

Holistic Measures of Student Growth

Holistic measures of student growth can be used and applied to many roles that school psychologists fulfill within the school setting. The key characteristics of the holistic approach, according to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, is the combination of a “pre- and post- test model with the regularity of a repeated measures approach” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013). To utilize this approach, school psychologists must obtain a baseline data point regarding a particular skill, progress monitoring data, and a final post-test that examines skills learned following a period of intervention. Often, keeping student work samples and products in a portfolio can be helpful to showing growth across time, although there is caution that this might not be appropriate for all work samples given the confidential nature of the student-psychologist relationship in some circumstances, such as counseling. Through this model, growth can be demonstrated on the same measure, or generalized to student performance on various measures, in order to show student growth.

As school psychologists, many of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) domains of practice can be applied to a holistic approach. For example, Domain 1: Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability, Domain 2: Collaboration and Consultation, and Domain 3: Interventions and Instructional support (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010), examine how school psychologists can be utilized to consult on interventions and the implementation of academic supports for students who are struggling academically at school. School psychologists will need to ensure that a baseline assessment is given prior to intervention in order to obtain pre-test data, that data is collected in a repeated measures fashion, and that a post-test is given in order to show growth following intervention. While some individuals may argue that this data should not apply to school psychologists as they are not the ones implementing the intervention, it is indirectly that the school psychologist has an impact on this data as it is the school psychologist who has the knowledge and skills necessary to recommend interventions to other educators. Therefore, without the school psychologist’s recommendation, the academic intervention program may never have been implemented in the first place. Thus, it can be argued that this data should be applied to the school psychologist since they played a critical role in implementing and designing the evaluation. Alternatively, districts may also consider the school psychologist’s decision making capacity and the way in which school psychologists utilize data to inform decision making on interventions. If the school psychologist is able to indicate through data that an intervention is not working to impact student growth, the school psychologist can recommend a new intervention for teachers to implement in the classroom. It is through continuing to recommend interventions until the student is successful with a particular intervention that districts can realize the impact that the school psychologist has on student performance. Again, without the school psychologist monitoring this data and making recommendations for interventions, the student may not have received the same level of support. Therefore, student growth data along with the school psychologist’s ability to interpret data and make recommendations on student interventions can be utilized when determining the impact the school psychologist has on student growth.

The example rubric *Growth Criteria for Holistic Evaluation in the Implementation of an Academic Intervention* (**Table 1 and Table 1a**) can be applied to look at growth across multiple

work samples that span the course of a year or the course of a specific intervention (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2013). It is important to note that the level of growth will not be calculated using a specific growth score. Instead, growth will be examined by applying the criteria in the rubric to multiple work samples. The following rubric was developed in order to apply this approach to reading fluency. Educators are encouraged to adapt the rubric to meet a variety of academic needs.

In utilizing the above model, a school psychologist will likely be involved in many academic consults per year across many different academic areas. Therefore, it will be important for those applying district-determined measures, like the one above, to school psychologists to look at the trends noted across multiple students and multiple work samples in order to understand the school psychologist's impact on students as a whole. Unlike educators who work only at a grade level, the population that school psychologists work with often spans an entire school; therefore, it will be important for administrators to apply grade level expectations when evaluating the impact that the school psychologist has on his or her students. Using this approach, it is important to note that many different types of work samples, such as classroom curriculum-based measures and informal running records completed by teachers, may also be used to show growth in addition to more formal assessments of a student's reading fluency abilities.

