Quarterly Newsletter

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Data, What's the Point?

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Lesson plans, individualized plans, behavior management, reinforcement, staff meetings, and data collection on top of that? Is data collection really that important?

In the special education world, data collection may be one of the most important things we can do. Data collection drives the educational and behavioral programming of our students. Data can be used to determine the effectiveness of our interventions. Is the student's problem behavior decreasing? Is the student's time at work increasing? Data has all of our answers!

Common types of data collection techniques for behavior:

ABC: ABC data collection is most commonly used to track behaviors. Antecedent (A) is what happens right before the behavior. Behavior (B) is an observable behavior that happens. Consequence (C) is what happens right after the behavior. See an example of an ABC datasheet here**.** This data method can help us identify possible functions of our students' behaviors. What is happening to cause this behavior?

Duration: Duration data collection is recording when a specific behavior starts and ends. For example, your student's behavior is the time spent out of their seat. The stopwatch would start when the student gets out of their seat and end when the student returns to their seat. This time is then entered into the datasheet (duration data sheet). This data method will help us see if the duration is increasing or decreasing due to our interventions. You can also total the amount of time the behavior was shown in a day and compare it to the total time available in the day to see what % of the day the behavior was present.

Frequency: Frequency data collection is used to track how often a behavior occurs throughout the day. For example, determining how often a student talks during class without raising their hand. Every time the student blurts out without raising their hand, you would put a tally mark on the datasheet (frequency data sheet). Then you can see how often they talk out of turn each class period. Calculating the total number of instances of behavior will allow us to graph the data and see if our interventions are increasing or decreasing the frequency.

Analyzing data:

Once the datasheet is filled out, staff can begin analyzing the data. Are we seeing time periods throughout the day the student regularly has difficulty with? Is the behavior decreasing? Are the behaviors increasing? Do we need to change our interventions? It is important for all team members to be involved in the data process.

Data tools:

Google Forms is a great online way to create your own custom datasheets. You can send your google forms to your different team members, and they can fill them out on their phones or computer. Google forms also do a good job at compiling all of your data for you into charts which can assist with analyzing your data.

Microsoft Excel is a fantastic way to turn your data into visual graphs. You can create trend lines that show if your interventions are working or not.

Schedule Tool is an easy, effective way to turn a student's daily schedule into an activity and data tracker. This is a good tool for people who are new to data collection. Staff members can mark what the activity is for the student and if there were any target behaviors during that time. This sheet can also be sent home for the guardians to see.

Training:
The AFIRM modules (AFIRM Modules) offer many trainings for autism evidence-based practices. Many of these trainings also go over data collection and have free resources for datasheets.

There are many ways to take data. The important part is finding a data collection method that works for you and making sure everyone on your team realizes the importance of data collection. Data drives our educational and behavioral programming. Please reach out to your SESA Specialist for assistance setting up, taking, and analyzing data.