

Perceived Barriers and Benefits of Technology-Based Progress Monitoring for Non-Academic Individual Education Program Goals

Authors : A. Drelick, T. Sondergeld, M. Decarlo-Tecce, K. McGinley

Abstract : In 1975, a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) was granted for all students in the United States regardless of their disabilities. As a result, the special education landscape has been reshaped through new policies and legislation. Progress monitoring, a specific component of an Individual Education Program (IEP) calls, for the use of data collection to determine the appropriateness of services provided to students with disabilities. The recent US Supreme Court ruling in Endrew F. v. Douglas County warrants giving increased attention to student progress, specifically pertaining to improving functional, or non-academic, skills that are addressed outside the general education curriculum. While using technology to enhance data collection has become a common practice for measuring academic growth, its application for non-academic IEP goals is uncertain. A mixed-methods study examined current practices and rationales for implementing technology-based progress monitoring focused on non-academic IEP goals. Fifty-seven participants responded to an online survey regarding their progress monitoring programs for non-academic goals. After isolated analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative results, data were synthesized to produce meta-inferences that drew broader conclusions on the topic. For the purpose of this paper, specific focus will be placed on the perceived barriers and benefits of implementing technology-based progress monitoring protocols for non-academic IEP goals. The findings of this study highlight facts impacting the use of technology-based progress monitoring. Perceived barriers to implementation include: (1) lack of training, (2) access to technology, (3) outdated or inoperable technology, (4) reluctance to change, (5) cost, (6) lack of individualization within technology-based programs, and (7) legal issues in special education; while perceived benefits include: (1) overall ease of use, (2) accessibility, (3) organization, (4) potential for improved presentation of data, (5) streamlining the progress-monitoring process, and (6) legal issues in special education. Based on these conclusions, recommendations are made to IEP teams, school districts, and software developers to improve the progress-monitoring process for functional skills.

Keywords : special education, progress monitoring, functional skills, technology

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