In addition to measures of academic growth, a holistic approach could also be used to assess growth that students make on behavioral intervention plans that school psychologists and teachers collaborate on. This work falls within NASP Domain 1: Data-Based Decision Making and Accountability, Domain 2: Collaboration and Consultation, Domain 3: Interventions and Instructional support, and Domain 4: Interventions and Mental Health Services to Develop Social and Life Skills (National Association of Schools Psychologists, 2010). In order to do this, the school psychologist will first have to work alongside teachers to determine the level of problematic behavior that is seen in the classroom. While there are many approaches that have proven useful for this approach, some common ways of measuring student behavior in the classroom include momentary time sampling procedures, collecting frequency data, and rating scales completed by classroom teachers that examine the degree of problematic behavior experienced by students (i.e. Conners Rating Scale, Behavior Assessment System for Children-Second Edition).¹ School psychologists are encouraged to use multiple measures in order to gain a better understanding of the child's functioning within the classroom setting prior to implementing a research-based intervention to support a student who is struggling within the classroom. From here, progress monitoring and post-intervention assessment will be important to determining the school psychologist's impact. As with academic interventions, behavior interventions may not always show the intended results the first time an intervention is implemented. Therefore, school district are also encouraged to look at the manner in which school psychologist's continue to work with students who do not show the desired results immediately after an intervention is implemented. After all, continuing to work with a student who is having difficulties and having multiple types of interventions that can be tried indirectly show the school psychologist's ability to work with students in order to promote student success. The rubric *School Psychologist's Impact on Problematic Behaviors* (**Table 2**) may be utilized by districts looking to determine the school psychologist's impact through behavioral consultation.

¹ Please note that the Massachusetts School Psychologists Association does not endorse any of these rating scales. This is used to illustrate this example rather than to endorse the use of a specific measure.

As with the model described for academic consultation purposes, the school psychologist will likely be involved in many behavioral consultations per year across many grade levels and students. Therefore, it will be important for those applying a district-determined measure, like the one above, to school psychologist to look at the trends noted across multiple students in order to understand the school psychologist's impact on the student group he or she is working with as a whole when determining an overall impact rating.

Finally, it is also important to acknowledge the school psychologist's role in providing students with social-emotional support within the school environment. Within this area, determining a school psychologist's progress with an individual student is perhaps more difficult due to the nature of many mental health disorders. For instance, students might show a period of time where they improve followed by a period of regression. Anniversaries, birthdays, and holidays may also serve as triggers for individual students. For these reasons, judging a school psychologist's effectiveness at any given moment using a holistic approach is difficult. At times, simply getting the child to school might be the greatest success that the school psychologist may have given the student's emotional state at that time, and this may be high impact at that given moment. Therefore, judging student growth will be highly individualized and student specific. One way in which school district might measure the impact of school psychologists' mental health services is through examining factors involved in the "inputs" rather than the "outcomes" and "outputs" of mental health services as the inputs might serve as a more indirect measure of the school psychologist's impact on the student. It is through these inputs that districts can isolate the internal factors that are under the school psychologist's control. This may be one way to do this as these inputs often have the ability to create outputs and outcomes valued by society (Kaufman & Stakenas, 1981). See **Table 3**, *School Psychologist's Impact on Mental Health*.

As the school psychologist may be involved with numerous cases throughout the year, administrators should be looking at the overall quality of the school psychologist's ability to intervene in these situations. It is through these inputs that the school psychologist can indirectly have an effect on the academic achievement of students in the classroom.

Conclusions

It is important to note that the Massachusetts School Psychologists Association intends to provide school districts with samples as to how they could develop district determined measures using a holistic approach through the above rubrics. This document is meant to be a sample only and is not meant to be comprehensive in nature nor is it meant to describe the only holistic approaches that could be utilized for rating school psychologist. Districts are encouraged to use these samples, if appropriate; however, they are also encouraged to recognize the unique strengths that their own school psychologists possess in determining how best to measure their individual growth. District administrators are encouraged to collaborate with their own school psychologists in order to determine models that will best meet their needs.

References

- Fuchs, L. S., Fuchs, D., Hamlett, C. L., Walz, L., & Germann, G. (1993). Formative evaluation of academic progress: How much growth can we expect? *School Psychology Review, 22*, 27-48.
- Kaufman, R. & Stakenas, R. (1981). Needs assessment and holistic planning: The external needs assessment links school efforts and results to social requirements and realities. *Educational Leadership, 38(8)* , 612-616.
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2013). Technical guide B: *Measuring student growth and piloting district determined measures*. Retrieved from: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/eval/ddm/TechnicalGuideB.pdf>.
- National Association of School Psychologists. (2010). *NASP model 10 domains of practice*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nasponline.org/standards/practice-model/>.

