Writing IEPs That Align to Common Core Standards

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Carol Kosnitsky
dkosnitsky@comcast.net

The IEP Balancing Act

"Idealism" of IDEA IEP requirements
"Reality" of writing quality IEPs

4 Strategies

1. Collecting and synthesizing multiple sources of information prior to writing the IEP.
2. Analyzing skills necessary to access the general curriculum.
3. Writing compelling and instructionally relevant present level statements and measurable goals.
4. Monitoring student progress frequently and adjust instruction as appropriate.

Passing the Test

- **Dead person's test** – If a dead person could do what is expected in the goal, you have a problem. For example, you want to avoid using terms such as "won't do" or "refrain from" because these are things that in fact a dead person can do!

- **So what test** – If the student can accomplish this goal, so what? Is it instructionally relevant and does it meet one of the student's identified areas of need?

- **Stranger test** – If a stranger could observe and measure the targeted goal based on how it is defined in the IEP, you have passed this test!
Strategy #1

Collecting and synthesizing multiple sources of information prior to writing the IEP.

• Don’t sacrifice effectiveness in the name of efficiency.
• Make the “draft” IEP reflective of everyone’s voice.
• Engagement is a process, not an event.

Strategy #1

Student
• The student’s priorities for the upcoming school year (and beyond).
• The student’s interests and preferences (effective motivators).
• Accommodations the student finds useful.

Parents
• Their concerns for the upcoming year (and beyond).
• Their child’s approach/reaction to school work at home.
• Accommodations they find to be effective.
• Their child’s interests and preferences (motivators).
Strategy #1

Teachers
- Expectations for students (math, reading, etc.).
- How student is currently performing in these areas.
- Ways the student’s disability impacts performance.
- Accommodations or modifications to offset the impact of the disability.

Strategy #1

Related Service Providers
- Overlapping goals.
- Functional performance.
- Necessary accommodations.

Try This:

1. **Samples Questionnaires - Pages 6-10.**
2. The special educator will distribute the forms 6 weeks prior to IEP due date.
3. Use school structures such as grade level team meetings to collaboration with all the student’s middle school teachers.
4. Ask students and parents to complete the forms at the beginning of the year as a way to get to know them. Have them review and update their responses a month prior to the IEP meeting.

Backward Planning for Meetings

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Strategy #1

Current special education assessments:
- Student's learning style, strengths, areas of need.
- Information about the student's disability.
- How the disability will impact performance.
- Accommodations and instructional strategies.
- Relationship of data to large scale assessment data.

Current state assessments:
- Current skill acquisition.
- Generalization of skills.
- Information on test-taking.

Current classroom and curriculum-based measurements:
- Current skill acquisition.
- Baseline information.
- Error analysis.
- Generalization of skills.

Current classroom observations
- Behavioral data (baseline).
- Functional performance.
- Environmental supports and barriers.
- Social relationships.
- Adherence with school routines.
Strategy #1

Assessment and Observation
Analysis School Year: ________

Pg. 11

Try This:
1. Sample template - page 11.
2. As new assessment and observation data becomes available throughout the year, maintain a “cheat sheet” that provides brief summary of the assessment findings and implications for instruction.
3. Consider the creation of “data binders”. These binders can catalog new information collected each year that will contribute to the development of the next IEP. As students move from one service provider or building to another, it’s an efficient way to communicate the essential information needed to “hit the ground running”.

Strategy #2

Analyzing skills necessary to access the general education curriculum.

Strategy #2

Importance of Aligning IEPs to Standards
- Supports access to the general education curriculum.
- Focuses instruction on more challenging content and skills.
- Promotes a unified system of education for all students.
- Promotes collaboration between general and special educators.
- Promotes making “least dangerous assumptions”. 
Strategy #2

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- Standards for English Language Arts - Including:
  - Reading: Text complexity and growth of comprehension
  - Writing: Text types, responding to reading, and research
  - Speaking and Listening: Flexible communication and collaboration
  - Language: Conventions and vocabulary

- Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

Strategy #2

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- Standards for Mathematical Practice
  - Habits of mind students should develop to foster mathematical understanding and expertise.

