COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Project

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Adam Frank

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COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

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by

Adam Frank

Approved by:

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Melissa Holland, Ph.D.

_____________________________________
Date
Student:  Adam Frank

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________________________, Department Chair
Susan Heredia, Ph.D.                     Date

Department of Graduate and Professional Studies in Education
Abstract

of

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

by

Adam Frank

The author is responsible for all aspects of the development of this project, which reviews current research on the Common Core State Standards and their implementation in California classrooms. Given the recent implementation of these standards, the need for training of both incoming and existing professional staff in California schools is at a critical moment. The implementation of these standards is requisite for all California students, thus a need is present for specialized training that addresses exceptional students with learning challenges.

The purpose of this project is to provide special education teachers with the information they need about Common Core State Standards; what it is, what are their expectation as educators, and how they can best support students through both collaboration with the general education staff and developing effective goals to support the needs of these particular students.

Additionally, this project will provide information on home-school collaboration. It is expected that, as a result of attending this workshop, teachers will gain both
knowledge and skills in understanding and addressing the application of Common Core standards with exceptional students in their classrooms.

The prepared project is a 4-hour training workshop with a presenter’s manual, handouts, slides, and presenter notes. Potential instructors of this workshop would include school psychologists and special education teachers. The target audience of this presentation includes teachers working in schools. Workshop participants will better understand the Common Core Standards and the process of developing goals to support student’s individual needs on their Individual Education Plans and effective classroom interventions.

_____________________, Committee Chair
Melissa Holland, Ph.D.

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Date
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Adam Frank
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The 2014-2015 school year represented a significant turning point for educators. It marked the administration of the first statewide assessments tied to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) across participating/member states. For education agencies that are the recipients of federal, state and local funding sources, assessment measures provide critical information that informs decision-makers as to how funds should best be allocated. This serves to give local entities, such as school districts, external pressure to demonstrate student achievement in line with state educational standards.

For students to demonstrate mastery of CCSS educational standards requires an educational infrastructure that incorporates formative and summative assessment, ability on the part of the student, access to an appropriate level of instruction by highly qualified educational staff, and resources that support learning (Achieve Inc., 2016).

Background of the Problem

The implementation of new academic standards represents a significant challenge for educators. Not only does it require teachers and administrators to learn an entirely new way of doing their job, but to develop approaches that support students whether they are just entering school or transitioning from the old system to the new. These difficulties are compounded when students possess disabilities that impact their ability to access the general education curriculum (Agran et. al, 2002). Students receiving special education services represent a broad spectrum of needs that can require services and supports uniquely tailored to promote an individual’s ability to meaningfully benefit from
instruction. As a result, teachers, both in the general and special education settings, must collaborate with each other to ensure that all students are challenged under the new standards (Samuels, 2013).

**Purpose of the Project**

The overarching goal of this project is to initiate connections between educators, administrators and support staff to promote the student learning. Operating under the assumption that collaboration amongst subject-matter experts will stimulate outcomes that benefit all students, both within the general and special education populations, this project will result in a professional development opportunity that promotes this outcome. Research in this area supports the notion that educators require professional development opportunities wherein they can learn to collaborate with other professionals across discipline, and hone their teaching skills to be more aligned with the new level of rigor found in the CCSS standards. This level of collaboration is critical for those working with students in special education given the expectation that student growth will be both documented and measured in a standardized assessment format.

**Definition of Terms**

**Common Core State Standards.** A set of academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards were created by state school chiefs and governors to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life. Standards are voluntarily adopted by individual states across the United States.
Exceptional Children/Students. An inclusive term that refers to children with learning and/or behavior problems, children with physical disabilities or sensory impairments, and children who are intellectually gifted or have a special talent.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). A law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

Universal Design for Learning. A set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. It provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone—not a single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). A U.S. Act of Congress which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; it included Title I provisions applying to disadvantaged students. The Act required states to develop assessments in basic skills. To receive federal school funding, states had to give these assessments to all students at select grade levels.

Academic/ Content Standards. These provide a common set of expectations for what students will know and be able to do at the end of a grade. College and career ready standards are rooted in the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in post-secondary study or careers.
Individualized Education Program (IEP). A program that is developed for public school children eligible for special education. It is created through a team effort and periodically reviewed. It describes how the student learns, includes goals, and what teachers and service providers will do to help the student best learn.

Limitations

This project has been designed to give school personnel both a better understanding of the Common Core State Standards and of the tools they need to develop to set academic and behavioral goals to support student learning in the classroom. The strategies and suggestions provided are not intended to replace current practices, but rather to supplement and promote best practices. In addition, it is important to note that the information presented in this project is to serve as a general guideline, not specific to any particular student. Those students with an IEP will require specific supports, accommodations and instructional programming determined by inclusion of relevant information provided to the IEP team.
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Perhaps one of the most contentious changes to public education in the United States has been the creation, adoption and implementation of the Common Core State Standards across the nation. While not all people and groups agree to the merits of the Common Core, its presence and accompanying challenges are reality. Changes to educational standards and assessment will require a significant level of training for those tasked with the chore of aiding children in achieving mastery of these standards. This challenge becomes greater when attempting to support students with disabilities, socio-economic disparities and cultural barriers that may prevent them from accessing the general-education curriculum. Specialized training will be required for those professionals who support these students.

History

The close of the 20th Century brought forth many new challenges to public and private life for the American people. The rise of a global economy, advances in technology and the shift from a manufacturing to a service-oriented economy were but a few of the many changes that both characterized the new America and presented areas representing its future challenges. A new economy and perceived threats to American hegemony led to the rise of concerns over whether American students were adequately prepared to compete in the global economy (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012; Trotter, 2014). As a result, one area of public life that has come under constant scrutiny is public education.
The fundamental question being asked by many is, “Do American schools prepare our students to participate and be competitive in the global economy?”

Education is an area of public life in which the principle of federalism is strongly visible. In essence, the responsibility of educating America's children is shared between the federal government and the states. Generally, the federal government’s role is to provide oversight and subsidize programs (such as school lunch) in the form of grants. At times, the federal government will create mandates, (either funded or unfunded) in order to create large shifts in policy, administration and direct education of children throughout the nation. As far back as 1892, nationally based initiatives have attempted to reform different elements of public education (Wallender, 2014). In all cases, from President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s National Defense Education Act in 1958 to President George W. Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), these initiatives shared common goals, but in most cases, lacked the wide-spread support needed to succeed on a national scale (Wallender, 2014). NCLB was an attempt by the federal government to use its redistributive power (federal funding of local state programs) to influence state entities to both make schools accountable for, and improve student performance (O’Connor, Sabato and Yanus, 2014). While effective in having state entities generate means of accountability such as standardized assessments and school performance criteria, this approach left the question of what students needed to learn and how this would be accomplished to the discretion of these agencies.

Throughout much of its history, public education has been driven primarily by local and state entities. Given that this responsibility is distributed amongst 50 states, it is
not surprising that there is great variety in the type and quality of education one can receive across the nation. However, in an attempt to address both the challenge of creating uniformity in education, as well as developing standards that would challenge students with competencies to prepare them for adult life, state chiefs and governors across the nation collaborated and developed a comprehensive set of standards that have come to be known as the Common Core. They set out to create a set of standards that met four specific goals: common standards, college and career readiness, quality education for all students, and increased rigor in the classroom (Wallender, 2014; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) is a set of K-12 English Language Arts and mathematics education standards, with literacy extensions for grades 6-12. The CCSS is touted by its proponents to utilize the most current thinking in education, combined with internationally-based standards and local state-level input to provide a set of learning goals that will prepare high school graduates to be ready to take credit-level coursework at universities and colleges across the nation (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012; Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). It is a product of collaboration between the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). These two entities began the process of developing college-readiness standards, informed by the best practices of member states, in 2008 and released their initial document in 2010. (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). Following the development stage, member states began the process of analyzing and adopting the CCSS for local execution. CCSS has been
implemented by 42 states across the nation, 4 territories and the Department of Defense Education Agency (DODEA) which provides schooling to children of American servicemen, diplomats and other individuals working with the federal government abroad (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

To comply with regular assessment requirements of NCLB, additional institutions were created by the states. The two most notable institutions that have emerged are the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Smarterbalanced.org, 2016; PARCConline.org, 2016). In addition to creating the assessments, these organizations have received federal funding to train individuals who will go back to their respective educational organizations and provide local trainings for school-based implementation (Doorey, 2014).

