Back to Basics: Goal Writing for School-based SLPs
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Once again, welcome to our webinar today, Back to Basics: Goal Writing for School-based SLPs. Our presenter today is Marva Mount. And she has worked in a variety of settings in her 30-plus-year career, but school-based services is her favorite. She has presented at the state and national level on a variety of school-based issues. She is a chapter author and contributor to the Fourth Edition of "Professional Issues in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology," which will be coming out next month. And she’s also a contributing author to the ASHA Special Interest Group 16, School-Based Issues, Perspectives. She also received the TSHA Hall of Fame Award last year for her outstanding contributions to the profession, well-deserved. And we’re very pleased to have her here with us today. Welcome, Marva. I’m gonna turn over the floor to you.

Hi, thank you so much. I’m so excited to see all the participants that are signing in. So thank you for joining us today. What we’re going to be discussing is goal-writing. And there will probably not be anything new that you’re gonna hear today that you haven’t heard already. But hopefully, it will just spark some discussions, and also kind of help us all regroup as a new school year begins so that we can do what's best for our students and their families by writing appropriate goals and objectives for them. I do need to go over a few things quickly, some disclosures. I am receiving an honorarium from SpeechPathology.com for this presentation. And I have no nonfinancial disclosures to make today. These are our learning outcomes that we're going to be discussing. And we're going to explain what a SMART goal is and why they're important. We're going to describe the process for writing measurable and educationally pertinent goals for our students. And then we're going to list two to three examples of SMART goals at the end. And feel free to ask questions at any time, as Amy said. Just put those in the Chat pod, and we will definitely refer to those at the end. We’ll allow some time for that. This is sort of our agenda. I’m currently doing the introduction, and then we’re gonna talk about why SMART goals are important to the process of SMART, SMART examples, and then our summary, and questions and
answers. So here we go. First of all, I want to review, just really quickly, the IDEA requirements for our Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance. And I know everybody has a different acronym for that. You may call 'em PLAP or a PLAAP or a PLAAFP. But basically, it's the part of the IEP where we go over the present levels for our students. And in order to get into the goal-writing piece, I just wanna make sure everybody understands how we get to that goal-writing piece and what information needs to be in that IEP.

So some of the things that we need to consider when we develop our present levels is their academic functioning, their critical need, current measurable and observable data that we have on those students, what those data sources are, any conditions that surround their measurable performance, such as modifications or accommodations, and then enrolled grade-level content standards. Because we are school-based SLPs, so we do need to make sure that we are aligning our goals with those academic standards. And I realize lots of states use the Common Core State Standards, and some states have written their own. So whatever your standards are for your state, just make sure that you understand what is contained within those standards in the areas that apply to speech and language. Also, the IDEA requirement for PPCD, which is what we call it in Texas. Some of you will call it early childhood education. Some of you might call it pre-K.

But we’re talking, basically, about those little babies three to five years old that are not yet in kindergarten. On their present levels, we’re going to discuss how the student's disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities. So those kids obviously don’t have academic standards, but they do have some standards for appropriate activities for their age and grade level. And then, of course, in grades K through 12, we talk about how the student's disability affects their involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. So just to point those two out. Some of those codes in the Federal Regulation's definition of individual education program,
you'll note that one of the statements speaks specifically to present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, and speaks specifically to the child's involvement in general ed. So I just wanna bring that to your attention in terms of where that's located if you want to go take a look at that. So the PLAAFP, or the Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance, is important. Because it gives us the student's competencies. It identifies areas of critical need. It identifies what facilitates learning best for that student, as well as what inhibits learning. It determines appropriate measure of growth, and it provides the information needed to design this specialized instruction for the students, which is the part of the IEP that we're gonna be talking about today, and that is that goal-writing section.

So if you don't write a good PLAAFP, you're obviously not going to have good, strong measurable goals for the student. So that's kind of why I put this in the handout, just so you realize all the things that go into writing a goal actually come before it in your present levels. It's important. It's also important because it covers specific types of academic information and skills the child has mastered. But it also covers any other areas that are not academic, such as social communication and activities of daily living. So this immediately brings to mind all of our students we may be writing goals for that are in some of those more self-contained special education classrooms.

For our children that have other disabilities in addition to speech, we also need to make sure that we're looking at whatever the curriculum is that is being used for those students in those classes so that our goals align and mirror what is happening for that child academically. In the present levels, you're going to be talking a lot about, you're describing the what, the how, and the how much the student is learning in specific areas. And you're also putting in that statement, adequate information about the student, in order to design the specialized instruction, which is our goals we're about to discuss. This little graphic, I like, because it kind of puts it all into perspective. Your present levels are going to look at where that student is currently functioning. Then
you’re gonna look 12 months out for an annual period for those measurable annual goals to make sure they’re obtainable. Because what we never wanna do is write a goal that is continually carried over for a student from year to year. Because if we are doing that, there’s something wrong with our connection between what the present levels of the child is in addition to what their goals and objectives might be. So always think in terms of, what can my student accomplish in 12 months? Sometimes that’s easy to figure out, sometimes not so much. Sometimes with some of our lower-functioning students, we have to take a good, educated, professional guess in terms of how quickly they’ll progress. But I put this graphic there just to kind of remind you, in looking at the critical needs of your student, make sure that you are, obviously, aiming for progression, but don’t overstate or over-aim in terms of what you’re going to expect that student to do within a year period. Sometimes we find that we’ve written our goals and they may be a little bit too complicated. We had great hopes and admirations for a lot of progress, and we didn’t see that.

