

Goal Getters: Crafting Quality Objectives for High-Tech AAC



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Technically Speaking: A Closer Look at How to Increase Positive Outcomes with High-Tech AAC



YouTube (no ASHA CEU)

https://youtu.be/ZaWEDqvU7Bc?si=TBLdrB7CXD_IFv5D

Register for ASHA CEU here:

<https://www.ablenetinc.com/technical-speaking-on-demand-registration>

April 2022

Reverse the Curse: Device Abandonment & Prompt-Dependency in AAC



YouTube (no ASHA CEU)
<https://youtu.be/LdUpGex-oh0>

Register for ASHA CEU here:
<https://www.ablenetinc.com/reverse-the-curse-device-abandonment-prompt-dependency-in-aac-registration>

Financial Disclosure

- Ann is a salaried employee at EASTCONN, a regional education service center located in Hampton, CT. Her work is partially funded by the Connecticut Tech Act Project.

Non Financial Disclosure

- Ann is a member of ASHA and helps facilitate a statewide AT/AAC Community of Practice.



Instagram @drawntoaac

At the end of the session, attendees will be able to:

1. Identify 2 challenges with writing goals for people who use high-tech AAC
2. Identify 2 ways to improve pre-existing goals
3. Identify characteristics of high-quality goals

Instagram @drawntoaac



At the end of the session, attendees will NOT be able to:

1. Feel bad about what they've done in the past.
2. Change their practice without talking to their teams and administrators.
3. Count on things staying the same, being agreed on by everyone, and knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that they're doing it "right."



SLP-CCC
SUPER
LOVING
PERSON,
COMMITTED
CREATIVE
AND ALWAYS
CORRECT.

Who Are You?

- Individual with a disability
- Family guardian or authorized rep
- Reps of Education
- Reps of Employment
- Health Allied Health & Rehab
- Reps of Community Living
- Reps of Technology
- Unable to Categorize



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Challenge # 1 = Who are They?

“For many children who have complex communication needs, it is impossible to do a one time assessment and learn enough about the child to write meaningful goals and objectives. School systems often do not recognize this process, and expect the team to be able to assess and write goals over the short term. This often results in **narrow**, task specific, meaningless goals that are **not flexible** enough to follow the child’s evolving learning requirements. Therefore, initial goals may need to be written in a manner that allows for exploration of a range of strategies to determine the most appropriate learning requirements for each child.”

- from **Writing IEP Goals and Objectives for Authentic Communication - for Children who have Complex Communication Needs** by Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter-
July, 2009 and Feb, 2010

Examples of Flexible Goals

Note: All examples are suggestions and should be modified appropriately for individual needs.



“For example, ‘the child will use 3 of the following (developmentally relevant) communicative functions expressively...’ Examples of communicative functions can be listed in the goal, so that data can be collected on the use of them. For example: request objects, request/direct actions, request assistance, request recurrence, request cessation, ask questions, express opinions, protest, complain, etc.

“(Name) will show increasing interest and attention to someone using a comprehensive aided communication system (such as a PODD) to talk to him/her in natural contexts throughout the day. This will be observed as an increase in: looking towards the communication symbols or the communication partner, calming during this process, looking away to the side but with a stillness as if listening, or responding to the partner’s message. (define this specifically for this child) Minimum of (10) times during the school day in a variety of contexts.

- from Writing IEP Goals and Objectives for Authentic Communication - for Children who have Complex Communication Needs by Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter- July, 2009 and Feb, 2010

**WHEN YOU PULL OUT YOUR
COOLEST TOY TO ELICIT A REQUEST**



AND GET NO RESPONSE



10 Modeling Tips from Linda Burkhart

1. Goal should not be for them to say what **we** want them to say
2. First words are not “more, done, help” ... they are whatever is meaningful to that child
3. Model about what **they** are thinking about
4. Model to connect, not to direct (*I've also seen “not to correct”*)
5. Immersive language model vs. corrective language model
6. Whatever the child says is correct!!! Make something of it, go with it
7. “Immersive-like” because not efficient to model everything we say
8. Must be genuine, meaningful, & EMOTIONAL
9. Emotionless modeling is harder to remember
10. As soon as you want the child to copy your model, you're crossing the line

Example of Flexible Goal + Objectives

“Goal: (Name) will generate 3-4 word sentences using his communication book.

