

Decision Rules Protocol

This resource is designed to support a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team with the development of written decision rules to guide the problem-solving process.

Decision Rules at Tier 1: High-Quality Universal Instruction for All Students

Determine if the universal instruction provided for all students is working (Kentucky Department of Education, 2025).

- Select valid and reliable screening assessments with high classification accuracy to provide a snapshot of the academic, behavioral and social-emotional health of the school.
 - Develop a schedule for assessment, data collection and review.
 - Use graphs or charts showing the results of screening assessments for all students by grade level or class.
- Develop clear decision rules identifying the criterion cut scores used to determine risk status. These are developed through research to identify what score a student needs to earn in the fall (or winter) to have a strong likelihood of meeting grade-level proficiency in the spring of the same year. These scores are typically assigned a risk level based on research conducted by the test developer. For example:
 - Low Risk: Likely to meet end-of-year grade-level benchmark.
 - Some Risk: Predictive of current or later learning difficulty without some change to instruction.
 - High Risk: Unlikely to meet EOY benchmark without immediate, intensive instructional support.

Decision rule example: For a sustainable MTSS, if fewer than 80% of students in the general education classroom are meeting benchmarks, review the instruction and resources used and develop a plan to improve Tier 1 instruction.

Decision Rules at Tier 2 and 3: Supplemental and Intensive Interventions Layered for Students Who Need Additional Support

While universal screening provides a quick and efficient way to provide a snapshot of the health of Tier 1 and identify students who are at risk, it does not give a full picture of the underlying root cause of the problem. Additional diagnostic assessment is needed for students who are at-risk to provide more detailed information about individual students' strengths and weaknesses (Kentucky Department of Education, 2024).

Determine the valid and reliable diagnostic assessments that will be used to verify risk status, identify the target area of concern, and set goals for improvement (Kentucky Department of Education, 2025).

Determine how frequently student progress will be monitored. For example:

- Data collection every 2 weeks at Tier 2 (at minimum monthly) for academic skills.
- Data collection weekly at Tier 3.
- Depending on the target behavior, progress monitoring for nonacademic skills and behaviors is usually more frequent (e.g., weekly, daily, hourly).

Develop a schedule for progress monitoring assessment, data collection and review. The more sensitive the progress monitoring tool, the more frequently the tool can be used.

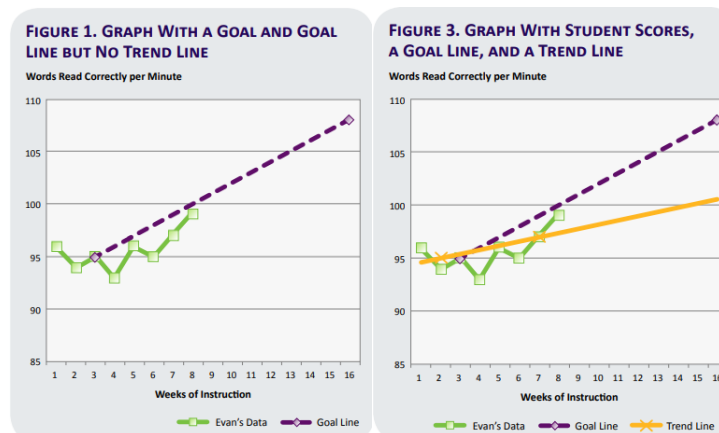
Determine how intervention effectiveness will be monitored and reviewed.

- Graphs or tables showing the effectiveness of specific interventions for groups or individual students can provide information on which interventions are most effective.
- Develop a schedule for reviewing and acting on the data

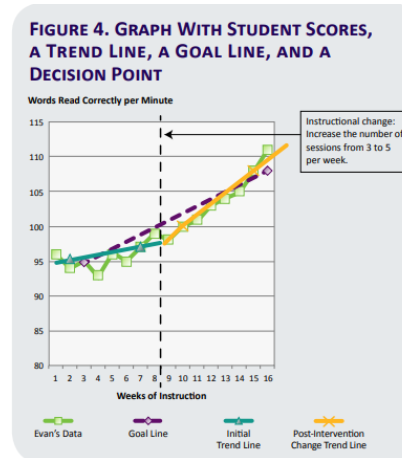
Decision Rules for Evaluating Progress

Determine when to review.

