2025 OSSPEAC Conference

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GOAL WRITING IN ACTION: HOW TO IDENTIFY OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIORS TO CREATE COMPLIANT IEP GOALS.

PRESENTER INFORMATION

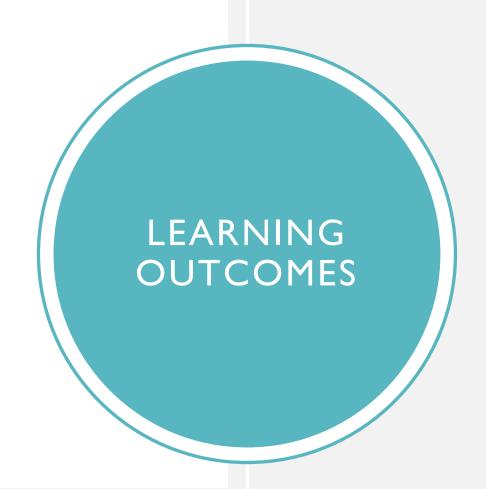
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This presenter has no relevant financial relationships to disclose.



- By the end of this session, attendees will be able to use the ACTION acronym to:
 - Identify a specific, observable goal behavior representative of functional skill deficits
 - 2. Create a dynamic assessment measure to obtain baseline achievement levels, type of support (prompts/cues), and goal condition needed for functional skill attainment
 - 3. Write a compliant annual goal for IEP reviews



"GOALS ARE HARD"

-Tindall, 2001-present

SMART AND COMPLIANT



SLPs learn about SMART goals in graduate school



Most are taught the SMART components, but not how to pick target behaviors for goals



Intentional training on goal writing is essential to the development of goals that meet the SMART criteria (Nobriga & St. Clair, 2018)



If you create a SMART goal, it will be compliant

IEP PART 6 – MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

What is a SMART goal?

S = Specific

- Identifies ONE specific target behavior
- One behavior = One verb

M = Measurable

- 4 components to a measurable goal:
 - I. an observable behavior
 - 2. the level of support needed
 - 3. criteria
 - the conditions under which the behavior will be performed

A = Attainable

- Based on student's strengths and weaknesses
- Consider time available for speech

• R = Relevant

- Aligns with one or more academic standards
- Builds foundational skills required to meet standards

T = Timely

What the student can demonstrate in one year (annual goal)



- 1. <u>Clearly defined behavior</u> specific behavior the student is to perform based on skill deficits
- 2. <u>Condition</u> situation, setting or materials in which the behavior is to be performed
- 3. <u>Performance Criteria</u> accuracy level the student must demonstrate for mastery and the number of times they must demonstrate it to be considered proficient













WE ASSESS SKILLS...

- Assessment is the systematic process of obtaining and using information to make a judgement or decision about something (Shipley & McAfee, 2025).
- Assessment methods to determine skill levels:
 - Standardized tests
 - Interview
 - Medical history
 - Teacher report

- Parent report
- District and State testing
- Classroom performance
- Etc., etc., etc.

WE MEASURE BEHAVIORS...

- We can't measure skills; we measure behaviors that demonstrate those skills
- Behaviors are elicited by something that WE DO
 - The SLP provides strategies and interventions along with supports (prompting/cues) to get that behavior to happen
- Behaviors are observable, by someone, in specific situations
- Behaviors are actions meaning the student is DOING something
 - That "something" is what you document as your goal target behavior



- ASSESS areas of weakness by identifying functional skill deficits.
- **CHOOSE** the skill to prioritize
- THINK of target behaviors representative of the skill
- IDENTIFY specific, relevant, and measurable target behavior
- OBTAIN baseline data for the measurable target behavior
- NOTE the level of support and condition(s) needed for success

A = ASSESS

- Determine student's strengths and weaknesses
- ETR should state student's educational needs
- What skills does the student need to improve?
- Use multiple sources to determine areas of weakness:
 - ETR data; Past IEP performance; Progress monitoring data; Teacher/caregiver input; Student report

SKILL OR BEHAVIOR?

SKILLS IDENTIFIED IN ETR

- Phonology
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics

BEHAVIORS TARGETED IN IEP

- Production of /s/ blends in words
- Use of present progressive –ing verbs
- Creation of compound sentences using conjunctions
- Comparing and contrasting characters in a story
- Conveying a personal narrative about lunch time

C = CHOOSE

- Prioritize skills
- Most of our students have many language needs.
- Which deficits have the greatest impact on academic success? (Caruana, 2015)
- What skills would lead to the most improvement in increase classroom independence?
- What skills would create the most change in communicative function?
- Which skills are foundational for grade-level skill acquisition?

