



IEP Basics: Effective Goal Writing

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Who is in the room?

- **What is your name?**
- **What is your role?**
- **What do you want out of this session?**

▶ About Us

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▶ **About this Presentation:**
Connect the purpose of an effective IEP with data-based decision-making to ease the process of effective goal writing.

- Review the needs of students with Autism as educators plan to include evidence-based methods of instruction in IEPs
- Review and practice task analyzing goals for effective and helpful learning objectives
- Apply learning to data-based decision-making

The language we use has meaning . . . so here are my rules:

Person-first AND/OR identify-first

Default reference to members of the Autism community will be person-first, but this is superseded by an individual's preference for Autistic identify-first. I usually will ask for a preference when appropriate.

Responsiveness

Be willing to change based on the changing preferences/trends in the community.

Example: <https://www.assistiveware.com/blog/aac-terminology-survey>

Support representation and spread awareness

Practice using different forms to support representation and awareness - references to specific individuals can be identity-first.

Students with Autism and the IEP



Social Communication

Social Interaction

Patterns of Behavior

DSM-5

Social Communication

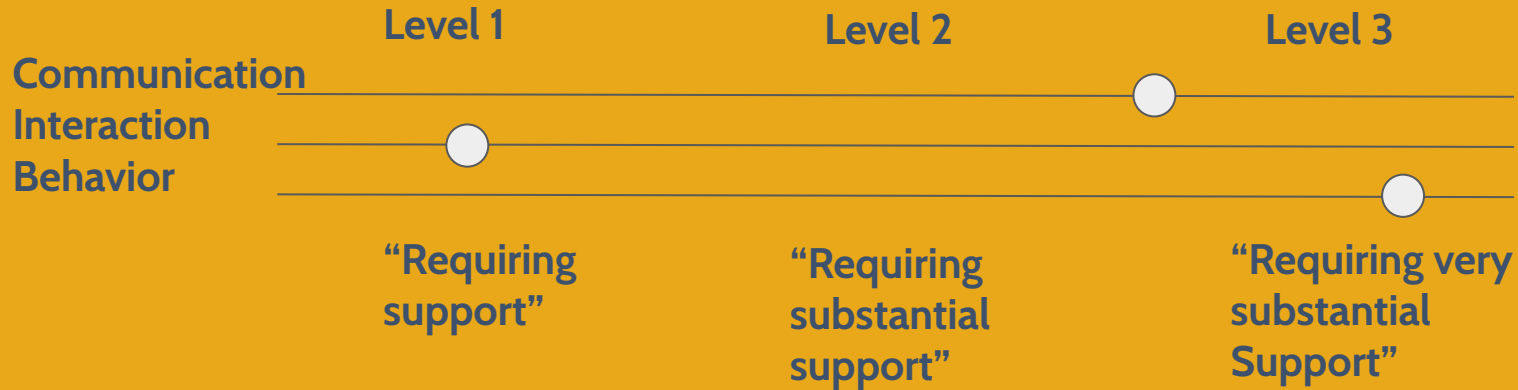
Social and emotional reciprocity; Sharing of interests, emotions, or affect; Initiations and responses . . .

Social Interaction

Use of gestures, Eye contact, Body Language, Integrating verbal and nonverbal communication, Facial expressions . . .

Behavior

Routine management, stereotyped motor movements, Repetitive behavior, Restricted or fixated interests, Sound sensitivity . . .



Several Variables, Each a Spectrum

Additional DSM-5 Considerations:

Diagnosis Conditions

C. Symptoms must be present in the early developmental period (but may not become fully manifest until social demands exceed limited capacities or may be masked by learned strategies in later life).

D. Symptoms cause clinically significant impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of current functioning.

E. These disturbances are not better explained by intellectual disability (intellectual developmental disorder) or global developmental delay. Intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder frequently co-occur; to make comorbid diagnoses of autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability, social communication should be below that expected for general developmental level.

