

Monitoring Student Progress Toward Meeting IEP Goals

Monitoring a student's progress toward meeting her IEP goals is critical to determining whether the services and supports outlined in the IEP are providing her with educational benefit. In fact, IDEA requires IEP teams to document how student progress will be measured. However, regardless of what method schools select to measure student progress, administrators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that progress monitoring takes place.

A student's progress should be monitored in a frequent and ongoing manner so that educators can respond quickly if the student is not making adequate progress or is making more progress than anticipated. The information below outlines a systematic approach to monitoring a student's progress. It describes how to select a progress monitoring measure, collect and graph the data, and analyze that data to make informed decisions.



Step 1: Choose a measurement tool

Choosing the appropriate measurement tool is a critical first step in monitoring student progress. Administrators should keep several considerations in mind when doing so. The tool should:

- Directly measure the behavior stated in the IEP goal. For each of the goals below, both an example and non-example of a measurement tool that directly measures the target behavior are shown.

Goal: *Given a third-grade level reading passage, Katrina will read aloud at a rate of 115 words correct per minute (wpm) by the end of the school year.*

Example Measure: oral reading fluency assessment

Non-example Measure: end-of-chapter comprehension test

Goal: *By the end of October, Vladimir will initiate at least one positive peer-to-peer interaction (e.g., asking to play, saying "Hi") during the 20-minute morning recess, 3 out of 5 days, for 4 consecutive weeks.*

Example Measure: count frequency of behavior based on an observation

Non-example Measure: teacher's subjective impression of the student's peer skills

- Be feasible for the context (e.g., brief; easy to administer on a regular basis; non-disruptive to the student, the lesson, or to other students).
- Be valid and reliable whether measuring academics or behavior.

i FYI

The National Center on Intensive Intervention’s tools charts are designed to help educators select reliable and valid academic and behavioral progress monitoring measures.

Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Charts

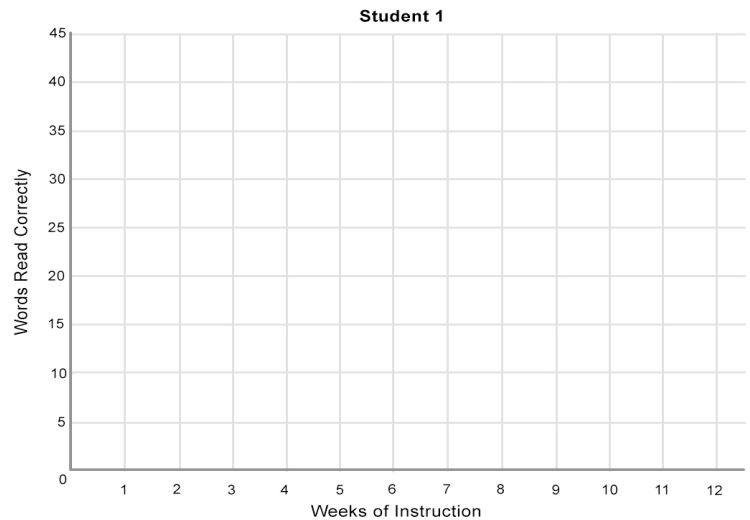
<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/chart/progress-monitoring>

Behavior Progress Monitoring Tools Charts

<https://charts.intensiveintervention.org/chart/behavioral-progress-monitoring-tools>

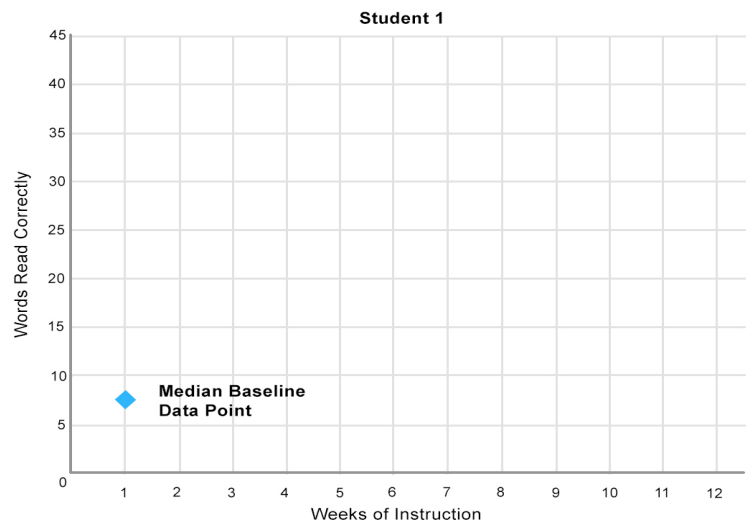
Step 2: Create a graph

Educators are more likely to use data when those data are easy to understand. When educators, students, and parents view a visual representation of the data, such as a graph, they can quickly and clearly see the student’s progress. Note that on the graph to the right, the vertical axis represents the range of possible scores a student can obtain on the selected measure, whereas the horizontal axis represents the weeks of instruction.



