

Data Without Tears Summary: How to Write Measureable Educational Goals and Collect Meaningful Data

Terri Chiara Johnston

The success of your attempts to collect data on educational goals and objectives can depend on two equally important factors:

1. The clarity and completeness of the goals and objectives you write
2. The convenience and practicality of the data collection systems you choose

Using these strategies can increase the functionality of IEPs and student assistance plans. Clear goals and practical data collection strategies become a roadmap for directing instruction and measuring progress.

Writing Measurable Goals—the ABCD Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Component</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Tips</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A = Audience</td>
<td>the learner or the student</td>
<td>This is the name of the student!</td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B = Behavior</td>
<td>the specific actions the learner is to perform, demonstrate or exhibit</td>
<td>Should pass the &quot;stranger&quot; test—anyone would be able to recognize the behavior from the description in the goal.</td>
<td>*Will choose and demonstrate a self-calming plan from a list of pre-learned and practiced strategies... *Will orally count nickels, dimes and quarters up to $2.00...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = Condition</td>
<td>context in which the learner will perform the skill or decrease the undesired behavior</td>
<td>This can include both the supports or special materials needed and the setting in which it will occur. It should always at least include the setting.</td>
<td>*Given a visual cue... *During circle time with one verbal reminder... *During independent work time and with only two verbal reminders...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = Degree</td>
<td>the criteria for an acceptable level of performance</td>
<td>Percentages work well if you can clearly count “something”—but if you can’t count all of it, then you can’t calculate a percentage. Adding a “consecutive” time may help to clearly determine mastery of a skill.</td>
<td>*Number correct... *Within a five minute period... *With 85% accuracy across all observation periods... *Complete all steps... *On five consecutive trials over two consecutive weeks...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of measurable goals using the ABCD method:

John (A) will correctly predict what happens next in writing (B) after listening to a fourth-grade short story (C) four out of five opportunities over a two week period (D) by the end of the first grading period.

During transition activities (C), Donna (A) will reduce the number of times she touches, grabs, kicks, or otherwise physically engages another student (B) to zero, 80% of designated observations (D)
**KISS—Keep It Simple, Sweetheart**  
Practical and convenient methods of data collection

What questions would you like answered about your students?

Start by defining the behavior you want to know more about

Define behavior as observable, with a start and stop time  
pages 41-45

How do you measure this to find out what is really happening?

What kind of behavior will you be observing and measuring?

The behavior is observable or creates a permanent product

A concrete product that samples a student’s performance, or knowledge

Examples: CBM, worksheets, tests, reports, CMS

pages 27-30

Behaviors that you want to increase  
page 34-35

Behaviors that you want to decrease  
page 66

Most accurate and convenient, use whenever possible!

Frequency:  
How often a behavior occurs, or the rate

Behaviors that you want to increase  
page 34-35

Behavior occurs less than 3 times per hour

Self-graphing form  
pages 35-39, 93  
goal attainment scaling

Scatterplot  
pages 45-47, 96

Behavior Diary

Behaviors that you want to decrease  
page 66

Behavior occurs more than 3 times per hour

Record total time of behavior  
pages 59-60

Record time before behavior is begun  
pages 60-61

Duration:  
How long a behavior occurs

Latency:  
How long it takes before a behavior is begun

Record In on a scale, frequency

Try to choose a method that accurately measures what you want, but is simple and clear for the person collecting it.

Remember, the goal is to make your data collection clear, complete, convenient and practical...  
*Without tears!*

Below are two effective methods of measuring change in response to intervention or instruction:

- reviewing permanent products
- observing or rating behavior

*These are not the only methods of collecting information about students, but can be helpful when evaluating observable behaviors*

**Tip:** design or choose your data collection methods and forms when you are writing your goals.