Four additional consortia have been created to design alternative assessments for those students for whom the general assessments may not be accessible or valid. These consortia specifically design assessments for exceptional populations that include English Language Learners (ELL) and students with significant cognitive, motor and emotional disabilities (Doorey, 2014).

The scheduled release of their formalized assessments was in Spring of 2015 and all consortia have already completed field-testing and administered the new English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics standardized tests. It is expected that these tests will be “used to measure student, school, and state performance on the Common Core State Standards” (Doorey, 2014, p. 57).
Common Core Unifying Standards and Career Readiness

A driving force behind the implementation of the Common Core movement has been the notion of career-readiness. Regardless of the career and life choices young people make following their prescribed K-12 education, many skills are required in order to be college, career and community ready. The Employability Skills Framework, (developed by the U.S. Dept. of Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education) suggests that the construct of employability is composed of applied knowledge, effective relationships and workforce skills (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This construct implies that to be employable, an individual must bring a range of skills that allow him/her to perform the duties of the working environment as well as be able to effectively work with others in that particular setting. The CCSS reflect this paradigm in that students are not simply expected to “know” information; rather they must demonstrate skill acquisition via multiple methods of expression. The fundamental premise is that expressing one’s knowledge through multiple means will directly translate to successful performance in both the higher level academic environment of college and the professional working world.

The CCSS generally outline/identify expectations of what students should be able to do by the end of each school year. While prescriptive, they are not limiting, and provide teachers and curriculum developers the opportunity to use their best judgement and available tools to meet these ends (California Department of Education, 2013). To understand how the CCSS identifies and scaffolds knowledge requires the reader to understand teaching principles implemented by those who have received extensive
training in college-based teacher training programs. Well-researched and established frameworks in the field of education serve as guidance for those who wish to design curriculum and make decisions that scaffold learning activities based on levels of rigor and depth. These frameworks are used to develop instructional tools in core areas of learning such as reading, writing, speaking and listening. For those not versed in instructional design, the fundamental premise is that the CCSS provides anchor standards in these areas across curriculum and grade level that increase in complexity as a child matures.

One example of this might be a reading standard in which a child is asked to retell a familiar story. From kindergarten through 5th grade, the same anchor standard will be present, yet as the child progresses through their years in school, the demands associated with the standard become more complex. Initially in kindergarten, the child might retell the story with the teacher providing questioning strategies. By 5th grade, the same student will retell a story from multiple types of literature, be required to identify the primary themes, provide key details and summarize the text with analysis.

This scaffolding approach is apparent in both CCSS English and math standards and is designed to be supported across the curriculum. In many ways, this emphasis on process over product has led to frustration amongst parents attempting to understand what their children learn, particularly in Common Core math activities where parents look for quick “answers” to problems that are designed to focus on developing children’s analytic skills (Maxwell, 2013).
The Common Core’s Impact on Students

The goal of the CCSS is to challenge students to think critically and therefore be better prepared to succeed in college and the workplace (Bushaw & Lopez, 2012; Wallender, 2014; Trotter, 2014). Having a set of standards that are common across the majority of the United States has multiple advantages for students. First, when students relocate to other parts of the country, they can seamlessly move from one educational system to another without worry that the standards will be vastly different. Secondly, the increased rigor prepares students for the higher standards of college and the workplace. In theory, the standards promote equal education for all students (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

These new standards have resulted in a completely new education for many students. In prior reading instruction, literacy education focused mainly on basic comprehension of fiction. Very little non-fiction was taught and students were rarely asked to go beyond a basic recap of a story. Under the new standards, non-fiction is the emphasis (Greene, 2012). With CCSS, 50% of all reading material in elementary school must be non-fiction. Instead of simply recapping a story, the students must explain why things occurred, how they impacted the people involved, and what might happen in the future. Students now practice “close reading” where they are expected to read a chapter or passage multiple times, each time focusing on a different element or question. The increased rigor is designed to teach the students to pay closer attention to what is happening in the passage or article. Students must provide reasoning and evidence for

The changes in writing instruction are profound. Prior to the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, language arts literacy was focused on descriptive writing where a student does a personal narrative. In non-ELA subjects, students might write a paragraph about an event, or do a book report for history or a science explanation for a project. Under the new standards, students are being taught and encouraged to use writing as a way to effectively express their opinions, beliefs and knowledge. They are expected to write in many different contexts and are required to use text evidence to support their views (Duke-Estroff, 2014; Graham & Harris, 2013).

Changes in math standards have sparked the most controversy when it comes to the CCSS. For most states, previous math standards placed a heavy emphasis on rote memorization and many concepts were taught in isolation. Word problems were basic and straightforward and rarely contained more than one type of mathematical calculation. Under the new standards, the primary focus is turning students into thinkers who can solve a problem in a multitude of ways (Duke-Estroff, 2014). This has led to great confusion for many parents and teachers alike as students are no longer taught shortcuts to solve equations, but are encouraged to figure them out for themselves. Seemingly easy problems look difficult as students must go through a series of steps to “prove” their answer, rather than just conducting simple computation. The idea with the new standards is that when students find their own ways to reach a correct answer, and they learn that there is more than one way to get there, they have more ownership of the learning and
feel a better connection to the content (Heitin, 2014). The belief is that these kinds of exercises lead to greater flexibility in academic learning in particular, and in life in general.

With the increased rigor for math and ELA come adjustments in standardized testing. These changes will of course impact students as they will now be subjected to more rigorous testing, much of which will take place on the computer. The CCSS also contain a series of technology education standards that schools are expected to implement alongside the academic standards. Students are now taking the new assessments on the computer and therefore not only need to be familiar with how to use the computer program on which the test is given, but also need to have practice in testing in this fashion. Schools must adjust instruction to incorporate these new technological standards as well (Demski, 2013).

**The Common Core’s Impact on Teachers**

Teaching under the new Common Core State Standards is going be difficult for many teachers because they are being asked to teach in ways they have not taught before. Demski (2013) points out that due to the fact that the assessment piece is still largely an unknown, teachers must focus on transforming their teaching and classrooms into CCSS worlds. Different schools and districts around the country are tackling the new standards in a multitude of ways. Some are taking apart the standards and teaching some elements outside of the core academic classes. For example, teaching the technological aspects (how to navigate the test online, word processing programs, spreadsheets, etc.) in
computer literacy classes. This frees the math or ELA instructor to teach their content, but still assign work that conforms to the new standards (Demski, 2013).

Teachers have to spend valuable time “unpacking” the standards to truly understand what they are expected to teach their students. This method is also important for teachers of special populations. The challenge here lies in the depth of knowledge that teachers have of the content they are now expected to teach. The new standards require the instructor to be able to teach content in multiple ways. This requires a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught. With the introduction of CCSS, all students are expected to be taught and master grade level appropriate standards (Kurth, 2013).