Note: Individuals with a well-established DSM-IV diagnosis of autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, or pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified should be given the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder. Individuals who have marked deficits in social communication, but whose symptoms do not otherwise meet criteria for autism spectrum disorder, should be evaluated for social (pragmatic) communication disorder.

Additional DSM-5 Considerations:

Are there a co-occurring needs?

Specify if:

- With or without accompanying intellectual impairment
- With or without accompanying language impairment
 - (Coding note: Use additional code to identify the associated medical or genetic condition.)
- Associated with another neurodevelopmental, mental, or behavioral disorder
 - (Coding note: Use additional code[s] to identify the associated neurodevelopmental, mental, or behavioral disorder[s].)
- With catatonia
- Associated with a known medical or genetic condition or environmental factor



▶ What does this mean for the IEP?

Autism is not an academic disability

Areas of need in 1) social communication, 2) social interaction, and 3) behaviors can impede academic performance

IEP goals should focus on primary areas of need



▶ Stop and Think

How would you reframe/revise this goal:

Matthew has support needs in pre-algebra that are rooted in his need for social communication, interaction, and behavior supports. His teacher wrote a standards-aligned goal that reads:

“Given algebra problems with a single variable, Matthew will correctly solve equations with variables on both sides with 80% accuracy by October of 2025.”

- Matthew is not understanding the expectations of work
- Matthew is engaged with his favorite book during work time
- Matthew doesn't check his work for small errors

The Target: IEP goals for students with Autism should focus on the primary needs of each Autistic student.

But, what if the need goes across academic disciplines and is strictly about communication, social interaction, or behavior change?

How do I target that?



How can I measure it?

What is data-based decision-making?
How do I do it?

Breath in .
..

Data-Based Decision-Making Step-By-Step

Breath
out . . .

Hyphenated Adventure Time

With Dr. Haughney

If you get dizzy,
just focus on
the hyphens . .
.

Data-based Decisions are Effective, Purposeful Decisions

How to practice building meaning from your data:

- Start with a frequency count (you can observe and count instances) for at least 15 sessions.
- If you collected data on something with no intervention point (scores are all similar with no increase due to learning), rearrange your data from the lowest score to the highest score (just for practice).
- Practice graphing the data and analyze - what is the data telling you?
- Complete the steps in this Powerpoint and use the data in a cyclical decision-making process (wherein you collect data on the implementation of your decision and start again).

