Consensus Points on Language Goals

1. *All of our IEPs should have PLEPs, NEEDs, GOALs and Objectives that are internally consistent ("flow").*

- All parts of IEP must be internally consistent and relate highly to each other
- Internal consistency means that:
  - **Data (numbers) match** across evaluation reports, progress reports, IEP PLEPs, Goals and objectives
  - Specific language behaviors identified as "needs" in evaluation reports are the same language behaviors that show up in PLEPS (progress and baseline), and as goals and objectives
    - **Specific language behaviors (wording) match** across evaluation reports, progress reports, IEP PLEPs, needs, goals and objectives
    - Target language behaviors should not simply "appear" in IEP goals or objectives without being described in the PLEP statements.

- Data in PLEPS and potential target language behaviors can come from a variety of sources:
  - Initial evaluation report (for initial IEP)
    - Criterion-referenced tests (e.g., SCERTS)
    - Authentic assessment like SLP probes, language samples, etc.
  - 3-year reevaluation report (if timing is right)
  - Progress reports prior to annual IEP
  - Other data collected during therapy
  - Classroom observations
  - Teacher/parent interviews focused on communication areas of highest concern

2. *PLEP statements should give enough information so receiving SLP gets an accurate picture of the student, but be concise (2-3 paragraphs max.) AND contain the minimum required components.*

- PLEP must provide **objective data for progress** on prior year's IEP goals and objectives, and give **baselines** for next year's IEP goals and objectives

- Minimum components to signpost:

  a) How disability affects student progress (participation) in general ed. curriculum
  b) Student strengths
  c) Parent input (may be combined with "student strengths")
  d) PLEP - progress toward each "old" IEP goals and objectives
  e) PLEP - baseline for each "new" IEP goals and objectives

- Optional component (but preferred):

  f) Additional information that paints a general picture of child's language skills

3. The student should be able to achieve the target goal in one academic year (36 weeks)

- Limit IEP goals (specific language behaviors) to those the team is pretty sure that the student will be able to learn within one year.
  - "Pretty sure" means:
    - In the SLP's or team's prior experience with similar students
    - If the specific student has made/not made reasonable progress on IEP goals in the past
    - Realistic expectations for specific student
- If the team is not sure that the goal can be achieved in one year, then the goal is probably:
    - Too general or too broad
    - Needs to be more specific and clearly described
    - Needs to be broken down into smaller skills that the student has a chance to learn
    - Other?
- This also relates to prioritization – Goals that can be achieved in one year should be prioritized.

- *Goals should not be copied verbatim from year to year* – If goals change very little or not at all, that is a signal that they need to be rethought and broken down into smaller skills that student has a chance to learn.
  - It's OK to change criterion from year to year, and keep target language behavior the same (e.g., 2006 – 65%; 2007 – 80%)

4. *IEP language goals and objectives must be measurable.*

- A goal or objective must be a <u>behavior</u> that you (or anyone/stranger) can observe and **<u>count</u>**. If you can't count it, it shouldn't be a goal or objective.
- A goal or objective can only be measured if it specifies an observable language behavior.
    - **Stranger test**
    - **Dead Man test**
- A goal or objective will have greater likelihood of being measurable IF the SLP has a clear idea of a **<u>measurement task</u>** that can be used to measure both baseline and progress!

- *Think twice before using the terms "age-appropriate" or "grade-level" in a goal/objective*

- There are some problems with "ranges" as baseline in PLEPS and end points in Goals/objectives:
    - Internal compliance monitor feedback
    - Lack of precision makes it difficult to determine progress
- *So, think twice before using "ranges" for a specific language behavior as PLEP or Goal*
  - The use of more specific "given conditions…" in PLEP statement and measurement task helps to measure student performance on skill more precisely (e.g., "given X level of cuing in Y activity, student performed at Z% out of 10 opportunities)

5. *IEP goals should be limited to the 2 or 3 most important specific language skills that we want the student to achieve this year.*

- Where do possible/candidate language goals (behaviors) come from:

  - SLP judgments, informed by our experience, training, and "model" of language
  - Pre-referral information (e.g., Why exactly was student referred for S/L evaluation? What specific language behaviors, or lack of, concerned the team?)
  - Teacher/parent interviews focused on communication areas of highest concern to them

