

# Writing High-Quality Functional Goals in Early Childhood: Addressing Non-Academic Needs



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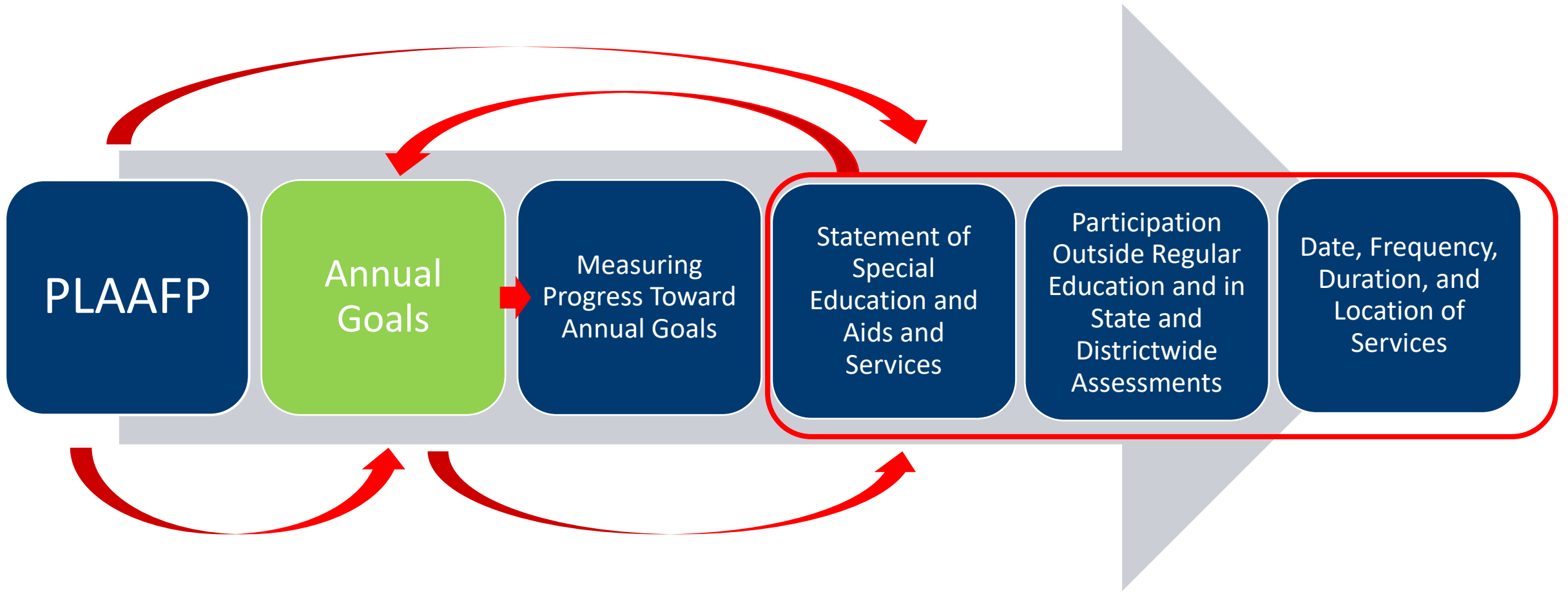
# Ensuring Appropriate Progress

*Andrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1  
(2017)*

- “To meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances.” (emphasis added)



# Role of the Goal in the IEP



# Setting the stage for appropriate progress.

To effectively design goal to promote appropriately, ambitious growth, we most

- Maintain high expectations
- Articulate what we want the student to do (Teacher clarity = ES .75; learning goals = ES .68; appropriate challenging goals = ES .59)
- Know the child and their circumstances [PLAAFP Statement, IDEA Sec. 300.320 (a)(1); *Andrew F.*, 2017]
- Know what knowledge, skills, and strategies the student **needs** to do to meet ambitious goals

# Goal setting starts with the **right** questions!

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- What do you and the family want for the student?
- What is the student's current reality and unique circumstances?
- What is the student's primary functional need that requires specialized instruction?
- How can we maximize our resources to support the student?





# Role of the Present Level of Academic and Functional Achievement (PLAAFP) Statement

Foundation for Goal Setting

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# What Does IDEA Say About the PLAAFP Statement?

(1) A **statement** of the child's **present levels of academic achievement and functional performance**, including—

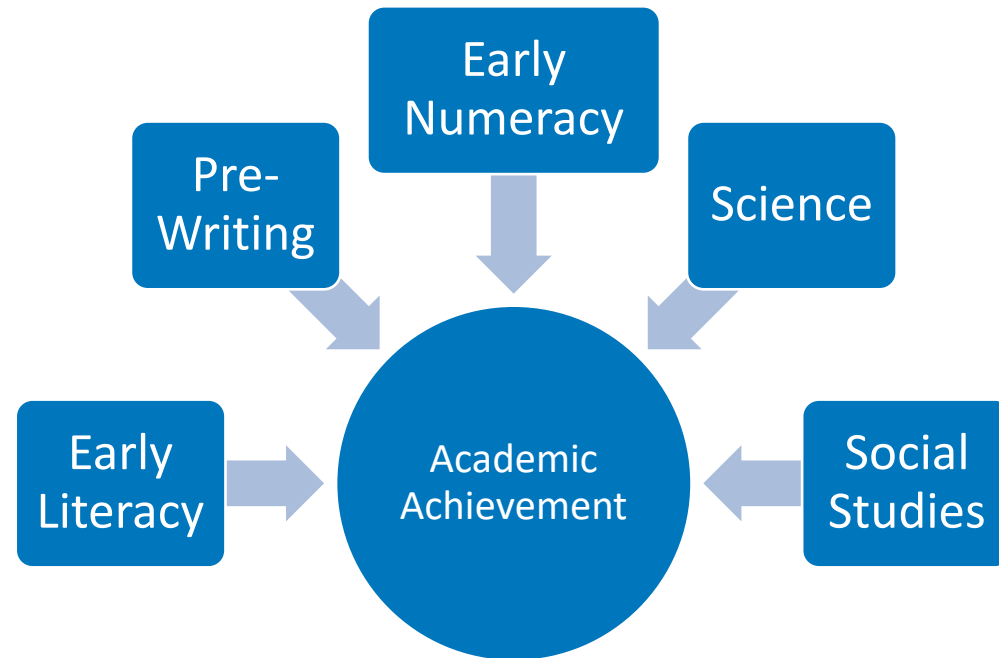
(i) How the child's disability **affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum** (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children); or

(ii) For preschool children, as appropriate, **how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities.**



# What is meant by present levels of academic achievement?

“Academic achievement” generally refers to a **child’s performance in academic or pre-academic areas**. It could vary depending on a child’s circumstance or situation; therefore, a definition of academic achievement is not included in the IDEA regulations.



