This special education research brief provides a synopsis of the steps in curriculum-based assessment (CBA) and lists resources that provide more detail on the method and applications of CBA. The described CBA method involves selecting or developing a method of measurement, assessing student knowledge, tailoring instruction to student needs, and using repeated assessments to fine tune instruction and track progress. The 20 bibliographic resources listed are arranged in four categories: general information and CBA models; measuring, recording, and analyzing student data; tailoring instruction; and using CBA data. (JDD)
Curriculum-based assessment incorporates the school's curriculum with "best practice" teaching techniques: It provides the data needed to determine precisely what the student knows, where he or she should be in the curriculum, and when he or she is ready for the next lesson. It results in a record of performance that indicates whether the student is progressing in accordance with the goals established for him or her. The four steps below introduce the basic CBA method.

**SELECT OR DEVELOP A METHOD OF MEASUREMENT**

CBA relies on repeated measurements of a student's performance in a sequenced curriculum. The method of measurement must be quick, simple, and easy to use, and it must directly reflect the skill or behavior the student is to learn. A measurement method can be developed for any curriculum material. The method may be designed by the teacher or selected from various methods created through research. One method frequently used when CBA is applied to reading instruction is to have the student read for one minute from the appropriate level of the text and score the number of words accurately read.

**ASSESS STUDENT KNOWLEDGE**

The first CBA assessment is used to identify where in the curriculum materials the student should begin and exactly what he or she needs to learn. The student's score is recorded, usually on a graph that has dates on the x-axis and increasing scores on the y-axis. For example, a student who needed special help in reading was asked to read from a story that matched his apparent reading level. The teacher also had a copy of the story and marked the words read incorrectly on that copy. Scoring revealed that the student knew only about one-third of the words in the story; he needed to increase his reading skills before he could work with the text.

**TAILOR INSTRUCTION TO STUDENT NEEDS**

The CBA data is used to identify what the student needs to learn. Some principles proposed by one CBA model are:

- When preparing lessons, aim for small, steady increments of growth. It is better for the student to successfully learn a little each day than to learn a lot of material one day and be unsuccessful in attempting the same amount the next day.

- Control the rate at which new information is presented. In preparing each lesson, build on what the student already knows and incorporate a small amount of new material into material that has already been learned.

- Develop accuracy and fluency through drill and practice before presenting new material in context. Examine the lesson's content first and prepare items for drill. After the drill, present the material in context (e.g., reading from the text).

In the example, the curriculum was adapted for the student. Stories were written to control the ratio of known to unknown words. The stories were sequenced so that the new words were slowly introduced and then reviewed in later stories.
USE REPEATED ASSESSMENTS TO FINE-TUNE INSTRUCTION AND TRACK PROGRESS

CBA measurements are repeated frequently, usually weekly. In the example, the assessments were repeated every other day and incorporated with the student's reading lesson. The student's progress graph showed that he was learning six to seven new words per day; only eight adapted stories were required to bring him to the point where he could study from the textbook. The teacher reviewed the text ahead and drilled this student when necessary. Within 3 weeks, he was able to read the book and keep up a satisfactory performance level.

Analysis of the student's performance not only tells the teacher whether the student is progressing as expected, but also can provide feedback on the effectiveness of the instructional techniques used and serve as an aid in analyzing the student's learning problems. As progress graphs are completed, they create a record of the student's achievement during the school year, providing information on realistic goals and expectations for the student.

RESOURCES

General Information and CBA Models


Measuring, Recording, and Analyzing Student Data


Tailoring Instruction


Gickling, E. E., & Havertape, J. (undated). Curriculum based assessment. In James A. Tucker (Ed.), *Non-test based assessment*. Available from Educational Directions, Inc., P.O. Box 4471, Austin, TX 78765. ($45.00)

Uses of CBA Data


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