- Standards for Mathematical Content
  - Skills and knowledge students should know and be able to do.

Strategy #2

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- Standards and Appendices
  - [http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards](http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards)

- Application to Students with Disabilities
Strategy #2

Look for opportunities:
- All content teachers responsible for supporting reading and writing instruction.
- Inclusion of statement on application of CCSS for students with disabilities.
- Explicit description of "universal design of learning".
- The "career" in College and Career Readiness standards.

Strategy #2

Writing Standards-based IEPs
1. Develop vision.
2. Develop present levels.
3. Analyze essential standards compare to student's present levels and long-term vision (gap).

Strategy #2

- Begin with the end in mind.
- What does the student expect to be doing in the next five or 10 years?
- The vision statement should anchor all subsequent decisions.
  - Keeps the "I" in IEP.
  - Provides the Team with a basis to establish priorities for individual student.
Strategy #2

Present Levels Performance
- Analyze information from multiple sources:
- Determine the student's current level of academic and functional performance.

Student's Vision
Necessary Skills, Knowledge and Behavior

Student's Present Level
Skills, knowledge behaviors student knows and can do.

Strategy #2

Analyze Standards
- "Not all standards are created equal!"
- Select the most "powerful" standards to address in the IEP – those that will provide the student greater access to the general education curriculum and move student closer to his or her long-term vision.

Endurance: Will this standard provide students with knowledge and skills that will be of value beyond the present instructional setting?

Leverage: Will this standard provide knowledge and skills that will be of value in multiple disciplines?

Preparation for next level: Will this standard provide students with essential knowledge and skills necessary for success in the next grade or level of instruction?

Strategy #2

Analyze Standards

- What is the standards saying the student must know and be able to do?
- What is the intent of the standard?
- What are key vocabulary?
- What are the pre-requisite skills?
- How does the student’s disability affect progress in this standard?

Strategy #2

Analyze Standards

- "Drill down" to determine what is required for a student to access the standard (the core of the problem)
  - Linguistics (e.g. - morphology, semantics, etc.)
  - meta-linguistics (e.g. - structure, sound system)
  - Cognition (e.g. - memory, retrieval, attention)
  - meta-cognition (e.g. – being strategic)

Adapted from Barbara Ehren

Strategy #2

Analyze Standards

- Is the standard addressing a skill? (look for hierarchical access point).
- Is the standard addressing content or knowledge? (look at degree of difficulty and complexity).

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revised Bloom's Taxonomy</th>
<th>Sample Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>Assemble, construct, create, design, develop, write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Argue, defend, judge, support, evaluate, justify, deduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, experiment, question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>Demonstrate, illustrate, interpret, sketch, solve, use, model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Classify, describe, discuss, explain, identify, recognize, paraphrase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>Define, list, memorize, recall, reproduce</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Strategy #2: Vocabulary Acquisition - CCSS

<table>
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<td>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- a. Test common objects into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
- b. Demonstrate understanding of frequently occurring verbs and adjective (by relating them to their opposites (antonyms).)
- c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., relate place to actions that are colorful).
- d. Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs (e.g., like, similar, almost, almost).

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</td>
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<td>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., personification, metaphor) in context.
- b. Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., loaded, metaphor, synonym, antonym) to better understand each of the words.
- c. Distinguish among the connotations (associations) of words with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., stiffly, stiff, firm, persistent).
- a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, irony) in context and analyze their role in the text.
- b. Analyze nuances in the meaning of words with similar denotations.
Try This:

- Don’t reinvent the wheel. Many districts have engaged in a systematic approach to “drilling down” to understand the skills, knowledge and processes involved with state standards.
- Document all this work. The standards will not change from year to year.
- Check out your state’s Alternate Assessment resources. There are often great examples of drilling down to the “big idea”.

