# TATS & FIN Talk

## VOLUME 5

# Using Progress Monitoring in the Early Childhood Setting

Collecting and using data in early childhood settings is a purposeful and multifaceted process. The collection of data should be objective, specific, and conducted under authentic conditions. Childcare providers, teachers, and other classroom staff should deliberately develop a system for collecting and using data throughout the year, keeping in mind developmental milestones to measure each child's attainment of skills. Curriculum-based measurements conducted for ongoing assessment provide information for individual and whole-class decision-making. Classroom data can be used to inform evaluation but is not a standardized measure of a child's skills. On the next page are some frequently used terms related to observation and data collection.

**Evaluation** Is the process of collecting information in order to understand a child's competency and skills at a certain point in time. Evaluations are usually accomplished through the use of specific standardized instruments, as well as through family interviews and observations, and may be used to help determine a child's eligibility for exceptional student education.

Evaluations can serve a multitude of purposes, both formal and informal. Evaluations such as the Battelle Developmental Inventory-2NU or 3, DIAL, or the PLS-4, can only be administered by qualified personnel who have been trained to give evaluations with these standardized instruments. Families will also be involved in the evaluation process, in order to accurately represent the child's progress in achieving developmental milestones.

**Ongoing assessment** is the process of periodically reviewing a child's progress towards reaching an identified goal. This periodic review should also include information regarding the child's current strengths and needs.

Ongoing assessment is an essential part of a high-quality early childhood program. Assessment results are used to create a record of growth and development, to design curriculum and instruction to meet individual needs, and to provide families with a way to understand their child's strengths and challenges so that they can provide supports at home. Assessment results for groups of students can also provide educators with a way to determine the effectiveness of the developed program.

**Curriculum-based measurement** a type of criterion-referenced assessment, is accomplished by tracking children's progress on goals related to classroom, district, or state expectations. Such progress monitoring ties directly to the skill criteria the children are expected to accomplish during the school year or school term.

Florida adopted the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards in 2017. These standards and benchmarks reflect knowledge and skills that a child on a developmental progression should know and be able to do at the end of an age-related time frame. The FELDS domains include physical development, approaches to learning, social and emotional development, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific inquiry, social studies, and creative expression through the arts.

**Progress monitoring** refers to gathering data related to a child's performance on specific skills that are being taught or related to the child's ability to understand essential skills and their success toward meeting IEP goals.

It is important to remember that progress monitoring is a foundation for planning and refining instruction. Progress monitoring is conducted with the long-term goal of creating an environment where each child grows and thrives in a Universally Designed classroom, with individualized supports provided for children who have IEPs.

# Five Steps to Meaningful Progress Monitoring



| STEP 01 | STEP 02 | STEP 03 | STEP 04 | STEP 05 |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Talk, Ask, Discuss | Set up Situations | Watch | Record | Apply Information |

(TATS Tips: Opportunities for Observation and Data Collection)

Meaningful and targeted progress-monitoring data collection should be deliberate and conducted in collaboration with appropriate service providers for individual children. Different data collection methods that might be used include anecdotal records, checklists, photos, videos, or work samples. Some examples are provided below.


**Observation**


**Video**


**Checklist**


**Work Sample**
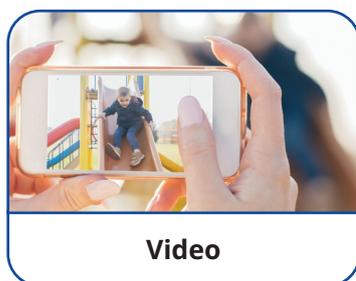
## Here are some suggestions for addressing the developmental needs of children during progress monitoring activities.

✚ Have a variety of toys and activities available to gain the child's interest. These items can also be used between task items to re-engage or maintain the child's interest while different tasks are presented.

✚ Ask the child to help put away some of the materials or suggest a task they can perform to "be a helper."

✚ Allow for motor or sensory breaks as needed. Young children usually need to move around, and many children seek sensory input.

✚ Be aware of the child's energy level and physical comfort. Depending on the time of day, a child might become hungry, sleepy, or tired during the session. Attempt to accommodate their needs as much as possible. It might be necessary to offer a snack during the session if the child is hungry.

✚ If a child is reluctant to participate, bring some preferred toys out as supports for the child, or to be integrated into the task.

✚ Use age-appropriate language such as "toys" and "games" instead of "test." Encourage the child throughout the session. Set the tone as one of playful fun.

✚ Use appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities. Allow for variation in time, allow practice, reinforce attempts at a task, or allow for motor actions in responding, if appropriate.

