

Determining Instructional Level and Conducting Ongoing Progress Monitoring Frequently Asked Questions

- **What does “Determining Instructional Level” mean?**

In order to conduct ongoing progress monitoring, it is critical to find out where a student’s functional/instructional level falls. There are flowcharts with the steps involved in determining a student’s instructional level at:

http://www.fcrr.org/assessment/pdf/OPM/decisionMakingFlowcharts_Sep2006.pdf

To monitor a student using materials not on her instructional level will not be helpful in showing growth and will likely frustrate her.

- **Why use ongoing progress monitoring (OPM)?**

Ongoing progress monitoring (OPM) allows a teacher to document progress in reaching the benchmark goals in the critical components of reading. For those students who are receiving immediate intensive intervention (iii) it is best practice to do more frequent monitoring of their progress to get snapshots of their growth. Assessment that is more frequent will enable you to adapt instruction based on the needs of the student.

In addition, it might be helpful to administer a measure that is not normally given at a particular grade level. For example, a teacher may want to give a 3rd grader, who is at risk on Oral Reading Fluency, the Nonsense Word Fluency test to get a picture of the student’s decoding skills. This will provide additional information in determining why the student is deficient in Oral Reading Fluency. With the teacher giving the assessments, he will have the opportunity to take note of qualitative information. For example, if the student consistently missed the medial sounds on the Nonsense Word Fluency test that information will be critical in planning appropriate instruction for the student.

- **Should I use OPM for all my students?**

No, the purpose of OPM is to assist the teacher in determining if interventions are working and when changes in instruction are needed for some of her students. Students who are on grade level have no need for frequent monitoring and can be assessed during the three regular assessment intervals.

- **How does ongoing progress monitoring differ from the progress monitoring done during the regular assessment schedule?**

OPM is conducted by the teacher and can involve more frequent monitoring. Sometimes the use of off-grade level measures can give the teacher important data to inform her instruction so these are included in the ongoing progress monitoring measures. OPM can be administered on a weekly or bi-weekly basis as needed.

- **How does one access the OPM materials?**

All *Reading First* district coordinators received notebooks with hard copies of the assessments that may be used on each grade level. The front content of the notebooks may be downloaded from the FCRR website:

<http://www.fcrr.org/assessment/pdf/OPM/OPMGuide-RevisedSep2006.pdf> Actual scoring booklets and probes are to be downloaded from the Official DIBELS website. (See the steps below.)

- **What are the steps for accessing the OPM materials from the University of Oregon website?**
 - a. Go to the DIBELS website (<http://dibels.uoregon.edu>)
 - b. From the DIBELS Home Page, click on the “Download” function from the left hand menu under the heading, “Measures”.
 - c. Click on the “sign up here” function for a materials-only account.
 - d. Fill out the information and hit the submit button. This will give you a username and password.
 - e. From the DIBELS Home Page, you can go back to the “Download” function from the left hand menu, under the heading, “Measures”.
 - f. Log in and hit the submit button.
 - g. This page has the benchmarks assessments and progress monitoring materials that are available to download for free.

Once you have a materials account you can log in with that username and password whenever you want to access the materials.

- **If teachers have access to these materials, is it a concern that they will use them to teach the test?**
 There is always a risk of a teacher misusing the materials. FCRR, however, would like to emphasize the purpose of DIBELS is to give indicators of the student’s needs in order to provide appropriate instruction. It is NOT to evaluate or monitor teachers. A good analogy to illustrate not using the materials to teach the test is the temperature analogy. If you suspect a child has a fever you certainly would not want to give him ice water to drink right before you insert the thermometer into his mouth. You would likely miss the possibility that the child may need treatment.
- **As with the regular progress monitoring, won’t teachers be more likely to think they should teach non-words and rapid letter naming since they are assessed?**
 This is a concern and FCRR does not promote these practices. Letter naming fluency is simply a predictor of a student’s ability to retrieve information quickly and with automaticity. This skill could as easily be measured using numbers. Nonsense Word fluency tests a student’s ability to decode unknown text and determine how secure they are with the alphabetic principle. There would be absolutely no justification for practicing that skill with non-words.
- **If some of the same measures are used for the regularly scheduled progress monitoring that are used for OPM, won’t test/retest affect the scores?** Every effort is made to make the items different from the ones given in the regular assessment schedule and this should not be an issue. However, it is possible for there to be an occasional overlap of passages. Should that happen, there is little likelihood that students receiving intensive intervention will remember the stories.
- **How can a teacher get trained on the OPM assessments?**
 Within each *Reading First* school the reading coach would be the first person to turn to for assistance with the training. She could train the teacher on the measures that are appropriate for the grade level she teaches. It is also possible for teachers to attend some of the training provided for the assessment teams within the district by the DIBELS facilitators. In August of 2007, FCRR will be providing Online DIBELS training to allow teachers the opportunity to learn how to score and administer the DIBELS measures. By accessing this

self-training tool, teachers can learn the measures that are most appropriate for the grade they teach.

- **When should the OPM assessments be administered?**

The measures can be given as frequently as once a week and can be given anytime between the test intervals. Remember, there is no rule stating that all students who score in the high risk or moderate risk range must be monitored weekly on any measure for which they did the benchmark goal was not met.

- **Where should the OPM take place?**

OPM can be done within the regular classroom if the teacher can find a place that will limit distractions and noise.

- **Can I enter the OPM data into the PMRN?**

Yes, this may be entered into the PMRN. Teachers will then be able to look at growth in between the 3 progress monitoring intervals required for *Reading First*.