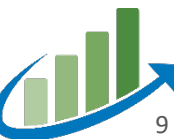
Source: 71 Fed. Reg. at 46662.



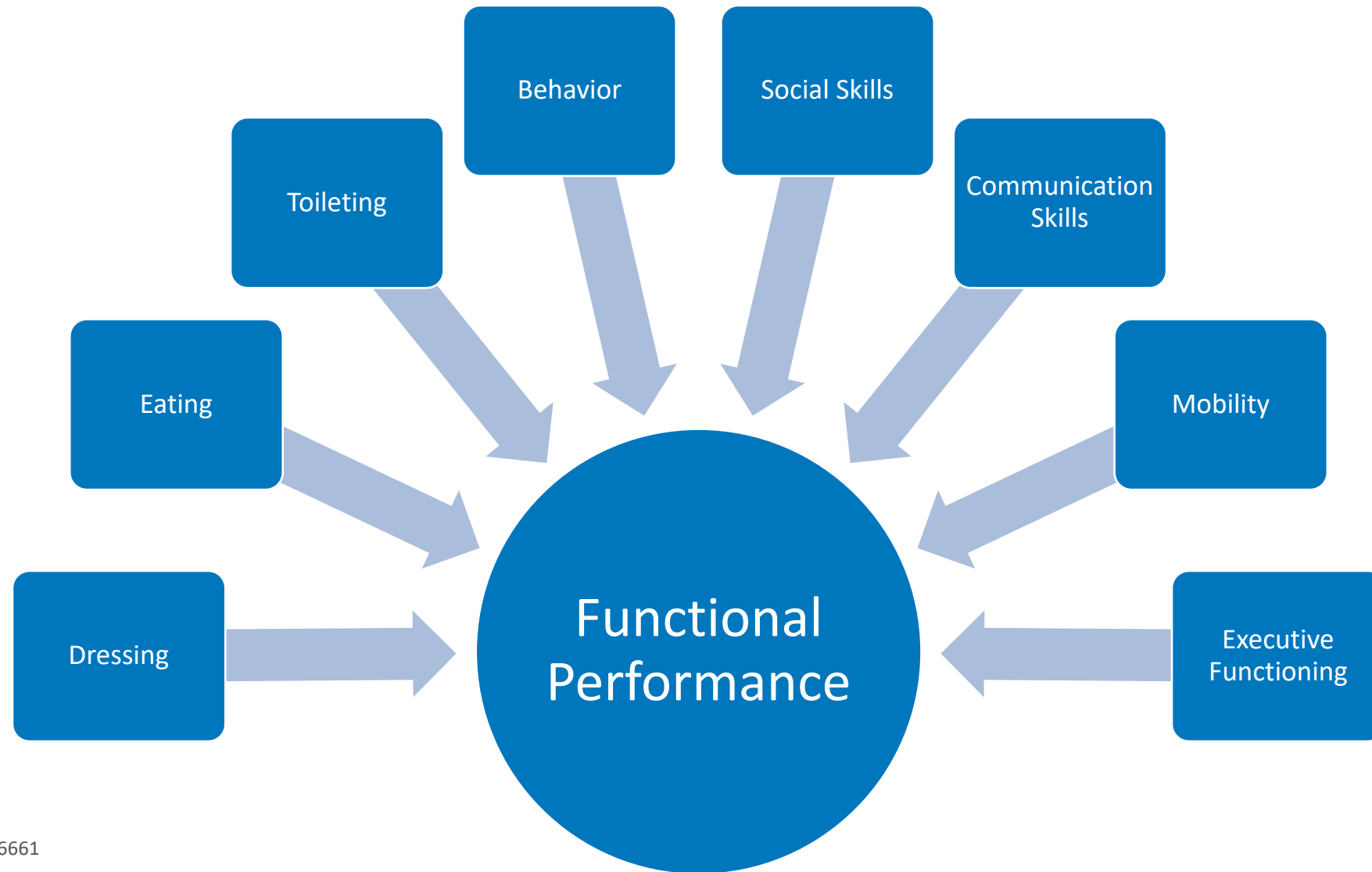
# What is meant by present levels of functional performance?

- “Functional performance” generally refers to activities that are not considered academic or related to a child’s academic achievement.
- “Functional” often is used in the context of routine activities of everyday living.

Source: 71 Fed. Reg. at 46661



# What are some examples of functional skills?



Source: 71 Fed. Reg. at 46661

# Did You Know?

Regardless of the student's disability and areas of need, the IDEA requires an IEP to include “a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement **and** functional performance.”

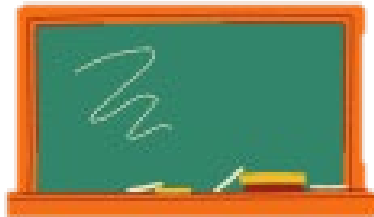
# What information does the PLAAFP statement provide for goal setting?



