Indicator: All teachers maintain a record of each student's mastery of specific learning objectives. (5115)

Explanation: The best formative assessment is that kept by teachers tracking each student's progress in mastering learning objectives. This enables the teacher to modify learning plans, accelerate students who achieve early mastery, and provide support (or modifying plans) for students lagging behind. A record of student mastery of learning objectives is also a valuable communication tool to let parents know how their children are progressing.

Questions: Does your school provide teachers with a standard template to record student mastery of learning objectives? Are the records kept on paper, or does your school provide an electronic system? Do your Instructional Teams use the data from these records to modify unit plans? Do teachers use the record to adjust their learning plans? Who reviews the teachers' records?

Robert Slavin (in Cotton, 1998) wrote, "Imagine an archer who shoots an arrow at a target but never finds out how close to the bulls'-eye the arrows fall. The archer wouldn't be very accurate to begin with, and would certainly never improve accuracy. Similarly effect teaching requires that teachers be constantly aware of the effects of their instruction" (p. 6). Teachers have all kinds of methods to gather information about their students and more importantly, their students' learning. Redding (2007) gives one such example, "Unit tests are constructed to give teachers a good idea of a student's current level of mastery of the objectives without taking a great amount of time to administer" (p. 104).

Administering unit tests is just one way of measuring student learning. Effective schooling research "identifies the practice of monitoring student learning as an essential component of high quality education" (Cotton, 1998, p. 1). The purpose of monitoring student learning is to be able to track progress, give meaningful feedback, and make instructional decisions. Achievement tests are one such method of collecting this type of data, but they happen less frequently and results are not immediate enough for teachers to use to alter or adjust their instruction in such a way that will affect student learning immediately. The types of decisions teachers are making every day (instructional pacing, student placement, differentiating assignments and grouping) are made on the monitoring and records of daily work that the teacher needs to have at her/his fingertips. With this information in hand, teachers can "compare a student's progress to the rate of improvement needed to meet end-of-year goals" (Safer & Fleischman, 2005).

For Special Education

In order to meet the higher expectations of current standards-based systems, educators need information that can be used to project how students are doing against the grade-level standards throughout the course of the year so they can determine what needs to be done to accelerate student progress toward the proficiency standards and goals identified on students' IEP's. Progress monitoring techniques can provide that information. Although the promise of progress monitoring is great, the techniques are not universally used, nor are they universally understood in the context of standards-based reform.

Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) are among many (Fuchs & Deno, 1991; Helwig, Heath, & Tindal, 2000; Langenfeld, Thurlow, & Scott, 1997; Lindsey, 1990; Marston, 1989; Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991; Stecker & Fuchs, 2000; Stiggins, 2001; Wiggins & McTigue, 1998) who have emphasized that it is essential to have assessment that involves the ongoing collection and use of information to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) also emphasized the need for implementation of continuous progress monitoring. There seems to be growing recognition among educators, researchers, and policymakers of the need for more widespread use of progress monitoring with students with disabilities, that is, a set of techniques for assessing student performance on a regular and frequent basis.

Successful implementation of progress monitoring is not just a matter of picking an approach or a combination of approaches. Regardless of methods used, progress monitoring approaches in a standards-based assessment and accountability system must include defined strategies for scoring, analyzing, reporting and tracking data, and defined strategies for creating meaning from the data gathered across all sources to develop effective improvement plans.

Source: Quenemoen, R., Thurlow, M., Moen, R., Thompson, S., & Morse, A. B. *Progress Monitoring in an Inclusive Standards-based Assessment and Accountability System* (Synthesis Report 53). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota. National Center on Educational Outcomes. February 2004.

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