✚ Use the child's most familiar way of communicating and allow variation in response modes – for example, accepting a nod instead of a verbal 'yes' response. If a child is a dual-language learner, be aware of cultural norms that might influence responses to tasks.

Adapted from Addressing Unique Needs During Assessments – TATS 2019.

# Planning for Progress Monitoring

Ms. Dee and her paraprofessional, Mr. Will, have set up mathematical thinking activities for groups of children to do with varying levels of adult support. There are activities that allow practice with matching diagonal, horizontal, and vertical pictures, and activities in which children use shapes to create pictures with patterns. Another set of activities, supported by the speech and language pathologist, Ms. Nan, involves identifying and completing patterns. The staff has developed this plan for gathering data and will use results to inform their planning process.

**Below is a blank data collection form for your use in the classroom.**

| Data Collection Plan | |
|---|---|
| **What** skills are being assessed? | *Mathematical Thinking: completing patterns, directionality, constructing models.* |
| **How** are they being assessed? | *Mrs. Dee will use a teacher-made checklist, Mr. Will will photograph children's patterned pictures, and Ms. Nan will collect information specific to student IEP goals.* |
| **When** is a good time to collect data? | *Since adult support is needed for some children, data will be collected when the special educator is in the room, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings during group time.* |
| **Who** will be responsible? | *Each adult is responsible for gathering data for the group with whom they are working.* |
| **How** will the data be shared? | *Data is made available for review and is provided to families on a monthly basis or as needed. The team will meet every two weeks to discuss needed changes to instruction.* |

---

| Data Collection Plan | |
|---|---|
| **What** skills are being assessed? | |
| **How** are they being assessed? | |
| **When** is a good time to collect data? | |
| **Who** will be responsible? | |
| **How** will the data be shared? | |

For individual children, the same elements are used for progress monitoring, but specific to the child's learning needs, so that instruction and supports can be adjusted. Read these examples of progress monitoring and subsequent recommendations as Florencia, Damon, and Mark (introduced in Volume 3) transition to kindergarten.

Florencia is learning English. She has used visual supports, and her teacher has been teaching vocabulary for meaning. She has needed less adult support over time and her confidence has increased.

Florencia's progress is monitored using the Ages and Stages screening tool. Through an interpreter, her teacher tells her family that she is making wonderful progress and explains how the family can continue to support her in becoming fluent in English as well as Spanish.

When transitioning to kindergarten, Florencia will take a Test for English Speakers of Other Languages to see if she will need continued supports.

Damon is making progress with using his cane for Orientation and Mobility (O&M). He receives services, supports, and accommodations through his IEP.

His teachers and paraprofessionals use checklists, observations, and structured tasks to measure his proficiency. The data indicate that Damon is continuing to make good progress toward meeting his IEP goals.

As Damon transitions to kindergarten, the IEP team recommends an inclusion setting with a support facilitator three times a week during English/Language Arts, continued instruction in O&M, brailled materials and tools (nametags, labels, books, slate and stylus), services from an itinerant teacher for the Visually Impaired, and ongoing collaboration between his school and his Division of Blind Services agency provider.

Mark still needs help to stay engaged in group activities and is making very slow progress in using expressive language. He follows a visual schedule and first-then prompts. He is experiencing some success using headphones during music and movement. He requires sensory activities and use of a balance board between pre-academic tasks. Progress monitoring data indicate that he has increased the amount of time engaged in large-group activities and that he is responding to reinforcing successive approximations for following directions.

His teacher and the paraprofessional monitor his progress toward his IEP goals closely and document this every two weeks on a chart.

As Mark transitions to kindergarten, his IEP team recommends a full and individual reevaluation to consider the presence of an additional disability and the ongoing need for specially designed instruction. His current Developmental Delay eligibility ends at age 6, and his progress monitoring data indicates a need for ongoing services. The IEP team recommends an inclusive setting with a co-teacher, and additional intensive interventions in a therapy room to meet his sensory, communication, and behavioral needs.

The presence of data collection for ongoing progress monitoring is evidence of a quality early childhood classroom. Using a problem-solving model to adjust instruction designed in accordance with the principles of UDL allows effective inclusion to set the stage for a child's educational experience and future academic success. For more information on planning for progress monitoring in inclusive early childhood programs, contact your local TATS or FIN representative.

Technical Assistance and Training System (TATS) — http://www.tats.ucf.edu
Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) — http://www.FloridaInclusionNetwork.com

# Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

| Data Collection Plan | |
|---|---|
| **What** skills are being assessed? | |
| **How** are they being assessed? | |
| **When** is a good time to collect data? | |
| **Who** will be responsible? | |
| **How** will the data be shared? | |