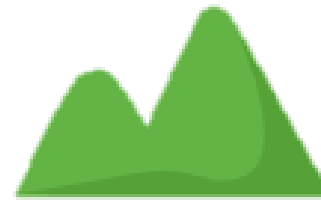
**Student Needs**



**Baseline Information**



**Effect on Progress in General Education**



**Connection to Goals and/or Services**

This content was adapted with permission from the IRIS Center module titled *IEPs: Developing High-Quality Individualized Education Programs. High-Quality PLAAFP Statements* (p. 6).



# Developing Functional Goals

Leveraging the PLAAFP Statement

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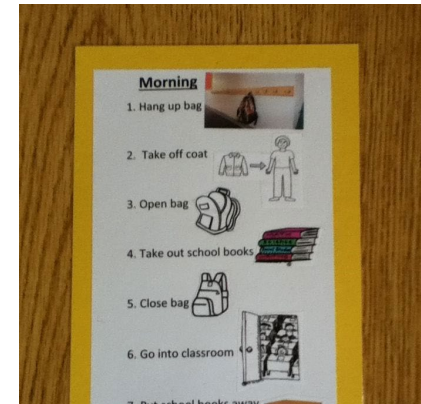
# Steps for Goal Setting

1. Select a Target and Measure
2. Establish Baseline Performance
3. Choose a Strategy for Setting the Goal
4. Write a Measurable Functional Goal



# Key Characteristics of Functional Measures

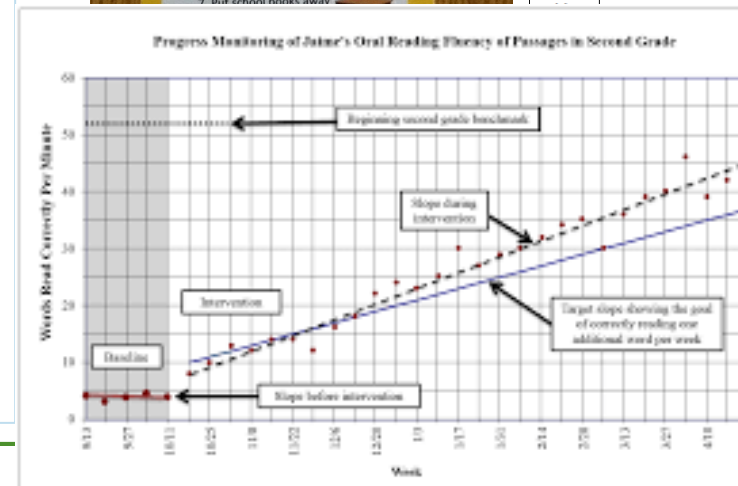
- Valid and reliable measure
- Align to relevant, age-appropriate outcomes
- Allow for repeated measures
- Brief
- Feasible
- Can be graphed!



Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class/ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Start/ end times: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of interval: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Codes: + behavior did occur — behavior did not occur

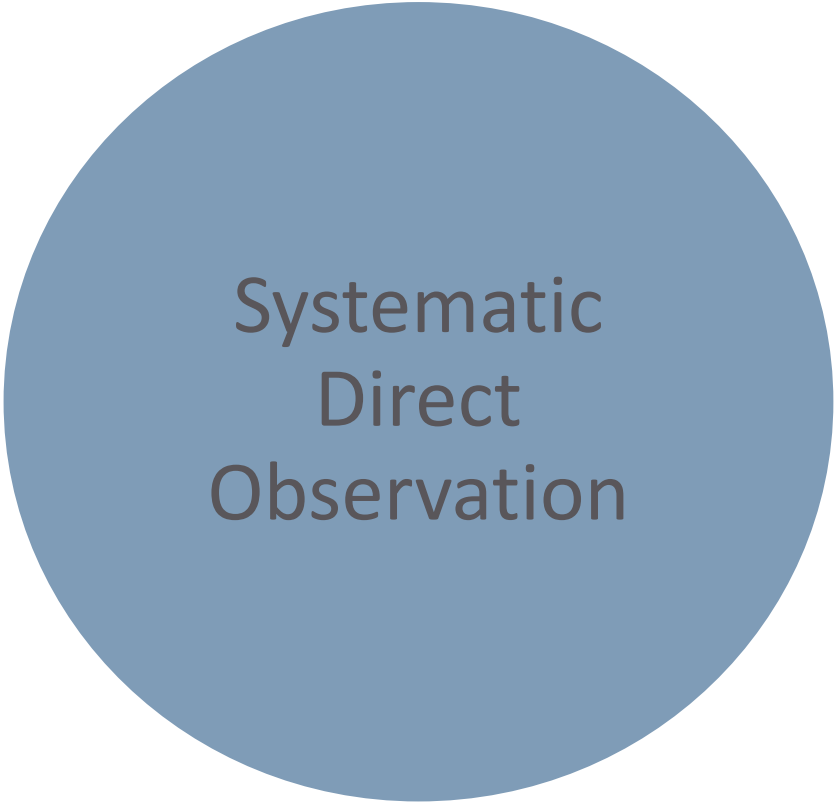
Interval	Behavior	Interval	Behavior
Example	+ —	31	+ —
1	+ —	32	+ —
2	+ —	33	+ —
3	+ —	34	+ —
4	+ —	35	+ —
5	+ —	36	+ —
6	+ —	37	+ —
7	+ —	38	+ —
8	+ —	39	+ —
9	+ —	40	+ —
10	+ —	41	+ —
11	+ —	42	+ —
12	+ —	43	+ —
13	+ —	44	+ —
14	+ —	45	+ —
15	+ —	46	+ —
		47	+ —
		48	+ —
		49	+ —
		50	+ —
		51	+ —
		52	+ —
		53	+ —
		54	+ —
		55	+ —
		56	+ —
		57	+ —
		58	+ —
		59	+ —
		60	+ —
		<b>Total %</b>	

Behavior occurred during a specified period of time.  
 Center (<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>)



# Step 1: Select the Target and Measure

Focus functional goals on a skill that can be taught, measured, and graphed.



