

LEARNING MODULE #5 Part 2 of 2

MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

2. Portfolio Assessment

Another way of collecting data is through the use of portfolios. The portfolios can contain information from all of the people involved with the student: teachers, teaching assistants, therapists, etc. Video taped segments can be part of the portfolio. This is especially useful for those students who do not perform as well for some individuals as others, or on a consistent basis. Portfolio content should reflect day-to-day activities and will be the basis for revising objectives.

A portfolio containing video samples provides a permanent visual document that can be reviewed at any time. It helps to provide a smooth transition from one year to the next, with different teachers, schools, therapists, etc. Some problems with video samples include actually getting someone to do the videotaping and editing it. The other problem is getting people to actually spend the time looking at the videos.

3. Symbol Assessment

The student may use more than one type of symbolic representation (e.g., real object choices combined with some large coloured photographs). Beukelman and Mirenda have identified four areas of assessment in order of difficulty: (*Augmentative and Alternative Communication, Management of Severe Communication Disorders in Children and Adults*, by D.R. Beukelman & P. Mirenda, 1992).

- a) **Receptive language labeling** where the student is asked to select the item requested when given a choice of two or more symbols.
A "yes/no" questioning format can be used to also indicate receptive language.
- b) **Visual matching** requires that the student select the picture or symbol, or word, which matches the object.
- c) **Question and answer testing** involves the student selecting a correct symbol or word in response to a knowledge-based question (e.g., what did you have for dinner?)

d) **Requesting format** involves assessing the individual's ability to request something or someone in context. The situation is arranged to provide the student with opportunities to request objects or activities by speaking or by selecting one symbol or object without being asked. Indirect cues may be used such as "What do you feel like doing?" Here is an example:



Data collection forms have been designed based on Beukelman and Mirenda's paradigm. These are in the **Reference Section (Assessing Symbol Use for Communication and Assessment of Symbol Use for Communication)**.

4. Re-Assessment Using Formal Measures

You could use the assessment tools that were used initially to see if there has been any progress. There are some problems with this approach, however. The assessment tools generally sample skill areas, and may not be specific enough to identify actual progress. Students may also score higher on a re-administration of a measure because of a practice effect. In general, students should receive higher scores simply because of their overall increase in developmental level.

5. Evaluating the Information

In the Reference Section for this module, there are several sample blank data collection forms that school teams can use to collect information on student's achievement.

As mentioned earlier, another way of collecting data is through the use of videotaping. This is especially useful for those students who do not perform consistently with different people, in different situations or on different days. The video provides a permanent visual document that can be reviewed at any time.

When documenting by paper, it is important to look at all the elements involved in the task and to try to record relevant data. For example, when answering questions from a story by looking at one of three pictures, the instructor should record if the question was answered correctly and what position the correct card was in (left, middle, right). If the student gave an incorrect response, information should also be recorded about the position of the incorrect picture card, so that the instructor can determine if there is a position bias.

Reference Section

- Refer to the Reference Section for this module for an example of this type of data collection, in the document called "Question Comprehension Data Sample."

All documentation should be dated and the instructor identified. Again, this can provide some good information. For example, perhaps the student consistently does not perform well on Friday afternoons. Perhaps the student does better on a certain task with one instructor versus another. What elements have changed in the situation? One instructor may perform the task slightly differently than another. Perhaps the student is more motivated when working with classmates rather than with adults. Perhaps a certain task is performed more accurately and reliably earlier in the day or week.

Once the data has been collected, the teacher, therapists, and resource teacher need to determine how the student is doing. They will want to know whether the student is making progress, holding his own, or is slipping. Changes or modifications to the student's program can be done at this time as well. Relevant therapists should be consulted at this time to address any changes in the student's program. This may mean increasing expectations if the student is making definite progress. If the student has not made progress, the team can revise IEP objectives, or provide more support or enhance the motivators.

This information will be shared with the family on the report card.

Points to Ponder

- One (of many) challenges is to collect information from all team members, and to share it with all team members, so that it is meaningful for everyone. How have you been able to do this?

6. Providing Anecdotal Comments

The update on objectives can be followed with short, anecdotal comments that can be relayed to families through conferences and/or in written form. This makes the reporting procedure more "user-friendly".

Reference Section

- Refer to the "Sample Report Card" in the References, and note the short anecdotal section at the end.

7. Summary of Reporting Progress

- The student's team identifies objectives or skills, which the student is working on. (Start by drawing on the student's long term goals, and identify relevant objectives).
- Take the above objectives and build in a measurable increment or change to generalize this skill as previously outlined.
- Determine how and when measurement will take place and who will monitor skill development for each goal area, domain or discipline.
- Consider some of the areas that you might include in your anecdotal section (e.g., favourite classroom activity; interactions with peers)
- Summarize the data collected. Identify areas that you want to modify (e.g., need to generalize to other people, situations, objects; increase expectation for, or gain greater independence in performing the skill; decrease latency of response)

8. How Do We Measure Progress For Students When Skills Appear To Remain The Same Over Time?

We can anticipate that some students will most likely be working on similar skills throughout their school career. It is important to be able recognize for the student, ourselves as educators and caregivers and for the student's family, where s/he is making progress. This will likely occur in very small increments. Some students may be working on similar skills throughout their school years or lifetime. It is important to be able to recognize for these students, ourselves as educators and caregivers and for the students' families, where they are making progress. This will likely occur in very small increments.

