

KPF Kristie Prett-Frontczak



IEP Makeover Tips and Tools



Backstory for the IEP Makeover Tips and Tools Ebook

The year? 1992 and I was studying early intervention at the University of Oregon.

It was springtime and members of my cohort and I were learning how to write Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) that were measurable, functional, generative, etc. I remember I was with a cohort member, likely the amazing Barbara Avila, in a classroom on the 2nd floor of the Clinical Services building.

We were working on a blackboard (yes, this was before Smart Boards were invented) and trying to use the ABC formula to write IFSPs from the Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming System (AEPS). The models provided by several of the doctoral students stated things like, 5/6 times and 3/4 times as the criteria for each goal.

Now, many of you know, math is not my superpower, however, the idea of identifying (rather guessing) the number of trials I should include as a criterion statement didn't make any sense. One of the doctoral students walked by, and we asked her, "How do you know what criterion to write?" We wanted to understand when 5/6 was more "appropriate" than 3/4, etc. The doctoral student paused, and said, "Well, you just mix it up!"

Meaning...sometimes you use 3/4 and if you've used that too often...try 5/6. Well, not the sage advice I was looking for, and to be honest, I've not yet come across an answer that fully embraces the complexity IEP teams face when writing IFSP/IEP goals and objectives.

Since that time, I have worked hard to find ways to write goals that are both measurable and meaningful. This eBook contains some of my latest works and collaborations on giving many IEPs a much-needed makeover!

With gratitude for all you do!



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Author Notes:

Whether something is a goal, an objective, or even back in the day, a benchmark is dependent upon the child's age, their PLAAFP, and assessment data. Thus, any of the statements shared could be a goal, an objective, and/or a benchmark. My suggestion is to try not to get caught up in whether the statement is big enough to be an annual goal, or small enough to be an objective. The ability of a team to identify what the child needs and to then design an instructional sequence is another part of the IEP process. For this reason and others, the makeover begins with determining “what” it is that requires specially designed instruction to ensure a child's access, participation, and progress in the general curriculum (i.e., “appropriate activities” for preschoolers).

What follows are a set of goals that have been made over using the framework and formula shared in the [Pre-K Teach & Play IEP Toolkit](#). And in most cases, a before “goal” and after “goal” are provided. However, any goal is better when it is written in the context of a strong PLAAFP.

Author Bio:

Dr. Kristie Pretti-Frontczak is a {r}evolutionary speaker, researcher, and play advocate. Through podcasts, blogs, free resources, and trainings, Kristie inspires and supports early educators in {r}evolutionizing their teaching. Kristie spent 16 years, as faculty, at Kent State University and now trains and coaches early educators worldwide. Kristie is a Past President of the Division for Early Childhood and works with intentness and determination to sort through the clutter and chaos to join seemingly disparate ideas. She also aims to celebrate differences and shared attributes to achieve solutions. You can access her latest solutions at <http://kristiepf.com>.

Makeover: Counting Goals

Before: “When counting objects, (insert child’s name) will say the number names in the standard order, pairing each object with one and only one number name and each number name with one and only one object.”

After: “During a variety of daily activities, (insert child’s name) will correctly pair a label/name, a symbol, and/or an action of one object, person, and/or event, to another. The child will correctly pair five different labels, symbols, or actions each day for two consecutive weeks. For example, the child will correctly pair number tags with corresponding objects by counting, child will select a buddy to read with when directed to “find a friend”, child will pair matching letter tags with letter sounds, child will name each animal in a story, child will give each child a napkin during snack, child will hang their backpack on a hook).”

SIDE NOTE: If you want additional information on counting trajectories for preschoolers, I invite you to listen to/read the transcript for the Pre-K Teach & Play podcast titled, *What Would Sherlock Do In “The Case of the Child Who Couldn’t Count”?*. It’s found at <https://prekteachandplay.com/podcast19>, and includes more information on why children struggle with counting and has many good resources on mathematics trajectories in early childhood.

Before: “When counting objects, (insert child’s name) says the number names in the standard order, pairing each object with one and only one number name and each number name with one and only one object.”

Before: “By (date), when given as many as 10 objects and (5) cups labeled with different numbers (e.g., 3, 6, 7, 2, 9), (insert child’s name) will place the correct number of objects in each cup by counting aloud and placing each individual object in the cup one at a time, scoring (4 out of 5), during (2 out of 3) activities.”

And at first glance, you might say to yourself, “These aren’t that bad as far as “offenders” go! Or you might be asking, “Why are they included and what sort of makeover is needed?”