Table 1: Example Growth Criteria for Holistic Evaluation in the Implementation of an Academic Intervention (Reading Fluency)

No Growth	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student has not made any gains in reading fluency across multiple assessments - The student may show periods of improvement and decline, but overall, there is not significant growth from baseline - There was no attempt made by the school psychologist to change the intervention when data demonstrated that the student was not improving. 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student continues to make progress across work samples; however, the student does not reach the realistic growth mark (as indicated by Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993). - Error rate may or may not be decreasing even if the number of correct words read per minute is increasing (or vice versus) <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student is making slow progress and the school psychologist continues to implement the same intervention for too long despite the limited growth. 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student has made realistic growth (as defined by Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993) - The student continues to make steady progress across work samples - There are fewer errors made across work samples <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student was not making progress; however, the school psychologist was able to change the intervention based on data to support the student. 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student has made ambitious growth (as defined by Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993) - The gap between this student and his / her peers has completely closed and the student no longer requires any additional assistance to be successful within the general education classroom - The error rate in reading continues to decrease across work samples. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student was not making progress and the school psychologist continued to implement multiple interventions in order to help the student succeed.

Table 1a: Growth Rates of Words Read Correctly Per Minutes (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hamlett, Walz, & Germann, 1993)

Grade Level	Realistic	Ambitious
1	2	3
2	1.5	2
3	1.0	1.5
4	.85	1.1
5	.5	.8
6	.3	.65

Table 2: School Psychologist’s Impact on Problematic Behaviors

No Growth	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no growth between pre-intervention and post-intervention data based on classroom observations - There is no growth between pre-intervention and post-intervention data on rating scale reports - The school psychologist does not make any effort to change interventions that are not effective. 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is limited growth between pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention data based on classroom observations although some improvement is needed - There is limited growth between pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention data on rating scale reports. While improvement may be noted, the student continues to display a high level of problematic behaviors within the classroom. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student is making limited growth and the school psychologist continues to implement the same intervention for too long 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student continues to make steady growth but still needs a behavior management plan to be successful within the classroom setting. - Rating forms may show a significant decrease in areas measuring problematic behaviors, but there are still concerns for the student. - Classroom observations indicate that the behavior is still occurring within the classroom setting; although the frequency has decreased substantially. <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school psychologist recognized that the student was not making progress and changed the intervention. 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The student no longer needs a behavior management plan as indicated by multiple measures - Rating forms now indicate that the student is no longer “at-risk” based on teacher rating of behavior - While there still may be mild difficulties in the classroom, the school psychologist is no longer needed to intervene through a formal behavior plan. Any instances of the behavior are infrequent and can easily be managed by the general education teacher <p style="text-align: center;"><u>OR</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school psychologist recognized that the student was not making progress and continued to implement multiple interventions

Table 3: School Psychologist’s Impact on Mental Health

No Growth	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school psychologist does not have a mental health plan developed for each student on his or her case load that is individualized and student specific. - The school psychologist is not using research-based interventions in order to support struggling students on a consistent basis. - The school psychologist is not using data to track and inform counseling decisions throughout the school year. 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school psychologist does not consistently have a mental health plan developed for each student on his or her caseload that is individualized and student specific. - The school psychologist has limited data to track student progress 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school psychologist is using research-based interventions to support struggling students; each student has his or her own plan. - The school psychologist is keeping track of individual student data and is using this data to inform practice. - During periods of regression or crisis, the school psychologist has a plan and implements that plan to support the student - Changes to services are made based on the data obtained from counseling sessions 	<p><i>One or More are True</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The school psychologist is using research-based interventions to support struggling students that is individualized and student specific. On the basis of these interventions, the student is having greater success in the classroom (academically, socially, or behaviorally). - Data indicate that students are being to internalize strategies taught by the school psychologist and support from the psychologist is fading <u>OR</u> - When regression is noted, the school psychologist revisits how to intervene and develops a plan to support the student. This carries over to success in the classroom.