T/TAC Link Lines

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2006

Getting the Right Data
By Sharon deFur, Ed.D., and Lori Korinek, Ph.D.

Do you feel like you are drowning in data? You have SOL data, practice test data, test grades, homework, and standardized tests, not to mention daily mental or written observations of individual students or assessments made by related service providers. You must monitor progress of students with disabilities on IEP goals as well as progress in the general curriculum. *WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?*

This T/TAC newsletter focuses on helping educators meet these requirements by carefully choosing the right data and then connecting these data to instruction. This approach to progress monitoring promotes individual student achievement in the general curriculum.

Progress Monitoring Steps
Progress monitoring includes four essential steps:

Step 1: Identify goals directly aligned with curriculum or student needs.
Alignment with SOL targets and/or IEP goals helps ensure that the focus of data collection is access to, and success in, the general education curriculum. Progress monitoring begins with this end clearly in mind.

Step 2: Collect relevant data on a frequent basis.
Assessments should produce data directly tied to goals for which teachers and students are held accountable. Frequent data collection (daily and weekly) allows educators to <u>catch</u> mistakes early, <u>re-teach</u> when needed, and <u>accelerate</u> instruction where possible. Observations, samples of student work, rubrics, and other informal assessments make frequent data collection possible and instruction more efficient.

Inside this issue …

Step 3: Analyze data using visual means to interpret student progress. Using graphs, charts, or other visual means of comparing student performance to a standard makes the degree of progress real. Too frequently, educators stop progress monitoring at data collection. Researchers agree that *merely* collecting curriculum-based data *does not* impact student achievement. Rather, the strongest outcomes result from analyzing information and then reflecting on instructional practices (Deno, 2003; Fuchs & Fuchs, n.d.; Green, Alderman, & Liechty, 2004; Jackson, Harper, & Jackson, n.d.). When appropriate, accelerate instructional goals to close the instructional gap for students with disabilities!

Please remember that student achievement does not happen in a vacuum. Students' academic progress is also influenced by personal contexts, the utility of their individual accommodations or modifications, and the supportive climate of the general school environment. Understanding what your data mean and imply must happen within these contexts.

Step 4: Make instructional decisions based on careful interpretation of the data. Instructional decisions include whether you maintain your current instruction or whether to change students' goals, interventions, groupings, methods, accommodations, modifications, or other aspects of curriculum and instruction. IDEA 2004 and NCLB mandate that progress monitoring and reporting examine the degree to which students' academic and functional achievement approximates that of their nondisabled peers while keeping high expectations at the forefront.

Benefits of Progress Monitoring
Progress monitoring promotes achievement. In addition, Deno (2003) identified improving IEPs, enhancing teacher planning, predicting performance, enhancing communication, measuring growth, formulating screening and evaluation alternatives as effects of progress monitoring. Local Virginia special educators (who, unlike participants in Deno's studies, used both formal and informal measures to monitor progress) gave their opinions about progress monitoring benefits at a focus group conducted at the College of William and Mary (deFur, 2005). These, Virginia special educators reported that progress monitoring focuses instruction and avoids wasting time on skills already mastered, enabling teachers to identify skill areas needing additional instruction while making program changes more responsively. Participants described instruction as more specific, accurate, and informed. Improved instructional differentiation and curriculum pacing were also noted. The comment was made that progress monitoring "fixes errors in thinking." Fixing errors in thinking changes how we teach and improves outcomes for students with disabilities.

"Enhanced communication" pervaded the dialogue about systematic progress monitoring among these educators. They reported "significantly improved" communication with parents and "facilitation of" a shared understanding of the child's progress and instructional needs, which led to improved parent satisfaction. Virginia special educators noted that sharing monitoring results with students increased student motivation levels and self-monitoring skills. They expressed the hope that general educators would collect or use the information provided by progress monitoring to help differentiate instruction to more universally design instruction for all students.

You Can Do It!