So in that instance, when we come back together with that IEP committee, we can always adjust those goals. We can make them more difficult, or we can make them less difficult, depending on how the student performed for us. So the present level is the only way to determine student needs that will guide us in writing our educationally relevant goals. So I like to have this kind of printed out for myself and put somewhere where I can kind of always review it so that I don’t forget all the things that I need to be looking at for that student when I start to write their goals and objectives.

Okay, the big thing that we need to think about in functional performance is the basis for which we write educationally relevant goals for the child’s educational year. Because that leads us to next steps in the process of goal and objective writing. So if we kind of fail in the writing of the present levels, then the goals and objectives may not be appropriate for our student. They may be too high-level, or they may be too low-level. Or we may have expected a lot more than we’re going to see in that calendar
year, or that annual year. So the present levels give us the child’s academic strengths which are measurable, academic challenges which are measurable, what is facilitating the child’s learning, what inhibits the child’s learning, what their current levels of functioning are, and then data that is specific, factual, and operational.

So in your present levels, this is where you’re going to maybe provide some data from some evaluations. If this is a brand new student to you, you will be giving information and factual data on how that child performed on that educational assessment, or that speech and language assessment, so that you know exactly where that child is functioning at this moment. If this is a student that you have been seeing, then what will appear in your present levels will be all of that wonderful data that you have been collecting on that student over a year each time you see that child in therapy.

So you will be using that data to fill in the blanks for your functional levels of performance. So the PLAAFP process, I just thought maybe I’d give a little sample for some people that may be brand new to the profession and not exactly sure how to go about writing that present levels of academic and functional performance. I remember when I was brand new to school-based therapy, this was really tricky for me, because I wasn’t exactly sure how to word things, and I wasn’t exactly sure what the components were that I should address. So I’ve given you just a little table here to help out with that if you’re new. You’ll see that number one is need. Number two is focus. And number three would be your data.

And then I’ve given you some examples of the present levels statements. Student is working on developing his or her skills in the area of, and you’ll list what those skills are. So it might be fluency. It might be articulation. It might be a language. It may be a combination of all of those things. Specifically with an instructional focus in, so then you’re going to tell what your focus has been. That’s going to be primarily what your goals and objectives were addressing. And then the particular part is the student is
currently with conditions, providing the following information. So that’s either going to be evaluation data that you’re going to have to present there, or it’s going to be some of your therapy data, or it could be a combination of both. But those are primarily the three areas for your present levels that you need to include in order to be ready to write goals and objectives for the student. If you think of the present levels of academic and functional performance as the story of that student, just remember you’re writing an educational story for them in this particular section, and I think that that will help you in terms of organizing yourself and giving appropriate information so that when the parent reads those present levels, or when other team members that are also working with the student read those present levels, they put together the complete picture of that particular student, and then everyone is on the same page. I will comment here and say, I do know that some of our special education paperwork systems that are online, I know that they don’t provide you with a lot of information in that section. And all I can say to that is, that kind of makes me sad. And it also makes me a little nervous sometimes, because this is the part of the IEP that really drive the entire process.

So if you are working with paperwork systems that are online that don’t give you a whole lot of information in terms of the number of characters that you can type in a particular box, that type of thing, then, obviously, you just need to do the best you can with the amount of information that you can provide. But what I do sometimes do, particularly in situations where I know that the parents are very concerned and very involved, sometimes I might add an addendum to that IEP meeting. I may put some additional information in another place, just to cover myself that I’ve given a complete picture of what their present levels currently are. Not required, of course, because your data can speak for itself, but I do encourage you to make sure that you are very thorough in your present levels of performance section of your IEP, just because that sometimes becomes very difficult to explain in regard to why you chose certain goals and objectives for students if you don’t have that information available to all team members. So that’s just kind of an aside. So what happens when we align our goals
with the educational standards? We link our goals to what is going on in the general education curriculum, which is super important. I don't know about you, but in the state where I reside, we have statewide testing, and children do have to produce passing scores on that statewide testing in order to move from grade to grade, in order to graduate from high school. So I feel like, for my students, it's very important that I know what they have to know, and I know what they have to do on these statewide tests in order to pass those and move on to other grades. It also helps me because I need to know what's going on in classrooms in terms of the materials I choose and what I like to work with with my students, and I can't know that if I don't sort of look at those standards and understand them. We also support students who are at risk in our public schools.