When the standards are broken down into component parts, many teachers find that there are standards that are appropriate for even moderately to severely disabled students. The difficulty is in breaking the standards down. Teachers must collaborate with each other to ensure that all students are challenged under the new standards (Samuels, 2013).

This collaboration might present itself as the content-area or general education teacher working closely with the special education teacher to ensure that a particular student with individualized goals can access the curriculum. The content-area or general education teacher might share their understanding of how the standard will be met with most students, while the special education teacher could offer accommodations to ensure that exceptional students can meet the objective within the scope of their abilities. Each teacher possesses their particular expertise and the matter becomes one of creating the “conversation” in which access for the student becomes possible.
Graham and Harris (2013) point out that many ELA teachers, both general education and special education, feel ill equipped to teach writing to their students. Many non-ELA teachers are finding the new standards to be very challenging, as the standards now require them to teach writing within their content area. As teachers are struggling to understand and embrace the new standards, they are in need of specific professional development. This is especially true of non-ELA and math teachers. Killion and Hirsh (2013) posit that when districts cut professional development budgets, it undermines the overall goals of academic progress, especially if there are sub-par teachers who need more training to be affective. A very small percentage of the overall budget is reserved for professional development for teachers. This is a misallocation of funds as professional development has the highest potential of directly impacting student achievement by educating teachers in best practices and strategies for success. Gewertz (2013) explains that many school districts are attempting to send “trainers” to professional development seminars with the idea that they would bring back the strategies and information to the campus and teach the rest of the staff. In many cases, this is not enough. Many school districts are realizing that the training must happen directly with the staff affected. A history teacher may be tasked with teaching his students “close reading” of a primary source text to gain the layers of meaning within. However, if the teacher is not trained in the language and procedures of this type of teaching, it can lead to greater confusion and frustration both with the students and the teacher. In order for the multi-disciplinary approach to be effective, it must be implemented properly (Gewertz, 2013).
Fletcher and Porter-Magee (cited in Demski, 2013) provide salient advice for teachers who are trying to tackle the new standards and provide excellent instruction for their students. They suggest that the focus in the classroom should be on the standards themselves and that assessments should lead to an adjustment of instruction up to the standardized test. Knowing and understanding how the standardized assessment will look and then tailoring all prior assessments to match the style and feel of the main test, will allow students to become familiar with the exam in an authentic way. In addition, they encourage teachers to use the resources that have been created by their peers in other states who are implementing the CCSS. Rather than purchasing high-priced new resources, spend some time finding what other teachers are using that work (Demski, 2013).

The Common Core’s Impact on the Community

The Common Core State Standards were initially designed with the greater business community in mind. Undoubtedly, its adoption by the majority of the states has led to financial gain for a great number of businesses who specialize in providing materials for educational agencies. The challenge lies in ensuring that the implementation of CCSS is done in a way that is best for students with the least amount of waste. Many believe that this is where professional organizations need to step in.

Burns (2012) provides a call to action for professional organizations that have the research, intelligence, credibility and means to guide educational agencies to implement the standards in ways that are most beneficial to the students. He points out that the standards are well written, but they are not a curriculum for teaching, they are simply a
list of learning outcomes. Professional organizations such as the International Reading Association have provided insight for government agencies and other players in the CCSS game, but their influence is weak in the face of the corporations and political entities that are poised to gain from the adoption and marketing of the standards. It is in the best interest of education in general and student learning and achievement in particular for literary organizations, the experts in the field, to stop worrying about their political popularity or offending non-experts, and take a firm stance on proper literary education (Burns, 2012).

On the other side of the economic coin are the big businesses that will benefit from a workforce that is prepared to think critically, is creative and is innovative. Since its rollout in 2010, the Common Core State Standards Initiative has enjoyed support from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The new standards are more rigorous and were specifically written with the goal of preparing students for success in college and beyond. Much of the push for the CCSS came from what has been viewed as the dismal placement of the US education system when compared to the rest of the modernized world. If implemented with fidelity, the resulting CCSS graduates will be better prepared for college, and ideally will be better suited to compete in the global marketplace (Trotter, 2014).

Finally, when looking at the community impact of the CCSS, parents are found somewhat on the sidelines. In 2013, Gallup and the Associated Press conducted two separate polls to find out what the public thought about the new CCSS. Although the results varied, one clear finding was that the majority of the American public does not
understand the Common Core. Most of those surveyed either did not know what it was or could not explain it. For an initiative this large that is being implemented on such a wide scale to the tune of billions of dollars, these are troubling results. Many parents believed that it was good, but did not understand how it was different or how they could help implement it for their kids (Maxwell, 2013). Neuman and Roskos (2013) state that not including the parents in the implementation of this educational initiative is a huge mistake. Parents should be seen as collaborative partners in the education of students. If schools expect to maintain the support of parents, they must communicate effectively with them and invite them to be part of the exploration and solution.

**Common Core and Special Education**

**Practices in Special Education**

The new Common Core State Standards present many opportunities and challenges for the special education population. Under CCSS, special education students will be expected to excel within the general curriculum. This is because the goal of the standards and of IDEA is that ALL students exit high school with enough education to enter the workforce. Students will still be granted modifications, instructional supports and other interventions according to their IEP. The difference is that the students will be on the same track in terms of standards as their general education peers (Herbert, 2011). In addition, the White House is changing the way they rate the effectiveness of federally funded Special Education programs. The new program will require proof that students are actually making academic progress, not just receiving services. Inadequate progress can result in loss of funding (Sanchez, 2014). On the one hand, the standards are broad
enough to allow for all students to master content that is on grade level and still appropriate for the skill level of the student. On the other hand, the new standards introduce skills and depth of thinking that in many cases has never been taught to certain categories of special education students. In all cases, the literature has shown that adequate training and collaboration between teachers is essential for successful implementation of the CCSS with special populations (Bulgren, Graner, & Deshler, 2013; Demski, 2013; Killion & Hirsh, 2013).

In the subject of English Language Arts, the challenge varies according to the disability that the student may display. As these newly expanded standards are being implemented in the elementary grades, it is very important that educators continue to spend focused time explicitly teaching foundational skills as these skills tend to pose more challenges for students with learning disabilities (LD). For students who already face difficulties in phonemic awareness, decoding and fluency skills, the more rigorous reading material coupled with new strategies such as ‘close reading’ will frustrate many children with LD and make forward progress difficult. Early intervention and intense, explicit instruction in foundational skills by both the general education teacher and the special education teacher is essential in catching struggling students and seeing that they do not fall farther behind (Haager & Vaughn, 2013). In addition, the new focus in reading is on a method called “close reading” where the student reads text multiple times to glean more details and meaning from the excerpt or article. This is another area where students with LD may struggle to succeed. Additional scaffolding will be necessary to teach students the skills needed to be successful. The positive side of CCSS in this area
is that these reading strategies extend into multiple content areas. So, the student will receive the same type of training in multiple settings, allowing them many opportunities to practice the skill and be successful (Bulgren, Graner, & Deshler, 2013).

Increased emphasis has been placed on writing instruction, especially with special education students. This is because the ability to effectively express yourself in writing, using evidence to support your claims, is essential in being successful in college and in the workforce (Graham & Harris, 2013). For special populations writing can be very difficult. In writing instruction, special education students will experience difficulty as the amount of writing they are required to do greatly increases under CCSS. As with all other areas of CCSS, students will benefit from teachers doing the hard work of pulling apart the standards to glean the elements necessary for mastery. For students with learning disabilities, many of the elements of each standard may need to be taught in a different way or may take much longer to master.