Progress monitoring does not have to feel so daunting. To begin, start small. Partner with a co-teacher or grade-level teammate who can support your efforts. Choose one critical goal or objective for a student or the class and pre-assess. Choose the best (i.e., most efficient and effective) tool(s) that capture student performance data that YOU can reasonably collect and review (talk about) on a regular basis. Choices include formal measures such as valid and reliable classroom, SOL, and other state assessments. Informal measures include assignment rubrics, behavioral observations, grades, student work samples, and video or audio tapes. Students may be involved through procedures such as self-charting, portfolio development, and use of rubrics. Talk about your results with someone. Tell them what worked and what didn't. Explore why. Brainstorm what you should do next. Decide your next instructional step that will move your students forward in their academic achievement. Consider how you will make progress monitoring an integral part of your instructional practice.

Progress monitoring remains powerful and is worth the effort when students, families, teachers, and administrators thoughtfully engage in a process of frequent data collection, display, analysis, conversation, and reflective instructional decision-making. This newsletter gives you many ideas for using progress monitoring as part of your effective teaching repertoire.

References

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Collaborating for Student Success
(Workshop for Middle and High School Principals)

The Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP) and the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL), in collaboration with the Virginia Department of Education and The College of William and Mary are offering workshops for middle and high school principals interested in the challenge of collaborative teaching. Marilyn Friend will be the featured workshop presenter.

Dates and Locations

January 29, 2007	Williamsburg	March 26, 2007	Richmond
January 30, 2007	Fredericksburg	March 27, 2007	Lynchburg

Registration is complimentary only for middle and high school principals on a first-come first serve basis. Advance registration is required for all participants. To download the brochure and registration form, visit http://www.vassp.org/conference_schedule.htm.

Collaborative Leadership
Collaborating at the VDOE
By Wayne Barry, Specialist

The August 14, 2006, publication of the IDEA regulations seems to have created a new wave of interest and concern about the response-to-intervention (RtI) provision of that law. Most of us can readily recall the first wave of concern during the public hearings that preceded the law's signing. However, Response to intervention has been a concern to researchers and educators for more than 20 years. Use of RtI procedures for determining eligibility for special education services is only one aspect of RtI's importance. Very little appreciation has been expressed in the literature for how this provision in the law will continue to improve *instruction* for all children. The importance of RtI for instruction has not escaped the notice of several individuals in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), however.

In June, 2005, Doug Cox, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services for the Commonwealth of Virginia and then-President of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), and Cindy Cave, Director of the Office of Student Services, asked Don Fleming and Diane Gillam, specialists in the Division of Special Education and Student Services, respectively, to assemble an interdisciplinary group of educators to examine the RtI provisions in what would become the re-authorized version of IDEA. Accordingly, a group comprised of special educators, Title 1 specialists, and general education specialists in reading, math, and science began meeting regularly. The group included individuals who had been teachers at some point in their professional careers as well as individuals who had administrative experience. In March 2006, I joined and began to co-lead this group.

Workgroup members have pored over volumes of information, research reports, and PowerPoint presentations related to RtI, from experts and professional organizations. Individual members have attended a variety of "webinars" and telephone conference calls, and the group hosted a four-hour presentation on student progress monitoring by consultants from the American Institute for Research. The highlight of the group's training, however, was the attendance of the four team members–two from "general ed" and two from "special ed"– at a conference in Kansas City sponsored by the National Research Center on Learning Disabilities (NRCLD). This four-person contingent of general and special educators from Virginia appeared to be unique in its heterogeneous composition.   While we had gone to the conference feeling we might be a little bit "behind the 8-ball" in developing a state-sanctioned RtI response, we left the conference feeling a little bit "ahead of the game" upon learning that states appearing to be further along in implementation of RtI identified their major stumbling block to RtI implementation as getting "general ed buy-in." We in Virginia already had it.