Step 0.5: Target the Right Data

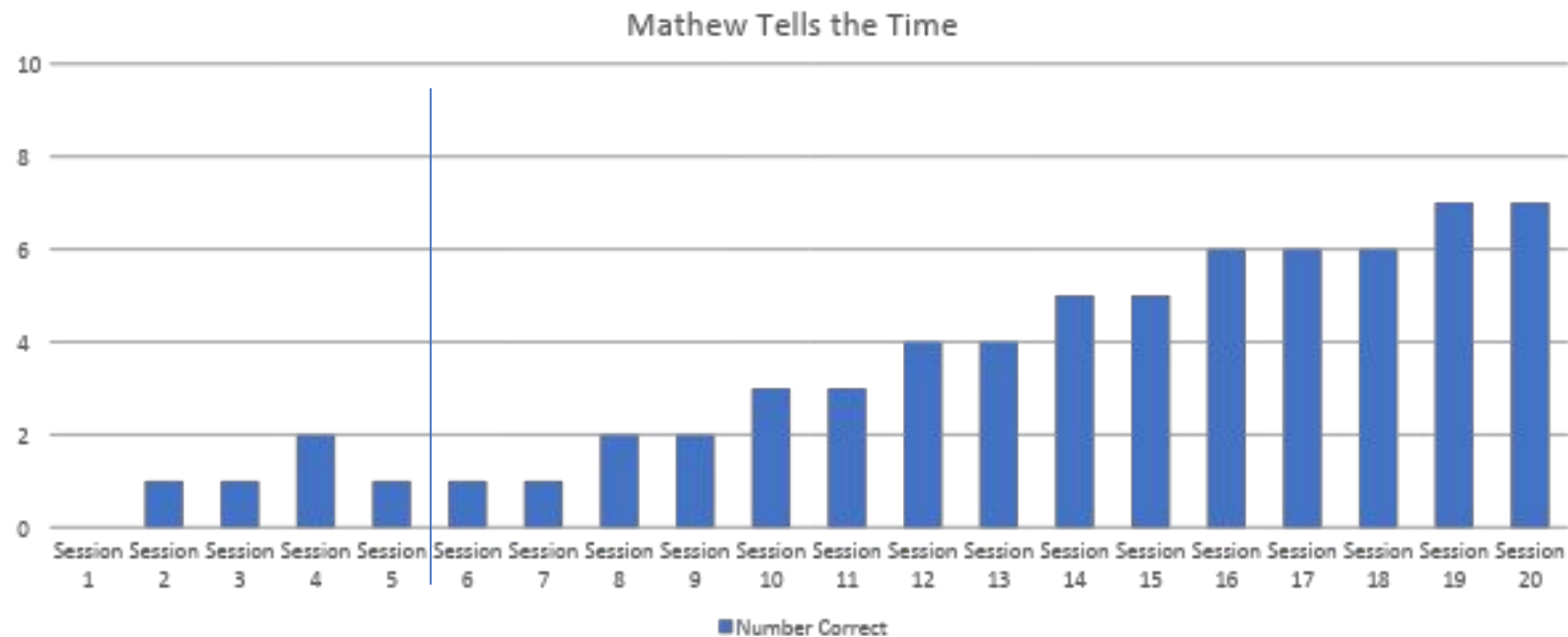
Don't waste
Your time
Your energy
Your planning
Your paraprofessionals
Your sanity
On data that doesn't
matter!



An Example Scenario

- Matthew is learning to tell time to document when he begins and ends a work session.
- His teacher documents if Matthew gets the time correct for both check in and check out of work for each work session. She would like him to get the time correct in 9 out of 10 opportunities for 5 consecutive days.
- His baseline is 0, 1, 1, 2, 1. The next 15 days of data are 1, 1, 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6, 6, 6, 7, 7.

Graphed Data



Step 1. Identify the important information

- Number of Sessions:
 - 20 total (5 in baseline)
- Baseline Average:
 - $0+1+1+1+2=5$, $5/5=1$
- Intervention Average (last 3 data points):
 - $6+7+7=20$, $20/3=6.6$
- Goal Number Correct:
 - Correct in 9 out of 10 opportunities= 9