Systematic  
Direct  
Observation

- Stay in seat
- Use toilet independently
- Say hello to a peer
- Use a fork
- Look at speaker





# Systematic Direct Observation

- The process of watching the student or environment for a period of time and systematically recording the functional behavior.
- Examples of observation:
  - Total number of times a student utters a word
  - Amount of time spent out of seat
  - Percentage of appropriate peer interactions

**Event Recording Form**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Class/ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Start/ end times: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of interval: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Behavior: \_\_\_\_\_ behavior occurs.

Codes: + behavior did occur — behavior did not occur

Interval	Behavior	Interval	Behavior	Behavior	Total
Example	⊕ —	31	+ —		12
1	+ —	32	+ —		
2	+ —	33	+ —		
3	+ —	34	+ —		
4	+ —	35	+ —		
5	+ —	36	+ —		
6	+ —	37	+ —		
7	+ —	38	+ —		
8	+ —	39	+ —		
9	+ —	40	+ —		
10	+ —	41	+ —		
11	+ —	42	+ —		
12	+ —	43	+ —		
13	+ —	44	+ —		
14	+ —	45	+ —		
15	+ —	46	+ —		
16	+ —	47	+ —		
17	+ —	48	+ —		
18	+ —	49	+ —		
19	+ —	50	+ —		
20	+ —	51	+ —		
21	+ —	52	+ —		
22	+ —	53	+ —		
23	+ —	54	+ —		
24	+ —	55	+ —		
25	+ —	56	+ —		
26	+ —	57	+ —		
27	+ —	58	+ —		
28	+ —	59	+ —		
29	+ —	60	+ —		
30	+ —	<b>Total %</b>			

Additional comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Interval indicates whether or not the behavior occurred during a specified period of time.  
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# Systematic Direct Observation Strengths

- Observation data are a direct representation of the behavior.
- Direct observation is applicable to a wide range of observable behaviors.
- Adaptable procedures can measure various dimensions of behavior.

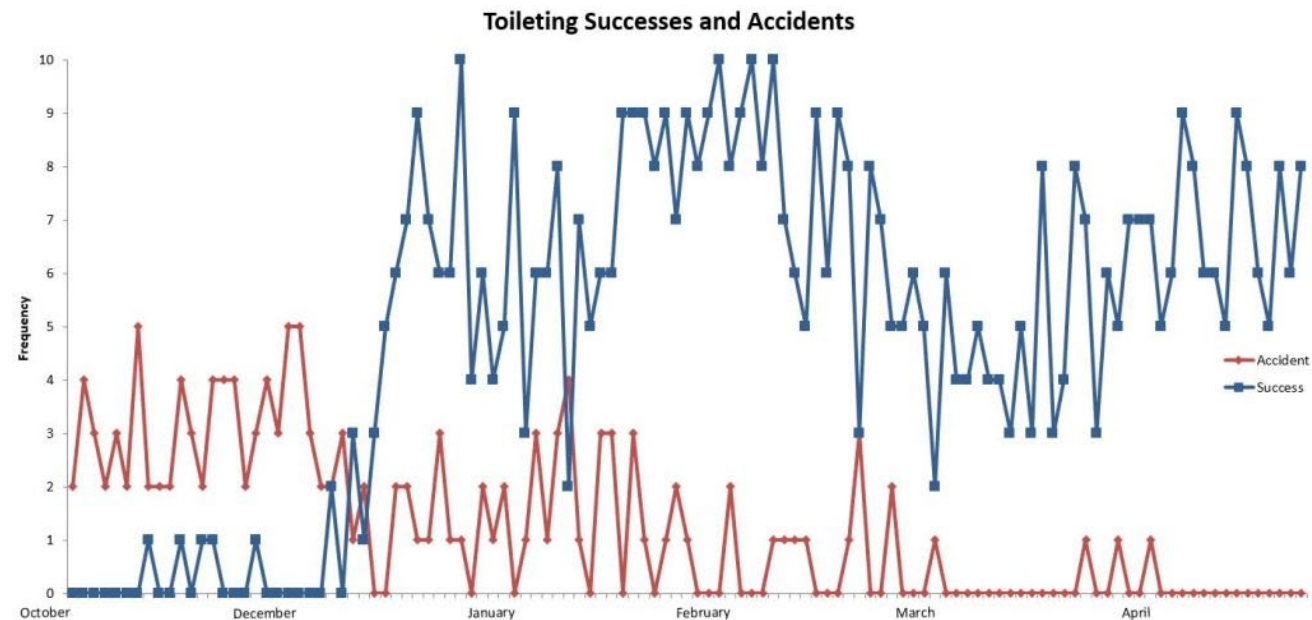


Image: <http://knappcenter.org/sample-page/treatment-programs/initial-steps/toilet-training/>



# Systematic Direct Observation Dimensions

Behavior can be measured in terms of the following:

- **Frequency** – number of times behavior occurs
- **Rate** – number of times it occurs within a given time period (e.g., 10x/hour)
- **Duration** – amount of time the behavior lasts
- **Latency** – temporal relation of behavior to other events (e.g., time to respond)
- **Intensity** – the magnitude or strength of the behavior
- **Level of Prompting** – how much support is necessary to complete skill



# Systematic Direct Observation Limitations

- May not be feasible in classroom context
  - Time intensive
  - May require trained observer
  - Can be difficult to implement if observer must perform other duties at same time, such as teaching or behavior management



# Step 1: Select and Define the Target and Measure

Focus functional goals on a skill that can be taught, measured, and graphed.