Collaboration on RtI exists not only at the higher levels of DOE but also at the highest federal levels. The Council of Chief State School Officers has had a subgroup collaborating on IDEA and NCLB *since 1999*. Readers are encouraged to visit its website at http://www.ccsso.org and after clicking on "Projects" (by name), scroll down to "IDEA Partnership." It was refreshing to learn of general education-special education collaboration at the highest levels. This collaboration informs our ongoing efforts to soon provide school divisions in the Commonwealth with a guidance document that will capture and direct our collaborative energies. We welcome those of you who are inclined to join your efforts to our own in providing the best instructional services available to children in the Commonwealth. Our children deserve nothing less.

Check It Out!

The following materials are available on loan from the T/TAC William and Mary lending library. To request materials, please call 1-800-323-4489 and leave a message. The materials will be sent to you along with a postage-paid return mailer. A complete listing of professional resources available through the T/TAC William and Mary lending library may be viewed at http://www.wm.edu/ttac. Simply click on the "Library" link to view holdings, complete an online search, or order materials.

Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement
By Victoria L. Bernhardt

Targeted toward non-statisticians, *Data Analysis for Comprehensive Schoolwide Improvement* shows how to gather, analyze, and use information to improve all aspects of a school. Using examples from real schools at both the elementary and high school levels, this book examines why data make a difference in school improvement, and what data to use. The book also presents tools to help educators make better decisions based on data. **(TS 75)**

Strategies for Integrating Reading and Writing in Middle and High School Classrooms
By Karen Wood and Janis Harmon

Full of practical research-based strategies, this book provides both theory and examples of incorporating reading and writing across all content areas to improve student performance. Classroom strategies for each content area are provided to actively engage students in reading and writing to improve student understanding and interest.
(CRD 180)

CHAMPS: A Proactive and Positive Approach to Classroom Management for Grades K-9
By Randall Sprick, Mickey Garrison, and Lisa Howard

Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, and Participation, CHAMPs focuses on clarifying and teaching expectations for these categories regarding every major activity or transition in your classroom. The book walks teachers through clearly defining their expectations for students, communicating those expectations, and teaching them to students. Worksheets and timelines help develop a positive approach to focusing time and attention on acknowledging responsible behavior. **(BM 186)**

Foundations: Establishing Positive Discipline Policies
By Randall Sprick, Marilyn Sprick, and Mickey Garrison

A set of six videotapes with guides, *Foundations: Establishing Positive Discipline Policies* is designed to assist schools in developing a comprehensive school plan for improving discipline and teaching student responsibility. This program works toward creating a solid base of consistent, positive behavior management techniques. A step-by-step process outlines how to organize a team, evaluate current practice, design a schoolwide plan, and implement and maintain that plan. **(BM 122)**

Family Partnerships
Tips for Parents: Monitoring Your Child's Educational Progress
By Donna Bayly, M.Ed., and Tina Spencer, M.S.

Parents and teachers work together to share the responsibility for educating students. As the middle of the school year approaches, parents may be wondering if their child is mastering the curriculum while meeting the goals and objectives written at an educational planning meeting. At that meeting, those goals and objectives would have been outlined in an **Individualized Education Plan** (IEP) or other student improvement plan.   Due to the pressure of state and district testing and the impact of those test scores on future educational planning for students, parents may not feel confident that their child is making adequate progress.

The following is a list of questions that parents can ask in order to get an objective measure of their child's progress.

- What are the Standards of Learning (SOLs) my child is expected to know at this grade level? Are the students given practice tests? Will I receive the scores of those tests? Are there online practice tests?
- Does my child take division tests? What do these test measure? When are they given? Will I receive the results of those tests?
- How can I help my child prepare for tests at home?
- Is my child using the accommodations/modifications outlined in his/her educational plan? Do they continue to be appropriate?
- Could you clarify my child's progress or lack of progress in more detail? Could a mid-year meeting be scheduled? I would like to share with teachers what I see at home and would like to gather information about what they see in school.
- What remediation or supplemental services are available for my child after school or during the school day?
- What is the best way for us to share information and feedback about my child's academic and social progress (e.g., phone, e-mail, student planners) in addition to the annual planning meetings?
- Should my child be included in educational planning meetings?
- How might I help reinforce school rules and expected classroom behaviors?

