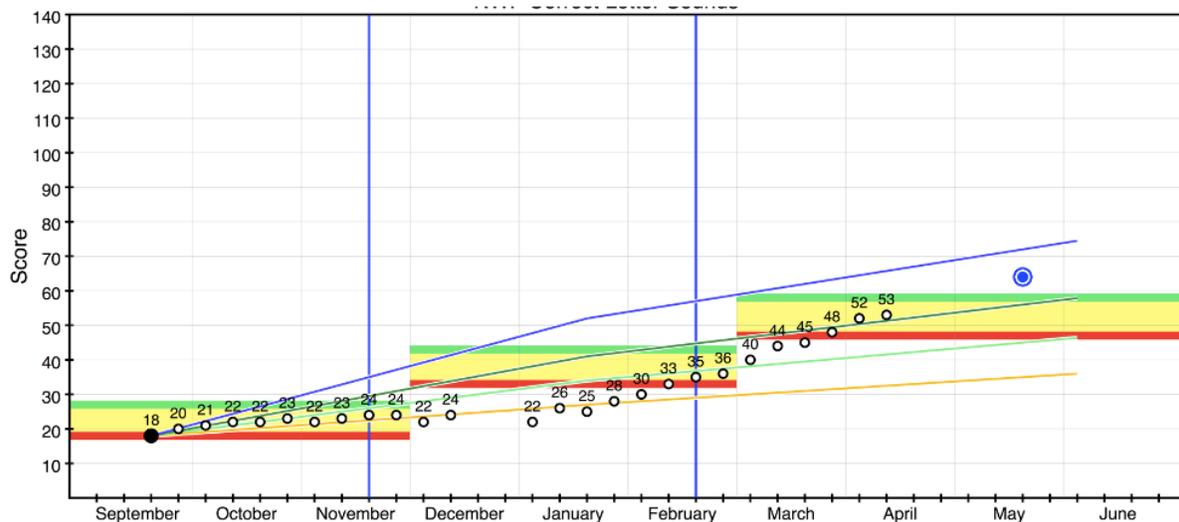


## Progress Monitoring Implementation Guide

Progress monitoring assessment involves the repeated measurement of a skill that is the focus of instruction, for the purpose of making decisions about continuing or changing the instruction. Decisions about student learning based on multiple data points across time are more accurate than decisions based on performance at a single point in time. Research indicates that student outcomes improve when teachers use graphed progress monitoring data to inform changes to their instruction.

Assessments used for progress monitoring must be brief, standardized, reliable and valid indicators of the essential early literacy skills. They must include multiple forms (often called probes) that are at the same level of difficulty, and are sensitive to growth over short increments of time.

Progress monitoring data are displayed on a graph showing student performance under different teaching conditions over time. By assessing and graphing the same skill over time, it is possible to see learning taking place.



### 1. What is the purpose of progress monitoring?

The purpose of progress monitoring is feedback to the instructor. Progress monitoring functions like a GPS, showing where the student is, where you want the student to get to, and if the student is on course to reach the destination. Like a GPS, progress monitoring provides real-time feedback to inform decisions about keeping instruction the same or making a course correction, rather than waiting months for the results of summative assessments. Progress monitoring allows instructors to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and to judge student progress toward important goals based on data rather than hunches or intuition.

## ***2. Is progress monitoring formative or summative assessment?***

Progress monitoring is formative assessment, meaning data are collected before a skill is taught, while a skill is being taught and at the point of expecting mastery of a skill. Progress monitoring answers the question...*Is the instruction working?* Summative assessments are done after a skill has been taught, at the point of expecting mastery of a skill. These assessments answer the question...*Did the instruction work?* Although progress monitoring can be used in a summative way - for a look back to see if the student met the goal – the value is in the real-time, ongoing feedback that teachers receive as they are teaching.