Math instruction poses unique problems for special education students and their teachers. Prior to CCSS, math instruction was largely made up of rote memorization. The new standards teach students that there are many different ways to solve a mathematical equation. Heitin (2014) explains that even if it is painstakingly difficult, it is important to teach math concepts to special education students, just as they are taught to general education students. If a student truly understands the concept, then they are more likely to be able to apply it in different situations. In the long run, the changes in math will be more beneficial for special education students as memorization can be difficult for them.
The Common Core State Standards Initiative and the US Department of Education has been very clear that the standards are to apply to all students, regardless of their abilities in school. That said, those students must receive the appropriate accommodations necessary to experience success (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). The fundamental difference between previous standards and practices and the new CCSS is in the use, or lack thereof, of modifications. Accommodations refer to supports and assistive items that allow the student to access the same grade level standards as their peers. Modifications refer to the changing of standards or curriculum for students with special needs. The focus has shifted from modification to accommodation as educational agencies attempt to provide truly equal educational opportunities for all students.

**Necessary Changes Due to Common Core Implementation**

The biggest change for special education that has occurred due to the implementation of Common Core State Standards is the expectation that all students, regardless of intellectual ability or disability, be taught grade level appropriate standards. Special education students will be held to the same standards as their general education peers, both in the classroom and on standardized tests (Herbert, 2011). This doesn’t mean that special education students will not receive accommodations designed to assist them to be successful. What it does mean is that they will no longer be learning less, or different curriculum than their peers.

In order for special education students to be successful in the mainstream classroom, many changes must take place in the way classrooms are organized and how
lessons are taught. Special education teachers must change their instruction and their expectations for their students as they attempt to teach the new CCSS. Many teachers of students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities have not been teaching grade level appropriate standards to their students. With the new expectation that all students will learn grade level appropriate standards, these teachers are finding challenges in that many of them do not possess the deep content knowledge required to be able to teach some of the new standards in multiple ways. When their instruction hits a roadblock, they are hard pressed to find an alternate method of teaching the concept. Wakeman, Karvonen, and Ahumada (2013) suggest the following adjustments to increase success: changing the complexity of information presented, minimizing or increasing the number of steps to solve a problem, breaking the standard into many parts and teaching them over a series of days, manipulating how abstract the materials presented are, use of technology, and manipulating the responses accepted or the answer choices to help guide the student to the correct answer. In addition, they believe that content should be overlapped and overlaid from year to year. Students with moderate to severe disabilities still need to be exposed to new grade level appropriate content as it overlaps with previous content (Wakeman, Karvonen & Ahumada, 2013).

**Potential Issues in Common Core Alignment with Special Education**

Many parents and teachers are worried about Common Core’s alignment with special education. It is one thing to state that all students must be taught grade-level appropriate standards and show academic progress; some believe it is quite another issue to expect these students to perform well on the standardized assessments. Former
Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was very firm in his statement of the federal government position with regard to special education and Common Core (NPR, 2014). States must set goals for special education students and measure those goals in ways that are standardized across the country. The challenge emerges with aligning the modified curriculum with the new assessments created by PARCC and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (Shah, 2012). For most students, appropriate testing accommodations will be enough for them to perform at grade level on the exams, assuming they received adequate instruction prior to the assessment (Kamenetz, 2014). In addition, the students must be familiar with the accommodations they will receive on the tests. Shah (2012) notes that a lack of familiarity with testing accommodations can lead to confusion when the accommodation is present. Translation services, audio, magnification tools, definitions and highlighting are but a few of the possible supports available within the testing platforms. Without formalized training, a lack of familiarity with these tools could negatively impact student performance when presented with such technology in the standardized testing environment. Of further concern is the format of the computerized tests as they are designed to provide harder questions as students are successful. For some students, lack of success can cause them to shut down and not try, thus resulting in test questions that become easier and easier as the computer seeks a correct answer choice from the student. This could result in questions being presented below a student’s grade level. Even with all of the accommodations available, the tests still won’t be appropriate for all students with special needs. The two consortia have been tasked with creating tests for 99% of students. The remaining 1% of students with
severe disabilities will be given alternate assessments that are more appropriate to their ability levels (Shah, 2012).

Another major shift for special education students and their teachers is in the way material is taught overall. Ideally, this will happen through use of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL is a framework for creating lessons and activities that are flexible but still achieve the goals needed. “UDL practices are intended to provide increased access to the curriculum by reducing physical, cognitive, intellectual, and other barriers and is a foundation for CCSS implementation” (Schaefer, 2014). UDL’s emphasis on multiple means of engagement, representation, action and expression provide teachers and students with a range of opportunities to meaningfully engage in the process of learning. It helps teachers to tailor their lessons to individual students and allows students to learn new concepts and information in multiple ways. The idea is that the curriculum is already designed with diverse learners in mind, thus minimizing the additional changes that may need to be made for the individual learners (Kurth, 2013).

As lessons are created, a series of steps are followed to ensure that the adaptations are appropriate to avoid over adaptations and over accommodation, which can lead to stigmatization and isolation of the student.

**Solutions and Recommendations**

**General Education Supports for Special Needs Students**

General education teachers, who also service special needs students within their classrooms, require additional training in the implementation of CCSS with their special education population. As the assessments being created are aligned to the new standards,
it is important that the curriculum and instruction is also aligned to those standards. Misalignment of curriculum to standards will result in a misalignment to the assessment, thus lowering test scores. When lower scores occur, many times the adjustment results in teaching to the test rather than teaching to the standards on which the test is based (Braun, 2011). The best way for general education teachers to avoid this misalignment is to completely understand what each standard entails. This is also essential in being able to effectively teach their special needs students as, although those students are still responsible for grade level curriculum, their IEP may reflect that their level of understanding of the standards is modified. When teachers in collaboration with special education staff spend the valuable time “unwrapping” the standards to get down to the essential pieces that are necessary for special education students to learn, it is easier for them to tailor their lessons to those elements (Samuels, 2013).

Further, general education teachers must collaborate with the support staff and special education teachers who are there to support the same special needs children. The Common Core initiative has provided a unique opportunity for expert support staff such as speech language pathologists (SLP) to become more actively involved in helping their students. Whereas the teacher may provide the content in the lesson, the SLP can provide strategies for communicating and understanding the content. General education teachers must understand that standards cannot be taught in isolation, but are interrelated and must be taught as such in order for students to truly grasp them (Blosser, Paul, Erhen, Nelson, & Sturm, 2012). Close collaboration between general education teachers and their
special education counterparts can help students transition more effectively to the CCSS (Flynn, 2014).

For students on the Autism spectrum, reading and writing instruction may pose other types of problems. Many of the ELA CCSS require students to infer the emotions and intentions of characters within a story. Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) will have difficulty with these standards as they struggle to understand and react appropriately to social cues and can have trouble understanding intention. As such, ASD students will need to be provided with additional strategies and learning opportunities to help them master the CCSS (Constable, Gross, Moniz, & Ryan, 2013).

The use of Universal Design for Learning Framework and Data Based Interventions will greatly assist special needs students in both the general education classroom and in more focused settings. As previously mentioned, Universal Design allows teachers to create lessons that are created with diverse learners in mind so that additional changes are minimal (Kurth, 2013). Also effective is the use of Data Based Interventions where supports are layered according to the data gained from weekly evaluations. These evaluations allow the teacher to measure the overall effectiveness of an intervention and adjust along the way to maximize the learning for the student (Powell & Stecker, 2014).

**Special Education IEP Goal Development**

Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are documents that outline the nature of a student’s disability, and address what the student should be taught. Designing an IEP involves evaluation of the curriculum, instruction, and location of the individual student’s
educational experience. This process is one of the most critical elements in making sure a student is receiving the most appropriate and best quality education for them. If a student has a high quality IEP that provides measurable grade appropriate goals and is followed by both the general education teacher and the special education teacher, their academic achievement will be impacted in a positive way (Salle, Roach, & McGrath, 2013).

