

## Data Without Tears Summary: How to Write Measurable 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

Goal Component	Definition	Tips	Example
<b>A = Audience</b>	the learner or the student	This is the name of the student!	<i>John</i>
<b>B = Behavior</b>	the specific actions the learner is to perform, demonstrate or exhibit  <i>What is it we are watching for?</i>	Should pass the “stranger” test— anyone would be able to recognize the behavior from the description in the goal.	<i>*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...</i>
<b>C = Condition</b>	context in which the learner will perform the skill or decrease the undesired behavior  <i>Where will this happen? What is needed for it to happen?</i>	This can include both the supports or special materials needed <i>and</i> the setting in which it will occur. It should always at least include the setting.	<i>*Given a visual cue... *During circle time with one verbal reminder... *During independent work time and with only two verbal reminders...</i>
<b>D = Degree</b>	the criteria for an acceptable level of performance  <i>How will we know the student is being successful or meeting the goal?</i>	Percentages work well if you can clearly count “something”—but if you can’t count <i>all</i> of it, then you can’t calculate a percentage. Adding a “consecutive” time may help to clearly determine mastery of a skill.	<i>*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...</i>

#### 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)*

*Adapted from Johnston, 2010*

**KISS—Keep It Simple, Sweetheart**  
*Practical and convenient methods of data collection*

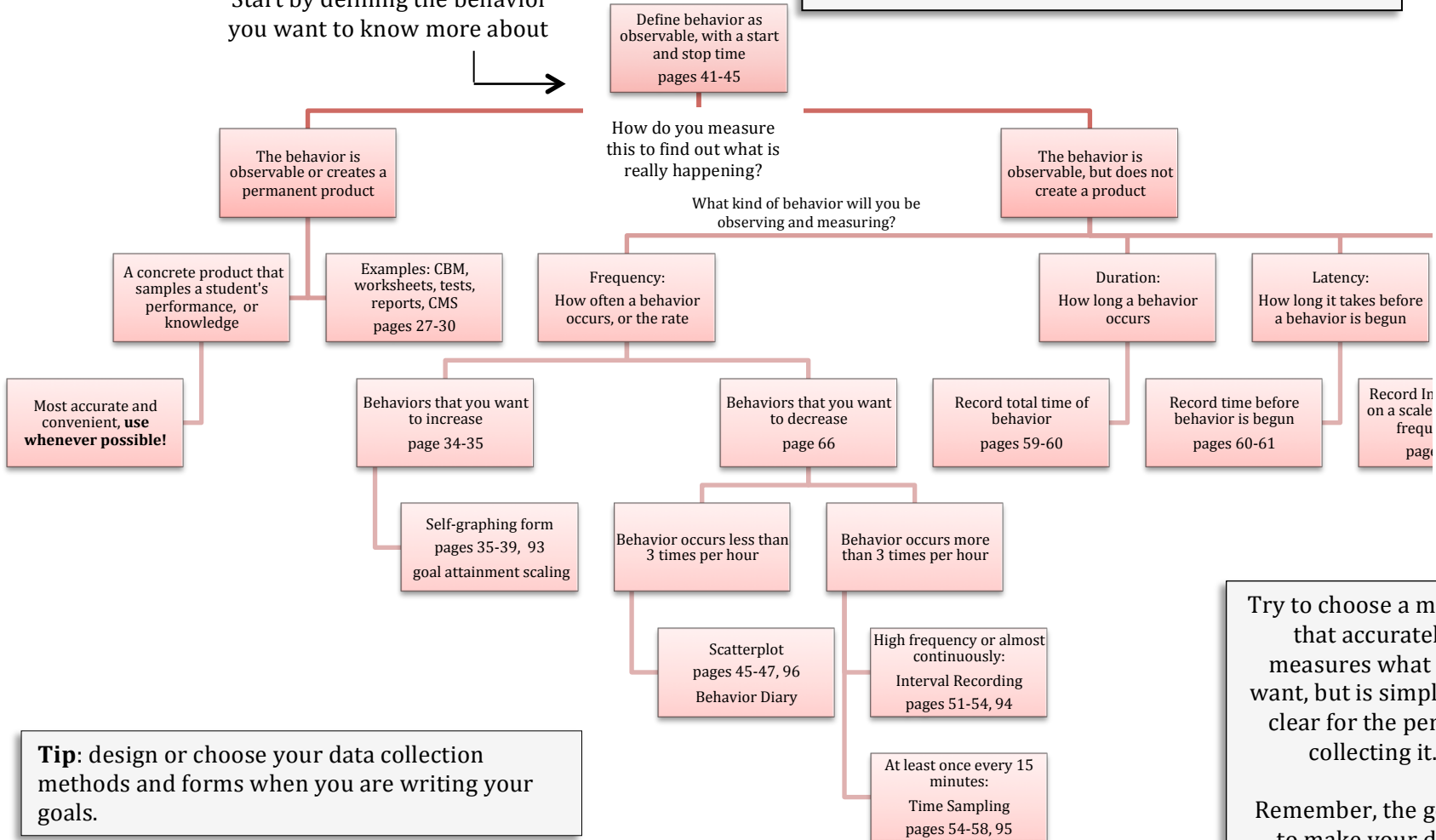
What questions would you like answered about your students?

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*

Start by defining the behavior you want to know more about



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

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!**