## ***3. What are General Outcomes Measures?***

Progress monitoring is a formal type of assessment that is different from other informal assessments teachers often use to monitor student learning. Teachers are familiar with giving summative assessments to test if students have learned what was just taught. Examples include unit tests and mastery tests that are integrated into published instructional or intervention programs. These tests are called Mastery Monitoring assessments because they are specific to a set of content and answer the question...*Did the student master what was just taught?*

Progress monitoring assessments are different from Mastery Monitoring, and are described as General Outcomes Measures (GOMs). GOMs sample student performance on indicators of overall reading health, measure growth over time, and predict future reading health. Acadience Reading, AimswebPlus and DIBELS 8<sup>th</sup> Edition are examples of GOMs.

## ***4. Which skills should be monitored?***

Indicators of the essential early literacy skills work well for progress monitoring. These are often the same skills used for universal screening. Because progress monitoring is done frequently, the skills selected for measurement should represent those that are important, those that can be influenced by instruction, and those that are predictive of future reading outcomes. In the examples of GOMs mentioned above, the skills selected for measurement are carefully chosen as representative of an overall component. For example, segmenting phonemes is used to represent what students know about the overall area of phonemic awareness, and words correct per minute is used to represent the overall area of reading comprehension.

## ***5. Who should get progress monitoring?***

Since the purpose of progress monitoring is to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction, any student whose instruction has changed is a candidate for progress monitoring. A common mistake made by district leaders is mandating progress monitoring directly

from screening results: *“Teachers must monitor every student who scores below benchmark every other week.”* It isn’t that simple. This type of mandate puts the emphasis on the assessment rather than where it should be – on the instruction.

Scores on screening measures should not trigger progress monitoring. Scores on screening should trigger a change to instruction. If instruction has been changed, then it is important to monitor the effectiveness of that change with progress monitoring.

The sequence should be:

1. Screening
2. Instruction
3. Progress Monitoring

If instruction hasn’t changed, there isn’t much reason to monitor progress.

### ***6. What materials should be used for progress monitoring?***

Students should be monitored in material that matches the skill targeted for instruction. Some students may score below expectation on screening in several areas. The lowest skill in the instructional sequence should be the first target of instruction and the progress monitoring materials should match that skill. For example, in the middle of first grade, a student might score low on ORF and NWF. Instruction should focus on the alphabetic principle and basic phonics, and NWF should be used for progress monitoring.

Although universal screening is always done with materials that match the grade level the student is assigned to, progress monitoring may be done with below-level materials. Older students who are missing foundational skills will need instruction in those below-grade-level skills, with progress monitoring in below-grade-level materials. For example, in the middle of third grade, a student might score low on ORF, and the Survey results indicate the student has not met the goal on PSF. Instruction should focus on phonemic awareness and phonics, and PSF should be used for progress monitoring.

When students are monitored in material that is too difficult for them, growth will not be seen in short intervals of time. This can cause the incorrect conclusion that instruction isn’t working, when actually the measurement material is not sensitive enough to pick up on changes in the skill being taught because of the gap between what is being taught and what is being measured.

### ***7. What progress monitoring goal should be used?***

Selecting progress monitoring goals is an individualized decision. In general, goals should be ambitious enough to close the gap and catch students up to the grade level

expectations. Tools such as Pathways of Progress from Acadience Learning can guide goal setting based on the level of progress made in the past by students who scored the same as your student at the beginning of the year.

If you are monitoring with grade-level material, use the next benchmark goal as your progress monitoring goal. If you are monitoring in below-grade-level material, use the end-of-year goal for the measure you are monitoring with, but cut the timeline in half. These students will have short-term and long-term goals.

### ***8. How often should progress be monitored?***

The frequency of progress monitoring should be informed by the intensity of the instructional support, which determines how soon you need to know if your instruction is working. Frequency of monitoring should not be determined by the score level on universal screening (see above recommendation against policies such as all students who score below benchmark should be monitored twice a month).

Roughly five to seven data points are needed to see a trend on a graph. For students who are working on below-grade skills, and receiving intensive intervention, you don't have a day to waste, and weekly progress monitoring will be needed to see the trend in five to seven weeks. For students who are working on within-grade skills, it might be okay to monitor progress every other week, and wait ten weeks to view the trend and decide about changes to instruction.

### ***9. How can I find time to monitor all of these students?***

Maybe you shouldn't monitor them all. If more than 20% of your class or grade score below expectation on the screening assessment, analyze and improve Tier 1 curriculum and instruction first, before trying to intervene with individual students. Administrative mandates requiring progress monitoring frequency based on universal screening results rob teachers of Tier 1 planning and instruction time and put the emphasis on the measurement rather than the instruction.