And special education children in general are at risk not only for falling behind educationally, but also, drop-out rates are a lot higher with our students that have special needs. So we need to really make sure that we're, as a team, collaborating and supporting those students as best we can to ensure that they are functional academically. We can also explicitly target academic language skills that will greatly improve academic relevance. And as a speech-language pathologist, I know you know, sometimes in our school-based placements, we are not always recognized for the talents, the skills, and the professionalism that we bring to the academic setting. And this is a really great way for us to showcase that for our administrators and our special education teams so that they know exactly what we know and how we can help explicitly, which I think is really important not only to promote us in our school-based programs but also as a profession in general.

Our goals will elevate the academic language skills of students with language disorders, because we know how to break it apart. We are the ones that know how to tear it apart and put it back together in terms of what is developmentally appropriate and what stages and steps do those children need in order to make it to the next level.
So we bring so much expertise to this particular part of the goal-writing process for our students. And I think we need to take advantage of that. We also ensure that our goals are rigorous and farsighted with respect to our students’ academic futures. All of our kids may not wanna go to college, but some of our children might. So as early as we can begin with those particular children, especially if they have language deficits, to prepare them for careers in college educations going forward, we really need to begin doing that as early as three years old. We need to make sure they have the vocabulary. We need to know they have the language and grammatical components. We need to make sure that they can function both in public schools and beyond that when they transition out into the world. If we don't align our goals with educational standards, we're kind of diluting those language-related achievements that our students have, and we also deny them benefits that they could experience through a collective impact. So collaboration is so important, especially for our children that we share with other special educators. We really need to make sure that we're all on the same page in terms of how we write their goals and objectives.

So we need to collaborate. We need to infuse whatever the educational standards are into our IEP language. And I know that you all can identify with this as well. We don't all speak the same language in the educational setting. So we have terms and conditions that are speech and language-related. And teachers sometimes have those same terms and conditions that are educationally related, but they call them something different. So we just need to make sure that we're all speaking the same language and that we all know that semantics means vocabulary, syntax means grammar. And we all need to be respectful of the fact that everyone on the team that we're working with may not know the correlation between those words. And we also need to make the curriculum accessible to our students by matching our treatment targets with their educational needs. And what better way to do that than to understand the language of our educational standards and start incorporating that into what we do as speech-language pathologists. So just to recap, why is it important? We've already
talked about a lot of these. But they require additional teaching and practice in order to perform well in the classroom. We all know that. If they didn’t require additional teaching and practice, they probably wouldn’t be our students. So we need to take advantage of that extra time that we could share the same types of educational needs with them that they’re going to be experiencing in that gen ed classroom. And so our goals and objectives need to be right on the money in terms of allowing them that more practice and that more teaching in those curriculum areas. It provides us with the framework to help us teach those concepts across standards, and it promotes sequential learning with a longitudinal plan and builds competence over time. So I have a lot of children on my caseload that are language impaired.

And those are my kids that are easily defeated, because they might come to me in a little pull-out situation. And I use a certain material, and they get it, and they understand it. But then they go back to class and it’s presented in a totally different way by the classroom teacher with different vocabulary and different materials. And we all know our children don’t really possess those skills of generalization. If they did, again, probably wouldn’t be our students. So we just need to make sure that kids are able to understand, oh, what I’m working on with you is also what this teacher is asking of me. And they really can’t do that unless we use the same vocabulary and the same materials that they’ll come into contact with every day.

So our standards cover language, listen, speaking, and writing. Most all standards, whether it be the Common Core or some other standard-based instrument that your state utilizes, they’re always going to have a section of language and how that relates to listening, speaking, and writing in an educational setting. And all of those things listed there are right up our alley. We know exactly what to do with those. Okay, so now let’s get down to, what is a SMART goal? And why are they so important for our students? So the acronym SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. And in terms of being specific, we are talking about
students' present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, as we just talked about a bit ago. For Measurable, progress is objectively determined at frequent data points. So we all know how important it is to make sure that our goal is written or measurable and that we can take good data on those goals. Achievable: realistic and related to students' most critical needs. And also remember, in that calendar year of that annual IEP, we need to make sure that we are making those goals achievable to those students during that period of time before the next review. We want them to be relevant, so we need results-oriented goals and objectives with a standard outcome in mind, which is why we are so bound to make sure we understand what those standards require of our students. And then they need to be time-bound. So we need to clearly define a beginning and an ending date.

So there, again, if you have your IEP on September 10th of 2019, you will have your ending period one year following that when you will come back together as an IEP committee and determine what are next steps for your student. So goals being SMART, and in looking at our acronym SMART, they need to be SMART, because we want to know exactly what that student has to be able to do. And in order to do that, we have to well-define it. We have to have a clear outcome, and we need to provide adequate details in terms of what the expectation for our student is. Obviously, Measurable, you have to have some sort of measurement.