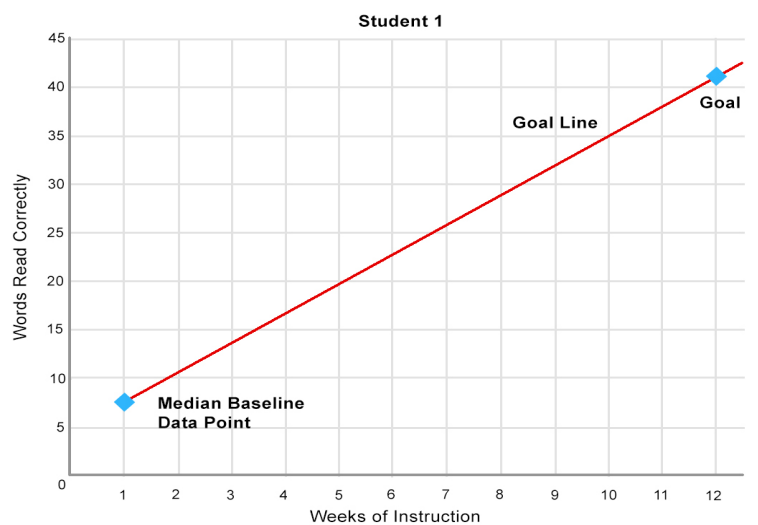
Step 3: Collect current baseline data

It is important to document a student’s current level of performance. *Baseline data* is the measure of the level of a student’s academic or behavioral performance before a change (e.g., one of the supports identified in the IEP) is implemented. An educator should collect enough baseline data to establish a stable, clear picture of the extent of the academic or behavioral problem. Baseline performance can usually be established with three to five data points. Once the data are collected, the teacher should identify the median score, the score that falls in the middle when scores are ordered from lowest to highest. For example, if a student receives scores of 5, 7, and 8, the median is 7. This score should be plotted on the graph.



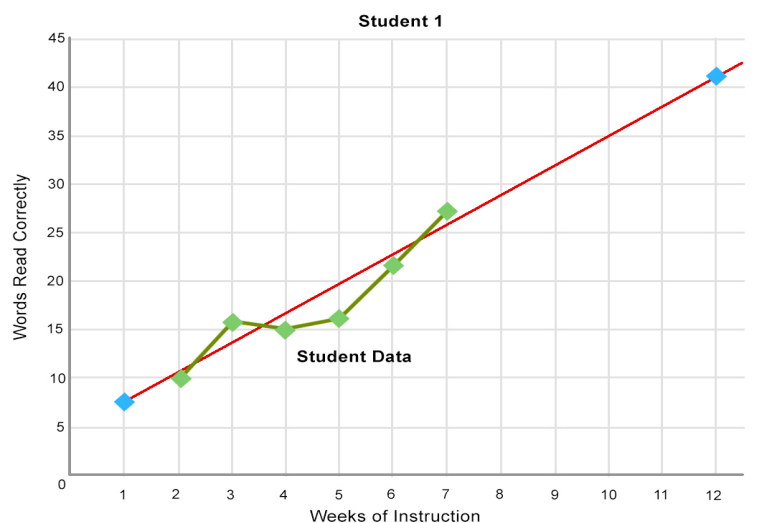
Step 4: Establish a goal line

Adding a goal line to a graph allows an educator to quickly determine whether the student is on target to reach the identified goal within the established timeframe. The *goal line* is a line drawn from the median baseline score to the expected end-of-year goal. Once an educator has plotted the median baseline data point, she can then plot the end-of-year goal (e.g., 115 words correct per minute) and draw a line between the two points. Often, educators identify and plot a short-term goal (e.g., a nine-week goal) and draw a line between it and the baseline data point. Doing so helps students gauge whether, in the short-term, they are on track to meet their end-of-year goal. Short-term goals also help keep students motivated to improve their performance.



