Inclusive Practice Tool: Considering Growth

A RESOURCE FOR SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Inclusive practice refers to the instructional and behavioral strategies that improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for **all students,** with and without disabilities, in general education settings.

To support inclusive practice, the tools of this *Guidebook* are based on the frameworks of Universal Design for Learning, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Social and Emotional Learning.

How do I use this tool?

This tool is intended to assist educators in determining growth for a range of students with diverse learning profiles. The tool introduces the concepts of gathering accurate baseline data and setting parameters through a process called banding. For more information on setting parameters for growth, educators will enjoy reading ESE's DDM Implementation Brief: Setting Parameters.

Directions: Classroom educators can use this tool to ensure that measures of student growth are accurate. **Building administrators** can use this tool to support classroom educators through a review of assessments and to guide professional development activities. **District administrators** can use this tool to support inclusive practice across schools and ensure that all students in a district have an equal opportunity to demonstrate growth.

The *Guidebook* tools are designed to strengthen inclusive practices and empower educators to meet the needs of all students by leveraging and augmenting the educator evaluation process. Although each tool is designed as a stand-alone resource, many tools mutually support educator practice. This tool has a strong relationship to the following *Guidebook* tools:
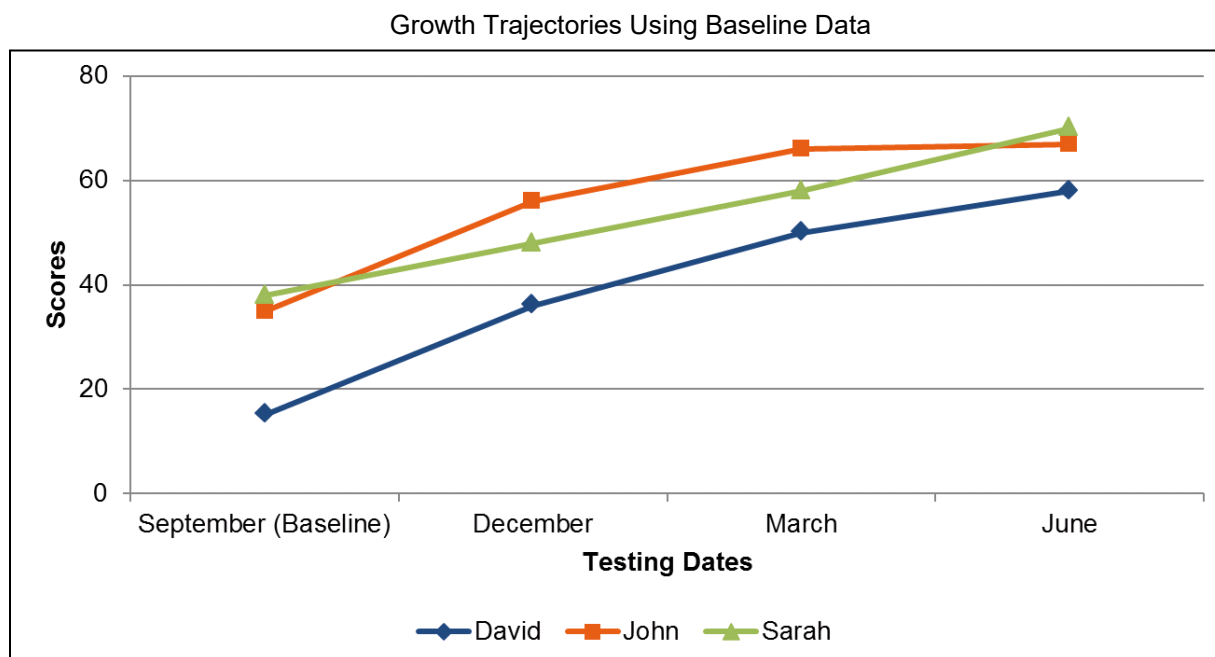
- **Tool 7a:** Accessibility Review

- **DDM Implementation Brief:** Setting Parameters

- Finally, check the Job-Embedded PD Planning Guide and Quick Tips for Guidebook PD

Connection to Inclusion

Measuring student growth is vital to an inclusive setting, since students with diverse needs begin instruction with a range of abilities. Evidence of growth provides an important lens for assessing a student. Since growth takes into account where each student begins, all students should have an equal chance of demonstrating expected growth. As a result, growth provides a fair assessment of all students progress. Growth better aligns with a student's effort and as a result allows them greater ownership over his or her own learning. Growth also provides important feedback to an educator making instructional decisions. An educator working with a student who is still struggling with grade level content, but has made tremendous growth should be confident to continue to use the same teaching strategies, while another student who although at the same level of performance but is not making meaningful growth requires additional investigation and new instructional approaches.

Baseline Data

In order to identify accurate measures of student growth, baseline data should be collected. Baseline data are defined as an initial collection of data (pre-test) that serve as a basis for comparison with the subsequently acquired data (post-test). By collecting high-quality baseline data, we can set growth expectations based on students previous skills as opposed to assumptions about demographic characteristics This initial data could be an identical assessment or a parrallel version which assesses the exact same content but asks different questions. Baseline data may also be based on a different assessment; however, educators should be cautious in interpreting growth. For example, we can't support a claim of growth based on an assessment of a student's understanding of fractions in December compared to their understanding of multiplication in September, since there is not enough overlap in content. We may be able to make a claim of growth comparing a students writing across the same time span even if they are in response to different prompts.