Try This:
Strategy #2

IEPs for Students with Severe Disabilities

- “the criterion of least dangerous assumption holds that in the absence of conclusive data, education decisions ought to be based on assumptions which, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the likelihood that students will be able to function independently as adult.”


Strategy #2

Need to prioritize and balance instructional priorities.

1. **Self-determination**: How can the core curriculum be used to teach self-determination skills?

2. **Assistive technology**: How can the use of assistive technology enable the student to engage in the task more independently?

3. **Personal relevance and functionality**: How can real-life activities make the standard meaningful for the student?


Strategy #2

Some Thoughts on the Use of Standards

- Standards are useful in framing levels of attainment, realizing there are **many different levels** in each area of competence.

- Standards set common expectations; students may **reach them at different times**.

- Within limits, there should be **choice to decide appropriateness of standard** for specific student.

- IEP goals are about **skills/behaviors**, not content.

IEP Planning Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Present Level - Can do:</th>
<th>Needs to do:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Teacher will do:</th>
<th>Special Educator will do:</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Progress will be measured by:</th>
<th>Progress will be measured by:</th>
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</table>
Strategy #3

Writing compelling and instructionally relevant present level statements and measurable goals.

Compelling Present Levels
- Rationale for the goal.
- Rationale for all necessary services and supports.

Connect the Dots

- Constructing Legally Compliant and Instructionally Relevant Measurable Goals Checklist.
- Pg. 25.
Strategy #3

Compelling Present Levels

1. Describe the skills student demonstrates.
2. Describe the student’s performance compared to expectations in the general education curriculum (gap).
3. Describe the skills the student needs to learn this year in order to narrow/close the gap.

Strategy #3

Compelling Present Levels

4. Describe how the student performs in the classroom environment (impact of disability).
5. Describe the effective strategies and accommodations that support this student.
6. Describe the student’s interests, preferences or stated goals that are motivators.

Strategy #3

Select Target Skills & Behavior

- If we can observe something, we can count it.
- If we can count it, we can come back after a period of time and count it again.
- To help you identify a target skill or behavior to count, ask the following:

  "What specific skill do I want to see this student do differently by the end of the IEP cycle?"

Strategy #3

Instead of:
(Not observable)

- Has poor social skills.
- Is disorganized.
- Is below grade level in math.

Define it as:
(observable)

- Does not join in cooperative play activities with peers.
- Does not bring notebook, textbook, and pencil to class.
- Incorrectly answers mixed-skills problems at grade level.
Strategy #3

Select a tool or method for collecting baseline data based on:

1. What dimension of the defined skill or behavior will be changed?
2. What tool or methodology can quantify that dimension?
3. Can the tool or methodology be repeated throughout the IEP cycle to determine if student is making progress?

Dimensions of behaviors/skills we attempt to change include:
- Accuracy
- Speed
- Frequency
- Latency
- Duration

Collect Baseline

- Under what conditions
- Who
- Target skill/behavior
- To what degree

Baseline is “present tense” of the goal:
When observed for 5 consecutive recess periods (30 minutes each), Sam engaged in reciprocal play (sharing ball and taking turns) for 3 minutes each session.

Goals is “future tense” of the baseline:
By June 2012, when observed for 5 consecutive recess periods (30 minutes each), Sam will engage in reciprocal play (sharing ball and taking turns) for 12 minutes.
Strategy #3

- Measurable goals are not about what you will teach.
- Measurable goals are about what you will measure to let you know the teaching has been effective.

Strategy #3

Template for a Measurable Goal

- By when …
- Under what conditions …
- Who …
- Will do “what” (target behavior) …
- At what level of performance …
- As measured by …

“By when” -- one year.

“Under what conditions” -- the condition that must be present in order for the student to demonstrate the targeted skill or behavior. For example:
- Assessment level.
- Degree of support.
- Setting/location.

“Who” -- it is always about the student!!!