When creating IEPs, special educators must create measurable and attainable goals for their students. The new US Department of Education expectation that all special education students must show grade level appropriate academic progress has impacted the way that goals are set for IEPs. Many special education educators are excited about the Common Core because it gives special education a set of standards that are aligned with general education and are broad enough to be implemented effectively with many different levels of disability. It does a disservice to special education students when their IEP contains goals that are not in line with the grade-level academic goals of their peers. These students may not be able to master all of the goals for a general education student, but it is always possible to master goals that are in line with and support the grade-level general education standards. The challenge is that the educators must understand the content well enough to be able to break it into components that the special education students can master (Samuels, 2011).

More and Hart-Barnett (2014) point out that in the age of technology, many school districts have moved to electronic IEP goal development. A computer program organizes all of the possible IEP goals and the school can select the appropriate goals for
each student. The program then stores the data, making it easier to update and track changes over the course of multiple years. Special education staff, with access to electronic goal development tools, would be able to enter the goal bank and potentially create their own standardized goals depending on the system’s capabilities. Typically, goal banks are either embedded into these platforms or alternative access can be obtained via a purchasing a subscription through a private entity via the internet (Kowalski, McCall & Lieberman, 2009) This type of program can be beneficial for districts if in fact the goal banks contain appropriate and high quality goals when compared to the overall grade appropriate standards. The goal bank can also help special education teachers see how the standards can be broken down as a way of planning meaningful lessons that align with the CCSS (More & Hart-Barnett, 2014).

**Specific Strategies for Underserved Populations**

The largest underserved population that is impacted by the CCSS is English Language Learners (ELL). These students are still learning English and find difficulty in understanding not only the concepts and skills they are being taught, but also the basic language of the instruction. The new standards are teaching material on a much deeper level than before. The problem lies with the fact that many ELL students are focused on language acquisition on a superficial level – i.e., learning how to create a sentence from the vocabulary they learn - when CCSS is testing a much deeper level of understanding. Bridging that gap and ensuring the ELL students are learning to think deeply and critically about the material is very difficult. One major barrier that teachers must cross is the language of their teaching. They must rework how they explain difficult concepts
so that those with limited English language skills can understand their explanations. It is essential that ESL teachers work with general education teachers to help them understand how ESL students learn and how the CCSS standards need to be taught to help them succeed (Maxwell, 2014).

Testing is also proving to be a difficult area to tackle for ELL students. New tests are computerized and therefore can have supports built in for students who usually receive accommodations, but this is cause for some concern as certain accommodations can affect the integrity of the test (Gewertz, 2013). For example, when taking a reading comprehension exam, it is not appropriate for a student to use an accommodation where the text is read to them, or a dictionary to define words and a translator to translate them back into their native language. However, for an ELL student who is just acquiring the language, they may not yet have the necessary vocabulary to answer the questions. Under the new CCSS, much of the changes to the test require students to understand and synthesize a higher level of academic language and use these skills to create arguments. With ELL students, they are disadvantaged by not only a lack of understanding of the reading passages in English, but also by a lack of vocabulary to write responses (Gewertz, 2013). With these issues in mind, the question arises: how do we know if the student missed the problem because they have not mastered the concept, or if they missed it because they did not have the adequate vocabulary to understand the question? The two testing consortia are working hard to develop an assessment that adequately measures what an ELL student actually knows. One strategy being used is to evaluate the question to determine whether the language can be simplified without compromising the
integrity of the measure (Maxwell, 2013). For now, however, teachers will need to increase their instruction of academic vocabulary to give their ELL students the skills to succeed on the standardized assessments.

Ideally, the new CCSS and the curriculum being developed to address it, will create more opportunities for disadvantaged students. Two of the major goals of the Common Core are to provide equal access to education for all students and to adequately prepare them for college and career. If this academic playing field is truly leveled and students are receiving equal instruction regardless of their socio-economic or racial background, then the result should be students who are poised to excel in college and finding meaningful careers beyond graduation (Toch, 2013). In order for this to occur however, it is imperative that school districts across the country spend the money needed to adequately train all of their teachers in how to implement the standards with fidelity and excellence. High quality professional development must be provided to all teachers so that they may serve their students (Gewertz, 2013; Killion & Hirsh, 2013).

**Conclusion and Project Justification**

The arrival of Common Core State Standards brings both advancements to traditional learning models as well as new challenges tied to their implementation. Perhaps the greatest challenge in advancing a unifying set of career-readiness standards is bringing together many stakeholders to not only provide appropriate curriculum and instruction, but develop school-based systems that can effectively evaluate student performance and respond appropriately to their needs. As the first waves of standardized testing tied to these Common Core standards have recently been implemented, education
professionals across the nation are scrambling to prepare their students to meet these expectations. Research in this area indicates that educators require professional development opportunities in which they can learn to collaborate with other professionals across discipline, and hone their teaching skills to be more aligned with the new level of rigor found in these standards. For those working with students in special education, challenges present themselves with regard to providing meaningful learning opportunities under the Common Core standards, and the new expectation that student growth will be both documented and measured in a standardized assessment format. Thus the development of Common Core professional learning opportunities for special education professionals is critical at this key transitional moment in American public education.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Research

Several approaches were utilized in the process of researching this project. This researcher accessed premium journal articles through the ERIC databases and Google Scholar search tools. Key terms were used to conduct searches. The key terms included, “Common Core State Standards”, “Special Education”, and “Individual Education Plan.” These terms were used in combination with other terms such as goals, instructional strategies, collaboration, and exceptional students.

Both state and national Common Core web sites were used to identify existing support resources and links to other websites and instructional tools developed for implementation by designated agencies.

Given the author’s residence and work in the state of California, special emphasis was placed on obtaining instructional resources/materials directly intended for consumers within local education agencies. The State of California’s Department of Education provides a variety of resources including state-based standards that align to those of the national Common Core (California Department of Education, 2016). These resources were used in both the literature review, as well as examples generated for the presentation created for site-based educators directly working with special education students. Interpreting the current standards were based on a close reading of the instructional materials included within the California Common Core document (California Department
of Education, 2013) as well as prior knowledge the author obtained during his teaching career.

Additional references include articles and books researched by the author, and those that directly applied to the current project are noted in the current reference list.

Prior to the development of the literature review, articles and books were categorized by topic areas and subsequently, incorporated into related sections as each topic was addressed in the formal document.

**Presentation Development**

The in-service training presentation was developed to provide participants with a working knowledge of goal development for special education students in states that have the Common Core as a component/foundation for their state-based standards. A brief introduction to the Common Core is provided for participants, following a summary of the literature review. This creates an understanding of the Common Core, an explanation of how it applies to Special Education students, approaches recommended by the literature and a justification of why special educators must be proactive in developing effective Common Core aligned goals for these students.

The presentation/training is designed to be a 4-hour in-service that includes both practice activities and direct instruction. Utilizing an approach common in the behavior analytic literature, attendees will actively participate in a training presented in the form of instructions, modeling, rehearsal and feedback (Miltenberger, 2011). In other education circles, this is sometimes known as “I do, we do, you do” (Levy, 2007).
Activities include discussing current approaches to goal setting, implementing research-based recommendations and a hands-on activity where participants develop goals based on a case study student. Activities will also include collaborative components with other participants in small groups as well as debriefing sessions.

The intended audience for the presentation includes special education teachers, school administrators, school psychologists, speech/language therapists and other individuals, such as program specialists, who are directly involved in the generation of academic and behavioral goals for special education students.