So are you going to measure this in a percentage? Or are you going to measure this in terms of so many trials out of so many trials? Any way you want to measure that is fine. There is no set way to measure a goal or an objective. That is definitely up to you and largely depends on how the goal is written in the first place. They need to be achievable. So example: within 36 weeks, within 12 months. You need to make sure that you specify the timeline that those children have to achieve that goal and objective. Oftentimes our large goal might be for a 12-month period. And then some of our short-term goals and objectives, or our benchmarks, may have varying degrees of
length to them. So we may start out with a goal that we feel like they can achieve in 12 weeks, one that they may be able to achieve in 20 weeks, and et cetera, until we get to that 12-month period when it ends. And then they're time-bound based on the terms of the IEP. So why SMART? Well, they state desired future achievement for the student, so we're always looking ahead. What does this precious child need in order to be successful in the second grade, or the third grade, or the 12th grade? They assist in focusing on what a student’s primary needs are through present levels. And they help us define exactly what their future achievement looks like and how we're going to measure it. So you can't get much smarter than that. If you follow that process, then you should be writing some really great goals and objectives for your students. There are also components within these SMART goals. And by components, I mean the different aspects of that goal and objective that are going to help you cover all your bases. The first one would be condition.

Some people use the term quality. Either/or, they're interchangeable. Specifies under what conditions the behavior will occur. So for example, you're going to be stating in what setting. You're going, maybe, to be stating some materials that you might utilize. And I don't mean saying Super Duper cards or LinguiSystems cards, whatever that might be, but you're going to be kind of giving a roadmap in terms of how you're gonna get that child there. So that's kind of what I mean by materials. I don't necessarily mean you're going to name the materials. Because remember, probably not a great idea to do that, because if that child moved to another location and that therapist did not have the same materials as you, obviously that would become a problem for that goal. So I'm not talking primarily about naming specifics, materials. Okay, hang on one second. I'm getting a low battery on my computer. It is plugged in, so let's try another plug, see how that works. There we go, okay. We're also talking about behavior, or the learning performance of our student. So identifying the observable and measurable performance expected answers the question, what will you see the child perform or do? So you're going to specifically state what it is that you want that student to do for
you in order to pass or master that goal and objective. And then your criteria is always talking about, to what level does the student need to perform this behavior? Your timeframe is the amount of time it will take the attain the goal. And that always answers our question, how long do I think it will take this student to perform the behavior to this level, this specific level? Okay, so this is a little chart that I thought might be helpful in terms of looking at condition/quality, learner performance, criteria, and timeframe. I don’t know about you, but sometimes I need a visual to sort of jumpstart my thinking. And I will sit down to write a goal and objective, even after all these years, and words fail me. They just do not come. And that’s probably because I’m getting really old, and it's hard for me to remember things.

But I have a lot of colleagues that are not as old as me that tell me that they sometimes kind of go brain dead at the moment where they're trying to think of how to start a goal and objective or write a goal and objective. So for condition and quality, you can see that it's broken down into a couple of different things like location. So you might say, "During lunch group, a student will," or, "In a large group, a student will," or, "In a one-on-one setting or situation, "this student will." And you can see all the location, just some suggestions of how you could meet that quality or condition component of the goal. You'll also see givens. You can talk about given so many trials, or when given pictures, or when given unfamiliar material, when given a topic, or when given a story starter.

There’s a lot of things that you could put in there in terms of the quality or condition. And you can kind of see there what I mean about materials. I'm not specifying the name of a material. I'm just suggesting, this is how I'm gonna get to that end objective. Then you have some miscellaneous in here. For some of our children that are working on social skills, sometimes that’s really hard to come up with, maybe, how do you want them to react in social situations and with whom? So you might talk about with typical peers. You might talk about with adults. You might talk about with a certain grade-level
vocabulary or anything of that description. And then quality, independently, with prompting, in correct order, with a main idea and so many number of details, with no more than one direction. So you kind of get an idea of what I'm discussing in terms of how to meet that condition or quality component. Number two column shows the behavior or the learner performance. And these are some great ways for you to figure out how to write a goal that is measurable. Because you're giving specifically what you want them to do.

So you'll notice, we don't use words like learn. We don't use words like will know, because you can't really measure know. You can't really measure learn. So this will help you with some of those words that will make that goal and objective measurable in terms of behavior. So alphabetize, answer, self-correct, summarize, give, identify, include. So those are all words that are definitely measurable that you can take data on without problem. So I've just given you some samples there. And obviously, that is only a very small percentage of some of those behavior terms that are measurable, but that kind of gives you an idea of what I'm talking about. And if anybody wants any of these in large format, you'll see at the end, I give you my email address.