Direct Behavior  
Rating (DBR)

- Peer or class engagement
- Non-disruptive behavior
- Appropriate play
- Actively listens
- Communicates verbally



# Direct Behavior Rating (DBR)

Behavior	Date					
Disruption	9+	5	5	5	5	5
	7 – 8	4	4	4	4	4
	5 – 6	3	3	3	3	3
	2 – 4	2	2	2	2	2
	0 -1	1	1	1	1	1

Target Behaviors	Playground	Circle Time	Technology
Follows Rules	✓		
Quiet Voice		✓	✓
Hands to self			

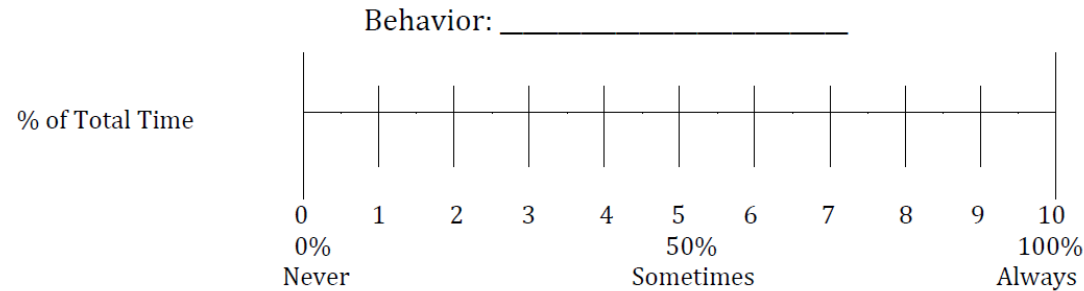


# DBR Single-Item Scales (DBR-SIS)

## Direct Behavior Rating (DBR) Form – Fill-in Behaviors

Date: M T W Th F	Student: Rater:	Activity Description:
Observation Time: Start: _____ End: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> Check if no observation today	Behavior Descriptions:	

**Directions:** Place a mark along the line that best reflects the percentage of total time the student exhibited each target behavior. Note that the percentages do not need to total 100% across behaviors because some behaviors may co-vary. If desired, an additional behavior may be defined and rated.



- [Behavior Goals DBR Form](#)
- [Direct Behavior Rating Individualization Form](#)

(Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & Christ, 2010)

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[www.directbehaviorratings.org](http://www.directbehaviorratings.org)



# DBR-Respectful

## Respectful

Respectful behavior is defined as compliant and polite behavior in response to adult directions and/or peer interactions.

- *Examples* include following 2-step teacher directions, prosocial interactions with peers, positive response to adult requests, and verbal or physical disruption without a negative tone or connotation.
- *Non-examples* include refusing to follow teacher directions, talking back/yelling no, tantrum, inappropriate gestures, inappropriate language and/or social interactions with adults or peers, and disruption with a negative tone/connotation.

(Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, Christ, & Sugai, 2009)

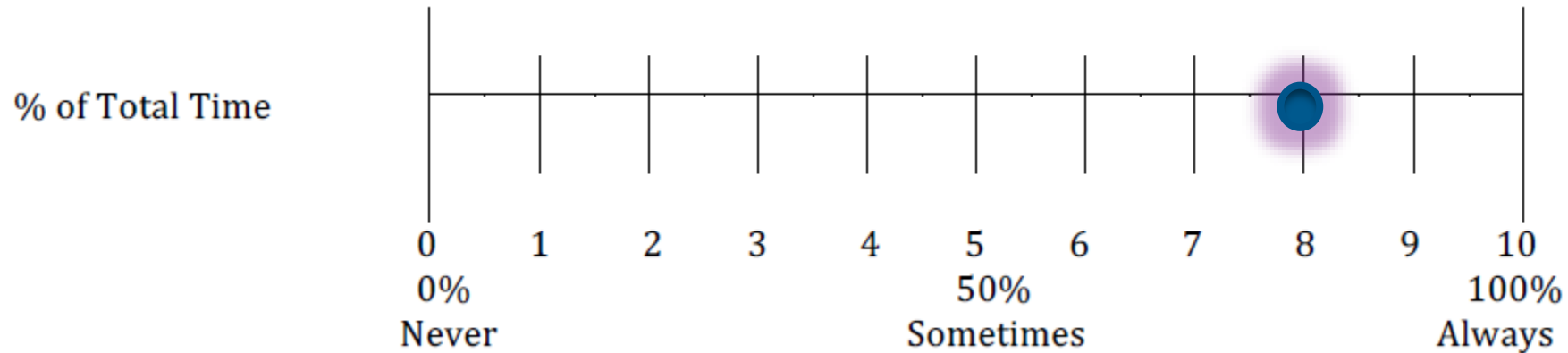




# Respectful Example

## Respectful

Place a mark along the line that best reflects the percentage of total time the student was respectful during group activities today.



**Interpretation:** The teacher estimated that the student displayed respectful behavior for 80 percent of group activities today.

Slide adapted from Chafouleas (2011) with permission.



## Step 2: Establish a Baseline

Establish baseline using the same tool that will be used for progress monitoring and include in PLAAFP statement.

### Approaches:

- Use benchmark score (if available).
- Use the **median** of three probes or **mean** of three consecutive probes.
- Consider at least 3-5 behavior data points to achieve a stable baseline.



# Establish and document baseline.

- The student’s baseline score should be used when writing PLAAFP statement in the student’s IEP. For example:

BASELINE: “When prompted to use the bathroom before break, Chris completes 0/10 steps independently while same aged peers can complete 10/10 steps independently or with minimal verbal reminders. He currently requires physical prompting to complete 7/10 steps and verbal prompting to sit down and dry hands. He urinates in the toilet 3/5 times opportunities per week.

**Toileting Task Analysis**

Below is an example of the steps of a basic toileting routine. Please give your child a score of 10 points for each area he/she can complete. You may score a “5” for areas where your child is beginning to show independence. Total the score at the bottom.

