



AUTISM CLASSROOM RESOURCES PODCAST, EPISODE 22 DATA COLLECTION

URL: <http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode22>

Welcome to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast, the podcast for special educators who are looking for personal and professional development.

I'm your host, Dr. Christine Reeve. For more than 20 years, I've worn lots of hats in special education, but my real love is helping special educators like you. This podcast will give you tips and ways to implement research-based practices in a practical way in your classroom to make your job easier and more effective.

Hi and welcome back to the Autism Classroom Resources Podcast. I'm very excited to have you here again today and we have an episode about data collection and how to make it work for you as well as five things you can do to improve your data collection over the next few months.

Data collection is one of the most difficult things that I hear teachers trying to figure out. And let's face it, everybody tells you that you have to take data, but very few people actually tell you how to walk through and how to do it. So in this episode I want to walk you through what the three things are that we need, our data collection to be. And why those things are important, but more significantly. I want to give you five different ways that you can use to improve your data collection and help it work smarter for you.

These are five ways that you can implement in your classroom without a ton of specialized knowledge and I'll point you to a number of free resources that I have on the website that can help you in that journey as well. So let's get started.




3 Things IEP Data Needs to Be

So there are three things that we need our data to be. We need it to be clear, measurable and useful. We need it to be clear to ourselves and the others who look at it. We need it to really measure what it says we measure. There's nothing worse than getting to the end of an IEP and then realizing that what you've been measuring doesn't answer the question about mastery. And we need to make sure that it's useful in that it informs our instruction. I am totally not about taking data just to take data if it doesn't help us in some way. I don't see the point. We take data to monitor progress, but we also take data to tell us when progress isn't happening. Before we get to the end of the year and that last report card. We need to know quickly if a student is struggling. So that we can make changes to how we're teaching rather than losing that time.

And data collection should also be a source of reinforcement for us. It should let us know when a student's progressing. It should give us that good feeling in, mine's in my stomach, that something in your classroom is actually going right and it should give you credit for what you teach. It should show that you're implementing an instructional program and in the days of accountability that can be really helpful. So how do you make sure that you get the data that actually is going to meet those needs? So those are what my five elements are about that I want to talk about today.

Write Data-Friendly Goals

The first is that you need to write data friendly goals. Now I know that everybody has had a ton of training probably on writing goals that are measurable and things like that. But there are a few other things that you can do to your goals that can make or break your data collection down the line.




One of them is that we want to really make sure that the skill that we're writing is very specific. We want to make sure that it's defined so that other people can understand it and we also want to make sure that everyone is clear when they observe the behavior. So if you can't observe it and actually see the student do something and at least two other people wouldn't agree with you about whether, or not it occurred, then it's probably not a written goal. That is written well. So you want to focus on behaviors that actually occur rather than the absence of behavior.

So focus on how many times a student followed a direction, not how many times they didn't. Because maybe he didn't follow it because he didn't hear it. It may not be that you're actually measuring noncompliance, which is the absence of something. Try to make sure that you are measuring the actual presence of something occurring.

You also want to make sure that you're writing it in a way that you know that what you're observing is what you're seeing. So for instance, rather than saying, "He will refrain from getting mad," you're going to be much better off saying what those behaviors are that you want to decrease over time. So throwing things, hitting things, yelling at people. Those are specific behaviors that we can observe. But being mad looks different for every single person. So you want to be careful about that.

You want to make sure that you are being specific. What did Mary do when she was interacting with the other student? Rather than she'll make a friend, because then you're going to have to define what a friend is. And chances are good that she'll have kids that she's friendly with and not friendly with over the course of the year. So how do you make that a yearly kind of goal?