DALTON – 5 YRS; KG ETR IDENTIFIED IMPAIRED SKILLS IN:

Phonology

- Voicing
- Stopping
- Cluster reduction
- Gliding
- Final consonant deletion

Syntax

- Speaks primarily in oneword utterances and short I-3-word phrases
- Makes pronoun case errors (i.e. "him for he")

Pragmatics

- Difficulty following directions
- Unable to maintain topic
- Difficulty interacting with peers

Semantics

- Unable to name categories
- Limited use of adjectives
- Limited understanding of spatial/relational concepts

Morphology

- Does not use plural or possessive /s/ word endings
- No tense markers for verbs

T = THINK

- Brainstorm!!!
- Think about what behaviors demonstrate these skills
- Behaviors are observable what do you "visualize" the student doing?
- Behaviors are actions the student must "DO" them
- If a student increases their skill level, what behaviors happen more often?
- What would a "correct" response look like?

ELICIT, OBSERVE, MEASURE

NON-OBSERVABLE VERBS

- Increase
- Improve
- Decrease
- Reduce
- Understand
- Know

- Demonstrate
- Eliminate
- Comprehend
- Learn
- Familiarize
- Observe

OBSERVABLE VERBS

- Say
- Identify
- Match
- Label
- Classify
- Produce

- Compare
- Choose
- Summarize
- Extend
- Name
- Categorize

Bloom's Taxonomy

- Academic standards are consistent expectations of grade level skills
- If the student is unlikely to meet the standard without support, then it is a possible annual goal target (Diehm, 2017)
- Identify the verbs in the standard (convert to observable behavior if needed) – this is what the student is expected to "do"
- Determine how to measure the skill in a logical, reliable, and observable manner (baseline and progress monitoring)
- Incorporate the language used in the standard into your goal (Caruana, 2015)



KG STANDARDS - TARGETS

Reading Literature

Retell Stories including key details

Describe the relationship between illustrations and the story

Reading Informational

Identify the main topic

Identify similarities and differences between 2 texts

Reading Foundational

Blend and **segment** onsets and rimes

Add or **substitute** phonemes in one-syllable words

S&L Comprehension

Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges

Ask and answer questions about key details of a read aloud

KG STANDARDS - TARGETS

S&L Presentation

Describe people, places, things, and events

Speak audibly and **express** thoughts, feelings, ideas clearly

Language Conventions

Form regular plural nouns orally

Produce and expand complete sentences

Language Vocabulary

Determine meaning of

meaning of multiple-meaning words

Use frequently occurring inflections and affixes

Language Vocabulary

Sort common objects into categories

Relate verbs and adjectives to their antonyms

I = IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY specific and relevant target behavior
 - Target behavior reflects the skill addressed
- We can't measure a behavior that we don't observe
 - Don't write goals for negative behaviors like "reduce," "decrease," or "eliminate"
 - Identify the replacement behavior that will be the target response
- Use the academic standards to help identify behaviors
- Consider selecting complex skills IEP is 1 year
 - STGs and LPOs will target foundational behaviors needed to meet Annual Goal

TARGET BEHAVIORS

Reading Foundational, S&L Presentation (Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics)

- Imitate /s/ in initial position of words
- Identify word position for /k/ in single syllable words

S&L Presentation, Reading Foundational (Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics)

- Produce both sounds in 2 element consonant clusters
- Produce final consonants in CVC words

S&L Presentation, Language Conventions, Vocabulary (Syntax, Morphology, Semantics)

- Create a pronoun + auxiliary + present progressive verb sentence
- Add an adjective to expand a simple S+V+O sentence

S&L Comprehension, Presentation, , Language Conventions, Vocabulary (Syntax, Semantics)

- Answer "why" and "how" questions appropriately
- Ask a question beginning with "where" to determine an object's location

TARGET BEHAVIORS CONT.