The following are some areas where students may experience growth and change:

- through increasing levels of partial participation in activities
- through less prompting or facilitation required over time
- through generalization of the same skills to new people
- through generalization of the same skills to different activities
- through fewer false hits for some responses such as switch work
- a decrease in the amount of time it takes the student to accomplish the task
- an increase in the amount of time that the student engages in an activity

All of these areas denote progress and all of us need to recognize and celebrate any increment of progress!

9. Sample Report Card

Desirable learning outcomes for students with special needs involve the following five key elements:

- Participation
 - Connections
 - Accomplishment
 - Contribution
 - Satisfaction
- (Ysseldyke & Thurlow, 1994)

These key areas can all be commented on in a report card. Ask teaching assistants and peers to contribute information. As well, if other teachers are involved with the student (e.g., band, drama, etc.), ask them to provide some information.

9.1 **Participation:** What has the student participated in this term?

Share information on both regular activities as well as any special events such as assemblies, field trips, school or classroom themes, etc.

Example

John has participated in some wonderful activities this term. In music, the class worked on percussion instruments and John really enjoyed getting a-hold of the drumstick and playing along with the rest of his class.

John also participated in all of our typical class activities: reading, spelling, math, science and social studies while working on his special skills (see the Accomplishment session for specific information on skill development).

John was also involved in some wonderful special activities this term. The school celebrated two big themes: Multicultural Days and Adventures under the Sea. John participated in all of the activities: music, assemblies, listening to speakers, art projects, and eating interesting food.

As a class, we worked on our Life on the Farm unit. John attended both our Apple Farm and Pumpkin Patch Field trips.

9.2 Connections: Who has the student connected with during the term?

Think about any social connections that the student has made with peers, older and younger buddies, and school staff.

Example

John has had 4 wonderful Recess Buddies this term that he really connected with: Tyler, Amanda, Michael, and Rachel. Here's what they shared about spending recess with John: "We like to play with John 'cuz we have fun. We ask him, 'Do you want to play Go, go, Stop or Run around the school?'"

You could also indicate what specific skills John is working on (e.g., using his Step by Step Communicator for "go, go, stop") and his progress, thus weaving accomplishments into social connections.

9.3 Accomplishments: What has the student learned?

This part of the report card refers to the student's progress towards IEP Objectives/Skills and Long Term Goals. Teachers focus on students' specific skills or short-term objectives and comment on those.

Example

This term, John has been continuing to work on his skill of using the switch for recreation and leisure (running the tape recorder to listen to taped music) and providing a service for others (making popcorn and running the electric pencil sharpener).

*Our objective was that John would demonstrate **more independence with using the switch**. We wanted him to progress from needing a helping hand and a verbal prompt to hit the switch to just needing a request. We've seen some very nice progress with this. John is able to make popcorn by hitting his switch on the request of Mrs. Edison and/or a buddy. He doesn't need the physical prompt anymore.*

John is also becoming more independent in using his switch to run the tape recorder. He still occasionally needs a bit of a helping hand to hit the switch when the tape stops but this is much better than last term when he needed hand-over-hand support almost every time. Way to go, John!

Running the electric pencil sharpener is a new task for John. He certainly shows that he enjoys this activity (with a big smile) and we know that he'll need lots of practice to become more independent. Right now John needs lots of helping-hand support and requests to activate the switch when we need him to, but we would like to see more independence next term.

9.4 Contributions: How does the student contribute to the class, to the school, and to the community?

You can address specific jobs the student does as well as contributing by the presence, attitude, etc.

Example

*John has been a great contributor this term. He uses his **switch** and the Powerlink to help us make popcorn for the class. The class earns a Popcorn Party once a week for reaching their Math Goals. So far they haven't missed a Popcorn Party so John has been busy! John uses the **switch upon request from either Mrs. Edison or from one of his buddies**. This is wonderful progress from last term when John also needed a helping hand from Mrs. E.*

*John also asks the Vocabulary Question of the Day using his Step-by-Step Communicator. The other students really look forward to his asking them a 'hard one'. John usually hits his **Step by Step at the request of Mrs. E. or another student, but sometimes he needs a helping hand**.*

*As the Special Helper (as everyone has a turn), John's job is to sharpen all the pencils. He is using **his switch and PowerLink to run the pencil sharpener**. He and a buddy sharpen all the pencils of Fridays. This is a new activity for John so we know he'll need lots of practice. Right now, he **needs a helping hand and a request to hit the switch most of the time. We're aiming for a bit more independence with this next term**.*

Note that the bolded comments document the specific skills that John is working on and the level of independence that has been achieved, thus weaving Accomplishments into Contributions.

9.5 Satisfaction (Happiness Is ...) What has the student done this term that s/he has found particularly satisfying or enjoyable?

Example

*For John, happiness is ...
recess buddies: Tyler, Michael, Rachel, and Amanda
playing go, go stop with his BIGmack at recess
reading buddies*

going over bumpy ground in his wheelchair
going on field trips with the class
eating fabulous desserts sent in by mom
music class - banging on the drum, playing jingle bells
listening to country and western music
relaxing after lunch

Reference Section

- Refer to the Reference section of this module for a shell for a "Report Card Template" for this type of report card outlined above, as well as a sample report card for a report which specifies the long range goals, skills, and objectives, along with anecdotal comments.

Points to Ponder

- How do these report card formats work for you? Do you have another format, which you prefer? Do you have ideas for modifications for the report card formats provided?