Benchmarks:

1. (Name) will complete a multi-word sentence (using PODD and other multiple modalities) when provided with models and visual supports of sentence starters during structured writing activities at school.
2. (Name) will produce 2 word sentences when provided with the verbal cue to “tell me more” during genuine interactions
3. (Name) will spontaneously produce 2 word sentences.
4. (Name) will produce 3 word sentences when provided with the verbal cue to “tell me more”
5. (Name) will spontaneously produce a 3 word sentences.”

- from Writing IEP Goals and Objectives for Authentic Communication - for Children who have Complex Communication

Needs by Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter- July, 2009 and Feb, 2010

Consideration #1 = What Counts?

Goal: (Name) will generate 3-4 word sentences using Total Communication (speech, SGD, ASL, *conventional/universal gestures*)

Conventional/universal gestures = pointing, nodding, shaking head, waving, shrugging, etc. because they represent something and are socially acceptable

Be specific about how to measure, while also giving the student autonomy to say anything

Remember: Using stock or prewritten goals that are not individualized does not meet the requirements of IDEA

Challenge #2 = S.M.A.R.T.

“...This often results in **narrow, task specific**, meaningless goals that are not flexible enough to follow the child’s evolving learning requirements.” - from Writing IEP Goals and Objectives for Authentic Communication - for Children who have Complex Communication Needs by Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter- July, 2009 and

S	Specific	Make your goal specific and narrow for more effective planning
M	Measurable	Make sure your goal and progress are measurable
A	Achievable	Make sure you can reasonably accomplish your goal within a certain time frame
R	Relevant	Your goal should align with your values and long-term objectives
T	Time-based	Set a realistic but ambitious end date to clarify task prioritization and increase motivation



Challenge #3 = Collecting Baseline Data

1. True or False: You should target a skill that your learner has already demonstrated to be emerging.
2. True or False: Operational skills, such as navigating folders, should have their own goals.
3. True or False: Goals should focus on successful communication even if that's without using the AAC device.
4. True or False: It's better for you to ask your learner questions that have no wrong answer, such as, "What do you want?"
5. True or False: Your learner can repair a communication breakdown without being aware of the breakdown.

AAC-Specific Data Collection Tools:

- Realize Language
- AAC Profile (AACCP)
- Dynamic AAC Goals Grid (DAGG-3)
- Communication Matrix
- Assessment of Learning Process (ALP) for AAC

AAC-Specific Data Collection Tool #1

Realize Language by PRC-Salttillo

- \$10 per year (30-day free trial)
- Website that collects every button activation in PRC-Salttillo software
- Organizes by part of speech, frequency, and timestamped, which is searchable
- Available in the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland

Other AAC software have their own built-in data logging of each button activation and some even have settings to differentiate between what the learner activated vs. what someone else modeled.

If you are able to collect a 100 utterance language sample, now you can use:

1. Mean Length of Utterance (MLU) - [resource by Williamson, 2014](#)
2. [QUAD Profile by Russell Cross- 4 Checklists for Analyzing a Language Sample](#)

AAC Profile (AACP) by Tracy M. Kovach, Ph. D., published by PRO-ED

- \$84 for print manual + 15 forms
- \$44 for electronic manual
- Rating scales in 4 Communicative Competencies (Light, 1989) operational, linguistic, social, and strategic
- By observation (could ask/interview parent and 1-to-1 educator)
- Quantifies level of independence to help you prioritize what to target- skills that are demonstrated sometimes with some support vs. never with max support
- Some skills ask about the communication partner's skill level because it will influence

4 main Competencies, but wait there's more..

5 Competencies by Blackstone and Wilkins, 2009

1. *Operational*: Power device on and off, navigation, volume control etc.
2. *Social*: Initiating, maintaining, and terminating communicative interactions in a socially, culturally, and contextually appropriate manner. Communicate intent, **repairing communication breakdowns**.
3. *Linguistic*: Improving language use, expanding utterances, using appropriate grammar, syntax, etc.
4. *Strategic*: special skills that are unique to AAC-based communication, such as the ability to gain the listener's attention prior to selecting a symbol on a communication board, checking for partner comprehension, and **repairing communication breakdowns** Identifying communication breakdowns, knowing which AAC system to use in a given situation
5. *Emotional*: the development of an emotional vocabulary and utilizing that lexicon to relay feelings, beliefs, and thoughts. Awareness of emotions; empathy, self-regulation, self-efficacy.
6. Kate Ahern added "Self-Advocacy" in 2014: asking to stop, take a break, report abuse, neglect¹⁹

AAC-Specific Data Collection Tool #3

Communication Matrix by Charity Rowland, Ph.D.