If your child is not making satisfactory progress or is suspected of having a learning disability, he may need a referral to the Child Study Team at your school. This team will review all concerns and records of past educational testing and make recommendations. As your child's parent, you may initiate this request.

If your child already has an IEP or other services plan, ask for a meeting to review/revise that plan at any time during the school year to address your concerns. Staying informed of your child's academic progress will give you the necessary resources to become an effective partner in your child's education.

References
Berger, E.H. (2004). *Parents as partners in education.* Columbus, OH: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.
Callison, W.L. (2004). *Raising test scores using parent involvement.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Education.

Training for Autism Educators and Service Providers
2006-2007

Southeastern Cooperative Educational Programs (SECEP) is pleased to offer training for professionals working with students with autism or related disorders. SECEP has established itself as a regional program in southeastern Virginia, serving students throughout Chesapeake, Franklin, Isle of Wight, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Southampton County, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach, by providing effective assessment and programming for students within the autism spectrum.

A registration fee of $100 per participant per workshop includes materials, snacks, and lunch. All workshops will be held at the SECEP facility in Norfolk. Free parking is available on site.

Workshop Schedule

Behavior Intervention Strategies for Students with Autistic Spectrum Disorders
October 25, 2006, or February 28, 2007

Social Skills Strategies for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
November 29, 2006, or March 21, 2007

Instructional Strategies for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
January 31, 2007, or April 25, 2007

If you are interested in receiving additional information, visit www.secep.net or contact:

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Instructional Support Teams Discussion Board
T/TAC Online

The IST Discussion Board has been designed to facilitate communication and resource sharing among the existing and new IST sites in Regions 2 and 3. On the Discussion Board, teachers can post questions or comments and reply to questions or comments. Project Specialists from T/TAC William and Mary will also be available on the Discussion Board to guide and facilitate discussions. Visit online at http://www.wm.edu/ttac/discussion/index.php and request access to the Discussion Board. For more information, contact Donni Stickney (dlstic@wm.edu) or Fritz Geissler (fdgeis@wm.edu).

Newport News Bus Drivers Leave No Child Behind!
By Denyse Doerries, Ph.D.

Imagine educating 54 students with your back to them and only a small mirror to check on their progress. That is the job of school bus drivers! The Newport News Public Schools (NNPS) Department of Transportation is developing an effective discipline model to make the bus drivers' job more manageable. As part of this effort, the transportation department is participating with five Newport News schools (Crittenden Middle School, Gildersleeve Middle School, Passage Middle School, Dozier Middle School, and South Morrison Elementary School) in the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Effective Schoolwide Discipline (ESD) priority project in conjunction with ODU and W&M T/TAC. The ESD project is a multi-layered proactive model that views discipline as an opportunity to teach new behaviors.

The Director of Transportation, Frank Labrecque, along with his ESD team (Planning Coordinator, James Bryant; Safety and Training Coordinator, Linda Hamilton; Key Bus Driver, Zorina Williams; and Area Managers, Beverly Young, Ellen Charles, and Renee Robinson), are partnering with these five schools to align their discipline and intervention strategies. The five school-based ESD teams and the transportation department ESD team are working to establish a clear set of positively stated expectations for appropriate behaviors, preventive strategies that include teaching the expected behaviors, a continuum of procedures for encouraging these behaviors, and methods for ongoing data collection and analysis. The transportation department thinks of the buses as mobile classrooms that teach appropriate behavior and examines behavior by considering the "quality of the transportation services" and how this relates to student behavior.

The following are the ESD steps translated by Mr. Bryant and his ESD team from a schoolwide discipline model to an "effective buswide discipline" model. Mr. Bryant and his team are charting new territory, since typically such programs are designed primarily for schools.

