

UNM CDD/NMPED Educator Voices Podcast **Classroom Essentials – Data Collection**

1. There's only one way to get started with data collection and that is to get started! If data collection is new to you, see Lesson 5 – **Data Collection** in the Evidence Based Practices in the Classroom series on the Autism Portal
<https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/2019/05/15/training-for-educators/>
2. Start small – choose one or two IEP goals for one or two students. Make sure the objectives are well defined and broken down into achievable steps. See Lesson 4 – **Creating Goals and Objectives** in the Evidence Based Practices in the Classroom series on the Autism Portal -
<https://cdd.health.unm.edu/autismportal/2019/05/15/training-for-educators/>
3. Choose a data collection system – a simple frequency count is the easiest. Percentages are also easy and helpful; however, it is important to make sure that a percentage will make sense. For example: If the objective says, “Student will greet peers 90% of the time,” you would need to count how many opportunities there are to greet peers throughout the day and 90% might be different every day. “Student will greet peers four out of five opportunities,” however makes a lot more sense. If you want a percentage, it would be 80 percent of five observed opportunities.
4. **Only collect the data you will use!** In the above example, you might collect data all day every day, however, you only need to collect the day for five opportunities daily. Then you can use that data to make decisions about instruction.
 - a. Note – if you are collecting data for a Functional Behavior Assessment (ABC data), only collect data long enough to establish a pattern. For some behaviors, that could happen before lunch but should take no longer than about 10 days. If the behavior does not happen frequently enough to establish a pattern within 10 days, it may not be a priority behavior, or you may just need to jump to an intervention plan.
5. Best practice in data collection is to collect data every day, however, if that is not practical, collecting data two or three times a week is helpful. It does not have to be done at the same time every day and it should not always be with the same person if there is more than one instructor in the classroom. Sometimes it is helpful to have one person instructing and one person collecting data if that is a possibility.
6. Data should be graphically displayed – on plain graph paper or with software that helps you make a graph. This will enable you to use the data to make instructional decisions.

7. When you have at least 5 data points, and usually not more than 15, determine a *trend*, as described in the podcast or Data Collection Lesson – with a pencil or a ruler covering as many data points as possible. You will see one of the following trends
- a. An upward trend – if you are working to build a skill, this tells you the intervention is working. If, however, you are collecting data on an interfering behavior, this tells you the intervention is not working as planned
 - b. A downward trend – if you are working to build a skill, this tells you the intervention is not working. It is, however, what you want to see if you are working to reduce the frequency of a challenging behavior.
 - c. A flat trend tells you that the intervention is not working – the student is not making any progress. You need to make changes immediately (remember the IEP goal that comes back every year!).
 - d. Data that is so *variable* (up and down) that it is hard to determine a trend also tells you that something is not working – it may be that the student is not motivated enough (listen to the reinforcement and preference assessment podcasts).
 - e. Use the data to make decisions! Usually, one of the following decisions will help improve the trend
 - i. Step back – the skill (or skill step) may be too large or too difficult for the student. Break it down into a smaller step or choose a less difficult skill
 - ii. Step forward – the student may be bored with doing the same thing over and over. Choose a more difficult step or skill and/or do what you can to make the teaching more interesting including varying the materials, the prompts, changing the setting, the instructors and/or the time
 - iii. What can you do to improve the student’s motivation?
 - f. Use the data to communicate – with families, administrators, colleagues and students! Everyone will appreciate knowing that you know what you’re doing and that you have good reasons for teaching the way you do!

Resources:

https://www.amazon.com/Show-Data-Based-Instructional-Decisions-Simple/dp/1934575739/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=show+me+the+data&qid=1614607196&sr=8-2