“Will do what” -- specific, observable behavior or skill that requires some “action” or “change”.
- If the special education I provide is effective, what will the student do?
Strategy #3

“Performance Level” is influenced by:
- Baseline.
- Normative data.
- Allocation of resources.
- Time.

M. Shinn

Strategy #3

Essential Question
- What skills, knowledge and behaviors must this student acquire to access the general education curriculum?
- What growth and progress can be reasonably expected of this student in the coming year?
- Will the expected growth and rate of progress narrow the achievement gap for this student?

Strategy #3

“As measured by…”

The IEP team should determine the following:
- Who will collect data?
- When will data be collected?
- How it will be collected?
- Where it will be collected?

Strategy #3

Level of Skills/Behaviors
- Acquisition – Have I learned the skill?
- Fluency – Have I demonstrated the ability to do the skill?
- Maintenance – Can I remember the skill and do it repeatedly?
- Generalization – Have I maintained the skill to use it whenever/wherever?
While benchmarks and short-term objectives are thought by some to help track the child’s progress, they often bear no relationship to the nonlinear reality of a child’s development. Special education practice, via short-term objectives, too often focuses on achieving only small incremental improvements in student performance to the detriment of more effective longer-range planning.

Objectives

- Discrete components of the skill student will demonstrate (task analysis).

Objectives

- By June 2011, when given a verbal cue, Sally will independently follow 8 step hand-washing protocol for two consecutive weeks.
- By September, Sally will independently rinse soap from hands...
- By October, Sally will independently rub soapy hands together...
- By December, Sally will independently create lather in both hands...
- By March, Sally will independently turn on faucet...

Benchmarks

- Usually designate a target time period for a behavior to occur (i.e., the amount of progress the student is expected to make within a specified segment of the year).
- Establish expected performance levels that allow for regular checks of progress that generally coincide with reporting periods.
Strategy #3

Benchmarks
By June 2011, provided instructional time in the classroom, Billy will participate (remain in class) for 300 minutes per day for eight out of 10 consecutive days.
- By quarter one, Billy will participate in class for 225 minutes/day...
- By quarter two, Billy will participate in class for 250 minutes/day...
- By quarter three, Billy will participate in class for 275 minutes/day...
- By quarter four, Billy will participate in class for 300 minutes/day...

By 6/11, Ellie will decrease her weight from 150 lbs. to 130 lbs. - measured on a weekly basis.

Objectives:
- By..., Ellie will do aerobics 3 x week
- By... Ellie will do strength training 2 x week
- By... Ellie will eat increased portions of fruits/vegetables
- By...Ellie will reduce the amount of sugar

Benchmarks:
- By 1st quarter, Ellie will lose 5 pounds
- By 2nd quarter, Ellie will lose 10 pounds
- By 3rd quarter, Ellie will lose 15 pounds
- By 4th quarter, Ellie will lose 20 pounds.

Does the sum of the parts equal the whole?

Or is the whole greater than the sum of its parts?
Strategy #3

- Constructing Legally Compliant and Instructionally Relevant Measurable Goals Checklist.
- Pg. 26-27.

Try This:

1. Use the IEP Checklist to develop compliant and instructionally relevant present level statements and measurable goals.
2. Practice writing goals that must stand alone without any objectives or benchmarks. This will require them to focus on the target skill or behavior to be measured.

Strategy #4

Monitor student progress frequently and adjust instruction as appropriate.

Strategy #4

- A systematic process for collecting data that is used to assess students’ academic, social, and behavioral performance, and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention.
Strategy #4

Informal

- Teacher made assessments
- Checklists
- Rubrics (with caution)

Strategy #4

Curriculum-Based Measurement

- CBM -- general outcome measures; probes check the vital signs of overall "health" of basic skills.
- CBM -- reliable and valid measures.
- CBM -- multiple equivalent samples.
- CBM -- sensitive to small increments of change.
- CBM -- simple, accurate, and efficient to administer.
- CBM -- can be visually represented to determine effectiveness of instruction.