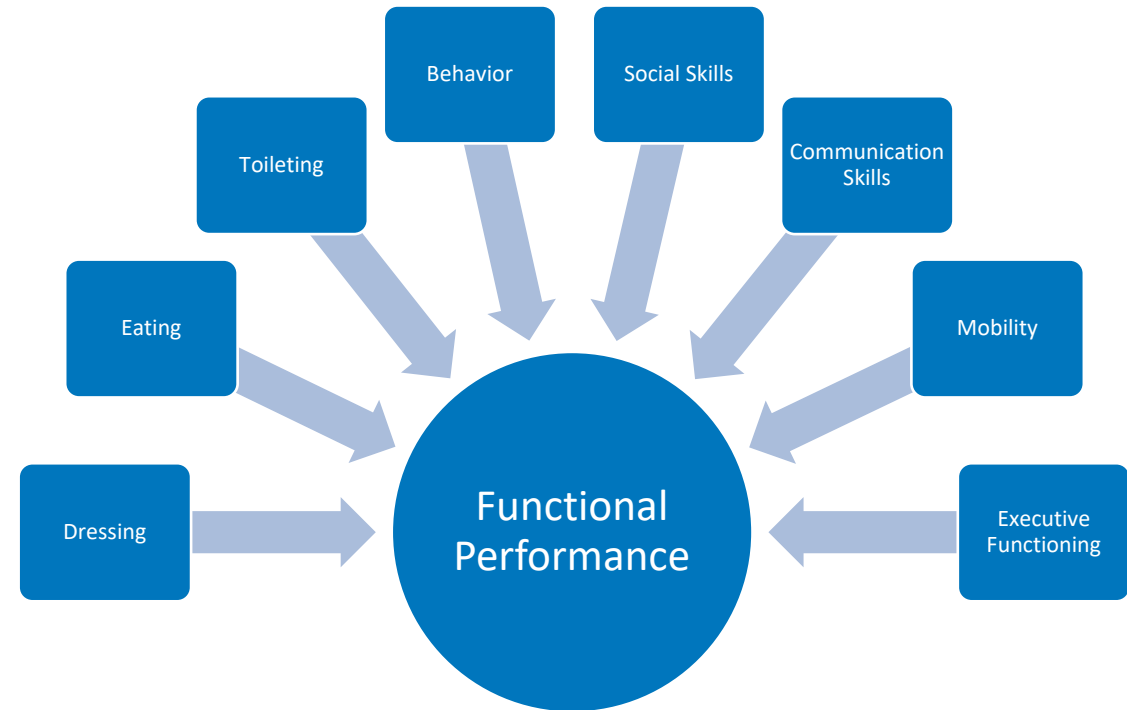
<u>Steps of routine</u>	<u>Points for completing the step</u>
Enter the bathroom	_____
Pull his/her pants down	_____
Sits on toilet	_____
Urinate in toilet	_____
Pulls his/her pants up	_____
Turns on the water	_____
Gets soap	_____
Washes hands	_____
Gets towel	_____
Dries hands	_____
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	_____ out of 100%

Developed by Jane Dettra, MS, OTR/L and Charlotte Crane, M.Ed., BCBA/LBA, Autism Consulting Teacher

# Step 3: Choose a Strategy for Setting the Goal

There are two validated approaches to setting goals:

1. Benchmarks or Criterion
2. Intra-individual framework



# Setting Goals Based on Logical Practices

Team members must know...

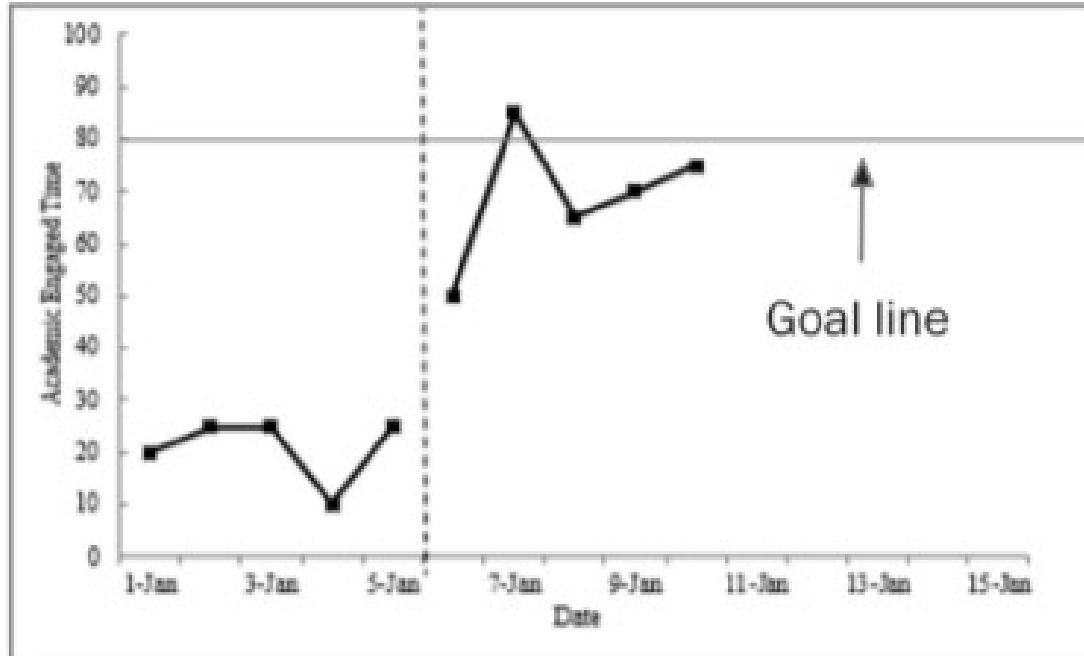
- **How** the goal was set
- **Why** the goal was set that way
- The **intensity** of the intervention provided to meet the goal

Knowing the goal helps educators select appropriate interventions/specially designed instruction to help students reach the goal.