- observational rating scales in the form of a portal that walks you through each skill one by one
- very specific descriptions and even some videos to help you answer Yes or No about your learner's skills
- great for learners with complex needs at the earliest stages of development
- free with email sign-up for:
 - Saving up to 5 Communication Matrix Assessments online
 - Using the “Try Me” function to complete assessments that are not saved online
 - Using the Community Forum features of the website
- **\$5 PDF version available** (professional, parent, and Spanish parent versions)
- **\$50 training webinar** for ASHA CEU on how to use the Communication Matrix

AAC-Specific Data Collection Tool #4

Dynamic AAC Goals Grid (DAGG-3) from Tobii Dynavox

- Free with email sign-up
- Similar grid to AACP in 4 Communicative Competencies (Light, 1989) operational, linguistic, social, and strategic and you rate each “goal” as mastered, in progress, or N/A
- % mastered for each section goes at the top to help you identify which of the 5 Communication Ability Levels your learner is (Emergent, Emergent Transitional, Context Dependent, Transitional Independent, Independent) for each of the 4 competencies
- Very detailed steps for SLP to follow in the **“Instructions: How to use Dagg-3”** section and gives case examples of each of the 5 Communication Ability Levels
- **Be aware that the “I” under Chain of Cues in the right-most column is a prompt!**
“I: Indirect Cue – Gesture toward the communication device and wait expectantly,” so if you’re checking that off as the support needed for mastery, ask yourself if that’s **true mastery**. I recommend that you don’t consider it mastered unless it’s independent.

More about the DAGG-3... LOTS MORE!

Beyond Baseline Data:

- Each skill in the grid is labeled as a goal, but it is not in SMART format
- Links under each “goal” labeled as “Activity:...,” takes you to a multi-page handout consisting of a lesson plan including the “goal,” preparation notes, materials list, tips for success (some have a link to a **video like this one**), activity with steps, supplemental activities list, and suggestions for how to measure progress. The last page is a template for a Parent Letter.
- For example, the first “goal” in the grid under Linguistic-Emergent-Making Selections has **this activity packet**
- The goal is worded as, “Selects any message or word given a communication page during an interaction with or without intent,” so it would need to be reworded, but that’s good because it is best practice to craft custom goals for each student.

Communication Competencies

Communication Ability Levels

∨ DAGG-3 Activities

- ∟ Linguistic Activities
- ∟ Operational Activities
- ∟ Social Activities
- ∟ Strategic Activities

∨ Linguistic Activities

- ∟ Emergent Communicators
- ∟ Emergent Transitional Communicators
- ∟ Context Dependent Communicators
- ∟ Transitional Independent Communicators
- ∟ Independent Communicators

∨ Emergent Communicators

- ∟ Goal 1
- ∟ Goal 2
- ∟ Goal 3

Consideration #1- Does It Matter?


Now that you have baseline data, how do you prioritize which skills to target?

Lauren Enders compiled a CHECKLIST based on the work of Linda Burkhart, Gayle Porter, and Carole Zangari

Examples:

- Will accomplishing the goal lead to autonomous communication?
- Does the goal address skills that make the communicator happier or more independent?

Does this AAC Goal Matter? Checklist Questions



Does the goal have relevance to the child now and in the future?	Yes	No
Is the purpose of this goal clear to both the child and the instructors?	Yes	No
Will accomplishing the goal lead to autonomous communication?	Yes	No
Will accomplishing this goal lead to increased access to communication?	Yes	No
Will accomplishing this goal lead to increased communicative competence?	Yes	No
Will accomplishing this goal lead to meeting communication requirements more: - intelligibly - independently - specifically - in as socially valued a manner as possible - efficiently	Yes	No
Does the goal address skills that make the communicator happier or more independent?	Yes	No
Will achieving the goal provide a strong foundation for further language development?	Yes	No
Will achieving the goal positively influence how other people treat the communicator?	Yes	No

Based on the work of:



Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter - Appendix 3: Writing IEP Goals and Objectives for Receptive and Expressive Communication for Children with Complex Communication Needs, By Linda Burkhart & Gayle Porter from the PODD Communication Books Advanced workshop Manual ©.2019.