And if you want me to send you just this worksheet, or this graph, I am more than happy to send that to you in large format, if you wanna keep that somewhere. Level three, or column three, is Criteria. So this is where we're gonna be talking frequency, duration, accuracy, or latency/speed, maybe intensity, depending on what type of a goal you're writing. So you'll note it may be so many times per day. It may be so many times and in so many minutes. It could be over consecutive sessions. You know, some of our fluency students, we look at duration, we look at accuracy. And sometimes it's kind of hard to figure out, how do I wanna word that so that it's measurable? So I've just given you some examples in several of those categories, frequency, duration, accuracy, latency/speed, and intensity. So maybe that will help a little bit. And then in column four, the Timeframe, this is always something I get asked a lot. Well, how do I
write that on my schedule of services page in the IEP? And all I can say to you about that is, do it the way your district requires that you do it. Because I know districts all across the United States have very differing views on how the timeframe should be written. Some school districts like it by grading period. Some like it by grading quarterly. Some like it by every so many weeks. Some people like it by every so many sessions. So I can’t give you a definitive answer on how’s the best way to write that, because I know your districts give you instructions on how they want that to be written. And I also know that some of your IEP electronic paperwork is already set in a certain way, so you don’t have a choice. All you get to do is fill in the number. You don’t get to change the delivery model or the service model.

So just, when writing the timeframe, just remember, as a speech-language pathologist, you have lots of things that can interrupt your therapy, at least where I work. Field trips, testing, benchmark testing, statewide testing, it seems like every day there’s something new that pops up that I can’t see the student. So I do like to write mine over a period of time rather than so many times per week just in case a week is full of wonderful things for third graders or fifth graders, and I can’t get to two times a week. I kind of like to have a little bit more flexibility in terms of how I can meet those established minutes per grading period as listed on this schedule of services.

So if you don’t have to do two times per week, or one time per wee, or however that is weekly, then I would suggest, don’t write it weekly. Because that sort of restricts your ability to make up those minutes in the event that child is involved in something else. And we all know how busy schools are with so many activities. So just protect yourself in terms of those minutes that you providing per week, or per grading period. Okay, so now let’s look at the model for goal writing. So along with the components that we just reviewed, these are some of the things that you also have to include in that model for goal writing. So your SMART goals are always going to talk specifically about, who is it that has to do this? So who is always gonna be your student. The what: what will he
need to do, he or she need to do? Is it measurable and observable? That’s the what. When is your timeframe. So how long does this student have to work on this particular goal? Where would be your conditions, so setting, situation, and materials. How, that's the criterion. To what level or degree must students perform. And assessment, what level of assessment are you going to use to measure progress and attainment of that particular goal? I’m giving you this model because a lot of times this model fits in better with your special education paperwork than the SMART or the Components model. So you can see that they're all very similar in nature. I’m just giving you some examples of each so that whatever you’re utilizing in your district, hopefully one of these will work for you in terms of all the components required.

Okay. So our goal components, typically, I always write mine, first of all, by when will the person do it? Who will do it? What will they do? How well will they do it, and under what conditions? So that’s kind of an example of how I set mine up. So I always start out, by the end of whatever, John will be able to produce the S sound in phrases with 80% accuracy without models provided. So that might cover all of those goal components in terms of what needs to happen in that particular goal in order for it to propel us forward. Another thing I’m gonna share with you is a seven-step process to creating standard-based IEPs. It was originally done by Project Forum at a NASDSE conference way back in 2007.

And I was at that conference, and this particular procedure was being presented to classroom teachers, special education classroom teachers, but I liked it so much that I started implementing it myself in terms of the speech goals that I was writing. I have modified it some, and I’ve changed up the steps a little bit. Because the order that it went in for classroom teachers wasn’t quite the order that I thought in. So I did move some of the steps around. So when you look up that reference, you’ll see it’s not exactly the same. But because I was taking their basic model, I definitely wanted to give them credit for that. Because they came up with it, not me. But what I wanna talk
about now are these particular steps in the next few moments. So I want, first, to always review assessment data and determine those present levels. And we talked quite a bit about that at the beginning. So for example, first, write/review the present levels. So I've given you some examples of some present-level statements. So Sally is a four-year-old student with autism. So I've told you who it. And then I told you what she displayed in terms of verbal and physical outburst. I've told you that she uses one- and two-word phrases, and specifically how, and I've also mentioned some things that I didn't see her initiate independently to give a full and complete picture of a functional analysis for Sally. So not gonna read that to you, because I know you can read. But that's just kind of a sample of what a PLAAFP statement for one of my students might look like. Then in step two, I prioritize her deficit areas, okay. Because if you look back, Sally has quite a few deficit areas. And for a four-year-old, some of those deficits are already pretty significant if she's only using one and two words to express her wants and needs.