Strategy #4

Curriculum-Based Measurement

CBM probes don’t measure everything, but they measure the important things, for example:

- Reading -- # of correct words read in one minute.
- Spelling -- # of correct letter sequences.
- Writing -- # of correct word sequences.
- Math -- # of correct digit placements.

Strategy #4

Curriculum-Based Measurement

- In 36 weeks, given a ____ grade level passage, the student will read _____ correct words with no more than ______ errors in one minute.
- In 36 weeks, given a story starter, the student will write _____ correct word sequences in 3 minutes.
Oral Reading Fluency

It was raining outside, and there was nothing for Norman to do. "I have the most boring life," he moaned. As he flipped down on the couch, the power went out. Watching a blank television was not something Norman wanted to do. He looked around at the four dark walls that kept him out of the rain.

"Now what am I going to do?"

"You could tidy up your room," his mom suggested, "or organize your closet."

Your closet is a disaster, Norman. I'm actually frightened of what you might find in there. You haven't cleaned it in a decade.*

There was nothing Norman could say after his mom had made up her mind. He was going to have to clean out his closet.

The only problem was that Norman couldn't even open his closet door.

Written Expression

The cave was very dark and I try to close my eyes, so I couldn't see anything, but that didn't help. Than I hear someone breathing. I try to stream, but neither came out. The breathing became close and close to me, and the worst Part was that I couldn't see anything. At first I thought meself that I was just imaging stuff.

Behavioral Data

- Event/frequency
- Duration
- Latency
- Interval recording

Strategy #4
Strategy #4

**Event or Frequency** - David’s goal is to initiate a peer contact during cooperative play each morning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Recording</th>
<th>Total number of times behavior occurred</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
<td>/ /</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
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<td>11/7</td>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
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<td>11/8</td>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>9:00 – 9:30</td>
<td>/ /</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Duration** - Sarah’s goal is to sit in the circle without adult physical support for 15 minutes during morning meeting. You complete an observation to collect information regarding the actual amount of time Sarah sits without physical support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Enter time when behavior began</th>
<th>Enter time when behavior stopped</th>
<th>Length of time that the behavior lasted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>8:55 am</td>
<td>9:01 am</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>8:55 am</td>
<td>8:54 am</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>8:55 am</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/8</td>
<td>8:55 am</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>8:55 am</td>
<td>9:01 am</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
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</table>

**Interval** - Use this type of recording to estimate the percent of time a behavior is occurring.

**Example:**
- Michael’s goal is to increase on-task behavior in class. Off-task behavior is defined as being out of his seat at inappropriate times and talking to his neighbors about topics unrelated to the assignment.

For this example, use this chart to determine the percent of time Michael is on task during the next two minutes. His behavior should be noted every 15 seconds. You can use Yes/No, Y/N, +/- or whatever marks work best for you.

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# times on task/# of intervals (8) = % of time on task

2/8 intervals = 25% of time
Strategy #4

Latency - Jen’s goal is to decrease the time it takes for her to begin a teacher-directed task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time when instruction is given</th>
<th>Time when behavior starts</th>
<th>Length of time for the behavior to start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>8:46 am</td>
<td>8:52 am</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/6</td>
<td>8:32 am</td>
<td>8:35 am</td>
<td>3 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>8:55 am</td>
<td>9:02 am</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/8</td>
<td>8:44 am</td>
<td>8:49 am</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>8:37 am</td>
<td>8:41 am</td>
<td>4 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Try This:

1. Embed data collection into direct service provision whenever possible.
2. Establish one station in classroom for progress monitoring.
3. Train paraprofessionals to collect data.
4. Engage classroom teachers for suggestions on ways they can collect data.
5. Use existing sources of data (tardy slips, office referrals, etc.).

Try This:

6. Use a floating substitute to free up staff to do observations and data collection in “real time”.
7. Create a “tool” bank; not a “goal” bank!

![Diagram](image-url)
Thank You

Carol Kosnitsky
ckosnitsky@comcast.net