Zangari, C., (2012, October 11). Practical Goals that Matter. PrAACtical AAC. Retrieved October 11, 2021, from <https://practicalaac.org/practical/practical-goals-that-matter/>.



Compiled by Lauren S. Enders, MA, CCC-SLP for PrAACtical AAC



Consideration #2- Will It Impact Other Skills?

Are similar skills being targeted in other goal areas with other service providers, such as academic, social/emotional?



This will naturally increase practice with variety, which is a key to learning. It will also ensure generalization across communication partners and contexts.

Comparing the student’s baseline performance to state standards in the domains of Speaking & Listening and Language assists with prioritizing which skills require goals and services in the IEP.

Speaking and Listening Standards K-5 SL

The following standards for K-5 offer a focus for instruction each year to help ensure that students gain adequate mastery of a range of skills and applications. Students advancing through the grades are expected to meet each year’s grade-specific standards and retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades.

Kindergartners:	Grade 1 students:	Grade 2 students:
Comprehension and Collaboration		
1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>kindergarten topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others and taking turns speaking about the topics and texts under discussion). Continue a conversation through multiple exchanges. 	1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 1 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). Build on others’ talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion. 	1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about <i>grade 2 topics and texts</i> with peers and adults in small and larger groups. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion). Build on others’ talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others. Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.
2. Confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details and requesting clarification if something is not understood.	2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.	2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
3. Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood.	3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.	3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

Example: In the Language domain, for Kindergarten, in Conventions of English, one skill is “use the most frequently occurring prepositions (e.g. *to, from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with*)” -page 26

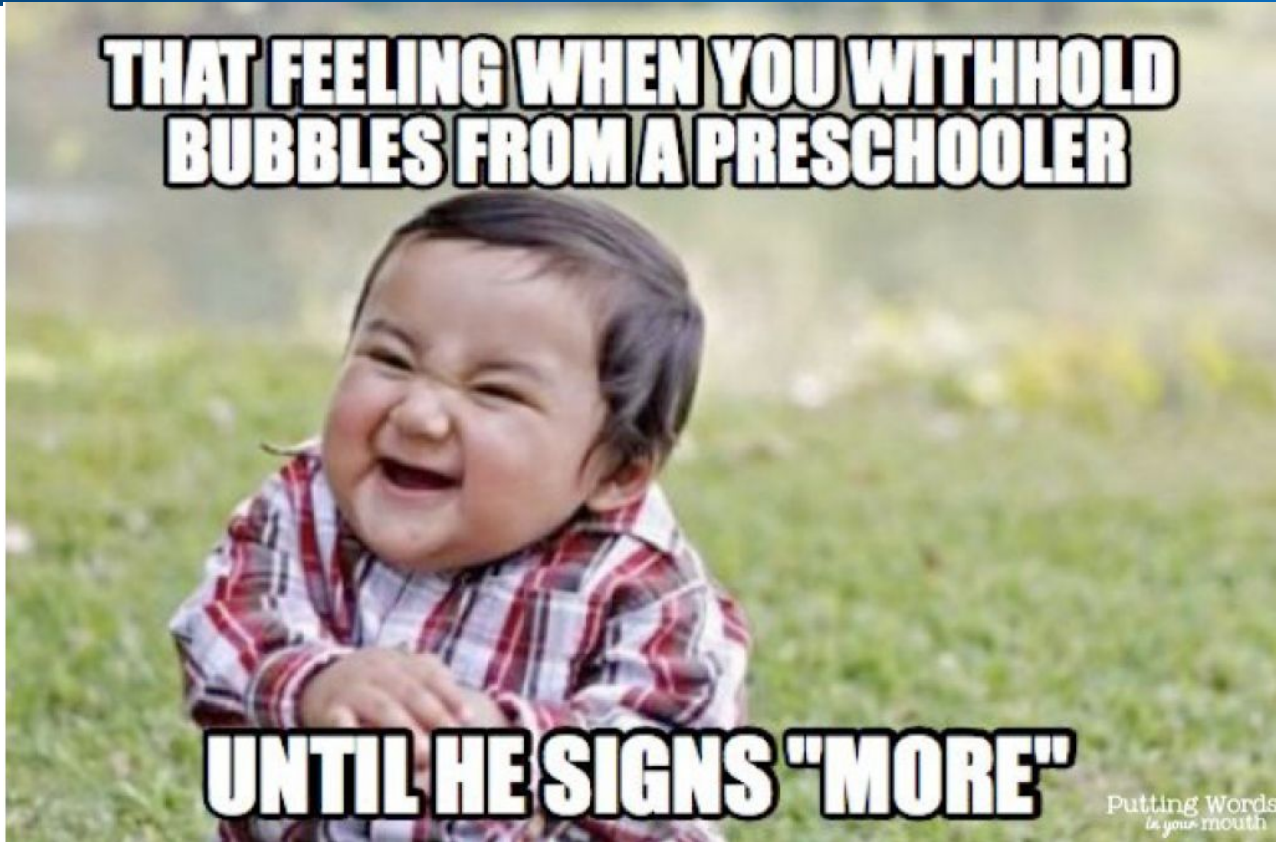
Speaking & Listening skills start on page 23. Language skills start on page 26.