Step 2. Calculate Current Growth

- Intervention Average – Baseline Average = Current Growth

$$6.6 - 1 = 5.6$$

$$\underline{\text{Current Growth} = 5.6}$$

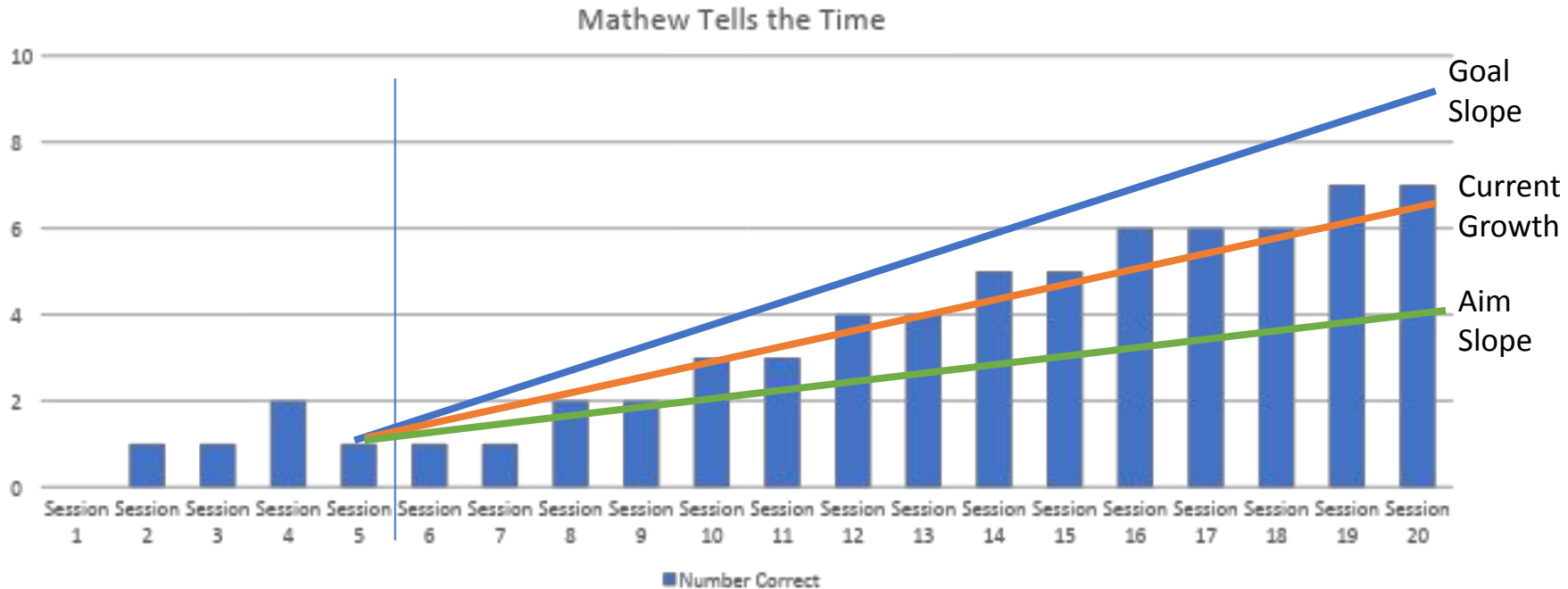
Step 3. Calculate the Aim Slope

• Goal – Baseline Average = _____/2 = Aim Slope (x)

$$9 - 1 = 8, 8/2 = 4$$

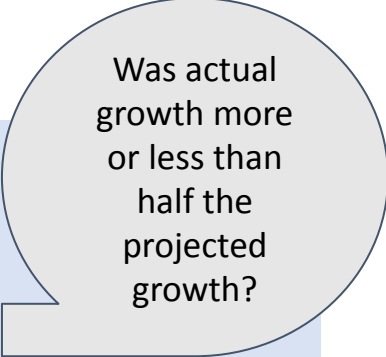
$$\underline{\text{Aim Slope} = 4}$$

Current Growth compared with Goal and Aim Slopes on the Graph



Step 4. Judge the Current Growth Against the Aim Slope

- To be considered “Steady Growth” or “Mastery”:
 - Current Growth \geq Aim Slope
- To be considered “Slow Growth” or “No Progress”:
 - Current Growth $<$ Aim Slope
- To be considered “Variable”: the data may indicate steady growth or slow growth, but data points fall at inconsistent levels.



Was actual growth more or less than half the projected growth?

In this case, $5.6 > 4$

Step 5. Determine the Decision using the Goal

In this case, $5.6 > 4$

- Did the student meet the goal?
 - Goal was 9 out of 10 for 5 consecutive days.
 - Because he did not meet the goal once (let alone for 5 consecutive days), but his growth falls above the aim slope:

Current Growth $>$ Aim Slope, but Goal Not Met = Steady Growth

Step 6. Next Steps

- If the data is too variable to tell, next steps may involve evaluating potential sources of the inconsistency (typically medical or motivation related)
- If the progress is steady or slow, the degree of variability may help you decide if the student requires more time to meet the goal, or if additional supports or a goal rewrite is appropriate.
- If either mastery or no progress, a new goal is necessary.

In this case:

Steady Growth (very consistent)= More time to complete the goal.

Handout for Reference

- Step-by-step instructions
- Example included



Step-By-Step Calculations in Data-Based Decision-Making

1. Gather Info: No. Sessions, Baseline Avg. (first 3 points), Intv. Avg. (last 3 points), Goal Number Correct, Goal Mastery Details.
2. Current Growth: Intv. Avg. – Baseline Avg.

