

# Embedding Assessment into Daily Activities and Routines

## USING THE DATA

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## Organizing Data to Create a Visual Display

Collecting and recording progress data on skills embedded into ongoing activities and routines is the first step toward becoming a data-based decision maker. Researchers suggest organizing data on target goals or objectives into a graphic displays that illustrate performance over time, promotes systematic use of the data for instructional decision making (Hojnoski, et al., 2009b). Graphic representation of data has been identified as a critical component of most problem-solving models, including



response to intervention models such as Recognition and Response (Coleman, Buysse, & Neitse, 2006), an early intervening model for early childhood. Data-based decision making is likewise at the heart of the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS), developed to support the academic and behavioral needs of all learners in pre-K through grade 12 public education programs in the state [www.KansasMTSS.org](http://www.KansasMTSS.org)

Graphs and visual displays are inherent in many CBAs. Online data recording and monitoring systems with graphing features, such as the AEPSi, are becoming more widely available. However, if the CBA you are using currently does not include graphic displays or electronic data systems, you can create your own graphs with software programs such as Microsoft Excel or with paper and pencil (Hojnoski, 2009b).

## Interpreting Data to Make Instructional Decisions

As discussed previously, a fundamental purpose of assessment is to establish initial and present levels of performance regarding important skills from which a baseline can be established and skill acquisition can be measured. Ultimately the information is used to inform instructional decision making, and to adapt educational plans accordingly. When analyzing curriculum based assessment data, an early childhood team is able to determine if the instructional program is having a positive effect on the class and for individual children. If the program is not having the desired effect, the team will need to discuss potential reasons why specific objectives are not being mastered (by groups or individuals).

Hojnoski, et al. (2009b) advise that prior to deciding how to respond to data that suggests insufficient progress, teams ask themselves a series of questions, including:

1. Have adequate opportunities for instruction and practice been provided as intended?
2. Is the targeted skill or behavior of concern one that may take more time to change?
3. Are the instructional opportunities that have been provided sufficiently intense enough to bring about change?

Your team may think of other instructional variables to be considered. At this point it may be necessary to collect additional observational or assessment information to identify specific modifications, adaptations, or assistance that might be needed to improve student performance. Changes to the environment, curriculum, materials, time, schedule, and/or teaching methods may need to be considered in relation to the information gained through assessment activities and the identified needs of each child.

The following vignette illustrates how adaptations to daily activities provided the opportunity to collect and utilize ongoing assessment data to drive future instruction in a preschool classroom.



*After Mrs. Smith and her early childhood team reviewed the data collected for a three-week period, they identified several students who had not achieved targeted skills in the areas of fine motor and pre-writing. Therefore the team decided to modify a highly motivating upcoming learning activity planned for the dramatic play area, the “Car Wash/Fix It Shop”, to include fine motor and pre-writing tasks.*

*Materials were added to the activity to encourage fine motor and pre-writing skills: a table and chairs (to provide a surface for writing), a cash register and tickets for charging of services (for children to write out specific amounts due, and provide “payment”), vocabulary cards with theme related pictures and words (to encourage writing/modeling), and a variety of markers and colored pencils. An adult was stationed in the center to model writing and encourage participation and practice.*



*By the end of the week, two of the targeted students had exhibited significant progress on functional prewriting tasks, and it was decided that the third student would benefit from opportunities for more individualized instruction in this area.*

Visual displays and graphing information can also be used to communicate with family members, sharing current information regarding targeted goals and objectives and providing a concrete representation of their child's progress over time. While the first conference with families in which progress data is shared may take more time, subsequent conferences take less time as you will only need to review the newly accomplished goals/objectives and discuss the child's next steps or areas of concerns. Your team's observational and anecdotal notes, formal test summaries, and current information from the family should also contribute to your authentic assessment results.

## Summary

As mentioned earlier, the decision to require the use of information from an approved curriculum based assessment in reporting child progress on Early Childhood Outcomes in Kansas largely was based on the understanding that CBA is an effective way to gather information that can be used for program planning and monitoring child progress in the general early childhood curriculum. It was hoped that practitioners would find CBA data useful beyond determining Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF) ratings at program entry and exit.

As we have demonstrated, CBA tools can provide a way to document continuous progress and mastery of specific curricular goals and objectives. This mastery measurement approach provides educators with the opportunity to identify explicit gains for individual learners, as well as compare those gains with the performance of the entire classroom. CBA results can then be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the overall curriculum (e.g. average performance of children within domains), and shared with family members, service providers, boards of directors or others who may support the ongoing needs of the preschool program.

This packet was designed to illustrate ways that curriculum based assessment information can be used to improve teaching and learning in a preschool classroom. We hope the information, examples and resources provided in this packet will assist practitioners in the creation of a system for ongoing assessment during daily activities and routines that will make the task of collecting, recording, interpreting, and using CBA data less daunting and more worthwhile.