1. If you know typical development, you know that these statements represent what all preschoolers are learning around the construct of counting. And a primary job of the IEP team is to avoid “rewriting” the general curriculum. Which, by the way, is NOT defined in federal U.S. law (IDEA 2004), and in fact, the phrase “appropriate activities” is used instead for preschoolers. Thus, out of the gate, these statements need a makeover because they represent what all children are expected to learn.
<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/.root,regs,300,D,300.320,a,1,ii,.html>
2. Next, and here is where things get interesting. Because the statements are written specific to one-to-one counting, and because the criteria is either assumed, missing, or stated as a quantity, it forces the team’s hand. Meaning, to make it “IEP worthy”, many teams will be lured into simplifying and/or reducing the number of objects a child has to count (e.g., 3 instead of 10). Keeping the “behavior” the same, and reducing the complexity, in my opinion, is one of the worst offenses in writing IEPs, and will not lead to improved or desired outcomes. Basically, the team has avoided figuring out the real or underlying issue around why the child is struggling with counting.
3. Thus, before we can give the samples a makeover, we need to better understand what we mean by “counting”. In both samples, the type of counting targeted one-to-one; where a child counts objects by saying number tags in a one-to-one correspondence with the objects (i.e., one number tag is named for each object, and each object is counted only once). It’s important to fully define the “what” because we can then begin to see the complexity that goes into something like one-to-one counting. Specifically, this type of counting is a foundation for understanding numerosity and the ability to perform operations. This type of counting requires a whole host of skills to develop concurrently, such as
 - Number Sequence
 - One-to-one correspondence
 - Cardinality
 - Subitizing
 - Quantity
 - Labeling
 - Recall

And this list doesn’t even include other related skills such as motivation, having a calm state of arousal, the ability to focus and attend to relevant stimuli, etc. The question for the team, and based upon assessment information, is which of these related behaviors is the reason the child is struggling? There are other questions that need asked, but let’s keep it as simple as we can for now.

After: “During a variety of daily activities, (insert child’s name) will correctly pair a label/name, a symbol, and/or an action of one object, person, and/or event, to another. The child will correctly pair five different labels, symbols, and/or actions each day for two consecutive weeks.”

This goal statement is “better” because:

- It can be justified as a component of the common outcome of counting, and emphasizes the “why” the child is not accessing, participating, or making progress toward the common outcome. It is also universally designed, which helps take the burden of performance and instructional emphasis off the child having to verbalize.
- It is measurable and maintains its functionality because it shows that one-to-one is a pervasive concern across daily activities, versus suggesting a specific learning disability around number sense, which would be incredibly hard to justify for a preschooler.

And as we continue the conversation about counting goals in early childhood, what do you think of targeting **cause and effect play with objects** as an “IEP worthy goal” for a preschooler who is struggling with **one-to-one counting**?

Here’s another **before** counting goal from an online goal bank: Given an independent work task containing pictures to count, and numbers or number word response cards up to 20, STUDENT will count each object and match with the correct number represented in order to demonstrate one-to-one correspondence, with 80% accuracy, in 4 out of 5 opportunities, by MONTH, YEAR.

The question becomes, “what’s the what?”

- Counting with one-to-one correspondence?
- Symbolizing?
- Recalling?
- Sequencing?
- OTHER?

After with an emphasis on the critical and related skill of cause and effect: During daily activities, (insert child's name) will **explore/investigate** (e.g., bang, close, crumple, dump, flip, hand, hit, open, poke, pound, pour, pull, push, put in, scoop, shake, squeeze, swipe, take back, touch, turn, wind) three different **objects** in order to make something **happen** (i.e., intentionally cause an effect to take place), each day for two weeks.

Rationale/logic:

- In general, symbolic play parallel the development of language and cognitive skills...including mathematics.
- Meaning, symbolic play is necessary for gaining an understanding of mathematical concepts (e.g., counting, quantity, patterns, comparisons, shapes, measurement) and information found in visual formats (e.g., photographs, diagrams, maps, charts, graphs).
- A component of symbolic play is the use of, and interaction with, objects.
- A prerequisite to symbolic play is the ability to intentionally act upon objects to cause an effect.

Makeover: Social Interaction Goals

Before:

- Negotiates to resolve conflicts with peers during play activities in _____% of opportunities for _____ consecutive days as measured by _____.
- Will pair eye contact with requests for a minimum of _____ seconds, across a minimum of _____ items on the first trial of the day for each item for a minimum of _____ consecutive days as measured by _____.
- Will remain with a group of 2-4 peers for _____ minutes and imitate simple play schemes given no more than _____ prompts in _____% of opportunities for _____ consecutive days as measured by _____.

After: When a familiar adult and child need to work together to meet a common goal or accomplish a task, the child will adjust his/her responses (e.g., make different physical actions, make different statements, adjust speed of movement, change physical proximity) to stay in coordination with the adult to accomplish the goal, each day for two weeks.