Second, you also want to make sure in the writing of your goal that your mastery criteria is written in a way that makes sense for the skill and it



makes sense for your classroom. If you're talking about the initiation of interaction or communication, for instance. We tend to write our mastery goals as the percentage of opportunities that a student got something right. That works great if you're measuring math. But if you think about it, if you go to measure the number of initiations that a student makes, I don't know what an opportunity for initiation looks like. Or more exactly I don't know what an opportunity for initiation doesn't look like or a lack of an opportunity. I guess if you were completely by yourself, you would have no opportunity for initiating communication. But we want to make sure ... So I don't know how to count those times that they didn't do it because every minute is an opportunity for initiation. Say at recess, I might be better off saying that she'll do it a certain number of times within a set time period and then all I have to do is count. I don't have to count the time she doesn't do it. I just have to count the number that she does.

We also don't want to write a goal so that you have to take data on everything all the time. You do not need to take data on all the things all the time. And I'm going to repeat that. You do not need to take data on all the things all the time. In our data course in the Academy, I talk a lot about the fact that I would rather have a reliable sample of data that shows me if a student is progressing, than just have random observations that someone managed to take that I don't even know if they're really accurate. Because I don't know if they were really able to observe during a specific time period.

There's a ton more to say about that, but generally make sure that your mastery criteria doesn't require you to have eyes on the student every single minute that he is in your classroom. Unless, someone is there tracking data every single minute that he's there. And of course make sure that your goals are measurable.




Make an IEP Data Collection Plan

Okay. Number two, make a plan. Making a data plan is critical because otherwise you're throwing data into the classroom and seeing where it sticks. And that's not going to give you the data that you're going to need to make decisions down the road. It's also probably not going to be really reliable or really accurate data to give you the information that you need. So to make the plan, I use the Teaching Implementation Plan or the Comprehensive Autism Planning System, neither of which are autism specific. I use them to organize both my instruction and my data collection. And I will link in the blog post that goes with this, I will link information about each of those. So that you can make a decision about what makes the most sense for you.

They both lay out the goals for the student. And they both account for how data is going to be taken in the classroom. The thing that I really like about the Teaching Implementation Plan, or the TIP, is that it focuses specifically on all the goals in the IEP. So you know when you've completed a TIP on the student that you know how you're going to teach every skill and how you're going to track every skill in the IEP. So you're not going to be caught out at the end of the year realizing that you're missing data if you put this plan in place.

Plans are also important because you shouldn't be the only person taking data on the team or in your classroom. Your paras likely spend a good bit of time with your students and often during that time you're working with other students and you may not be there to observe that interaction. Their data should tell you how the students are doing during that time. This is particularly important when we talk about behavior because for so many of our students, the person coming back and reporting how he did in an activity is going to remember how the end of the activity went or the worst parts



of it went more than the better. And the data is going to make that information more objective.


In addition, having the paras taking data should take some of the load off of you for data collection. Now you do need to train them in how to take data and you do need to have a system that is simple enough and understandable to them. I will talk about training them in a future podcast in the next few weeks, where I talk about training and strategies for training staff when you have a full classroom and have no extra time.

Create a System of Data Collection

Number 3 is that we need to create a system of data collection. So if you have a plan from a TIP or a CAPs, then the system's going to be pretty easy to develop. But you still need to think about how you're actually going to deploy that across your classroom.

So many times people will ask me, is there a data sheet for this? Or is there one data sheet that I can use for everything? And look, I would love to tell you that there is a data sheet that will solve all of your problems, but there isn't. And anyone who tells you that there is, is selling something. There are definitely user friendly data sheets like my data sheets that self graph, rating scales, rubrics, data sheets that allow you to have teaching programs in front of you while you're taking the data.

Some data is easier to take than others. So for instance, if I could use work product for every single goal, I would do it in a heartbeat. Because it's a ton less work to collect the data, if I can just record what kind of prompting was needed and any extra information on the work product itself. And put it in my file cabinet and look at it regularly to compare it to today's performance. But we can't because some things just don't work that way.




And many of the things that our students need to learn don't lend themselves to work products. And that's why a system of data is so important.

