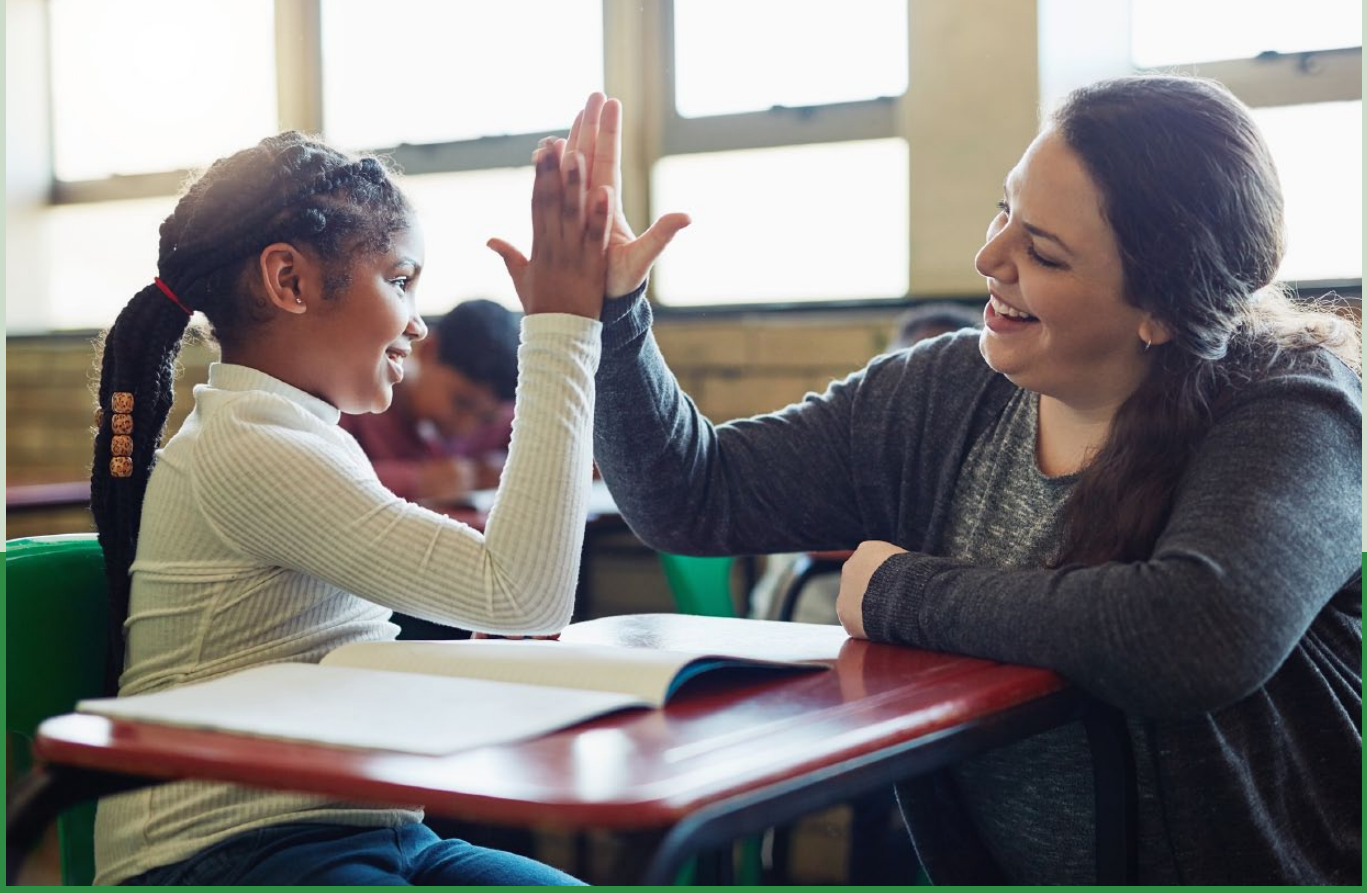

Developing Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance Statements for IEPs

Shannon Harmon, Ph.D., Chambersburg Area School District, Michelle Street, Ph.D., Chambersburg Area School District, David Bateman, Ph.D., Shippensburg University, and Mitchell L. Yell, Ph.D., University of South Carolina

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Josh is a fifth-grade student currently attending the local elementary school. Josh has been receiving speech services but has not yet met his goals. He was recently evaluated and found to meet criteria to be identified with a specific learning disability, in addition to his speech-language impairment that was identified in third grade. Josh is reported to demonstrate relative strengths in math skills. Teacher and parent reports indicate that Josh is a hard worker with a positive attitude toward school. When evaluated by the school psychologist, his performance was weak in oral reading fluency (ORF). His classroom teacher reported low scores on the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (8th edition) and classroom assessments. Josh is not of transition age at this time.