Step 5: Collect data on each IEP goal regularly

Educators should collect data on each IEP goal on a regular basis (e.g., every two weeks, monthly). Actually, IDEA regulations require that the IEP team document how frequently they will monitor this progress. Administrators can facilitate this process by making certain that an identified data-collection schedule is in place. Additionally, administrators should make certain that the educators responsible for data collection have the expertise necessary to use the measure, whether academic or behavioral. When applicable, administrators should make sure that educators receive adequate training.

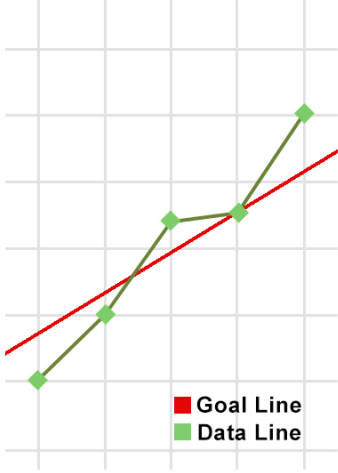
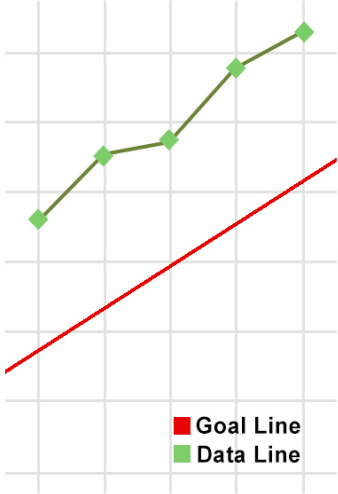
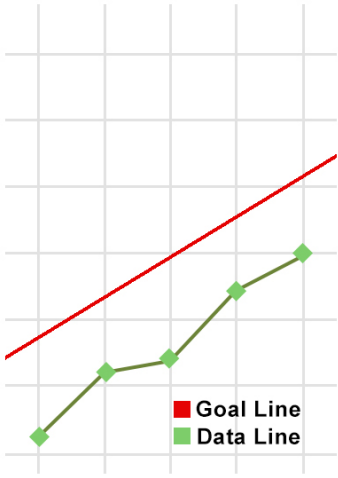


As data are collected, educators should plot them on the student's graph to create a visual representation of her performance. Keep in mind that most commercially available programs have graphing capabilities.

Step 6: Review data often and make instructional decisions

One step educators frequently overlook when monitoring student progress is to create a plan for regular data review. By reviewing a student's progress throughout the year, school personnel, as well as parents, can reasonably predict whether the student will achieve the goals specified in the IEP by the end of the year. The administrator should make sure that there is a process in place to ensure that every student's performance is reviewed on a regular basis (e.g., every nine weeks).

Once a minimum of six data points have been collected, a student’s performance can be evaluated. One way educators can do this is by using the Four-Point Method, which involves examining the relationship between the four most recent data points and the goal line on the student’s graph. Using this information, educators can make a data-based instructional decision. This ensures that any necessary changes to instruction will be made in a timely manner. The table below illustrates how to use this method to interpret the student’s data and make the corresponding instructional decision.

Student Graph	Interpretation of Student Data	Instructional Decision
 <p>The graph shows a red line representing the goal and a green line with diamond markers representing the student's data. The data line starts below the goal line but crosses it and remains above it for the final four data points.</p>	<p>If most of the points are on or above the goal line, the student is making appropriate progress.</p>	<p>No instructional changes are needed.</p>
 <p>The graph shows a red line representing the goal and a green line with diamond markers representing the student's data. The data line is consistently above the goal line, especially for the last four points.</p>	<p>If most of the points are significantly above the goal line, the data indicate that the student is making more progress than expected.</p>	<p>It might be necessary for the IEP team to reconvene to review the student’s goal to make sure that it is challenging and ambitious.</p>
 <p>The graph shows a red line representing the goal and a green line with diamond markers representing the student's data. The data line is consistently below the goal line throughout the entire period.</p>	<p>If most of the points are below the goal line, the data indicate that the student is not making appropriate progress.</p>	<p>An instructional change should be made to help the student achieve the identified goal. If the student does not make appropriate progress across time, the IEP team should reconvene to discuss possible actions.</p>

Step 7: Communicate Progress to Parents

IDEA regulations require that the IEP team not only document how they will measure a student's progress toward meeting her IEP goals but also that they must provide parents with periodic reports of their child's progress (e.g., quarterly reports, reports concurrent with the issuance of report cards). Graphs provide a visual representation of the child's progress. Having a visual representation, rather than a list of scores, makes it easier for parents to know whether their child is making progress.