Step 1: Secure administrative support.
This step was already established through the enthusiastic support and coordination of Mr. Jake Wilson, Program Administrator, and Mr. Frank Labrecque, Director of Transportation.

Step 2: Form a leadership team.
Because ESD is a long-term initiative (3-5 years), this step involves creating a leadership team. The leadership teams guides and directs the process of implementation and is representative of the stakeholders.

Step 3: Examine the practices that presently exist.
Align current positive behavior interventions with the ESD policies and procedures to make a "good fit."

The transportation department already provides intensive professional development and coaching to the bus drivers embedded within a multi-layer team structure of school-based and division-wide bus problem-solving teams. The department established teams of bus drivers at each school led by "key bus drivers" who support and help each other problem solve around challenging behaviors and issues. The key bus drivers, in addition to being experienced drivers, also receive additional ongoing training through regular meetings with area coordinators. Educating the teams and getting buy-in from the bus drivers for ESD can occur through these already established teams.

Step 4: Collect and analyze data.
Mr. Bryant and his team assessed the current baseline data concerning types of bus referrals, when they occurred, where they occurred, on what buses they occurred, the experience of that bus driver, the length of the bus routes, the number of students on the bus, and the number of times a student was referred. A new school bus disciplinary or intervention form was developed to assist the bus drivers in dealing with day-to-day problems. These forms are completed and discussed with the "key bus drivers" before an action is taken. The Incident Referral Form, which is turned into the schools, is also being changed in collaboration with the school-based teams and coordinating team.

After the initial data were collected and analyzed, Mr. Bryant and his team brainstormed ways that problems on the buses could be addressed. From this discussion, proactive, preventive strategies were created. For example, the data showed that 10% of bus drivers accounted for 48% of bus referrals. By looking more closely at the variables related to those 10%, a number of interventions were developed (e.g., bus routes were changed to shorten the ride, master bus drivers mentored less experienced bus drivers, the most experienced bus drivers were placed on the most challenging buses, a positive reinforcement system was established for the buses). Other proactive strategies that the team discussed included the importance of establishing positive relationships between driver and riders, focusing on teaching appropriate student behaviors instead of relying too heavily on the use of punishment, greeting each child by name, creating a system for organizing seating arrangements, and creating a few clear rules.

Step 5: Create an action plan to include positive reinforcement systems to encourage appropriate behaviors.
The ESD team is in the process of planning additional professional development to address increasing positive reinforcement for appropriate behaviors as well as ways to share data with the bus drivers.

The Newport News Transportation Department ESD team believes that appropriate behaviors need to be taught and that NNPS, in actuality, has 414 mobile classrooms and 399 mobile teachers. What an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of students!

T/TAC, College of William and Mary

Welcomes

Franklin City   Lancaster County   Portsmouth City   Stafford County

Members of the 2006-07 Cohort of the Virginia Transition Outcomes Project

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Writing Instruction: *A Way of Life* for Teachers and Students
By Louise LeBron, M.S.

Ernest Hemmingway was once asked what frightened him the most, and he replied, "A blank sheet of paper" (Schmidt, 2004). Mr. Hemmingway possessed powerful writing skills, yet he feared the blank page. It is understandable that some students, particularly those with limited writing skills, face the same fear when asked to complete writing tasks.

What makes these tasks daunting is the increased demand for written communication. Our reliance on technology for communication, specifically email and faxes, requires students to be proficient with written communication as never before (Chapman & King, 2003). Indeed, writing has become *a way of life* in school, in social settings, and in the work place. Research on literacy supports that content area instruction that integrates writing improves literacy for students at all ability levels (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). Teachers in all academic areas must integrate writing instruction into essential content instruction. This can be challenging for both teachers and students.

For teachers incorporating writing into their content material the following approach may be helpful (Chapman & King, 2003; Gravois & Gickling, 2003; Wood & Harmon, 2001).