A brief overview of the current presentation was also delivered to fellow school psychology graduate students and a faculty member who provided some feedback. Although the sum of the presentation has not been delivered to an audience prior to submission, suggestions were sought from this author’s school psychology advisor as well as current special education faculty.

The PowerPoint presentation, handouts, and notes for presenters are found in the appendix of this project.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The literature review (Chapter 2) findings were used to assist in creating a training workshop for administrators and faculty working with exceptional students who are provided additional supports on an Individual Education Plan. This is an approximate 4-hour workshop designed to give educators critical information needed to effectively develop goals for special education students.

Included in the project appendices are a manual, presentation notes, slides, and activities for a teacher, administrator or school psychologist to be able to present at a teacher training. This workshop aims to help special education teachers better understand the fundamental rationale behind the Common Core State Standards by giving them the necessary background information. This includes principles of the Common Core standards and guidelines for what effective goals should include and how to develop them as part of an Individual Education Plan.

Additionally, this author provides information on collaboration techniques with general education teachers for students who either participate in the general education classroom with resource specialist support, or special day classroom teachers working at the secondary level. Given that the special education teacher may not have the familiarity with secondary-level academic content areas (higher level math, reading, science, social studies), collaboration with content-area specialists is both necessary and proper to develop special education goals for students and methods of implementation.
Workshop Objectives

The professional development presentation includes teacher-friendly language, audience collaboration opportunities, visual stimuli and ancillary materials to aid in the group discussion of Common Core-based individual goals for students. The primary purpose of the project was to gather a knowledge base of the Common Core State Standards and condense it into a parsimonious product accessible to special education staff on school campuses. As a secondary product of this knowledge, exceptional students on an Individual Education Plan would benefit from the knowledge acquired by their teachers through their direct work with them. The ultimate objective of this project is for teachers to leave this training with a knowledge of research-based strategies and a method for developing effective Common Core goals that they will implement with all students on their caseload.

Recommendations and Limitations

Educational research is a fluid and ever-changing field. Those who review this project must be aware that the included professional development program is intended for current use and that future application must account for changes in practice and the addition of new research findings. This is critical for the reader to recognize as the Common Core State Standards, and their state-based variations, are a recent addition to the field of public school education. As with any new program in education, changes are inevitable to both the Common Core Standards and their implementation in the school setting. As this presentation has yet to be piloted, the extent of its benefit will manifest upon future implementation and subsequent iterations based on participant feedback.
Conclusions

If the Common Core State Standards can be summed up into a single point, its intention is that all students will finish their public-school education both career and college ready. This is a high benchmark for any student and an even greater goal for those with disabilities that impede one’s ability learn through the existing formal education process. For those working with these exceptional students, it is critical that they possess the knowledge and tools to develop effective Common Core goals as a measure for instructional planning, implementation and monitoring. Future researchers should look to state-based program evaluation measures and the results of statewide assessments, based on the Common Core State Standards, to examine the efficacy of current goal-setting approaches and provide future recommendations and methods for goal creation.
Appendix A

Workshop PowerPoint Presentation Slides

Common Core and Special Education
Developing Compliant Individual Education Plan (IEP) Goals

Slide 1
Welcome!

A prior knowledge survey will be presented in a moment. This survey is the first page of your handout packet. These resources are available at the back of the room. We will be using this information as soon as we begin!

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Pre-survey

- Do you presently write goals for special education students using the Common Core State Standards?
- What tools do you use to identify student present levels? (ex: benchmarks, classroom performance data.)
- In brief, what is your process for developing goals for students on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?
- When developing goals, do you collaborate with other staff on campus? If so, who?
- When developing goals, how do you incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles? If not, what is your level of familiarity with UDL?
Objectives/Learner Outcomes

- Participants will leave today’s seminar able to:
  - Identify key elements of legally compliant special education goals to include requisite components.
  - Connect IEP goals to present levels of student performance.
  - Write IEP goals that align with Common Core standards that utilize a Universal Design for Learning approach to implementation.

What are the Common Core State Standards?

- In brief, the Common Core State Standards represent grades K-12 content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics.
- They include extensions for related- subject areas to include Science, Technical Studies, and Social Studies.
- Students acquire knowledge that gradually prepares them, throughout their K-12 education, to be college and career ready.
Common Core changes affecting all students

- Student Expectations:
  - English Language Arts
    - Regular practice with complex texts and their academic language
    - Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from texts, both literary and informational
    - Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction
  - Math
    - Work deeply in fewer topics
    - Coherence: Understand why math works and be able to explain it.
    - Rigor: deep command of math concepts (conceptual understanding/procedural skills and fluency).

http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts/

Slide 6

Activity: Turn and Talk

- Why is it important to understand general education student expectations when our emphasis/focus is on special education students?
Why is it important to understand general education student expectations?

- Ultimately, special education students are general education students. As educators, our aspiration is to provide a general education for special education students.
- We promote the least-restrictive natural environment (the gen. ed classroom) for spec. ed students and assist in educational planning.

Expectations for Students with Special Needs

In addition to including special education students as part of the general education environment as a best practice in education, we as educators have a legal obligation to do so.

The general roadmap or the “how to”

- In order for students with disabilities to meet high academic standards and to fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in the core learning areas, their instruction must incorporate supports and accommodations, including:
  - Supports and related services designed to meet the unique needs of the students and enable their access to the gen ed curriculum. (IDEA 34 CFR§300.34, 2004)
  - An IEP which includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate their attainment of grade-level academic standards.
  - Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel who are prepared and qualified to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services.

The “how to” (cont.)

Promoting a culture of high expectations for all students is a fundamental goal of the CCSS. In order to participate with success in the general curriculum, students with disabilities, as appropriate, may be provided additional supports and services, such as:

- Instructional supports for learning – based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) – which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression.
- Instructional accommodations – changes in materials or procedures – which do not change the standards but allow students to learn within the framework of the Common Core.
- Assistive technology devices and services to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the CCSS.

Universal Design for Learning

- Universal Design for Learning is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn.
- [http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/conceptofudl](http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/conceptofudl)
- UDL is for all students! The idea is that for all students, we provide multiple means of representation, action/expression and engagement.
  [http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/3principles](http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/3principles)

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Brain Break

- Take five minutes to stretch your legs.
- Talk to at least one person in the room that you do not know well.
Individual Education Plan (IEP)
Goal Writing: Overall

• A student with an IEP will have annual goals.
• These goals describe what the student can be expected to accomplish in a 12 month period. (From one annual meeting/review to the next.)
• The IEP team takes present level information and develops a projection of what subject matter content the student will be able to learn.
• The student’s present levels are used to determine the growth needed to achieve mastery of the Common Core Standards.
• The student’s preferences, strengths and response to varied learning modalities are taken into account.
• These are also linked to services that allow students to make progress towards their goals.

Legal requirements for IEP goal writing

• A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to:
  • Meet the child’s needs that result from the child’s disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum;
  
  and

  • Meet each of the child’s other educational needs that result from the child’s disability

  • For children with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives;

http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/020292dynamid2Ctopicid2C4ed2C102C
Legal requirements for IEP goal writing

- IEPs must also include a description of:
  - How the child's progress toward meeting the annual goals described in 34 CFR§300.320(a)(2) will be measured; and
  - When periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided.

Goal Progress: Insufficient Progress

- Convene an IEP meeting to:
  - Review progress to date
  - Address lack of progress
  - Review services, instructional strategies and materials used to assist the student in achieving goals.
  - Make necessary changes to:
    - Adaptations
    - Educational services
    - Curriculum
    - Instructional strategies
    - Behavioral supports
  - Revise the goal or write a new goal
Using Present Levels Data

- IDEA 2004 requires a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.
- The information collected as part of the identifying present levels should provide the details necessary for the IEP team to make determinations of the child’s abilities and needs.

