Autism Information Fast Facts

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Tips for Effectively Collecting Data

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Data collection and analysis is an important component of educational programming for all students, but particularly for students with ASD. Making data-based decisions is critical for supporting students to make progress in all areas, including academics, behavior, communication, social skills, and other skills. But collecting good data and doing effective analysis can be challenging too. Being able to embed data collection into the daily routine of the classroom makes data collection a more manageable task.

Here are some tips for embedding data collection into the day:

▶ **TIP 1: Plan and organize**!
Making a plan for how and when you will collect data as well as what you will collect is the first step in collecting good data. Collecting data can sound a little daunting but knowing what skills you are targeting, when those opportune times for collection will occur, and how you are going to make that happen helps you get a plan together.

▶ **TIP 2: It takes a village**!
Don't feel like you have to collect all the data by yourself. Work with others to determine how everyone can be involved. Not only will it lighten your load to share it with others, but you'll actually have better data collection because it won't only be from one person's perspective. For example, you can have other teachers who work with the student take data as well as paraprofessionals or even the student themselves!

▶ **TIP 3: Simplify your data collection**!
It is tempting to write down all the things you observe when collecting data. However, not all of that information may be needed. The simpler you can make the data collection form, the easier it will be to complete, not only for you but for others as well. Also, the simpler the form, the more likely it is to be accurate.

▶ **TIP 4: Create a system**!
Use things you already have around you. Strategies such as making marks on masking tape, using post-it notes, clickers, or even moving paper clips from pocket to pocket to mark frequency can all be easy systems that don't require much effort or materials.

▶ **TIP 5: Analyze your data**!
Once you have your data, do something with it. Put it in a chart or graph so you can more easily see trends. This will help with making decisions about what needs to continue or what might need to change to help the student be more successful.

Regardless of how you collect data, it is important to remember it takes a little practice to become proficient. For more information on data collection and analysis, VCU-ACE has a self-paced course:

Improving Goal Mastery through Data-Based Decision Making
https://vcuautismcenter.org/te/courses/data.cfm

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