



Special Connections

A newsletter connecting our Special Kids, Families and Schools

Curriculum Based Assessment: Measuring Student Progress

By Andrea Ogonosky, Ph.D., LSSP, NCSP

Assessment information is the foundation for building instructional strategies needed to promote academic engagement and learning. The assessment that teachers and parents often use in decision-making and educational planning is taken from norm referenced assessments (standardized achievement tests) that describe the student relative to his or her same age or grade peers. This type of information is valuable for understanding the intellectual and academic strengths and weaknesses of the student. However, it can fall short of measuring academic progress relative to the curricular content of classroom subject matter, or to the extent in which the questions in the standardized achievement test reflect the skills in the specific subject or skill area being taught. Therefore, an alternative method of assessing student academic skills, called Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) can be used.

Curriculum Based Assessment (CBA) is a researched based assessment technique that can help educators facilitate student achievement by aligning the instruction with student learning needs. Assessing student progress using materials taken directly from the school curriculum does this. CBA also helps educators modify instruction based upon measured learning rates. Simply put, CBA provides academic "well checks" on student learning and progress.

CBA is a performance based assessment technique. It is direct, repeated measurement of student performance in the core academic areas of reading, mathematics, spelling, and written language. The salient features of this type of measurement are: it is brief, it is

frequently administered (at least twice a week), it is cost effective, and results are sensitive to slightest skill development over time. An educator provides the brief measurement, called a "probe"; scores and then charts the students' progress on a graph against a predetermined "aim" or goal line. The visual display of the results that include acquisition rate and retention rates of learning are then used to determine which educational interventions are effective and which interventions need to be altered.

The central measure of this instrument is the student's fluency in a particular academic area. Fluency can be described as the speed with which the student is able to produce the correct answers on an academic task. In reading, the fluency measure is correct words read per minute. In math, the fluency measure is the number of digits correctly computed on a worksheet within a two-minute time limit. The major reason for using fluency as a measure in this assessment is that the student needs to demonstrate acquisition of the basic skills that serve as the precursor for movement through the curriculum. If the student does not demonstrate fluency of a certain skill, than the skill must be taught using various interventions to demonstrated mastery before more advanced curriculum is introduced. It is important that a student is taught on his or her instructional level to mastery of skills (fluency) before he or she can successfully navigate through the advanced curriculum. If a student demonstrates mastery of the instructional content then frustration with material is reduced resulting in increased motivation and a reduction of behavioral problems. The fluency measure also provides information on the rate of which a student acquires newly introduced material. Often times the delivery of instruction is given at a rate faster than the student is able to maintain which leads to frustration and difficulties mastering curricular content.

Andrea Ogonosky, Ph.D., LSSP, NCSP is a licensed psychologist who provides consultation to various school districts regarding assessment and interventions in the state of Texas. Dr. Ogonosky received her doctoral degree in school psychology from the Pennsylvania State University. She has worked as a school psychologist, coordinator of assessment and psychological services in Humble ISD, and has presented numerous workshops on assessment, behavior management, instructional interventions, Autism, Bipolar Disorder, and ADHD.

Dr. Ogonosky is currently the President-Elect of the Texas Association of School Psychologists. She has published several articles on issues such as school safety, coping with crisis after September 11, and managing Emotionally Disturbed students in the general education classroom.

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(Continued) Once the rate is known, the teacher can then adjust the pace of delivery of material to match the students, once again increasing the likelihood of progress within the curriculum.

CBA is an assessment tool that matches curriculum objectives, is administered under timed, standardized conditions, and is very sensitive to student growth. When used to monitor a student's progress, the data is valuable in providing the teacher with timely and meaningful feedback about the effectiveness of the instructional interventions introduced to promote student success.

Parent Training for Parents of Students with Special Needs

For more information or to register call 281-897-6452 (seating is limited) Cypress-Fairbanks ISD staff CEU credits will be available.

TRC Meets Cy-Fair ISD Parents

Texas Rehabilitation Commission
Discussion on available services and qualifying criterion for services.
Question and answer session.
September 25, 2003 7:00 - 9:00 PM
10300 Jones Rd. Houston, TX 77065
Conference Rooms 502 C & D

Cy-Fair ISD Parents Meet MHMRA

Mental Health/Mental Retardation Authority will discuss available services and qualifying criterion for services.
Question and answer session.
November 18, 2003 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Boardroom- 10300 Jones Rd. Houston, TX 77065

Guardianship & Special Needs Trust Workshop

"Transfer of Rights" occurs at 18 years of age, who will need or legally be able to make medical or financial choices for your child?
January 20, 2004 7:00 - 9:00 PM
10300 Jones Rd. Houston, TX 77065
Conference Rooms 502 C & D

After High School, What NEXT?

College representatives will present how modifications, accommodations, counseling, tutoring, and support services are offered to students with special needs.
February 10, 2004 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Windfern High School Board Room
12630 Windfern Road, Houston, TX 77065

SSI, SSDI, and Return to Work

Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance, and programs for achieving self-support programs will be discussed. The panel will provide a question & answer session.
March 23, 2004 7:00 - 9:00 PM
Boardroom-10300 Jones Rd. Houston, TX 77065

Upcoming Features

The next issue (Nov/Dec) will have an article: "Parent & School Collaboration in ARD Meetings: Positive Effects for Kids" by Dr. Keith Turner, Associate Professor of Special Ed, Univ. of Texas at Austin.

A new feature of Special Connections this year will be the Parent Perceptions written by Ginger Sewell, parent and educator. Ginger wrote "The ABC's of Parental Preparation for an ARD Meeting" featured last year. Ginger Sewell is the parent of a young adult with a disability and a former Director of Special Education. Currently an educational consultant, she is the recipient of both the Parent of the Year and Professional of the Year awards from the Learning Disabilities Association.

Parent Perceptions: Back To School Fun or Frightening?

Going back to school is an exciting and welcomed event for many children. But not for all, as some children find it a frightening and humiliating time. Children who do not learn as readily as their peers often need the support and the assistance of their parents. And yet we, as parents, often experience those same feelings of fear and misgiving as our children return to school.

How can we as parents be most helpful to our children? We can recognize and acknowledge our own feelings, as well as the feelings of our children. We can serve as a role model by expressing our feelings in a positive and supportive manner to our children, our families, and to the educators working with our children. We can become aware that we communicate 58% our message with our body language and only 7% with our carefully chosen words.

A Message from Nadine Fidler, Assistant Superintendent for Educational Support Services

Welcome to a new school year! I look forward to working with all of you in my new position. I would like to introduce myself to you and share some goals for this school year.

In 1974, I began teaching secondary Social Studies. Finding so many high school students who could not read in my classes, I went back to graduate school to obtain my Master's degree in Special Education. I then taught in a resource room made up of students with learning disabilities, behavior disorders and mental retardation. My last teaching position was in a self-contained classroom for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities. In the 1980's, I served as a special education supervisor in Cypress-Fairbanks and a director of instruction at Labay Middle School. I have been principal at Bleyl Middle School for the past ten years.

My focus will be support of the school district's long range plan, support of our soon to be re-authorized IDEA and implementation of our Corrective Action Plan goals and objectives. I believe all children can learn when given enough time, appropriate programming and supportive adults. Together we can make these goals a reality. This year we will be strengthening the role of the tracking teacher, improving IEP goals to be implemented in the general education classrooms and designing effective behavioral intervention plans. Finally, pre-referral interventions for general educators will be stressed.

It is my pleasure to have the opportunity to work with all of you. Thank you for your dedication to success for children with disabilities.