- Take inventory of your feelings and beliefs about teaching writing
- Create a climate for writing
- Know the writer(s)
- Use written products to authentically assess student understanding of content essential knowledge
- Use written products to authentically assess student understanding of the writing domains **(See Insert)**
- Differentiate writing instruction to improve writing skills and understanding of essential content. **(See Insert)**

Writing skills may be taught to a variety of learners at both the elementary and secondary instructional levels across all academic areas. Teachers who use this approach experience positive student outcomes, including the following:

- Students demonstrate the degree of their understanding of what has been taught based on the content of their written products.
- Students learn to manipulate words to form complete sentences that demonstrate an understanding of the text.
- Written responses give students the opportunity to use key vocabulary from the text to increase vocabulary development.
- Students learn to reference the text in order to retrieve examples as support for statements and opinions.
- Students learn, review, and apply spelling, capitalization, and punctuation rules.

Written language skills are critical for mastering essential content in each academic area. Teachers must be deliberate, analytical, strategic, sensitive, and creative in their quest to integrate writing into their content area instruction.

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National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). Report of the national reading panel: *Teaching children to read: Findings and determinations of the national reading panel by topic areas.* Retrieved July 11, 2003, from http://nichd.nih.gov/publications/nrp/findings.htm

Schmidt, L. (2004). Is there a Hemingway in the house? *Educational Leadership, 64,* 42-45.

Wood, K. D., & Harmon, J. M. (2001). *Strategies for integrating reading & writing in middle and high school classrooms.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association**.**

Additional Resources: See the *Instructional Strategies That Support Authentic Assessment Within the Domains of Writing* insert for additional resources and strategies.

Transition Time
Connecting Virginia's Standards of Learning
to Secondary Transition Planning
By Debbie Grosser, M.Ed., and Dale Pennell, C.A.S.

Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) identify academic content and skills students must learn in order to be successful in school. Application of these standards facilitates successful transition to adult life for students with disabilities. Annual goals and activities that support transition planning may be most efficiently addressed through the general education curriculum, as the following examples illustrate.

Course	Transition Activity	SOL	Behavior for Annual Goal
English	Review the website for the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities to identify the services they provide	English 9.9 The student will use print, electronic databases, and on-line resources to access information	Use available technology to identify adult services that can support Robin's adjustment to adult life
Govt	Identify the steps and complete the process for receiving a driver's license	VA/US Government 17d The student will demonstrate knowledge of personal character traits that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in civic life by d) practicing respect for the law	Pass the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles' road test to obtain a driver's license
Science	Plan efficient travel routes to and from school, work, and home	Earth Science 3c The student will investigate and understand how to read and interpret maps globes, models, charts, and imagery. Key concepts include: c) direction and measurements of distance on any map or globe	Use the legend and compass rose on a city map to determine directionality and distance from one point to another
Health	Explain to teachers and employers the nature of his/her disability, its impact on learning, and accommodations needed for successful performance	Health 10.2a The student will analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the protective factors related to achieving and maintaining a sound mind and healthy body throughout life. Key concepts/skills include: a) the power of assertiveness	Demonstrate the self-determination skill of self-advocacy

This process by which the IEP team blends SOL coursework requirements with transition services may involve the following steps:

1. Review the student's postsecondary goals and identify high school coursework that enables the student to achieve his/her postsecondary goals.
2. Review the student's Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance to identify transition service activities and linkages the student needs.
3. Design appropriate transition services – coursework, transition activities, and adult agency linkages.
4. Determine the coursework and activities around which annual goals should be developed to support the student's academic and functional achievement.
5. Review the SOL knowledge and skills the student must master during the ensuing IEP cycle. Then determine points of alignment between the transition services and SOL courses the student is taking.
6. Write annual goals that support these points of alignment.

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Old Dominion University T/TAC

Old Dominion University is responsible for training and technical assistance for Regions 2 and 3 in early childhood special education/primary developmental delay (through age 9) and severe disabilities. You may contact T/TAC ODU at (757) 683-4333, or 1-888-249-5529, or visit their website at http://www.ttac.odu.edu.