S&L Presentation, Language Conventions, Vocabulary (Morphology, Semantics)

- Produce a regular verb in past tense form
- Form a plural noun from its singular form

S&L Presentation, Language Conventions, Vocabulary (Semantics)

- Sort 5 items into 2 different categories
- Describe an item using 3 attributes

S&L Comprehension, Presentation (Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics)

- Maintain topic for at least 3 turns
- Use appropriate phrase to enter a conversation

Reading Literature, Informational (Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics)

- Retell a story including character, setting, problem, and solution
- Identify story elements in a picture book

O = OBTAIN

- **OBTAIN** baseline data for the target behavior through dynamic assessment
- Behaviors are elicited what will you do to get a consistent response?
- Set up a condition to test your target behavior
- Discrete trials
 - Elicit the target behavior given the goal condition 5-10 times
 - Record accuracy level

DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT

- Create dynamic assessment/progress monitoring materials
 - Progress monitoring packets (TpT)
 - Fun Decks
 - Worksheets
- "Test" your target behavior with "goal level" supports (baseline)
- If you don't use the same material to measure progress each time, use similar materials
 - Ex. Use a different picture book each time to describe action in pictures

BASELINE DATA

- Required in the PLAAFP and must align with the annual goal
- Must be in the same unit of measurement as the annual goal
- Allow for natural data collection of a meaningful behavior (Hedge, 2025)
 - "Spontaneous" productions can't be measured in %
 - Can't achieve 80% accuracy given 3 trials
 - Can state # trials clinician will provide to measure progress in the goal – Given 10...no more than 3 errors (at least 7 correct)
 - Consider rubrics for more complex behaviors (social lang, nonverbal lang, etc)



N = NOTE

- **NOTE** the level of support and condition needed to achieve successful execution of the target behavior
 - Repeat baseline trials with as much support as needed to achieve accurate target responses (Hedge, 2025)
- Goal of teaching is 100% accuracy with target response
- Goal of treatment is as much accuracy as possible with appropriate supports (goal level)
- Condition must be explicitly stated so it can be repeated each time the goal is measured
 - situation, setting or materials in which the behavior is to be performed (Hedge, 2025)

MODELS, PROMPTS, & CUES, OH MY!

- Model Student repetition of clinician's model
- Prompt Direct and leads to the correct answer
- Cue Indirect and serves as a hint
- Doesn't matter what you call it if you are SPECIFIC
 - No min, mod, max what does that mean?
 - Can include examples in your goal to ensure understanding of target behavior

OBJECTIVES



"Small steps"
needed to meet our
annual goal



"Unpack" the standard



Objectives are not the annual goal broken into pieces!



Meet in less than I year

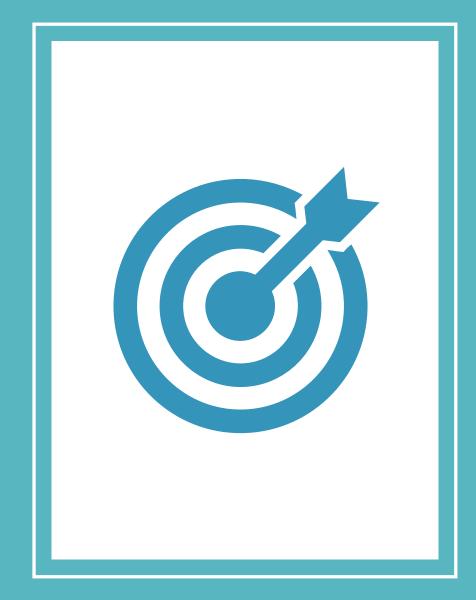


Use to demonstrate progress



Ohio doesn't monitor compliance

GOAL WORKSHOP BEGINS!





What do we need to do to make these IEP annual goals compliant in the state of Ohio?

LET'S FIX THE GOALS



Brady will increase his vocabulary skills by saying synonyms in sentences for 10 target words when they are read to him, and he can read the sentence with the target word underlined twice in 5 sessions.



Taylor will use clear speech sounds to say her /l/ sound while repeating words with /l/ blends 100% of the time in 4/4 sessions.

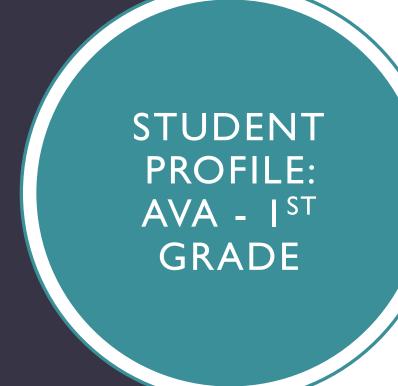
IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION!

In small groups, pick a student profile on the next slides and use ACTION to create 2 annual goals for the student and a baseline measure for each goal.

