher can change instruction in any of several ways. For example, he or she might increase

instructional time, change a teaching technique or way of presenting the material, or change a grouping arrangement (for example, individual instruction instead of small-group instruction). After the change, you — and the teacher — can see from the weekly scores on the graph whether the change is helping your child. If it is not, then the teacher can try another change in instruction, and its success will be tracked through the weekly measurements.

Other ways CBM can help you

CBM can also help you work more effectively with the school system on your child's behalf. CBM graphs make the goals, and your child's progress, clear to you and to the teacher. In this way, CBM can help parents and teachers communicate more constructively.

You can use the CBM graph in conferences with teachers and administrators, as it gives you specific information about your child's progress and the success of the instructional methods being used. You can also use the CBM graph in IEP (Individualized Educational Program) meetings, to go over specific information about your child's current performance so that you and the school can develop measurable goals and objectives that will lead to more meaningful progress for your child.

Resources

If you are interested in more detailed and technical information about using CBM, see the article entitled **Monitoring Student Progress in Individualized Educational Programs Using Curriculum-Based Measurement**, by Pamela M. Stecker.

For more information on Student Progress Monitoring, read:

- **Fact Sheet: Benefits of Curriculum-Based Measurement**
- **Student Progress Monitoring: What This Means for Your Child**
- **Integrating Student Progress Monitoring into Your Classroom: The Teacher's Perspective**
- **Chart: Review of Progress Monitoring Tools**

McLane, K. (n.d.). What Is Curriculum-Based Measurement And What Does It Mean to My Child? Washington, D.C.: The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, American Institutes for Research.

For more information, visit **The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring** and **The National Center on Response to Intervention**.

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