I have a system that I use to set up classrooms initially. And it changes a bit for each classroom because not only are everyone's goals individualized, but your organizational style is individualized as well. So each system is going to look different in different classrooms with different staff. But I have a system that gets you started and it's important that we implement our data plan in a systematic way. So I will link in the blog post to the free data webinar. It's completely free, that I have that you can take whenever you need it. So it's on demand. That shows you the beginning plan for getting a system in a classroom started to take instructional data. So it focuses just on instructional data and I'll put that in the blog posts that goes with this podcast.

Analyze Your Data

Our next item is that we need to analyze your data. If you don't analyze your data, you really don't know for sure if your student is meeting mastery or if the skill is foundering and hit a plateau. We actually, in the little research that we have about data collection in the classroom, we actually have data that shows that teachers who graph their data and analyze it regularly, have students who make more progress than teachers who don't. Analyzing the data means more than just looking at the data. So it doesn't mean just pulling out your data sheets and looking at it. If you've got self graphing data sheets, that may be all that you need to do. But if not, then you need to graph your data and have a regular review of your work product. It doesn't have to involve a ton of math or anything like that. But every week or so you need to be looking at your student's progress to determine if they're going up the line towards mastery or if they're not



going to reach that mastery point in time. Which then needs to indicate we need to make some changes.


It can be as simple as drawing a line on your graph from where the student started to where mastery would be on the date that it has to be mastered. And then see if your data is climbing up that aim line. I can actually help with this. I've got a free resource on my website that is a self graphing Excel document and there's a video that comes out of the Special Educator Academy that is on my blog for free that you can watch on how to use it. I use it to graph data from my group or embedded data sheets that I talk about in my system in the webinar I talked about earlier. They don't self graph and they need to be put into some kind of graph format. And the Excel document is designed to let you put that data in and then it graphs itself. And I update it every year. So I'll link to it in the blog post for this episode. You'll find it. If you just go to

autismclassroomresources.com/episode22.

Use Your Data to Predict Growth

And finally number five, you want to use your data to write your next set of goals. IEP writing should not be a complete shot in the dark in terms of guessing what the student can accomplish. If he learned to write a 100 sight words this year then I wouldn't expect him to read a 1,000 sight words next year. You want to look at the trajectory of that graph of your data and see where by the end of next year he might be able to get and you can do it just by extending that line.

The same is true for reducing behavior. Just reduce the line from how much it reduced this year to see could happen next year. What progress was made this year should then predict the progress we can make next year. Now, obviously our students are not automatons and everything changes in the




new year. So there are always going to be extenuating circumstances. But it's a lot easier to explain why you chose the goal you did when it's based on data rather than just a shot in the dark.

So those are the five things that you want to think about in setting up your data to make sure that it is working hard for you. You work hard to take your data, it should be working for you, not just be something else on your to do list. So I will include the links to the [free webinar](#), the [free Excel spreadsheet](#) and everything like that in the blog posts. So just go to [autismclassroomresources.com/episode 22](http://autismclassroomresources.com/episode22) and the links will be there. And I'll put the link to the blog post in the show notes as well.

Data takes some time to wrap your head around. And there's lots to think about with it. So it does take some time. So if you're a brand new teacher, it's going to be a piece that will come easier over time. So don't stress about it. There are some things that you can do to take regular tests and things like that to try to get your data. But by this point in the year, if you're listening to this when it's recorded, we just started the second semester in January. This is a really good time to make sure that your data collection system is in place and that it's working well for you to give you the information that you need.

I would love to hear your questions and your struggles with taking data and you can drop those in our [private Facebook group](#) at specialeducatorsconnection.com if you'd like to know more about the [Special Educator Academy](#), which has a whole course on data collection, hop on over to specialeducatoracademy.com to learn more about that. We have a number of tools in addition to the ones that are shared on the blog that can help you with data collection and our communities a great place to bring questions and talk about it.



I hope that this has been helpful. I hope that it gives you some ideas, some direction, and some resources for data because I know how difficult it can be and I want to thank you for spending the time for listening to this episode with me, and I hope that I will see you in next week for next week's episode.