- Data collected for initial evaluation report or three-year evaluation
    - Criterion-referenced tests (e.g., SCERTS)
    - Authentic assessment like SLP probes, language samples, etc.
- Other data collected during therapy
- Classroom observations
- Reference to curriculum and grade-level expectations (GLE), especially in area of "literacy"; these are language skills they need for successful participation in classroom.
    - MPS GLE handout

6. *Specific goals will usually be "better" than general goals (and will be more internally consistent with data from evaluations, progress reports, PLEPs)*

- "Specific" means:
    - Target language behavior is clearly defined.
    - Target language behavior passes "Dead Man test" and "Stranger test". If the goal is not a language behavior that the SLP or a stranger can observe and count, then it's too general.
    - SLP has a clear measurement task in mind, in which the target language behavior can be counted "yes – it occurred" or "no – it didn't occur"
- Many SLPs are concerned that goals/objectives measured with a specific test or curriculum are too specific (e.g., Read Naturally; 40/50 Boehm concepts; in 8th-grade reading curriculum)

7. Do not mix articulation and language behaviors in one goal.

- "Intelligibility" due to speech sound production problems (including pronunciation and speaking rate) is not a language goal – it's a functional outcome measure for articulation.
- See ASHA FCMs.
- *Think twice before using the term "intelligibility" to apply to a non-speech or non-articulation situation.*
- ***Articulation/intelligibility and language should be separate goals.***

8. Do not base IEP language goals on errors from normed tests.

- McCauley & Swisher (1984)
    - "There is probably no circumstance in which norm-referenced tests items can profitably be used to plan therapy objectives"
- Targets from errors on tests often do not pass the "so what?" test; relates to determining priority language goals.

9. Do not mix expressive and receptive language target skills in one goal.

- Comprehension is often tied to lack of background knowledge/experience and student's general cognitive abilities
- Comprehension (e.g., direction following, vocabulary) is addressed in all classroom activities by teachers (e.g., appropriate models, visual supports, scaffolds).
- Terms like "understand" and "comprehend" are ambiguous and not measurable
    - Consider alternatives to receptive language goals:
        - Write functional goals that focus on verbal and nonverbal responses students need to function successfully in school setting and academic tasks
    - Place receptive language goals in the "Breadth of Curriculum"

10. Think twice before writing an IEP goal for "Vocabulary"

- Consider alternatives to vocabulary goals:
    - Write "vocabulary learning strategy" goals that focus on students' ability to describe, explain, and demonstrate strategies for figuring out the meaning of a word student does not know.
    - Place vocabulary goals in the "Breadth of Curriculum"

11. Goals for ELL students (especially PreK and K) need to take L1 skills into account. These students should only be working on language behaviors related to their disability, NOT due to their emerging English skills.

12. Language OBJECTIVES must be internally consistent with the rest of the IEP, specifically, GOALs.

- All consensus points for GOALs apply to objectives (e.g., measurable)
- Objectives are the two or three small steps that will allow the student to move from starting point (on the identified NEED and from baseline in the PLEP) to the end point (target number in the GOAL)
- Therefore, objectives must relate clearly to the GOAL
- Objective should not contain totally different behaviors (because then they wouldn't relate clearly to the GOAL)

13. Do not have more than 3 OBJECTIVES under any one communication goal.

14. Do not mix articulation and language OBJECTIVES under a "big" communication goal.

15. Do not mix expressive and receptive language OBJECTIVES under a "big" communication goal.

Rubric for Language PLEPs, goals and objectives

PLEPS

- *Required component of PLEP*
- *"Sign-post" (e.g., use CAPITAL letters for **bold** on this page)*

1. **Student strengths (incl. parent input):** One or two sentences on the student's communication strengths. Parent input must be included.

- *Required component of PLEP*
- *"Sign-post" (e.g., use CAPITAL letters for **bold** on this page)*

2. **How student's disability affects progress in general ed. curriculum:** One or two sentences on how student's specific language needs affect participation in the classroom.