When you have your goals and baseline assessment activity, write them on the Forms response sheet to share with other attendees.

ACTION Goals





• Phonology:

- Weaknesses: Difficulty producing ageappropriate speech sounds; frequent sound substitutions including /t/ for /k/ all positions, /w/ for /l/ in initial and medial positions and consonant blends, and /w/ for /r/ in initial positions and consonant blends.
 - Weaknesses: Phonemic awareness
 Is unable to segment CVC words if they contain digraphs, has difficulty manipulating sounds in auditory tasks
- Strengths: Can discriminate between speech sounds in auditory tasks.

Morphology:

- Weaknesses: Omits grammatical morphemes (e.g., -ing, plural -s); struggles with verb tense. Omits auxiliaries "is" and "are" and only uses the copula in its contracted form (ex. It's, he's). Makes errors with irregular nouns and verbs.
- Strengths: Can use regular plurals, possessives, and singular pronouns with support.

Syntax:

- Weaknesses: Uses short, simple sentences; limited use of conjunctions.
- Strengths: Can produce subject-verbobject sentences with familiar vocabulary.

Semantics:

- Weaknesses: Limited vocabulary for age; difficulty naming items and describing actions.
- Strengths: Understands basic concepts (colors, shapes) and follows simple directions.

- Weaknesses: Difficulty initiating conversations; limited ability to maintain topics.
- Strengths: Responds appropriately to greetings and simple questions.



Phonology:

 Strengths: Age-appropriate speech sound production and intelligibility.

Morphology:

 Strengths: Uses plural and past tense markers correctly in most contexts.

Syntax:

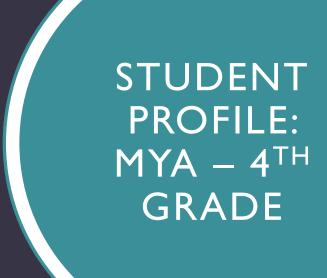
 Strengths: Produces complex sentences with conjunctions and modifiers.

• Semantics:

- Weaknesses: Difficulty understanding and using tier 2 vocabulary and multiple-meaning words; struggles with word retrieval.
- Strengths: Understands basic

vocabulary and can categorize objects.

- Weaknesses: Difficulty interpreting nonliteral language (e.g., idioms); struggles with turntaking and perspective-taking.
- Strengths: Can follow classroom routines and respond to direct questions.



• Phonology:

- Weaknesses: Inconsistent sound production errors, especially in multisyllabic words.
 Demonstrates groping behaviors and vowel errors (inconsistent) when speaking.
- Strengths: Improved intelligibility in structured tasks.

Morphology:

- Weaknesses: Frequent errors with irregular past tense and third person singular verbs.
- Strengths: Uses possessives and plural forms with familiar nouns.

Syntax:

 Weaknesses: Difficulty with sentence structure in written language; omits auxiliary verbs. Answers questions in the classroom with short phrases and often will respond, "I don't

know."

 Strengths: Can produce compound sentences orally with support.

Semantics:

- Weaknesses: Limited ability to define words or use synonyms.
- Strengths: Understands gradelevel vocabulary in context and can answer nonverbal comprehension questions without difficulty.

- Weaknesses: Difficulty interpreting sarcasm or indirect requests.
- Strengths: Engages in peer conversations with minimal support, is a member of the volleyball team, and states that she has, "lots of friends."



Phonology:

• Strengths: Speech is clear and age-appropriate.

Morphology:

 Strengths: Uses a variety of grammatical morphemes correctly.

Syntax:

 Strengths: Produces complex sentences with embedded clauses.

Semantics:

- Weaknesses: Difficulty with abstract vocabulary, figurative language, and multiple-meaning words.
- Strengths: Understands concrete vocabulary and can use context clues with support.

- Weaknesses: Struggles with conversational repair strategies and understanding social cues.
 Difficulty maintaining peer relationships.
- Strengths: Participates in classroom discussions and responds appropriately to teacher prompts.

RESOURCES

- Caruana, V. (2015). Accessing the common core standards for students with learning disabilities: Strategies for writing standards-based IEP goals. Preventing School Failure, 59 (4), 237-243.
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- Hegde, M. N. (2025). Clinical methods and practicum in speech-language pathology (7th ed.). Plural Publishing, Inc.
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 A practical and systemic approach. Perspectives of the ASHA Special Interest Groups. SIG 11, 3 (1), 36-47.
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