From Draft to Data: Crafting SMART IEP Goals That Drive Progress

Jennifer Nicholas, BCBA, M. Ed
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Why Goal Quality Matters

When students have high quality IEP goals, it :

- Drives meaningful student progress
- Supports compliance and best practices
- Enables effective instruction and data collection
- Communicates to the team what we're working toward, how we're going to measure it, and how we're going to get there.

What is a SMART goal?

S- Specific

M- Measurable

A- Achievable

R- Relevant

T- Time Bound

This framework gives us clarity and structure. A SMART goal is not just about academic achievement—it's about setting *attainable targets* that are grounded in student need and trackable over time.

Specific

Goals clearly state what a student will achieve rather than broad, overarching statements about growth.

Non- Example: Student will improve reading skills by 90 percent by the end of the IEP.

Example: Given an instructional level text student will increase reading fluency to 100 words per minute with 90 percent accuracy by the end date of the IEP.

Measurable

Goals must have concrete criteria for tracking progress. This could use percentages, specific number of correct responses, or other quantifiable measures.

Non- Example: Student will add and subtract correctly given a problem set by the end of the IEP.

Example: Given a problem set involving single digit addition and subtraction, student will solve correctly with 90 percent accuracy in 2 consecutive sessions by the end date of the IEP.

Achievable

Goals should be realistic and attainable given the student's current abilities and resources.

Importance of the PLAFF and Impact Statement

Scenario: Student with an intellectual disability coming into kindergarten with zero letter names and sounds.

Non-Example: Given a list of unknown CVC words, student will read with 100 percent accuracy by the end date of the IEP.

Example: When prompted, student will name most commonly produced sound associated with lowercase letters with 80 percent accuracy by the end date of the IEP.

Relevant

Goals should align with a student's individual needs and educational priorities

This is the individualized part of the IEP

Careful with goal banks

Academic goals should both "fill in holes" AND align with grade level standards. Both are important

Scenario: Student's behavioral data indicates that they struggle with unstructured time and leisure skills.

Non-Example: During conversation, student engages in eye contact for 80 percent of interaction by the end date of the IEP.

Example: During unstructured time, student self selects leisure activity from a visual menu and remains engaged in activity for 10 minutes during recess 4 of 5 days per week by the end date of the IEP.

Time Bound

Goals should have a defined deadline or timeframe for completion.

Non-Example: Given a reading passage on their independent reading level, student will increase their fluency to 100 words correct per minute.

Example: Given a reading passage on their independent reading level, student will increase their fluency to 100 words correct per minute by the end date of the IEP OR By (date).

Behavioral Goals

- In order to write an effective behavior goal, we must define behaviors well.
- Dead Man's Test
- Free from feelings
- What do you see? Hear?
- Definitions and goals should be clear, concise, and lend themselves to data collection.
- Interobserver agreement
- Behavioral Cusp : What REALLY matters? What will make the most impact for the student?

Non-Example: Student will successfully complete arrival routine each morning with 90 percent accuracy.

Example: Provided a visual task analysis, student will complete steps of the arrival routine including entering the school building, walking to the classroom, hanging up his backpack, and choosing a leisure activity with no more than 1 prompt from adults across 4 of 5 opportunities by the end date of the IEP.

Getting Practical: Essential Skills Checklists

**Aligned Focus Across Grade Levels and Buildings**
Essential Skills Checklists outlined what skills we prioritize as most important for long term student success and organized them in a logical progression to build upon in planning and instruction.

Simplified Goal Selection

Teachers assess students yearly using essential skills checklists and easily identify and select skills to target through new IEP goals at the annual review.

Provided a Framework for Data Collection
Clearly communicates to teachers which areas and skills should be monitored through data collection. .
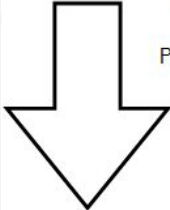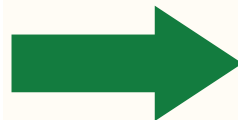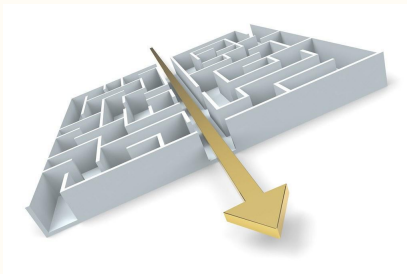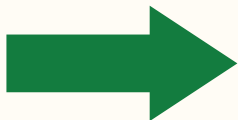
Resources

Adaptive Behavior

Math

Literacy

CBA's

Data Collection

Task Analysis Data Sheet

Student:							
Skill:							
Cue:							

Prompt Hierarchy:
Full Physical (FP)
Partial Physical (PP)
Verbal (Ve)
Visual (Vi)
Gesture (G)
Independent (I)

Date/Initials							
1. Student opens door							
2. Greets adult							
3. Checks schedule							
4. Removes backpack							
5. Hangs backpack							
6. Gets PECS book							
7. Removes lunchbox							
8. Places lunchbox in bin							
9. Removes binder							
10. Places binder in bin							
11. Removes jacket							
12. Hangs jacket							
13. Transitions to next activity							

Teaching Strategy:

Data Collection

Partial Interval Recording

Scatterplot (Baseline)

Student: _____ Grade: _____ School: _____
Date(s): _____ Observer: _____
Behavior of Concern: 1. _____
                      2. _____
                      3. _____
                      _____
                      _____

Code used (if any): *Use 1, 2,3 ,4,5 to code above behaviors*

Setting or Class	Times or Intervals	Day/Date _____	Day/Date _____	Day/Date _____	Day/Date _____	Day/Date _____	Total Times Observed
	8:00-8:15						
	8:15-8:30						
	8:30-8:45						
	8:45-9:00						
	9:00-9:15						
	9:15-9:30						
	9:30-9:45						
	9:45-10:00						
	10:00-10:15						
	10:15-10:30						
	10:30-10:45						
	10:45-11:00						
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	1:30-1:45						
	1:45-2:00						
	2:00-2:15						
	2:15-2:30						
	2:30-2:45						
	2:45-3:00						

Case Study