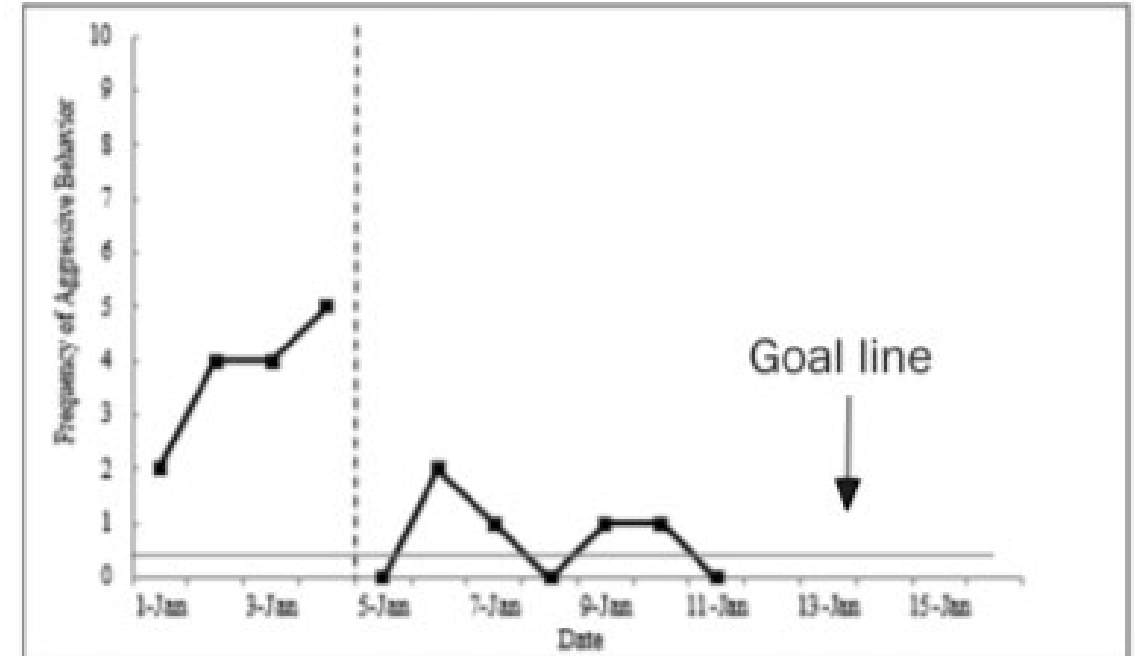


# Benchmarks for functional behaviors use peer expectations/ norms.

## Increasing Academically Engaged Time



## Decreasing Frequency of Aggressive Behavior



Always include a *goal line* on the graph to help you visualize progress!

# What would be a benchmark/criterion for these behaviors for the students you work with?

- Toileting
- Communication
- Hands to self
- Put toys away
- Attention

What is typical for same age peers? How do we know?

3 years	6-12 min
4 years	8-16 min
5 years	10-20 min

## Your Child at 3 Years

**Child's Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Child's Age** \_\_\_\_\_ **Today's Date** \_\_\_\_\_

How your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about your child's development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Check the milestones your child has reached by his or her 3rd birthday. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

**What Most Children Do at this Age:**

**Social/Emotional**


- Copies adults and friends
- Shows affection for friends without prompting
- Takes turns in games
- Shows concern for a crying friend
- Understands the idea of "mine" and "his" or "hers"
- Shows a wide range of emotions
- Separates easily from mom and dad
- May get upset with major changes in routine
- Dresses and undresses self

**Language/Communication**

- Follows instructions with 2 or 3 steps
- Can name most familiar things
- Understands words like "in," "on," and "under"
- Says first name, age, and sex
- Names a friend
- Says words like "I," "me," "we," and "you" and some plurals (cars, dogs, cats)
- Talks well enough for strangers to understand most of the time
- Carries on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences

**Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Can work toys with buttons, levers, and moving parts
- Plays make-believe with dolls, animals, and people
- Does puzzles with 3 or 4 pieces
- Understands what "two" means
- Copies a circle with pencil or crayon
- Turns book pages one at a time
- Builds towers of more than 6 blocks
- Screws and unscrews jar lids or turns door handle



**Movement/Physical Development**

- Climbs well
- Runs easily
- Pedals a tricycle (3-wheel bike)
- Walks up and down stairs, one foot on each step

**Act Early by Talking to Your Child's Doctor if Your Child:**

- Falls down a lot or has trouble with stairs
- Drools or has very unclear speech
- Can't work simple toys (such as peg boards, simple puzzles, turning handle)
- Doesn't speak in sentences
- Doesn't understand simple instructions
- Doesn't play pretend or make-believe
- Doesn't want to play with other children or with toys
- Doesn't make eye contact
- Loses skills he once had

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age, and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your local public school. For more information, go to [www.cdc.gov/concerned](http://www.cdc.gov/concerned) or call **1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)**.

Adapted from CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5, Fifth Edition, edited by Steven Shelov and Tanya Benner Abrams © 1991, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2009 by the American Academy of Pediatrics and SMART FEATURES: GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH SUPERVISORS OF INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS, Third Edition, edited by Joseph Hagan, Jr., Judith S. Shank, and Paula M. Duncan, 2006, in: Caregiver's Guide, © American Academy of Pediatrics. This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a structured, validated developmental screening tool.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) | 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

