

Precision Teaching - what is it?

Precision Teaching is a method of planning a teaching programme to meet the needs of an individual child or young person who is experiencing difficulty with acquiring or maintaining some skills. It has an inbuilt monitoring function and is basically a means of evaluating the effectiveness of what is being taught.

It can be used in early years, primary and secondary settings and can be applied to areas of the curriculum that can be broken down into clear objectives, eg: numeracy and literacy skills.

Zone of Proximal Development

Skills too difficult for a child to master on his/her own, but that can be done with **guidance and encouragement** from a knowledgeable person.

What is Known

What is not Known



What's the theory behind Precision Teaching?

Vygotsky suggested that effective teaching should be geared towards a learner's 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Precision teaching encourages us to be very specific about the material used with the child, ensuring that it is within the ZPD.

Precision teaching also draws on Haring and Easton's learning hierarchy which shows us how new learning needs to be fluent before it can be maintained effectively

The Learning Hierarchy (Haring & Easton, 1978)

Stage	Emphasis	Teaching Strategies
Acquisition	Pupil performs skills with accuracy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstration 2. Modelling 3. Cues and prompts 4. Routines and drills.
Fluency	Pupil performs with both accuracy and fluency.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repeated novel drills 2. Reinforcement.
Maintenance	Proficiency level reached and maintained in accuracy and fluency.	Adequate opportunities for skill use.
Generalisation	With instruction, pupil applies skill with novel materials or under different conditions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discrimination training 2. Differentiation training.
Adaptation	Without specific instruction pupil applies skills with novel material or under different conditions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Problem-solving 2. Simulation exercises.

Which children might benefit from precision teaching?

- Children who seem able enough to complete tasks but are reluctant to try (self-efficacy)
- Children who appear to know something one day but not the next (stuck on accuracy – need fluency)
- Children who appear to know something in one area but not in another (stuck on maintenance – need to generalise)
- Children who are very slow in the production of work (stuck on accuracy- need fluency)
- Children who ‘don’t have the basics’

What do I do?

Spend 5 to 10 minutes teaching the child/young person the 2 new items using whichever teaching method you think is best.

Using the probe, ask the child/young person to see how many they can get right in 1 minute. This should be a fun activity.

Make note of the number of correct items and number of errors

A note of the errors is made so you can target these for your next round of teaching – keeping the teaching ‘precise’

Record the correct responses and errors on the **PRECISION TEACHING CHART**

Name _____

Date _____

Learning Target _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Number correct in 1 minute					
Number incorrect in 1 minute					

Teaching Activities

What works?

chip	chat	mat	hip	chat
hip	chip	chip	mat	chip
chat	hip	mat	mat	chat
mat	chat	hip	hip	chip
chip	mat	chat	chat	mat
hip	hip	chip	hip	chip
mat	chip	chat	mat	chip
hip	chat	mat	hip	chat

Why is precision teaching useful?

Monitoring learning this closely gives **immediate feedback about teaching**. It means we focus very closely on exactly which material a child is struggling with and which methods are proving fruitful. Studies have shown (eg Hattie, 2009) that feedback about teaching makes the single biggest improvement to learning outcomes.

The number of correct responses show us when a child has achieved fluency with their new learning so reduces the likelihood of learning be 'lost' again.

Example 'probe'. A grid of about 4 randomly arranged stimuli, repeated 40 times

An Evaluated Pilot

The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) would like to gather evidence about the effectiveness of precision teaching in Moray. We are looking for a few schools to be involved in an evaluated pilot to support teachers and support staff in carrying out precision teaching. We would involve:

- Training for teachers and support staff
- Support visits
- Evaluation of the pilot

If you are interested in being part of the pilot please contact the EPS by e-mailing:
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