Consideration #4 = Other Communication Guides

Some **credible** frames of reference include:

- [American Speech-Language Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)
- [Mean Length Utterance \(MLU\)](#) (i.e. Williamson, 2014)
- [Brown's Stage of Syntactic and Morphological Development](#) (i.e. Miller, 1981)
- [Connecticut Early Learning Development Standards \(ELDS\)](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Developmental Milestones](#) (2 mo.-5 yr.)
- [Social Communication Benchmarks \(ASHA\)](#)
- [Connecticut CORE Transition Skills](#)

This is compliance, not connection



Think, “What does the student need to do?”

-If they need to navigate to the money folder to label a coin, then they are demonstrating an understanding of categories, but once they are in the folder and can see the symbols for penny, nickel, dime, and quarter, and compare it to the actual coin held by the instructor, they only need to complete a non-identical matching task. This goal should NOT be written as a labeling task. It is still targeting useful skills, just NOT labeling.

Coins Video = Not Labeling, Matching



Consideration #6 = Rule of 8

It is becoming a standard recommendation that we have at least 8 data points in order to report on progress. If you do the math for your student's service time (possibly divided by group instruction) divided by the number of targets you need 8 data points for, you may be setting yourself up for failure in being able to accurately report progress because you have too many targets.

For example, last year I inherited an IEP where the student had 9 targets and I saw him 2 x 30 mins per week in a group of 3. I immediately switched him to a dyad, but even still, with meetings, absences, drills, and assemblies, I could not collect enough data to accurately report on progress.

"Are you taking any foreign language classes this year?"

"Yes, Math."



someecards
user card

Consideration #7 = Nonverbal Behavior

“...individuals have learned that if they do certain things, other people react in certain ways, and they use those behaviors to communicate very intentionally. At this stage, they use unconventional pre-symbolic behaviors to communicate. Communicative behaviors are “pre-symbolic” because they do not involve any sort of symbol; and they are “unconventional” because they are not socially acceptable for us to use as we grow older. Communicative behaviors include body movements, vocalizations, facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people).” - [Communication Matrix Community Forum](#)



It's all fun and games
until someone figures
out the function of
your behavior.



somee cards
user card

Replacing/ Shaping Behavior

Look for patterns of behavior that a familiar person would interpret as meaningful. For example, a 1-to-1 saying, “He’s going to the door because he wants to leave. He loves taking walks.” That is spontaneous and autonomous communication! They need to start modeling the language that goes with it.

KEY: Honoring the nonverbal communication first by letting them get what they want/need



Note: All examples are suggestions and should be modified appropriately for individual needs.

Goal: Given access to the SGD and frequent modeling across contexts by a variety of people including peers, X will use symbolic language (universal gesture, ASL, SGD, or speech) to request preferred items and activities in 3 out of 5 opportunities from their baseline of 0 out of 5 opportunities by the end of the IEP year as measured by staff observation and data records.

Objective 1: Given *initiation through behavior (eloping, grabbing, leading) and being granted access to that preferred item or activity*, X will visually attend to the SGD while it is being modeled to request that item or activity in 3 out of 5 opportunities from their baseline of 0 out of 5 opportunities by the end of the first progress reporting period.

Objective 2: Given access to the SGD and frequent modeling across contexts by a variety of people including peers, X will use symbolic language (universal gesture, ASL, SGD, or speech) to request preferred items and activities *within a routine* in 3 out of 5 opportunities from their baseline of 0 out of 5 opportunities by the end of the second progress reporting period.

Remember: Using stock or prewritten goals that are not individualized does not meet the requirements of IDEA.