For annual IEPs

- *Required component of PLEP*
- *"Sign-post" (e.g., use CAPITAL letters for **bold** on this page)*

3. Present levels of performance: Specific skills to be learned

a. End point (progress) data for every S/L goal and objective on the past year's IEP:

- ❑ *Include information about where the data comes from (e.g., progress report, initial or three-year evaluation, classroom observation, clinician designed probes during intervention)*
- ❑ *This number will serve as the objective measure of how much progress the student made on each goal and objective (specific skills to be learned).*
- ❑ *Observable, measurable, "Stranger Test"*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task.*
- ❑ *This list should match the priorities that will flow directly into student needs and goals*
- ❑ *Limit to top 2 communication issues that will be priority goals for the next calendar year*
- ❑ *Parent input should be included if possible.*

For initial and annual IEPs

- *Required component of PLEP*
- *"Sign-post" (e.g., use CAPITAL letters for **bold** on this page)*

3. **Present levels of performance:** Specific skills to be learned

b. Baseline data (starting point) for every S/L goal and objective on next year's IEP:

- ❑ *Include information about where the data comes from (e.g., progress report, initial or three-year evaluation, classroom observation, clinician designed probes during intervention)*
- ❑ *This number will serve as baseline (starting point) from which to determine target end points for each goal and objective, and from which to measure progress (specific skills to be learned).*
- ❑ *Observable, measurable, "Stranger Test"*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task (see below)*
- ❑ *This list should match the priorities that will flow directly into student needs and goals*
- ❑ *Limit to top 2 communication issues that will be priority goals for the next calendar year*
- ❑ *Parent input should be included if possible.*

For initial and annual IEPs

- *Not required, but may be appropriate given SLP's personal preferences/philosophy on how lengthy and inclusive the PLEP statement should be, and/or given specific student and need for additional information (e.g., spurts in language "growth" over past year)*
- *Not necessary to "sign-post"*

4. Other information that "paints a picture" of the student's overall communication abilities:

- ❑ *This data may come from a variety of sources, incl. evaluation results, progress reports, therapy notes, teacher interviews, etc.*
- ❑ *This data may or may not include specific numbers that are an objective measure the student's abilities on these communication skills (other than goals and objectives).*
- ❑ *This data may be more "narrative" in nature*
- ❑ *Cautions:*
  - *Do not identify additional "student needs" in this section, or you will have to address them as goals or objectives, and provide specific baseline data.*
  - *List "taboo" words: "needs"*
  - *List acceptable words: weaknesses, areas for future focus, etc.*
  - *Entries in this section will increase the length of the PLEP.*

STUDENT NEEDS

- *Required component of NEEDS*

Key words:

- ❑ *Student <u>needs</u>*
- ❑ *Student "needs" will come from PLEP data, which in turn will come from either initial evaluation (for initial IEP), or last "progress report" prior to annual IEP (for annual IEP).*
- ❑ *There should be a direct relationship between PLEPs, student NEEDs, and GOALS:*
  - *<u>Match the wording</u> in the NEEDS statement to the wording in the PLEPS and GOALS in order to maximize internal consistency and flow.*
- ❑ *The specific "student needs" will come from the SLP's (and team's) judgment about:*
  - *The specific language skills that the student can reasonably achieve <u>within 36 weeks</u> (or one academic year)*
  - *The <u>one or two priority language skills</u> that will be the focus of the IEP for the next academic year*
- ❑ ***Each "need statement" must have a goal***
- ❑ *The number of goals will depend on the student's needs.*

GOALS

➢ *Required component of GOAL*

1. Direction of change:

Key words:
- ❑ *The student will increase*
- ❑ *The student will decrease*
- ❑ *The student will maintain*

➢ *Required component of GOAL*

2. Specific skill or behavior to be changed:

- ❑ *This specific "skill to be learned" will come from the SLP's (and team's) judgment about:*
  - *The specific" language skill to be learned" that the student can reasonably be expected to achieve within 36 weeks (or one academic year)*
  - *GOALS will consist of the one or two priority language skills that will be the focus of the IEP for the next academic year*
- ❑ *Observable, measurable, "Stranger Test", "Dead Man Test"*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task (see below)*
- ❑ *This list should match the priorities that flow directly from student PLEPs and needs*
- ❑ *Avoid "mixing" expressive and receptive goals, or language and artic/intelligibility goals*