While focusing on improving core instruction, teachers might select a student or two to monitor, as exemplars of students receiving small group instruction. This allows teachers to experiment with doing some monitoring, and to see how the data can be helpful for informing instruction, but not overwhelm them with too much time away from instruction.

### ***10. Should I use small group time on Fridays to do progress monitoring?***

Probably not. If you take all of the small group time on Fridays to do progress monitoring, you will have reduced your instructional minutes by 20%. Instead, monitor one student each day of the week at the end of small group time. Use the time when

students are packing up their supplies and transitioning to the next activity to spend a minute with a different student each day of the week.

### **11. Who should do the progress monitoring?**

Anyone who has been trained in the progress monitoring assessment can do the progress monitoring. This task can be shared across school personnel – classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, special education staff, reading specialists, school psychologists, and speech pathologists. Regardless of who collects the data, all staff who are working with a student should have access to viewing the progress monitoring graph.

### **12. What do I do with the data?**

Progress monitoring is a powerful instructional tool. But simply putting dots on a graph isn't the important part. Students could be monitored every day and reading skills won't necessarily improve. Student outcomes improve only when looking at the graph causes changes to instruction. Be sure to schedule time to review the graph of any student you are monitoring. Refer to the *Intensifying Instructional Support Implementation Guide* if you don't see sufficient growth.

### **13. How does progress monitoring fit within a MTSS model?**

Progress monitoring is one of four types of assessment required for implementing MTSS. Data about response to instruction are used to make decisions about moving between tiers. Students who are not making the same progress as others in their small group might be moved to a more intensive tier of support. On the other hand, support might be faded or reduced for students who have met their goals. And students who require intensive and individualized intervention that can't be maintained with general education resources might be determined eligible for special education services.

### **14. What if the student isn't making sufficient progress?**

Here are some questions to consider:

- Was the plan implemented as designed?
- Has instruction been focused on the right skill (the lowest skill the student hasn't yet mastered)?
- Can the task be broken down into smaller steps?
- Can the opportunities to respond be increased by reducing group size?
- Can the length and/or frequency of small group instruction be increased?
- Can instruction be presented more explicitly?
- Is an evidence-based instructional approach being used?

The focus should be on finding what works to enable learning. Additional information about alterable variables can be found in the *Intensifying Instructional Support Implementation Guide*.

### **15. What should I look for in a progress monitoring assessment?**

Tools used for progress monitoring must be specifically designed for that purpose. Look for progress monitoring assessments that are:

- Indicators of one of the five essential early literacy skills
- Brief (usually one minute)
- Standardized (given and scored the same way each time)
- Reliable and valid (created for the purpose of progress monitoring and found to get consistent results across time and assessors)
- Alternate forms at the same level of difficulty (the same task with different items on each form)
- Sensitive to small amounts of learning over time

Acadience Reading K-6 is an excellent example of a free progress monitoring tool.

<https://acadiencelearning.org/acadience-reading/k-grade6/>

- Research has determined what to use as the GOM/indicator of the essential early literacy skills (i.e., segmenting phonemes indicates phonemic awareness)
- The way the skills are measured picks up on small amounts of growth (i.e., retelling what was read rather than answering comprehension questions)
- Each form is constructed to be at the same level of difficulty as every other form (i.e., passages controlled for readability level)
- Procedures are standardized for giving and scoring the assessment
- Reliability and validity has been established
- Each form takes one minute to give
- There are 20 alternate forms for frequent monitoring

Remember...progress monitoring isn't what is teaching the student to read, it is just the measurement. Think of progress monitoring like stepping on the scale when you are trying to lose weight. You could weigh yourself every day, but you won't lose weight unless you move more and eat less. You could do progress monitoring every day but the student won't learn to read unless you teach the essential skill(s) they are missing.

When progress monitoring is kept in the proper perspective, as a feedback loop, it can be a powerful tool for improving reading outcomes by informing changes to instruction.

For more information about progress monitoring, see the Progress Monitoring Master Class.