So in terms of speech and language, Sally’s kind of a mess. So I need to be able then to take all the information that I know about Sally and prioritize, otherwise I'm gonna have an IEP goal and objective page that’s gonna have 85 goals and objectives. And I know from professional experience, Sally will never be able to function and make progress on all those goals if I write that many. So what I wanna do with the information I know about Sally, I wanna prioritize her needs in terms of those that are specific and important, and that are most likely to hinder her access or progress in her little special education preschool classroom. So step is going to be, I'm gonna take all that great information I know, and I'm gonna prioritize it. So in prioritizing her needs, okay, I'll look, and I see what all her needs are. Verbal and physical outbursts, and that's typically because she can't communicate, right. We know that behavior is a form of communication. Teachers may not understand that. So that may be something we wanna talk with the teacher about. She had very limited social interaction. We only see her parallel play with the students in her class. She does not initiate interactions with
peers independently, and she has limited verbalizations. So out of all those things, from a speech-language perspective, I really feel like the fact that she's not interacting independently and she has very limited verbalizations to be priority needs for her if she's going to access all areas of her educational setting that she currently is in. So what is most likely to hinder her? Well, as we just discussed, limited verbalizations, and she's not playing with her peers. She's not interacting with her peers. So those would be two priority areas that I would put on her speech IEP. I also wanna review the standards for her little class, if there are any. And in this case, they may not be academic standards. Rather, they might be communication standards. They might be socialization standards.

But I'm gonna review those, because I know what her deficit areas are now. Then I'm gonna look at the standard and see what the standard says. So I know that, in a prekindergarten guideline, I've found social and emotional development and social competence. Child shows competence in initiating social interactions. Well, they wrote that for Sally, apparently. Because that's exactly what she needs to do but can't. So I can found a standard that I can lock in on for Sally, going forward and projecting out to many grades to come, where we need to start developmentally with Sally to get her to this point that she can show competence in initiating social interactions. Then step four of my equation is I'm gonna correlate the deficit to a standard.

So you're gonna match that priority deficit skill to a corresponding educational or functional performance area. And then that selected area should be those that determine the greatest potential to accelerate your student's achievement. You're trying to close the gap. Okay, so skills Sally has. Well, we know from reading her present levels that she uses a picture schedule independently and can anticipate what comes next in her schedule, that she can use one- and two-word phrases to express wants and needs consistently with adults. She may not be doin' with her peers, but it's a great thing that she's at least able to do it with adults, probably when prompted,
which is why she’s doing it with adults, and not children. Exhibits social initiation in controlled environments with multiple prompts using a two-word phrase. So if there’s someone to help her and assist her to get her ready to make that social initiation, she can do it, but she’s still requiring a lot of prompts. And she will demonstrate parallel play alongside her peers. So it’s not like she doesn’t wanna be near her peers. She is just not yet to the point where she can turn that parallel play into interaction. So the skills Sally needs: Shows competence in initiating social interaction. Actively seeks out play partners and appropriately invites them to play. So we know from that standard for functional performance for that age level that these are some areas of need for Sally.

Okay, now we’re gonna develop those annual goals and objectives. So after you identify your deficit skill area, you find a corresponding educational need for this student, you are ready to set those goals. So let’s talk about then knowing what we know about our components, about the SMART acronym, and about all of the things that need to be included in that goal. Let’s look at what we can write for Sally. So, "By Sally’s next annual ARD," and it says ARD, and I’m so sorry about that. It should say IEP. I didn’t catch all those.

But I’m in Texas, and we call an IEP meeting an ARD meeting. So just scratch through that on your little handout and put IEP, 'cause that’s what that means. "By Sally's next IEP, given a verbal instruction "and no more than one verbal prompt," okay, so that's the first component, "Sally will approach a peer during a structured playtime "and invite him or her to play by making a verbal request, "such as, 'Play with me?'" Because we know she's capable of one- and two-word phrases already, so we're gonna bump her up to three words, and we think that's pretty darn good in terms of what she can do in that annual period. So that's the second part of that. "As evidenced by making the request "for five consecutive school days "during one grading period." So she is going to have to initiate those social interactions five consecutive school days during one grading period. And that’s our evaluation process for this particular goal. And that’s how we’re going to be able to measure her progress. Step six is to develop short-term
goals and objectives. And I'm gonna stop here and insert something. Short-term objectives are no longer required by federal law. When IDEA 2004 was rewritten and reauthorized, it took out the need for short-term objectives to be listed on a child's IEP unless that student was taking some sort of alternative assessment aligned with alternative achievement standards. So that's on all those kids that you're going to make modifications to the grade-level content. In that instance, you are required still by federal law to write those short-term goals and objectives. And that would be under 34 CFR 300.320. If you wanna go read that IDEA federal requirement, that's where you would find it, in Section 300.320.

So for most of our speech and language students that are speech and language students only, so for those SLI kids with no other disability categories, we typically are not modifying content. We only provide accommodations for how to best help them get to where they need to be. So on our speech-impaired-only students, we are typically not modifying content. So on those speech-only students, you are no longer required to write short-term goals and, the short-term objectives, unless your district or state still requires that. And that's perfectly okay for them to require it. I just want you to that if we get to this section and you're thinking, "Well, wait a second, "we don't even write short-term objectives in my district," that's why, that's the why.