Using Present Levels Data (cont.)

- Present levels are acquired by:
  - Current academic reports
    - Administered benchmarks, grades, direct assessment (ex: reading/Math fluency)
  - Standardized Achievement testing results (Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement/WIAT)
    - Reading/Written Expression/Math
  - Academic Habits
    - Participation/organization/test-taking skills/ Time management/ study skills/Homework management
  - Non-academic specific student behaviors
    - Attention, executive functioning
Using Present Levels Data (cont.)

- The IEP team must also discuss specific information about the child. This includes:
  - the child’s strengths;
  - the parents’ ideas for enhancing their child’s education. ***
  - the results of recent evaluations or reevaluations; and
  - how the child has performed on state and district-wide tests.

***If you share goals with parents prior to the IEP, be sure to mark them with the word “Draft.”

Activity: Who do you call?

- With one person at your table:
  - Identify who can/does provide you this information at your site.
  - Are there other individuals on campus, or in the community, who would be able to add to the present levels information base?
  - How might you reach out to those individuals you’ve identified
Special Factors To Consider

- Depending on the needs of the child, the IEP team needs to consider what the law calls special factors. These include:
  - behavior
  - limited proficiency in English,
  - blind or visually impaired,
  - communication needs,
  - deaf or hard of hearing,
  - assistive technology
  - communication
  - gross/fine motor concerns:
  - vocational
  - adaptive/daily living skills

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

- The mnemonic S.M.A.R.T. is a term from management literature. Its application has spread beyond that field and can be applied to developing education goals.
  - S- Specific
  - M- Measurable
  - A- Attainable
  - R- Relevant
  - T- Time bound

- By using this as a general framework for developing goals, one removes subjectivity and bias and develops a parsimonious statement of the objective.

IEP Goal: Contents

- IDEA 2004 states that goals must be “measurable.” This leaves discretion to schools as to how to produce them.
- The goal should contain the following components
  - When? (time frame)
  - Given what? (conditions)
  - Who? (student name)
  - Does what? (observable behavior)
  - How much? (mastery or performance accuracy and or criteria)
  - How it will be measured? (data collection methods)

Example

- When: By May 29, 2017,
- Given what? When presented with a 5th grade reading passage,
- Who: Adam
- Does what? will independently read 5th grade lexile material
- How much? At 140 wcpm with 100% accuracy
- How will it be measured? As measured by teacher observation/assessment in 3 of 4 trials.
Example in total

By May 29, 2017, when presented with a 5\textsuperscript{th} grade reading passage, Adam will independently read 5\textsuperscript{th} grade lexile material at 140 wcpm with 100\% accuracy as measured by teacher observation/assessment in 3 of 4 trials.

- \textit{Note: The goal may not exceed 12 months, and includes an actual date.}
- \textit{This goal must be reviewed, revised and/or discontinued by the given date.}

How much

- \textbf{When used appropriately,} we can measure meaningfully with percentages.
- Katy will correctly perform 2-digit by 1-digit multiplication problems with 95\% accuracy in 5 of 5 trials.
How is the IEP goal measured?

- Methods of measurement
  - Work samples
  - Teacher data/records
  - Portfolio
  - Teacher observation
  - assessments

Identifying Baseline

- Baseline should describe the child’s current performance on the skills identified in the goal.
- The baseline should be a quantifiable description of the classroom performance in the specified area.

- **Examples:**
  - Student reads 20 sight words w/o prompting.
  - Independently writes a simple paragraph of 2 to 4 sentences.
  - 20 to 30 blurt outs a day

- **Non examples**
  - Student has limited sight word recognition
  - Student writes name with little prompting
  - Student requires some supervision to initiate writing tasks.
Let’s practice together Writing goals with required elements.

- Step 1: Identify a student and academic need.
- Example: Mikey is a 1st grade student who qualifies for special education services under the category of “Other Health Impairments.” He has a diagnosis of ADHD and his behaviors impact his performance in the classroom. Teacher data collection/charting reveals that he yells and throws small items at peers and adults in the classroom setting in response to a task being assigned. This occurs on each of the 4 presentations of assignments throughout the week.

Design your S.M.A.R.T. Goal

- When? (time frame)
- Given what? (conditions)
- Who? (student name)
- Does what? (observable behavior)
- How much? (mastery or performance accuracy and or criteria.)
- How it will be measured? (data collection methods)
Example

• When: By May 29, 2017,
• Given what? When presented with an assigned 1st grade (reading, writing, math) worksheet
• Who: Mikey
• Does what? will initiate the task without protest
• How much? Within 5 minutes of presentation
• How will it be measured? As measured by teacher observation/assessment in 3 of 4 trials. (75% of the time)

Things to remember

• Is this a S.M.A.R.T goal?
• Is it presented in positive language?
• Does it pass the “Dead Man’s test”. (Can a dead person do it? If so, it is not a behavioral goal.)
• Ultimately, the goal should be meaningful for the student! The goal should advance the student academically.
Linguistic Appropriateness

• Goals should be at the linguistic level of the student and address a grade-level standard. If the student is also an English Language Learner, refer to the student’s California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scores and work samples to guide goal development along with support from your campus/district English Language Learner Specialist.

http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/el/documents/elstdndspubpublication34.pdf

Tying Goals to Common Core State Standards

• Remember that our objective is to use grade-level standards when it is possible and appropriate. We must, however, recognize that grade-level standards-based goals may not be appropriate for all learners.
Aligning Goals to Standards

- Student present levels of performance will inform the goal writer.
- Identify the standards that are essential to each student’s growth
- Some IEPs may need more goals, however one must be cognizant of the challenge in meeting all the child’s needs (i.e.: providing goals for all identified areas of need) and the ability/resources of the educator(s) to implement and report on those goals.

Independent Practice and presentation

- As our final activity, you will develop a S.M.A.R.T. goal based on the needs of one of your students.
  1. Write a brief paragraph describing your student’s needs.
  2. Choose a state standard based on the student’s educational needs
  3. Write a SMART goal for this student
  4. Be prepared to share your work!
Appendix B

Presentation Notes

Lecture notes to accompany presentation

Future presenters are advised to practice the presentation using the following notes as guidance. This will aid in transitioning between activities and remaining within the approximate 4 hour suggested time frame.

Slide: 2: (Prior to presentation) As people begin to take their seats, direct their attention to projected slide. Circulate the room greeting people and ensure they have the handout packet.

Slide: 3: Inform the audience that pre-test will be available for the next 5 minutes. Read each question and ask if anyone needs further clarification. Direct the audience to complete the questions. Circulate the room, making you available for questions/support. At the 5-minute mark, present the questions again, asking for volunteers to share their level of experience. Use a Word document (minimizing the PowerPoint) to review/write down participant responses.

Slide 4: Read the slide identifying the day’s objectives and transition quickly to the next slide.

Slide 5-6: Read both slides to participants. The slide on Common Core changes affecting all students requires some extended debriefing. At the end of the slide, ask the teachers to share with their neighboring participants how these changes might affect the way teachers provide instruction. Allow 5 minutes for this collaboration and then ask for volunteers to share their most profound insights for an additional 5 minutes. On the word document, write down 5 changes the teachers report (ex. More student driven work, change in curricular materials, change in usage of class time/homework time).

Slide 7: Say, “Allow me to pose the following question to you: Why is it important to understand general education student expectations when our emphasis/focus is on special education students?” Direct the participants to briefly share their ideas with a neighbor (1-2 min) and quickly transition to slide 8

Slide 8-11: Read through the slides, fielding participant’s questions for clarification.

