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–PROGRESS MONITORING: HELPING TEACHERS TEACH–

It's October, do you know if the instructional strategies used with your child/students are effective? Parents and teachers need to be able to answer that question *now*, not when the school year is almost over. We should expect that *all* students, whether they receive special education services or not, reach new academic goals each year. If very little progress is being made, is it the child's fault? No! As a teacher *I* need to change the ways I teach, including *how* I'm teaching the skill, *how often*, and more. If the student is not responding to the curriculum or instructional strategies, then the "program" and/or my methods need to change. Effective teaching is about finding ways to meet a student's educational needs, *not* expecting a student to "fit" into the program.

There is a new trend in many school districts to send report cards home only two or three times a year. If these are the only times teachers are keeping parents informed about student learning, it can be too little, too late. Parents can be proactive and ask for more frequent, objective reports showing the effectiveness/or lack of the curriculum and instructional strategies being used with their child. The request for more frequent progress monitoring occurs at the IEP meeting, when discussing the annual goals and how progress will be monitored and the frequency of it. When special education law was reauthorized in 2004, it allowed for the timing of progress reports to be individualized and no longer tied to when report cards go home.

But more frequent progress reports without in-depth information doesn't help the parents or teacher really know if a change in instructional strategies is needed. If the progress report merely has a numeral or letter to indicate progress, parents should ask for additional information. Teachers should have weekly/monthly data that can be shared with parents. Again, the specifics about *what* information is shared *when* can be detailed and written into a child's IEP. A two-page [handout](#) about progress monitoring is available on my [website](#); you're welcome to share it with others, [click here](#).

Identify your vision: What do you want to know about your child's learning?

Use your voice: Have it written in the IEP what information will be shared in progress reports and how often it will be shared. Amend the IEP if necessary.

Work together: Increase the two-way communication throughout the school year between families and school staff.

Read previous issues of my newsletter on my website. [Click here](#). Please let me know if you're interested in one of my presentations and/or customized consulting and coaching.

What we anticipate, determines what we find!
Charmaine Thaner