Because you're not required to do it any longer unless a student is receiving alternative achievement standards. So if the content's been modified, you do have to throw in those short-term objectives. If not, your district may have elected to take short-term objectives or benchmarks out of the equation. And I'm just mentioning that 'cause I want you to know it's totally legal to do that. But if you are writing short-term objectives or benchmarks, which are the same, those are interchangeable comments or names that we can put on that. We're gonna talk a little bit about those short-term objectives. Because in lots of instances, you utilize those STOs for building blocks for the student. So that big annual goal is gonna have a lot packed in there. And the short-term
objectives are kind of like your stepping stones to getting to that big objective. And you can also measure each one of your STOs or benchmarks individually with data collection. So sometimes having short-term objectives makes it a little bit easier. So in terms of developing your STOs, just remember, they’re building blocks for the student, and they’re stepping stones or baby steps to what you actually wanna get that child to accomplish by the end of the annual IEP period. So examples of possible STOs could be, by the end of Sally’s fourth reporting period, given a verbal instruction paired with a verbal, gestural, and visual prompt, Sally will interact with a peer in short, structured activity by sharing materials for up to five minutes over five consecutive interactions as evidenced by data collection by a classroom teacher and speech-language pathologist. If it’s only going to be measured by you, then say it’s only gonna be measured by you.

But in our instance, we write our goals for our younger children together so that our communication goals are not only being worked on by the speech-language pathologist but also being worked on by the classroom teacher. If you don’t do it that way, that’s perfectly okay. So you can see all of the components that need to be there. You can see the who, the why, the when, the how much, and how we’re going to evaluate that. So that covers all of our components in that one goal and objective. And you can see that this is a very important step if we’re going to get Sally to master those standards that are required for her pre-K classroom. Another one could be by the end of Sally’s second reporting period. And you’ll notice by the end of Sally’s fourth reporting period, because we know that’s gonna take a little bit more time. That’s gonna be hard for her. But the second part of that, that other second-part term, part, ugh, let me start over. That second short-term objective for Sally is not gonna take her want as long. So we’re gonna say, ‘til the second reporting period, we expect her to have been successful with that short-term goal and objective, and mastered it. So you’ll see, given a verbal instruction period with verbal, gestural, and visual prompts, Sally will demonstrate appropriate turn-taking skills during an adult-directed play task.
So we're being very specific about how this is gonna take place and with whom, over five consecutive interactions as evidenced by grading turn-taking using a social skills interaction rubric. Okay, I don't know how many of you use rubrics, but I can tell you they are very, very easy in terms of collecting your data that you're going to need for progress monitoring. So I develop and use a whole lot of rubrics, and a lot of my districts do as well. So you can kind of get an idea of what we're talking about in terms of those components. Now, what I've also given you, in case some of you are new to the profession, is a little cheat sheet.

So this is the Essential Elements Cheat Sheet. And you'll see a Yes or No column right next to it. And so if you check Yes based on need, the goal is based on identified student need, you are perfect on that. You're gonna give yourself a little check. If you read it back to yourself and you're thinking, "No, that's not really based on the need," so you're gonna check No. And then I've given you a little space to adjust it. So what do you think would be more accurate in terms of what they're doing now, so what their need is now based on what they can do. And the same with levels of performance, meaningful goal, measurable goal, annual progress, and classroom participation. So there, again, many of you could do this in your sleep.

But if you're new to the profession, I thought this might be helpful for you so that you can just learn kind of a systematic and organized way to break your goals apart. We all have those moments when we look back and think, how in the world did I write a goal like that? This little cheat sheet kind of stopped me from saying that about myself. 'Cause I'm in a hurry, and it sounds great. But then I get to the IEP, and I'm reading it out loud to people, then all the sudden I'm thinking, holy cow, what was I thinking when I wrote that? We all do it, even 30, 40 years into the profession. So if you're brand new to it, just know you are not alone. We all have those same moments. The other thing I wanna talk a little bit about, and hopefully, some of these charts that you have seen will help you. And again, like I said earlier, you will see my email address at the
end of this little production that we're doing today. And if you want those in large format so that you can just print them out and utilize them immediately, I have no problem sharing them. You can do with them whatever you like. I also don't mind you modifying it or, I mean, you don't need my written permission for that, obviously. I just want them to be something that are helpful, usable to you, especially if you're just getting started. Because I know school has just started. I know you are probably extremely overwhelmed with everything going on around you, and a little apprehensive, probably, about writing goals and objectives for your students.

And I will say, as I said earlier, this is an area that I think we all struggle with as speech-language pathologists. So as you read through the folders of your children that you're going to be serving, and you are inheriting folders and IEPs with goals that have been written by someone else, and you read 'em and you think, "What were they thinking?" or you read them and say, "I don't know how that's measurable at all," just show some grace to those professionals that came before you. 'Cause there's a lot of things you don't know about them. You don't know anything about them, really. You just know that this goal was written by them. But I just encourage you to show some grace to your predecessors and take your opportunities to write goals in the right way. And hopefully, some of those individuals that are passing on goals to you that are not well-written will do a little learning on their own and figure out how to do that. But when you get those goals, just show some grace to that person.