➢ *Required component of GOAL*

3. Expected ending level of performance:

Key words:
- ❑ *From (a baseline number) – optional since baseline is already in PLEP**
- ❑ *To (an ending number)*

- ❑ *This target end point (a number or "count") will come from the SLP's judgment about:*
  - *The progress on the specific language skill that that the student can reasonably be expected to achieve within 36 weeks (or one academic year)*
- ❑ *Observable, measurable, "Stranger Test", "Dead Man Test"*
- ❑ *Measurable means:*
  - *The "skill to be learned" can be objectively counted in a given context (measurement task)*
  - *Observer can watch/listen in the measurement task, and say with confidence that either the skill/behavior occurred (yes) or it did not (no)*
  - *The "count" makes sense. "Counts" include:*
    - *Percentage increase over baseline*
    - *Percent or number correct out of X opportunities*
    - *Rate (number of times skill is observed per unit of time)*
    - *Other:*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task*
- ❑ *Goals should match the priorities that flow directly from student PLEPs and needs, so go back to PLEP to make sure you have adequate baseline data for this specific goal.*
- ❑ *Avoid "mixing" expressive and receptive goals, or language and artic/intelligibility goals*

*Note: It is acceptable to include **"from"** statement along with **"to"** (expected level of performance), even though the "from" (baseline) is already specified in the PLEP relating to the specific GOAL.

OBJECTIVES

➢ *Required component of OBJECTIVES*

1. Condition under which a behavior is performed:

Key words:

- ❑ *Given*
  - *A specific set of materials*
  - *A setting*
  - *A specific level of assistance*
  - *An environment provided to the student when the behavior in the objective is performed)*

➢ *Required component of OBJECTIVES*

2. Specific skill or behavior to be performed:

- ❑ *These two (2) specific "skills to be performed" will come from the SLP's (and team's) judgment about:*
  - *Critical sub-components of the goal that, if achieved, will ultimately lead to achievement of GOAL within 36 weeks or an academic year*
  - *These 2 objectives should flow directly from student PLEPs*
- ❑ *Observable, measurable, "Stranger Test", "Dead Man Test"*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task*
- ❑ *This list should match the priorities that flow directly from student PLEPs, needs and GOALs*
- ❑ *Avoid "mixing" expressive and receptive objectives, or language and artic/intelligibility objectives*

➢ *Required component of OBJECTIVES*

3. Criteria of acceptable performance:

- ❑ *The target end points (a number or "count) for at least two (2) objectives will come from the SLP's judgment about:*
  - *The progress that is reasonable and achievable on this specific "skill to be learned" within 36 weeks (one academic year) or less, depending on how objectives are sequenced (see below)*
- ❑ *Observable, measurable, "Stranger Test", "Dead Man Test"*
- ❑ *Measurable means:*
  - *The "skill to be learned" can be objectively counted in a given context (measurement task)*
  - *Observer can watch/listen in the measurement task, and say with 100% confidence that either the skill/behavior occurred (yes) or it did not (no)*
  - *The "count" makes sense. "Counts" include:*
    - *Percentage increase over baseline*
    - *Percent or number correct out of X opportunities*
    - *Rate (number of times skill is observed per unit of time)*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task*
- ❑ *This list should match the priorities that flow directly from student PLEPs, needs and GOALs*
- ❑ *Avoid "mixing" expressive and receptive objectives, or language and artic/intelligibility objectives*
- ❑ *Objectives should be internally consistent with PLEPs, so go back to PLEP to make sure you have adequate baseline data for this specific objective.*

➢ *Required component of OBJECTIVES*

4. Evaluation procedures:

Key words:

- ❑ *As measured by*

- ❑ *What specific instrument, materials or actions will be used to measure student progress on the objective(s)?*
- ❑ *Specific instruments include:*
  - *Clinician developed probes*
  - *Daily behavior chart*
- ❑ *Specific materials include:*
  - *Story workbook assignments*
  - *End-of-chapter test*
- ❑ *Specific actions include:*
  - *Clinician and staff observations in classroom*
  - *Clinician using weekly reading timings*
- ❑ *Relates to measurement task*