- Develop decision rules for the number of data points needed to make sound decisions.
 - As the number of data points increases, the chance of measurement errors decreases. To effectively evaluate student progress, teams must collect enough data points to ensure they have an accurate indication of the student's skills being measured.
 - To obtain a reliable estimate of the student's response to the intervention, progress monitoring data should be collected for a minimum of 6-8 data points (IRIS Center, 2020; NCII 2012).
 - Allow enough time for an intervention to work balanced with the goal of not wasting instructional time with an intervention that is not working.
- Present student progress monitoring data in a graph format that includes a goal and trend line (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2013).



- When an intervention change is made, add a vertical line showing when the change was made and continue collecting data to determine if the change was effective (National Center on Response to Intervention, 2013).



Determine when to continue, change or end a plan.

- Develop decision rules for using a validated approach to analyzing the data to determine whether the intervention or goals should be changed. With the goal line and trend line in place, the team can evaluate progress using either the Four-Point method or Trend Line Analysis.

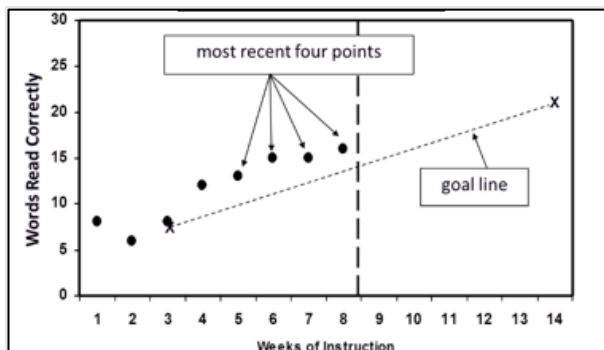
Two Validated Approaches to Analyzing Progress Monitoring Data (NCII, 2012)

Four Point Method:

Can be used if 3 weeks of instruction has occurred and at least 6 data points have been collected.

Examine the 4 most recent data points and use the following steps:

- If the 4 most recent data points are above the goal line:



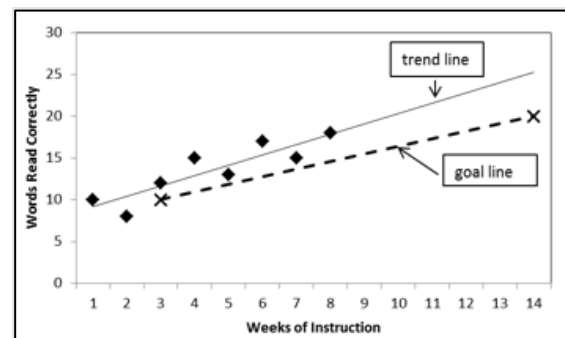
- Consider a more ambitious goal if set below grade-level benchmark.
 - Revise the intervention/progress monitor to focus on another area of need; or
 - Plan to fade the support and return to Tier 1 or 2.
- If the 4 most recent data points are below the goal line, the student is not on track to meet their goal, and an instructional change is needed.

Trend Line Analysis:

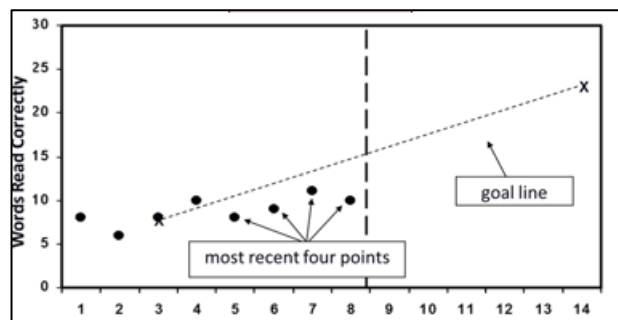
Can be used if 4 weeks of instruction have occurred and at least 8 data points have been collected.

Examine the data using the following steps:

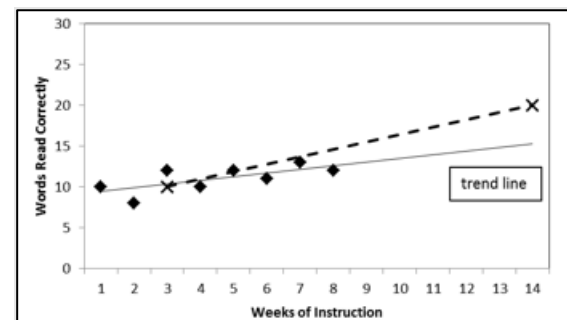
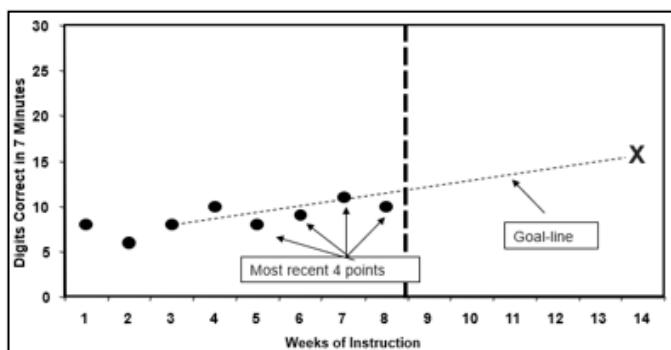
- If the trend line is steeper than the goal line:



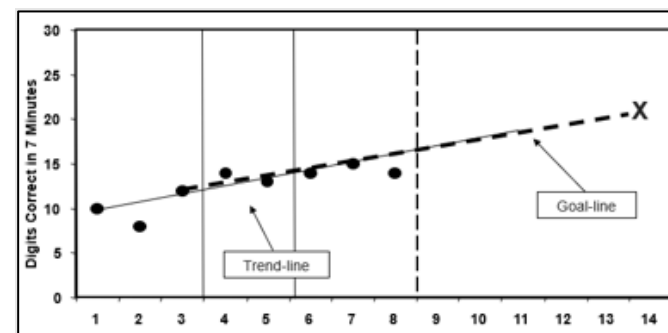
- Consider a more ambitious goal if set below grade-level benchmark.
 - Revise the intervention/progress monitor to focus on another area of need; or
 - Plan to fade the support and return to Tier 1 or 2.
- If the trend line is flatter than the goal line, the student is making insufficient progress. Consider an instructional change and assess fidelity.



- If the 4 most recent data points hover around the goal line, no change is needed. Continue to collect data to ensure adequate progress is made until the goal is met.



- If the trend line and goal line are the same, no changes are needed. Continue to collect data to ensure adequate progress is made until the goal is met.



References

- IRIS Center (2020). How can school personnel use data to make instructional decisions? Analyzing progress monitoring data. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University. <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/dbi2/cresource/q2/p04/> (ESSA Level IV)
- Kentucky Department of Education (2024, February). *Early literacy assessment within Kentucky's multi-tiered system of supports (KyMTSS)*. https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/EarlyLiteracy/Pages/early_Literacy_screening_Assessments.aspx (ESSA Level IV)
- Kentucky Department of Education (2025). *Kentucky's multi-tiered system of support (KyMTSS) implementation guide 2nd Edition* I've. https://www.education.ky.gov/curriculum/standards/teachtools/Documents/KyMTSS_Implementation_Guide.pdf (ESSA Level IV)
- National Center on Intensive Intervention (2012). Using academic progress monitoring for individualized instructional planning (DBI Professional Learning Series Module 2). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education. <https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/using-academic-progress-monitoring-individualized-instructional-planning-dbi-training> (ESSA Level IV)
- National Center on Response to Intervention (2013). Progress monitoring brief #3: Common progress monitoring graph omissions: Making instructional decisions. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED578046.pdf> (ESSA Level IV)

Tools and Resources

[IRIS Center: Evaluating Student Performance Using a Trend Line Analysis Using the Turkey Method.](#) Though most software programs will graph a trend line, educators can use the Tukey method to graph a trend line by finding the line of best fit for a student's data across a given period. This brief from the IRIS Center provides step-by-step directions for using the Turkey method to create a trend line.

[NCII Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Chart.](#) The National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII) has developed tools charts that are published to assist educators and families in becoming informed consumers who can select academic and behavioral progress monitoring tools. These charts display expert ratings on the technical rigor of assessments. The submission process is voluntary, and reviews of all eligible submissions are posted on the chart.

[NCII Student Progress Monitoring Tool for Data Collection and Graphing \(Excel\).](#) This Excel tool is designed to help educators collect academic progress monitoring data across multiple measures, graph student progress and set individualized goals for a student on specific measures.

[NCII: Overview of Academic Goal Setting Strategies.](#) This handout developed by the National Center for Intensive Intervention describes three validated goal-setting strategies educators can use to set intervention goals using general outcome measures

[NCII: Monitoring Student Progress for Behavioral Interventions.](#) This learning module developed by the National Center on Intensive Intervention addresses methods for behavioral progress monitoring and using progress monitoring data to make decisions about behavior interventions.