Because we don't know what their load was like. We don't know a lot of things about them. So before we judge, let's just make sure we do it the correct way, and we don't worry about what someone gave us, or handed to us. Okay, so last thing we're gonna talk about, just a little bit, is collaboration. And you'll hear a lot about interprofessional collaboration. ASHA has quite a bit on the topic. It's very important for us, as a group, to get out and collaborate with other individuals. And I think this is the way that we also become more respected in our respective build, ooh, I'm havin' such a hard time
talking today, guys. I’m so sorry. I think it’s gonna be a lot of how you’re viewed by your colleagues in your school, how your administration views you, and also how you are treated in terms of the things that you get and the spaces and the rooms that you’re assigned. It’s very imperative that we demonstrate how effective we can be with students that are having educational challenges. And it starts with you. It starts with how you present yourself, and it starts with how you collaborate with your colleagues. I encourage you to get into classrooms. I encourage you to be a well-known person in your building. I encourage you to be a source of knowledge and information to others. Because you know so much about how this works that other people in your building do not. So be sure you share your knowledge.

And when we collaborate, we’re increasing the value of what we do so that other people can it, but we’re also increasing the value to our students in terms of knowledge and skills that we can help them acquire. If you’re sitting out there and you’re a middle and high school SLP, that’s going to be super important if you’re gonna motivate your students, and you’re gonna make them understand why they to come to speech therapy instead of the rolling of the eyes, or they get lost on the way and never show up. It’s really important that you share with them what you know and what you can help them do so that they want your help.

So just make me a promise that you’re going to really try hard to do that this year. I’ve given you some references. We’re comin’ up on about three minutes until, 3 1/2 minutes before it’s over. And we wanna make sure we have time for questions if we have any. But I have given you some great resources. All of these are ones that I refer to on a regular basis. And the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, you can access that at sites.ed.gov. If you’re new to the profession, I encourage you to kind of look through those and understand what the requirements are of you as a special education provider. And that’s what you are in the public schools. Speech is a special education service. So just make sure that you are aware of what you need to know as a
speech-language pathologist working with kids in the public schools. Here is my email address, and I do not mind at all you emailing me. If I did, I wouldn't give you my email address. So if there things that were unclear today or if there are things that you would like to have additional information about, if you would like any of the tables that have been produced today in our little time together, and an hour is so short, it goes by so fast, but if you need anything from me, this is how you can locate me. It's mountmg@sbcglobal.net. I'm a speech-language pathologist first and foremost, and I would just be willing to help anybody with anything. So feel free to reach out to me. And hopefully, this has been helpful to you on some level and you haven’t wasted your time coming today. And sorry for my tongue-tie. I don’t know what’s goin' on with that. I'll work on that before the next production. And let’s turn it over to questions if we have any. Amy?

- [Amy] Thanks, Marva, that was really fantastic. I'm gonna give it a minute or two here to see if anybody wants to put any questions in the Q & A.

- Okay.

- What I wanted to suggest, perhaps, if you wanted to send us that chart that you had that had condition, behavior, criteria, timeframe on it--

- Sure.

- And then maybe also that Essential Elements Cheat Sheet, if you have those sort of in a single-page form or something--

- I do, I do.
And then we could make additional handouts of those, email it to everybody who attended today, and then it'd also be in the recorded course for the people who take this course moving forward. I mean, I would imagine--

That would be a wonderful idea.

People would love that.

[Marva] Okay, great.

[Amy] If you wanna send it to me right after this, then I'll get those made up, and I can email it out to everybody.

Perfect.

So we have, "Thank you, thank you, thank you," in the Q & A. Lots of nice comments, thanks so much. And let’s see, hold on, something’s blocking. Catherine and Carrie, just know that as soon as I get that from Marva, I will forward it on to any of you who are here today. And you, too, Sylvia. Yeah, lots of thank yous. I’m not seeing any questions so far, but I just wanna give it a second and make sure that nobody has any. My goodness, everybody loved your presentation, Marva.

[Marva] Well, I'm very glad. I don't ever want anyone to waste their time, so that makes me happy.

[Amy] We have somebody saying, "I've been out of the SLP loop for 11 years, "and I really needed this refresher, so thank you so much."

- [Amy] Let's see. You know, I'm not seein' any questions. I think you covered everything so very thoroughly and clearly that there probably weren't anything, there was not anything to clear up. So I'm gonna go ahead and close it down here. But to our participants, keep your eyes out for a handout. And I will email that along to you as soon as I have it from Marva, and then you'll have it for another resource from this presentation. But Marva, thanks so much. It’s always such a pleasure to have you here with us. And I do appreciate the time that you took to put this together for us. And thanks to our participants as well. We appreciate you being here and spending an hour out of your day with us. And I think we'll close it up here. Thanks, everybody, hope you have a great day, and that we see you back here before too long.