Slide 12: Say, “A fundamental principal of instructional design tied to the Common Core is the usage of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model. Click on the embedded links within the slide to bring up brief introductory videos. These videos will take approximately 10 minutes to show. At the end of each video ask the participants, “What were the big takeaway ideas from this film?” Allow the participants to share what they
learned. Ask, “How might you implement UDL principles in your classrooms for students on an IEP?”

**Slide 13- Provide the participants a short 5-10-minute break at this point.**

Slide 14-17 Read the following slides on IEP legal requirements and necessary procedures with insufficient student progress.

Slide 18-20: Read the information on student present levels and emphasize the importance of this information in establishing baseline data upon which to develop appropriate goals.

Slide 21: Activity- *Who do you call?* Tell the participants, “Turn to a partner and discuss where present levels data comes from.” Use the questions on the slide to guide participant responses.

Slide 22: Special factors- Direct participants to Handout 2 in packet and have them independently review the information. Ask the group if there are any questions, so far.

**Provide the participants a short 5-10-minute break at this point.**

Slide 23: Introduce the idea of S.M.A.R.T. goals emphasizing each letter in the acronym.

Slide 24: Connect S.M.A.R.T. goals to IEP goals. These must also have time frames, conditions, observable behaviors, performance mastery criterion and data collection methods. Direct participants to Handout 3 which summarizes elements of goal creation. Allow participants a few minutes to review the handout.

Slide 25-26: Present the example IEP goal broken apart in slide 25 and presented as one statement on slide 26.

Slide 27: Read the information regarding “How Much.” This emphasizes ways to quantify goal attainment first noted on slide 24.

Slide 28: Read the different methods of goal measurement to the participants and allow them to offer additional suggestions based on their experience.

Slide 29: Baseline data- Read to participants emphasizing examples vs. non-examples, discussing the measurability of the baseline data. Non-examples would include words such as “limited,” “little,” and “some.”

Slide 30-31: Present the vignette of “Mikey” and direct participants to Handout 4 where they will practice writing a S.M.A.R.T. goal for this student. Display Slide 31 as
participants are working on their goal. Provide 5 minutes for goal writing and circulate room to facilitate the activity.

Slide 32: Present the sample S.M.A.R.T. goal for Mikey. Ask groups to share other possible examples they generated during the 5 minutes of activity time.

Slides 33: Things to remember about S.M.A.R.T. goals. Read slide. Ask participants to apply the Dead Man’s test to their goals.

Slide 34: Linguistic appropriateness. If the student is also an English Language Learner, special considerations must be placed on the level of language ability as it impacts goal development. This simply adds another level of consideration as goals are developed and thus consultation with the relevant area specialist, within the participant’s school district, should be fomented.

Slide 35: Tying goals- Emphasize the need to tie the goal to an appropriate grade level standard.

Slide 36: Aligning goals. Be sure to emphasize the “A” or attainable component of S.M.A.R.T. goals. Emphasize the need to look at the whole student. Thus, the IEP goals must be seen as a package, not single separate entities unto themselves. One runs the risk of having too many goals.

Slide 37: Independent practice. Release the participant to practice the writing of IEP goals. Allow the participants sufficient time to engage in goal development. Factor in 20 minutes of debriefing/sharing time and 5 minutes for closing remarks and questions. Be sure to thank your audience and ask them to complete the “Exit ticket” worksheet which includes questions regarding their level of satisfaction, understanding of the materials presented and suggestions for improvement/future workshops. This is Handout 5 in the participant’s packet.
Handout #1 – Pre-Survey

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

1. Do you write goals for special education students using the Common Core State Standards?

2. What tools do you use to identify student present levels? (ex: benchmarks, classroom performance data.)

3. In brief, what is your process for developing goals for students on an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

4. When developing goals, do you collaborate with other staff on campus? If so, who?

5. When developing goals, how do you incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles? If not, what is your level of familiarity with UDL?
Handout #2: Special Factors

Categories of Special Factors

• **Communication**
  - Ability to effectively articulate needs, choices, ideas, self-advocate

• **Gross/Fine motor concerns**
  - Handwriting, gross motor functioning necessary for participation in school-based activities.

• **Social/Emotional/Behavioral**
  - The child’s behavioral or social/emotional needs impact their ability to engage with peers, respond to adults and perform desired functions in a school setting.

• **Vocational**
  - Career interests, career exploration, job training, employment experiences, supports, and work tolerance.

• **Adaptive/Daily Living Skills**
  - Self-care, leisure skills, student safety, transportation, banking, budgeting, etc.

Depending on the needs of the child, the IEP team needs to consider special factors. These include:

• If the child’s **behavior** interferes with his or her learning or the learning of others, the IEP team will consider strategies and supports to address the child’s behavior.

• If the child has **limited proficiency in English**, the IEP team will consider the child’s language needs as these needs relate to his or her IEP.

• If the child is **blind or visually impaired**, the IEP team must provide for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille, unless it determines after an appropriate evaluation that the child does not need this instruction.

• If the child has **communication needs**, the IEP team must consider those needs.
• If the child is *deaf or hard of hearing*, the IEP team will consider his or her language and communication needs. This includes the child’s opportunities to communicate directly with classmates and school staff in his or her usual method of communication (for example, sign language).

• The IEP team must always consider the child’s need for *assistive technology* devices or services.
Handout #3: S.M.A.R.T. IEP Goals

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

The mnemonic S.M.A.R.T. is a term from management literature. Its application has spread beyond that field and can be applied to developing education goals.

- S - Specific
- M - Measurable
- A - Attainable
- R - Relevant
- T - Time bound

By using this as a general framework for developing goals, one removes subjectivity and bias and develops a parsimonious statement of the objective.

Combining S.M.A.R.T. Goals with IEP Goal writing

IDEA 2004 states that goals must be “measurable.” This leaves discretion to schools as to how to produce them.

The goal should contain the following components:

- When? (time frame)
- Given what? (conditions)
- Who? (student name)
- Does what? (observable behavior)
- How much? (mastery or performance accuracy and or criteria)
- How it will be measured? (data collection methods)

Example:

By May, 29, 2017, when presented with a 5th grade reading passage, Adam will independently read 5th grade Lexile material at 140 wcpm with 100% accuracy as measured by teacher observation/assessment in 3 of 4 trials.
Case Study
Mikey is a 1st grade student who qualifies for special education services under the category of “Other Health Impairments.” He has a diagnosis of ADHD and his behaviors impact his performance in the classroom. Teacher data collection/charting reveals that he yells and throws small items at peers and adults in the classroom setting in response to a task being assigned. This occurs on each of the 4 presentations of assignments throughout the week.

When? ________________________________________

Given what? _____________________________________

Who? __________________________________________

Does what? ______________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

How much? ______________________________________

How it will be measured? ____________________________

Re-write the Goal as a statement below:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Handout #5: Exit Ticket

On the Likert scale provided, or each of the statements listed below, indicate your level understanding/mastery and/or agreement.

1 represents low level understanding/mastery/agreement
10 represents complete understanding/mastery/agreement

1. I can identify key elements of legally compliant special education goals to include requisite components.

2. I can connect IEP goals to present levels of student performance.

3. I can write IEP goals that align with Common Core standards that utilize a Universal Design for Learning approach to implementation.

4. This workshop contained information that I will be able to immediately use in my position.

5. The presenter was clear and the handouts were relevant to the topic being presented.

6. I would appreciate further training in this area.
References


Killion, J., & Hirsh, S. (2013). Investments in professional learning must change: The goals are ambitious, the stakes are high - and resources are the key. Journal Of Staff Development, 34(4), 10-12.


http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cdynamic%2CTopicalBrief%2C10%2C