Before: By May 2016, during play opportunities across a variety of centers, the child will engage in social play activities with peers by demonstrating 4 or more of the 7 targeted social interactions (initiation of greeting, using same materials, similar activity/play scheme as peers, imitate peers, motor and/or verbal exchange, simple imaginative play with objects) for 70% of a 10-minute time sample across 3 consecutive data days.

After: The child will initiate targeted social interactions with a peer (i.e., greet peer using their name; get peer's attention (e.g., says their name, taps them on the shoulder, directs/calls peer to notice or look at an action); give a peer a turn, wait, take another turn; resolve conflicts using simple strategies (e.g., make demands, walk/run away, report to adult) to maintain an interaction; imitate peer's motor actions; invite peer to join in play). Child will initiate three or more of the targeted social interactions during a 20-minute time sample across three consecutive data days.

Before: By next annual review, Mark will **state** his wants and needs using a three-word phrase or sentence, **answer** "what" and "where" questions about a picture or short story, **complete** a sentence using a curriculum-based vocabulary word from a choice of two words, and **follow** two-step directions that contain the concepts of size and condition (i.e., big, small, hot, cold, etc.) with 55% accuracy in 2/3 trials with no more than two prompts or models during structured therapy tasks.

After: (Insert child's name) will share information verbally (e.g., answering questions, telling, commenting) or non-verbally (e.g., selecting, pointing) five times a day for six consecutive days.

Makeover: Articulation Goal

For years, I've struggled when I hear the phrase "speech only" and continue to question my own knowledge around language development and articulation in particular. For example, when writing IEP goals for "speech only" children, am I knowledgeable enough about "how much intelligibility" should be expected for a three-year-old? How about knowing the age at which children should be able to use consonant sounds like sh and ch? And lastly, don't some children "grow out of" making common errors, even as late as six or nine years of age?

A lack of consistent understanding and/or answers to questions like these, in my opinion, has led to writing goals that are "classic offenders" when it comes to "speech only" outcomes. For example, **before**:

- Student will suppress FCD to improve intelligibility
- Student will speak with clear voice
- Student will produce /s/ in words 80% of the time

After: During daily activities, child will use a variety of two and three word phrases to greet, inform, and respond, and will be understood by familiar adults. To be understood by familiar adults, the child will produce/say the final consonant sounds of /p,t,d,k/ with two or less sound deletions in 10 phrases, across three consecutive observations.

Makeover: Recall Goal

Click [here](#) to download a Pre-K Teach & Play Practice Point about recall.

Before:

- When asked to recite orally, STUDENT will recall the alphabet sound song 4 out of 5 trials with 80% accuracy.
- After listening to a short story, STUDENT will recall and state the order of events with 80% accuracy for 4 of 5 sessions.
- After looking at a picture or photo for one minute, STUDENT will be able to recall details with 80% accuracy 4 of 5 trials.

After (there are several):

WHAT: Recall (latency)

Child will share ideas, facts, or experiences from memory about things that happened immediately ____ times a day for ____ consecutive days.

WHAT: Recall (accuracy)

Child will share ideas, facts, or experiences from memory, about recent events/experiences, with or without contextual cues ____ times a day for ____ consecutive days.

WHAT: Recall (use)

_____ will share information verbally (e.g., answering questions, telling) or non-verbally (e.g., selecting, pointing) ____ times a day for ____ consecutive days.

Lastly, here are a few more “pretty good” IEP goal statements. These were written in collaboration with [Barbara Avila](#) from [Synergy Autism Center: Family Based Support](#). A more comprehensive set of example goal statements is a resource that is available for [ECE Solutionary Members](#).

WHAT: Early forms of interacting with familiar adults, participation, and play; **criterion** is about *endurance* (length of time a given behavior can be repeatedly performed).

Goal Statement: When a familiar adult sits/stands/gets within close proximity of the child (e.g., at least 2 feet), and without asking questions, directing, redirecting, or cuing the child in any way, the child will remain in place for at least ____ minutes (i.e., does not move away from the adult).

WHAT: Early forms of focus/self-control and joint attention; **criterion** is about *frequency* (how often a behavior occurs).

Goal Statement: The child will shift attention toward a familiar adult (e.g., pause, orient body by leaning toward, gaze toward) and away from highly preferred object/item at least ____ times within a ____ minute interaction.

WHAT: Fine motor (bilateral motor coordination); **criterion** is about *accuracy* (how the behavior is to be performed).

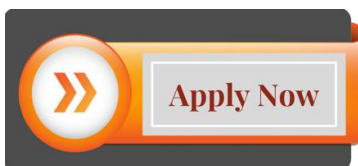
Goal Statement: During daily activities, the child will manipulate a variety of objects/toys/materials that require use of both hands at the same time, while performing different movements. The child will manipulate ____ different objects/toys/materials once a day for ____ weeks. For example, the child will button clothing, thread and zip a zipper, and/or cut out shapes with curved lines.

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