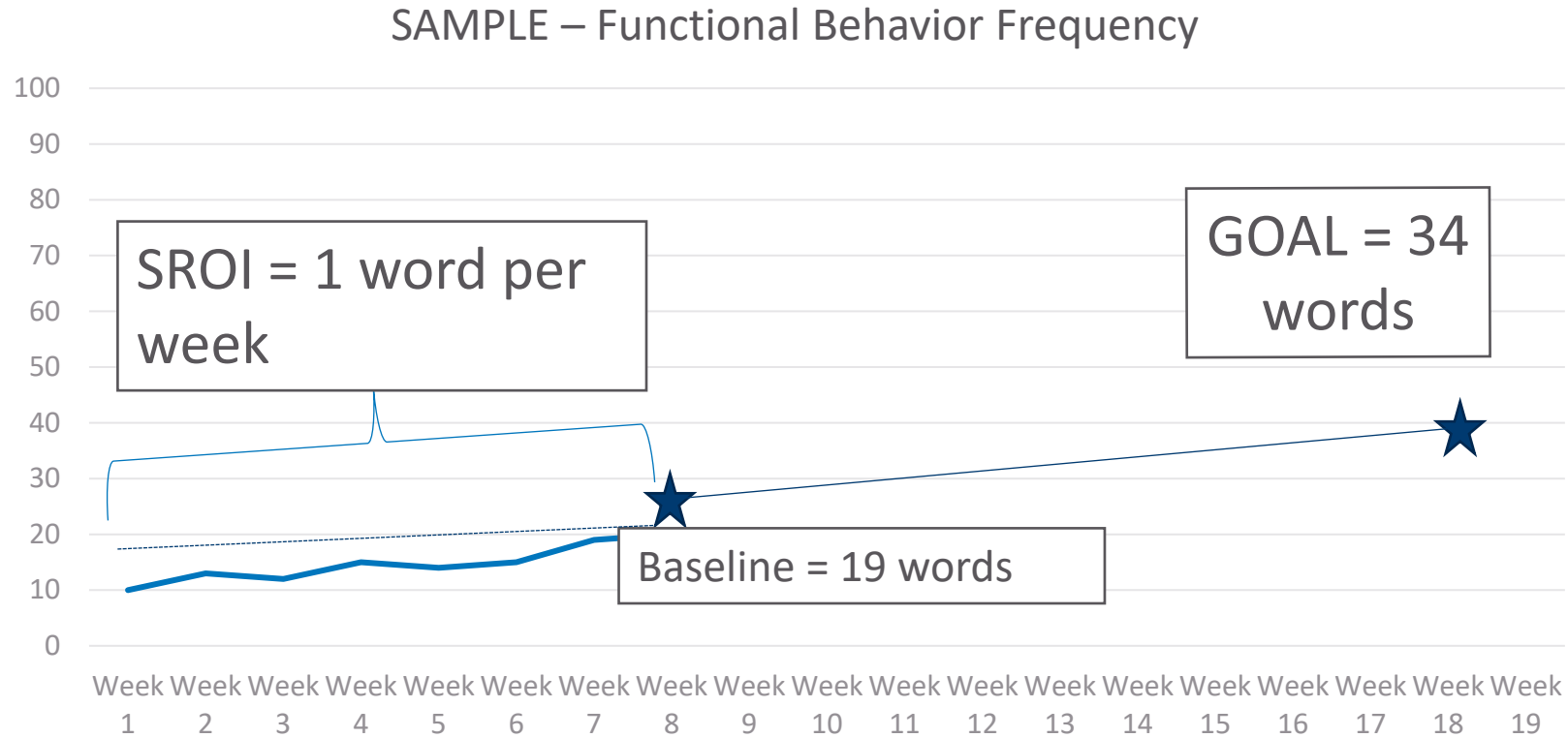
# Option 2: Using Intra-Individual Framework

- Often used for students performing far below grade level or with very low skills, where typical growth rates are not appropriate.
- Use three most recent data points to calculate baseline score.
- Calculate student's ROI (SROI) based on at least eight data points.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{SROI} \times 1.5 \times \# \text{ Weeks} \\ + & \text{ Student's Baseline Score (mean of 3 most recent scores)} \\ \hline & \text{GOAL} \end{aligned}$$



# Goal Setting – Using Intra-Individual Framework



# Using Intra-Individual Framework

## Advantages

- Useful when students are performing far below age/grade expectations and standard growth rates are not appropriate.

## Considerations

- May be difficult to understand and calculate and, therefore, may require more training and support.
- Requires collection of six to nine data points before setting the goal.
- May not be necessary for students performing at or near grade level.

## Step 4: Write a Measurable Goal

- Quality goals address the condition, or context, in which the skill will be performed, target behavior, and level of proficiency/timeframe.

Sample template for goal structure:

When given **[condition]**, the student will **[observable behavior and goal]** **[level of proficiency and timeframe]**.

# Closing and Next Steps



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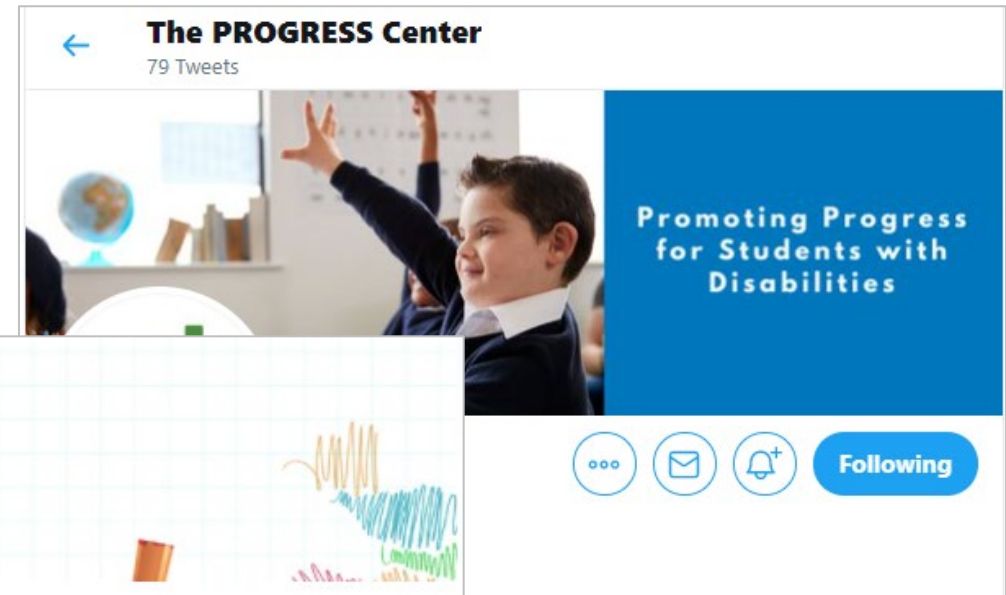
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# Resources

- Module: [The What and Why of Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance \(PLAAFP\)](#) (30 minutes)
- [Module: Complete The What and Why of Measurable Annual Goals](#) (30 minutes)
- [Strategies for Setting Data-Driven Behavioral Individualized Education Program Goals](#)

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