Calculations toward decision and next steps

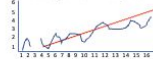
3. Goal – Baseline Avg. = _____ / 2 = ___ X _____



Example:

Micha is being taught to answer comprehension questions independently. His current goal is to get at least 5 out of 6 questions correct without prompting for 3 sessions. Baseline data for independent correct responses are 0, 2, 1. The next 14 data points are 2, 1, 3, 2, 3, 3, 2, 3, 4, 3, 3, 4, 3, 4, 3, 4.

1. 17 data points with a possibility of 6 correct can be graphed with a trend line (BL Avg. to Goal) to look like this:



Baseline average is 1. To reach mastery, Micha must have 3 session of 5 or 6 correct.

2. Avg. of last 3 data points $(4+3+4 = 11/3 = 3.6)$ – Avg. of baseline data points $(0+2+1 = 3/3 = 1) = 2.6$ Current Growth
3. Goal $[5] - \text{BL Avg. } [1] = 4/2 = 2$ is Half of the Projected Rate of Growth
4. $2.6 > 2$, so the decision will be either "Mastery", "Steady" or "Variable" growth.
5. The data is not too variable, but the mastery criteria is not yet met (with no data points yet reaching 5). Thus, Micha is making Steady progress toward this goal. Based on contextual information, Micha may require more time to reach mastery and his goal may need to be rewritten to include both comprehension and an additional level of challenge.

The Technique: IEP goals for students with Autism should measure progress on the primary needs of each Autistic student with systematic precision

But, how do I write an effective goal using this data? How can I be consistently clear, measurable, and SMART about this?



Writing an effective goal

What would a *SMART* goal for Matthew look like?
How can we double-check for effective IEP goals?

Gathering the right information:

- ▶ How can these (too rarely considered) factors help with developing IEP goals?

Student Strengths

Student preferences
and priorities
Student motivations
Goal support context
Either repetitive
consistent concerns

IEP Goal History

Previous test scores
Goal support needs
IEP Goal focus patterns

Team Input

The Student!
Parent/guardian/advocate
Service Providers
Siblings/Peers
Community Members

Building the context for the goal: Using the PLAAFP to show what you know

Visit the GDOE resources on IEP Development for more details:

[A Guide for Writing IEPs](#)

Identifying Six Components to Developing High Quality, Meaningful PLAAFP Statements

Psychological Evaluation Results

State and/or LEA Assessment Results

Academic/Functional Strengths

Academic/Functional Needs

Impact of Disability Statement

Parental Input

Setting SMART goals

BiteSize Learning



Specific

The goal is concrete and tangible - everyone knows what it looks like.



Measurable

The goal has an objective measure of success that everyone can understand.



Attainable

The goal is challenging, but should be achievable with the resources available.



Relevant

The goal meaningfully contributes to larger objectives like the overall mission.



Timely

This goal has a deadline or, better yet, a timeline of progress milestones.

SMART Goals TEST - Use the Formula

Are your goals specific, measurable, achievable, relevant (student and standard), timely?

THE FIX - Go back to the formula:

Given [x conditions], student will [x task] with [x criteria for mastery] by [x timeline].



Hitting the Target: IEP goals for students with Autism should clearly and consistently measure progress on the primary needs of each Autistic student with systematic precision to produce actionable results.

So, what makes an effective IEP?

Share the IEP goal implementation practices that you find most important/effective.

Visit gosocrative.com and enter room name HAUGHNEY



Thank You

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Please scan to send anonymous
feedback to the presenters.

Select References

AssistiveWare Survey Recommendations:

<https://www.assistiveware.com/blog/aac-terminology-survey>

Autism Speaks -

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-diagnosis-criteria-dsm-5>

Georgia Department of Education

[Writing Effective IEPs](#)

IRIS Center Resources:

<https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/iep01/cresource/q3/p06/>

National Clearinghouse EBPs for Autism:

<https://ncaep.fpg.unc.edu/ebp-database>