Consideration #8 = Operational Goals vs. Objectives

Goal: If the overarching goal for the IEP year is Operational, I would argue that's not a communication goal because carrying the SGD in and of itself isn't a communication skill. It'd be like writing an academic goal to get a calculator instead of using it to solve an equation.

Objective: If we're thinking of objectives as sequential benchmarks, then it makes sense to include an operational skill like carrying the SGD as the first step in being able to use it to achieve the communication goal, but there has to be a step 2 beyond just carrying the talker.

I personally don't think it's necessary to have an operational objective like "navigating folders" because if the objective is to communicate something that requires navigating into a folder then it's imbedded within that skill. Also, what if they start using speech to accomplish the task? Then your navigating folders objective is useless.

Consideration #9- Generalization

- Many of our learners who use AAC learn best in a routine, but often get stuck in a script when we teach them to answer WH-questions, participate in a turn-taking game, or complete a sentence given an initial starter phrase. Then outside of that setting and with new communication partners, they don't demonstrate the ability to generalize.
- Questions need to be presented in various language forms to keep the learner flexible (ex. Where do you live? AND What's your address?)
- With a variety of communication partners
- In a variety of settings
- Especially with similar age peers serving as the communication partner

“...from/with at least 3 different adults/peers across at least 3 different settings...”

Answering Social Questions Video



Consideration #10 = The 6th Competency

Target “power words” and self-advocacy words/phrases on AAC device (e.g., “I need a break”, “too loud”).

Demonstrate use of this language for different reasons: problem-solving, social interaction, needs met, feelings, advocacy, highly preferred items, etc.

Teach language of feelings, emotions, regulation and problem solving.

AI for Education- Prompt Library

Resource Hub-> Prompt Library -> Special Needs -> Writing IEP Goals

This is the template for what you write in ChatGPT in order to get the best results:

You are an expert special needs teacher. Write a [goal area] IEP goal for my [grade level] student to understand [topic]. Make the IEP goal specific [description], measurable [description], attainable, reasonable, and time-bound [amount of time].

AI for Education suggests you use ChatGPT or “your favorite AI”

Warning: Review closely before implementation and use these tools for suggestion only.

ChatGPT = free with email signup

I customized the prompt from AI for Education:

You are an expert special needs teacher. Write a communication IEP goal for my kindergarten student to understand turn-taking. Make the IEP goal specific (they should be able to recognize it's their turn and say "my turn," measurable (student will make a request for their turn in 8 out of 10 opportunities, improving from their baseline of 0 out of 10 opportunities, attainable, reasonable, and time-bound by the end of the IEP year.

ChatGPT

Goal:

By the end of the IEP year, when engaged in activities with peers, [Student] will demonstrate the ability to recognize when it is their turn and verbally request their turn by saying "my turn" in 8 out of 10 opportunities, improving from their baseline of 0 out of 10 opportunities.

Objective:

[Student] will participate in turn-taking activities such as games, group discussions, and sharing activities with peers.

[Student] will be prompted by the teacher or peer to indicate when it is their turn using visual and verbal cues.

[Student] will independently recognize cues indicating it is their turn and verbally request their turn by saying "my turn."

[Student] will generalize the skill of turn-taking across various settings, including the classroom, playground, and social situations.

[Student] will maintain consistency in turn-taking behavior throughout the IEP period, with a minimum of 8 out of 10 opportunities indicating successful achievement of the goal.

Progress Monitoring:

Progress towards this goal will be monitored through regular observations during structured activities, social interactions, and playtime. Data will be collected and analyzed to track [Student]'s performance, with adjustments made to interventions as necessary to support continued growth. Additionally, periodic reviews of the IEP will allow for adjustments based on [Student]'s progress and individual needs.

MagicSchool = free with email signup



When you sign up, it informs you of the following:

Check for Bias and Accuracy: AI might occasionally produce biased or incorrect content. Always double-check before sharing with students.

