

Utilizing Precision Teaching and Curriculum-Based Measurement to Effectively Build and Monitor Behavior

John Downs

Precision Teaching and Curriculum-Based Management (CBM) are two formal measurement systems used for instructional decision making that have essential commonalities and distinctions. According to Fuchs and Deno (1991), there are two major modes of instructionally relevant measurement into which Precision Teaching and CBM can be categorized. The first model, known as "specific subskill mastery measurement", includes Precision Teaching when assessing basic academic skills. The second model, a "general outcome measurement", would include curriculum-based measurement as developed to assess the areas of oral reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic.

Precision Teaching practitioners familiar with the history and literature of the field, realize the diversity and flexibility of Precision Teaching as a set of measurement and teaching procedures. Assessment of basic skills, as practiced by most Precision Teachers, is a formative, daily process of measuring specific short term objectives. However, Precision Teaching conventions, as utilized by some practitioners, have also been shown to be applicable to evaluating student progress in a summative fashion, while continuing to provide students and teachers with a means to build and measure basic skill performance on a daily basis. Examples of such projects date back to 1978 with CHARTS (Changing Achievement Rates of Teachers and Students) from the University of Washington (Lovitt, Fantasia, and Heliotis); MEPS (Monitoring Educational Performance of Students), also out of the University of Washington (White and McElwain, 1978); the Boys Town Schools' Monthly Assessment Program (MAP), used with junior high and high school students from 1984--89; and recent work in monitoring reading performance with elementary students under the direction of Sheila Fox from Western Washington University.

Both Precision Teaching and CBM are based on behavioral principles of observational assessment. Their commonalities are greater than their distinctions. As suggested by Fuchs and Deno (1991), an appropriate blend of the two might contribute significantly to providing a nondiscriminatory database that could be used across a range of decisions used in developing and evaluating student programs.