➢ *Required component of OBJECTIVES*

5. Sequencing instructional objectives:

- ❑ *Each IEP GOAL must have at least two (2) measurable short-term objectives.*
- ❑ *Short-term objectives must be sequenced in complexity to move the student toward the yearly IEP goal.*
- ❑ *The choice of how to sequence objectives will depend on SLP judgment.*
- *Sequence objectives by BEHAVIOR (the specific student behavior to be learned is the only part of the objective that changes).*
- *Sequence objectives by CONDITION (the specific prompts [level of support] given to the student is the only part of the objective that changes).*
- *Sequence objectives by CONDITION (the specific place where the behavior is to be performed is the only part of the objective that changes).*
- *Sequence objectives by CRITERIA (the specific target end point (a number or "count") determines when the student is ready to move to the next objective (or has mastered the objective).*

Example: Internal Consistency ("Flow")

Note: "Signposts" appear in BOLD print.

- **Evaluation Summary Report (for initial IEP) or Progress Report (for annual IEP)**
  - The same information should appear in both the evaluation summary report and IEP PLEP

Parent/Teacher interview:
The student strengths (as reported by parent and classroom teacher, and confirmed by SLP observation) include: he is friendly and likes to interact with peers; he uses well-formed sentences; he is increasing his ability to maintain eye contact with his listeners; he has a good sense of humor. The main concern is that the student only talks about one topic (Shamu the Killer Whale), and that this is causing problems in the classroom and with peers.

Informal communication tasks and classroom observations:

This section of an evaluation report will include additional paragraphs with other evaluation information on the student's communication performance that "paints a picture" of student's overall communication abilities. This information and data may come from norm-referenced tests, informal evaluation tasks, criterion-referenced tests, classroom observations, communication/language samples, etc.

Note carefully: Do not use term "needs" in this section unless you intend to have a GOAL and PLEP that "meets the need". Otherwise, the findings in the report may be better described as "student communication weaknesses".

During two 20-minute semi-structured conversations with the examiner, and two classroom observations spanning at least 30 minutes, the student was observed to spontaneously initiate only one conversational topic (i.e., Shamu the Killer Whale). The student's preference to initiate conversations with adults and peers on only this topic was confirmed by teacher and parent report. This is the student's **PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE.**

The student's preference to talk only about one topic limits his participation and progress in the curriculum; specifically, he does not verbally engage on topics brought up by the teacher (as part of the curriculum) or by his peers without disabilities (which limits his social interactions).

The student's **EDUCATIONAL NEED** is to initiate at least four different conversational topics in at least two different categories (e.g., *school*, such as class work, recess, or meals; *after school*, such as sports, movies, or video games; *family*, such as vacations, pets, or siblings; *school subjects*, such as astronomy or science).

- **PLEPS**
  - The same information should appear in both the evaluation summary report and IEP PLEP
  - The same information should appear in the PLEP, NEED and GOAL

The student **STRENGTHS** (as reported by **PARENT** and classroom teacher, and confirmed by SLP observation) include: he is friendly and likes to interact with peers; he uses well-formed sentences; he is increasing his ability to maintain eye contact with his listeners; he has a good sense of humor.

Another paragraph (or two) may be inserted here with other evaluation information on the student's communication performance that "paints a picture" of student's overall communication abilities (from informal evaluation tasks, criterion-referenced tests, classroom observations, communication/language samples, etc.).

Note carefully: Do not use term "needs" in this section when describing student communication weaknesses – any "need" has to have a GOAL.

As noted in the students initial evaluation summary report (date), during two 20-minute semi-structured conversations with the examiner, and two classroom observations spanning at least 30 minutes, the student was observed to spontaneously initiate only one conversational topic (i.e., Shamu the Killer Whale). The student's preference to initiate conversations with adults and peers on only this topic was confirmed by teacher and parent report. This is the student's **PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE**.

Other NEEDS would require additional paragraphs with baseline data; these would be additional PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE statements, and would lead to additional GOALs.

Also, if this were an annual IEP, additional PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE statements documenting progress on last year's goals and objectives would be necessary.