One of the most important elements of an individualized education program (IEP) is the section on present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP). The statements in this section not only serve as the foundation for the development of the IEP, but they also set the stage for the type of instruction that should be delivered and the specific educational services that will be necessary to promote a student's growth (Bateman, 2017). Additionally, the PLAAFP statements are the starting point by which a student's annual goals are determined and serves as the baseline for monitoring student progress (Yell, 2019).

According to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (hereinafter *Endrew*; 2017), "focus on the particular child is at the core of the IDEA. . . . It is constructed only after careful consideration of the child's present levels of achievement, disability, and potential for growth (*Endrew*, 2017, p. 12). The court clarified that for all students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2006), including both those students performing at grade level and those unable to perform at grade level, a school must offer an IEP that is "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances" (*Endrew*, 2017, p. 16).

A well-crafted PLAAFP statement should summarize all aspects of a student's present levels of performance in order to identify the strengths and needs of the student as well as the student's baseline level of functioning or progress. Furthermore, it should describe how a student's needs or disability impacts their educational performance and access to the general education curriculum. Information reported in the PLAAFP section must be of sufficient detail so that teams can (a) develop appropriately ambitious, measurable, annual goals that promote student growth; (b) determine special education services, and (c) measure student progress. To the contrary, when PLAAFP statements lack detail, they are of little value to teams when developing programs of support.

A well-crafted PLAAFP statement should summarize all aspects of a student's present levels of performance in order to identify the strengths and needs of the student as well as the student's baseline level of functioning or progress.

The Student's Current Performance

The description of the student's performance should provide a clear picture of the student's current circumstances, including any academic or functional needs that affect a student's education. *Academic achievement* refers to all indicators of a student's performance across academic domains, such as reading, mathematics, science, or social studies. When possible, academic achievement should be reported in relation to the standards of the general curriculum. *Functional performance*, on the other hand, refers to any nonacademic area that allows a student to function independently on a day-to-day basis, such as cognition, communication, motor skills, behavior, or social-emotional functioning (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2017). Although comparison to curriculum standards may not be possible for functional domains, interpretation of student present levels compared to age- and grade-level expectations can accomplish the same purpose.

Whereas current data will enable the team to set appropriate goals for the student, historical information may also be relevant. This information may include prior schools attended; previous results of standardized tests, such as performance on state assessments; previous special education services provided; and a review of assessment data used to make prior eligibility determinations. The PLAAFP statement should also include details regarding past or present related service experiences, such as therapies (speech therapy, occupational therapy [OT], physical therapy [PT]), transportation needs, nursing, or counseling as a related service. If a student's history is significant for the provision of a related service, a review of initial eligibility data, as well as current reports of student progress in active related services fields, would be appropriate.

Assessment information should be communicated in clear, jargon-free language, and *all* academic and functional performance areas should be considered for *all* students. For example, even if the student's primary need is academic and the student is likely to receive specially designed instruction for academic needs only, it is still important to document that the student's performance in each functional domain was considered and either ruled in or ruled out as an area of need by the educational team.

In Josh's scenario, although the IEP team may have discussed how functional performance factors were impacting his performance, the team neglected to document that these factors had been considered. Additionally, Josh's prior related service experiences were not sufficiently detailed, as will be discussed later in the article.

Special Populations

In the development of the PLAAFP section, special consideration must be given to students of preschool age, students of transition age, students with severe disabilities, and students with diagnosed social-emotional and behavioral disorders. For students who are preschool age, IEP requirements regarding the inclusion of a review of present level data and impact of disability or needs on access to general education remain consistent. However, specific to preschool age students, the IDEA further requires that IEP teams should consider ". . .as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities" (IDEA regulations; 34 C.F.R. § 300.320[a][1]). This statement acknowledges there may not be validated general education curriculum standards upon which to base comparisons in functioning for this population. Additionally, there have been concerns noted by practitioners regarding the use of traditional standardized testing to describe student functioning at such a young age. As a result, use of checklists, structured observation, or play-based authentic assessment strategies is at times viewed more favorably than conventional methods when measuring the functional performance of preschool-age students (Bagnato et al., 2014). Drawing comparisons between a child present levels of functional performance and those of typically developing, same-age peers or developmental-stage expectations is an appropriate practice for children who are preschool age (Barnett, 2002; McConnell et al., 2002; Sattler, 2018a).

