RTI: DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING
DETERMINING PERFORMANCE LEVEL

★ WHAT A STAR SHEET IS...

A STAR (Strategies And Resources) Sheet provides well-researched strategies or information that can help solve the case studies in this unit.

WHAT IT IS...

Performance level is an indication of a student’s reading skills, often denoted by a score on a given test or probe. It is usually represented on the vertical axis (the y-axis) on a graph of the student’s scores.

WHAT THE RESEARCH AND RESOURCES SAY...

- Progress monitoring probe scores have been shown to be highly correlated with standardized test scores. (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2003)

- Scores on progress monitoring probes indicate how students are reading compared with other students in their class and with a normative sample of grade-level peers. (Vaughn & Chard, 2006; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006)

- Performance level can be used to determine which students are not responding adequately to general education instruction (i.e., Tier 1 instruction) or to targeted instruction (i.e., Tier 2 instruction). (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006; Good, Simmons, & Kame’enui, 2001)

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

At the end of a monitoring period (e.g., seven weeks of Tier 1 instruction), the teacher compares a student’s performance level to the benchmark specified by the measure being used. To do this, he or she examines the student’s graph and calculates the student’s average score on the three most recent probes.

Benchmark:
An indicator used to identify the expected understandings and skills needed for content standards by grade level.

- If a student’s average score on the last three probes is equal to or greater than the benchmark, the student is responding adequately to instruction.

- If a student’s score is below the specified benchmark, more intensive instruction is warranted.
Example

Note: This example is also used on the STAR Sheet “Determining Rate of Growth” for a comparison of two of the methods for evaluating student performance.

During the second week of school, Mrs. Haversham administered a universal screening measure to each student in her first-grade classroom. Danisha scored in the bottom ten percent of her class—the criterion that indicates that she may not be responding to instruction. To determine whether or not Danisha was adequately responding to Tier 1 instruction, Mrs. Haversham monitored her progress for ten weeks using Vanderbilt University Word Identification Fluency (WIF) probes. Danisha’s progress monitoring graph is shown below. Using that data, Mrs. Haversham calculates the student’s average score on the three most recent probes.

Mrs. Haversham and the school support team determine that Danisha’s performance level is 15 wpm, which is below the established ten-week benchmark of 21 wpm. This indicates that Danisha is not responding adequately to instruction and may benefit from Tier 2 instruction.

Tips for Implementation

Universal Screening

After administering a universal screening, the teacher determines the performance level of each student by examining his or her scores. To ascertain which students may not be responding adequately to instruction in the general education classroom (Tier 1), the teacher may use one of three methods:

- Compare each student’s performance level to an established benchmark
- Rank order the students and identify the lowest performing students in a class (or in a grade level)
- Select a certain percentage of the lowest performing students (e.g., the bottom 20 percent of the class)
Tier 1

After monitoring the progress of a student for five to ten weeks in Tier 1, the teacher will evaluate that student’s performance level to determine whether the student needs more targeted instruction (i.e., Tier 2 instruction). In order to do so, the teacher needs to have a criterion with which to compare the student’s scores. The criteria for evaluating a student’s progress will vary depending on the progress monitoring measure being used. Each progress monitoring measure specifies the benchmarks that indicate an adequate response to intervention for that measure. These criteria also vary for each type of probe and for each grade level.

For example, the end-of-year benchmark for the Vanderbilt University Passage Reading Fluency probe for second grade is 75 words read correctly in one minute. Consequently, a student would need to score 75 or above to be considered performing at or above grade level.

Tier 2

Teachers can evaluate the performance of a student receiving Tier 2 instruction by examining that student’s progress monitoring data. However, it is recommended that teachers use the dual-discrepancy approach to determine whether a student is responding adequately to Tier 2 instruction. To learn more about this approach, see Page 23.

RESOURCES