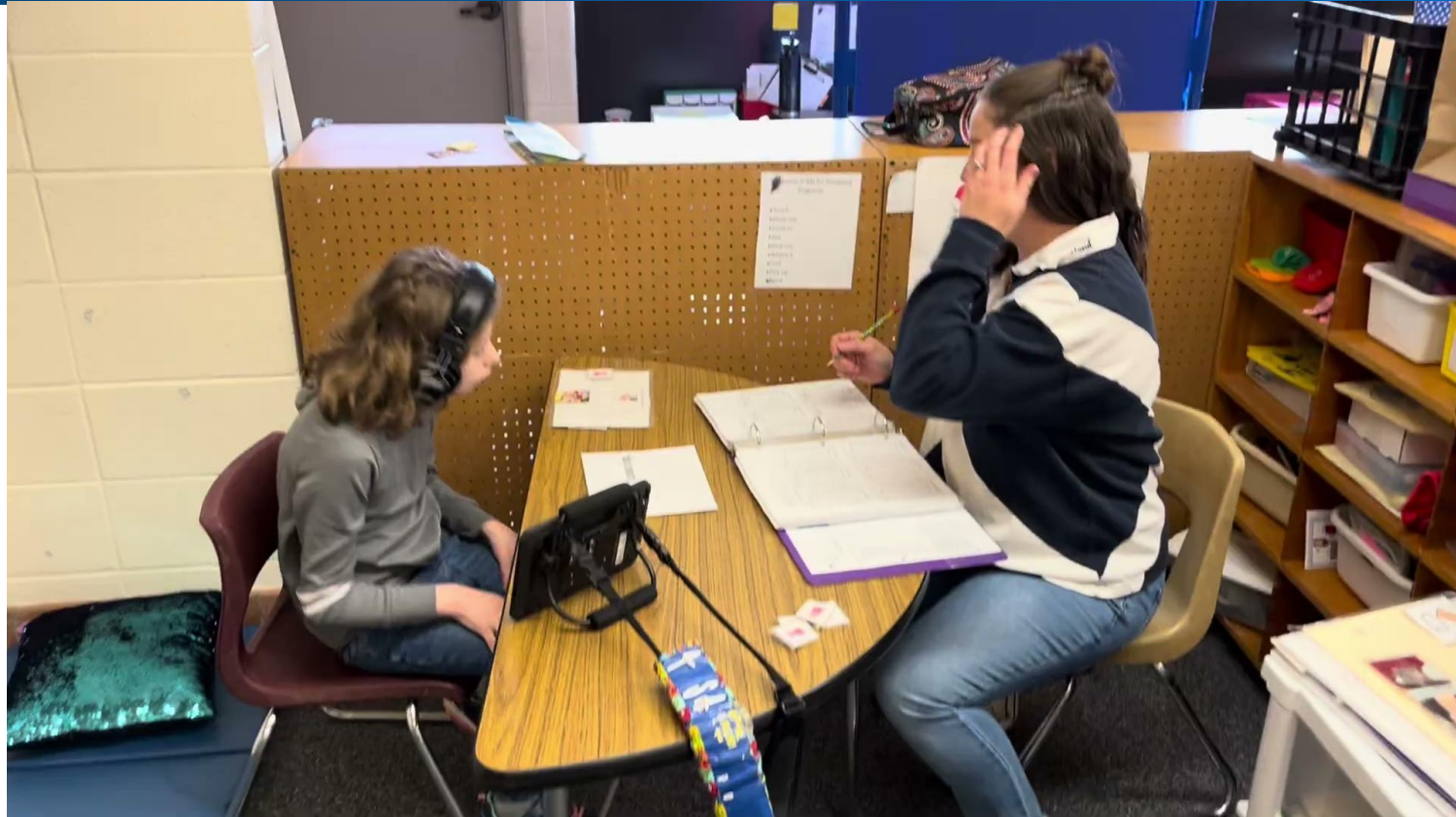
The 80-20 Approach: Use AI for initial work, but make sure to add your final touch, review for bias and accuracy, and contextualize appropriately for the last 20%.

Your Judgement Matters: See AI-generated content as a starting point, not a final solution. Always adhere to your school's guidelines.

Know the Limits: Our AI's knowledge stops at 2021, so be aware when dealing with recent topics.

Protect Privacy: Don't include personal student details like names or addresses. We strive to promptly remove any accidentally submitted information.

Multiplication Video



Multiplication Goal + Objectives

Given the considerations shared, what would be an appropriate SMART goal and benchmark objectives to break it down into sequential steps?

Goal:

Objective 1:

Objective 2:

Objective 3:

Additional Resources



[Goal Development Organizer by the CT State Dept of Education](#)

[Goal & Objective Component Rating Scale by the CSDE](#)

[What the Common Core State Standards say about ASL](#)

[CSDE IEP Quality Training Recommendation on Baseline Data](#)

[CSDE IEP Quality Training Recommendation Scaffolding Objectives](#)

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