The student's preference to talk only about one topic limits his **PARTICIPATION AND PROGRESS IN THE CURRICULUM**; specifically, he does not verbally engage on topics brought up by the teacher (as part of the curriculum) or by his peers without disabilities (which limits his social interactions).

- **NEEDS**
  - The same information should appear in the PLEP, NEED and GOAL

More specific:

The student **NEEDS** to initiate at least four different conversational topics in at least two different categories (e.g., *school*, such as class work, recess, or meals; *after school*, such as sports, movies, or video games; *family*, such as vacations, pets, or siblings; *school subjects*, such as astronomy or science).

Or

Less specific:

The student **NEEDS** to initiate and respond to different conversational and classroom topics across different categories such as school, after school, family.

Other NEEDS would require additional paragraphs with baseline data; these would be additional PRESENT LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE statements, and would lead to additional GOALs.

This goal comes from a criterion-referenced instrument (SCERTS).
(JA4.2) Initiates a variety of conversational topics (Conversational Partner Stage).
Criterion: the child initiates at least four different conversational topics that span different categories (e.g., *school*, such as class work, recess, or meals; *after school*, such as sports, movies, or video games; *family*, such as vacations, pets, or siblings; *school subjects*, such as astronomy or science).

- **GOAL**
  - The same information should appear in the PLEP, NEED and GOAL

The student will **increase** the number of conversational topics that he spontaneously initiates (with no verbal or other prompts) in a student-adult conversation **from** one **to** four in at least two different categories (e.g., *school*, such as class work, recess, or meals; *after school*, such as sports, movies, or video games; *family*, such as vacations, pets, or siblings; *school subjects*, such as astronomy or science).

- **Objectives (Sequenced by criteria)**
  - The same information should appear in the PLEP, NEED, GOAL and OBJECTIVES

1) **Given** at least two10-minute conversations with an adult during a week and no verbal or other prompts, the student will spontaneously initiate at least two topics (other than Shamu) in at least two different categories **as measured by** observations by classroom teaching staff **by Progress Report #2**.

2) **Given** at least two10-minute conversations with an adult during a week and no verbal or other prompts, the student will spontaneously initiate at least four topics (other than Shamu) in at least two different categories **as measured by** observations by classroom teaching staff **by next annual IEP review**.

Measurement Task

For:
- Initial evaluation (informal communication evaluation task, clinician-designed probe)
- Progress report (clinician-designed probe during intervention session)
- Three-year reevaluation (clinician-designed probe)

- 10-minute conversation with adult; set timer
- Adult plans to leave at least 5 "pregnant" pauses of 5 sec. during 10-minute conversation, to allow student opportunity to initiate a new topic.

- SLP keeps track of prompts necessary to evoke topic initiations.
- Adult verbal prompts:
  - We're going to have a conversation for a few minutes, and you need to decide what two (four) things we will talk about
  - Tell me more
  - What else do you want to talk about?
  - Other verbal prompts (list):

- Nonverbal prompts:
  - "No Shamu" card
  - Expectant facial expression or hand gesture to "tell me more" if student does not initiate during pause in conversation.
  - "Topic starter reminder" cards (e.g., ask a question; topic list) if student does not initiate during pause in conversation.
  - Other nonverbal prompts (list):

- How will SLP/observer know if student initiates topics ("yes" he did or "no" he didn't)? What will be observed and counted?
  - Student makes a comment during a 5 sec. pause in conversation (I saw "Star Wars" this weekend)
  - Student asks a question during a 5 sec. pause in conversation (What did you do Saturday? Did you see the Grammys?)
  - Student responds to either verbal or other prompt.
  - Some examples of topic categories include: *school*, such as class work, recess, or meals; *after school*, such as sports, movies, or video games; *family*, such as vacations, pets, or siblings; *school subjects*, such as astronomy or science.

- *Note: It may be appropriate during a conversation to maintain topics and not initiate an arbitrary number of new topics, so "appropriateness" must be taken into account when judging student performance on this measurement task. This is an issue for most PRAGMATIC goals. In this case, we might extend the length of the conversation to provide additional opportunities for topic initiation.*