Growth Trajectories Using Baseline Data

The following graph shows possible growth trajectories for three hypothetical students. The baseline data are represented by the first point on the graph, which shows the results of the pre-assessment given in September. The students

were assessed three more times, culminating with the post-assessment in June. Each student progressed differently over the course of the year. At the end of the year, Sarah demonstrated the highest level of performance. Although David started and ended with the lowest scores, the graph illustrates that he had the greatest change in score.

But did he grow more? Unfortunately, we can't determine this from looking only at a change in scores. It is possible that moving from a 20 to a 40 on this assessment is quite easy. So what is the best way to assess growth? The answer: we need to rely on an educator's professional judgment.

Banding

Since all students should have an equal chance to demonstrate growth on a common assessment, the banding process allows educators to set growth parameters that capture different cutoff scores depending on the student's baseline score.

Setting "bands" according to baseline scores allows educators to set *low*, *moderate*, and *high* ranges of growth for students more accurately and acknowledge that, on many assessments, an increase of 1 point does not necessarily equal the same amount of growth consistently across the scale. In other words, it may be easier for students to move from a baseline score of 5 to an end-of-course score of 10 than it is to move from a baseline score of 90 to an end-of-course score of 95.

The following table is an example of ranges of *low*, *moderate*, and *high* growth for students in three bands, based on baseline scores. Educators may create as many bands in the parameter setting process as they wish, but three is the recommended minimum when working with students with diverse learning profiles. In this example, three bands were set to capture different rates of growth.

You can learn more about the steps of the process by reading the Implementation Brief on Parameter Setting, and by watching the accompanying video.

Sample Banding Table

Baseline (Start-of-Course)	End-of-Course		
Initial Score	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
0–4	<8 points	8–12 points	>12 points
5–11	<3 points	4–10 points	>10 points
12–22*	<2 points	2–5 points	>5 points

*Students who scored above 22 on Baseline should be offered a more challenging assessment in order to demonstrate growth

Process

Pre-Assessment

■ Educators that are using the measure should meet and review together the items in the measure. The educators should establish bands for baseline scores based on their review of the measure and their professional judgment. Three bands are recommended, but educators might find it beneficial to use more than three.

■ Educators should then use professional judgment (and past student performance on the measure, if available) to determine a range of scores that represent *moderate* growth for all three bands. Growth above and below that range should be identified as *high* and *low* growth, respectively.

Review

■ After students have taken both pre-assessments and post-assessments, educators should review scores for disproportionate student growth. For example, students with disabilities should show similar amounts of *low*, *moderate*, and *high* growth as their peers who are not disabled.

Template

■ Determine a range of scores for each band, adding more than three bands if appropriate. Considering the baseline assessment, determine score cutoffs that indicate different levels of initial proficiency. In the preceding table, for example, scores from 0 to 4 suggest limited or no prerequisite knowledge. Scores of 12 or more points on the baseline assessment indicate that students are well prepared or have an advanced level of skills and knowledge.

■ Identify the range of scores that represent *moderate* growth for each band by determining how much growth a student at both the *low* and the *high* ends of the band should show in order to be considered *moderate*. Expectations for *moderate* growth should be high but not unattainable, and growth may differ between bands.

Blank Banding Table

Baseline (Start-of-Course)	End-of-Course		
	Low Growth	Moderate Growth	High Growth
Band One			
Band Two			
Band Three			

Key Understandings for Measuring Student Growth in Inclusive Environments

- Assessments that result in many students scoring 0 are problematic because of the "floor effect." That is, the assessment does not make distinctions between the skills and knowledge of these students. For example, if a third-grade reading pretest assessed only grade-level reading skills, a student reading at a high second-grade level and a student still struggling with letter recognition may receive the same baseline score of 0. As a result, it would be considerably more difficult for the second student to demonstrate growth on the posttest. It is important to review assessment results to ensure that groups of students (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learners [ELLs]) are not being impacted unfairly by floor effects. A similar problem can occur if many students receive the top score on an assessment, which leads to a "ceiling effect."

- Inconsistent accommodation use across years can inflate or deflate estimates of growth. Evaluators should be aware of the use of student accommodations. Educators and evaluators should regularly assess the accessibility of assessment tools.

- Regardless of the student growth model that is used, national studies have shown that the inclusion or exclusion of scores from students with disabilities does not—in most cases—affect an educator's score relative to other educator[1].

Framework for Reflective Conversations about Student Growth

- In an effective common assessment, all students should have the opportunity to demonstrate growth, regardless of their baseline scores.

- Educators should review measures to ensure that they are appropriate and fair for all students, including ELL students and students with disabilities.

[1] Buzick, H. & Jones, N. Using test scores from students with disabilities in teacher evaluation. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*

- After common assessments have been identified, a system for progress monitoring should be developed to assist with charting students' differential rates of learning.

- After end-of-course assessments are given, the educator's reflections about student growth should be shared with the educator's evaluator to inform professional judgment about Student Impact Ratings.