If the student is of transition age, it is important the PLAAFP statement outlines the specific desires of the student. Federally, transition goals must be included by the time the student reaches 16 years of age; however, some states have transition mandates at younger ages. Statements about academics remain pertinent; however, statements related to transition should also include information about community involvement, job training or employment experiences, postschool interests (employment or education), and comments relating to adult living, independent living skills, and daily living skills. Finally, a description of the degree of match between the student's current skills and the student's desired postschool outcomes will provide insight into the impact of the disability and will assist the team with comprehensive transition planning.

Some students may be diagnosed with disabilities so severe that they are unable to access the general education curriculum (e.g., profound intellectual disability (ID), severe traumatic brain injury (TBI), multiple disabilities). The Supreme Court was very specific in stating that students need to make progress in light of their current circumstances. In fact, much of Chief Justice Robert's questioning during the oral arguments in *Endrew* (2017) concerned how to describe the progress of students who are not expected to be a part of the general education curriculum.[1] For students with more severe disabilities, it is important to describe the strengths and needs with clear descriptors so that others fully understand how the student presents. One way this can be achieved is by comparing current student performance to previous performance, emphasizing progress over the past several years. The goal for all students is to work toward independence; it is important to focus on the specific skills necessary to help the student strive toward that goal.

Finally, students with diagnosed social-emotional and behavioral disorders are among those who commonly experience difficulty accessing the general curriculum. For these students, teams should ensure that PLAAFP statements include information about behaviors of concern; descriptors of the location, setting, and instructional activities where behaviors are observed to occur (e.g., regular or special education, large- or small-group instruction); and student response to antecedent and consequence strategies that have been implemented. The information included should be detailed enough to clearly communicate how the behavior prevents the student from accessing classes in a general education environment. By incorporating peer comparison data, educational teams are also able to draw conclusions regarding the degree of deviation from typical, age-expected functioning. This degree of deviation may also be gleaned from other sources of data, such as frequency counts, discipline referrals, and the amount of instructional time lost due to discipline issues.

PLAAFP Worksheet

To help guide IEP teams in developing a comprehensive PLAAFP statement that summarizes the student's current levels of performance and provides information about how the student's needs or disability impacts educational performance, the present authors have developed a PLAAFP Worksheet (see ***Figure 1***). Potential areas of impact are represented on the worksheet, with suggested data sources to be considered when drafting the PLAAFP statement. Data sources will be detailed further later in this article.

To complete this worksheet, a multidisciplinary team meeting should be scheduled, and all team members should bring input relevant to their domain of practice. A designated team member should be assigned the role of meeting facilitator and should document key information from the meeting on the PLAAFP Worksheet. Following the sequence of information outlined on the worksheet, the team should first identify general areas of student strength and need and then review special considerations relevant to the student's educational performance (e.g., medical, sociocultural, environmental). Next, data to describe present levels of academic achievement should be reported for all students, regardless of the student's disability or associated areas of functional need. After achievement data have been discussed and documented, the designated team member should lead the team in a review of each functional performance domain listed on the second page of the PLAAFP Worksheet, noting if parent, school, or both have identified a need in each domain. The team should utilize the space below each domain on the worksheet to document relevant data sources. ***Figure 1*** provides examples of potential contributing data sources under the special considerations, academic, and functional domains, recognizing that not every data source will be available or appropriate for each student.

After data have been discussed and documented for academic and functional performance domains, the team is tasked with analyzing the data to determine the most pertinent needs, referred to as "targeted needs" on the PLAAFP Worksheet. The team should conclude by

Figure 1 **Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance worksheet**

Student Name:	**Date of Birth:**	**School:**
Disability:	**Grade:**	**Date Completed:**

UNIVERSAL FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

General Strengths:		
General Needs:		

Special Considerations

Medical:	- Information from School Nurse (Vision/Hearing Screening Results, etc.) - Parent Report/Questionnaire(s) - Teacher/Staff Reports and Observations - Community-Based Medical Reports
Sociocultural & Environmental Considerations:	- Parent Report - Home Language Survey - Measures of English Language Proficiency (WIDA, etc.) - Review of Record (Educational History, Placement History, etc.) - Attendance Data
Other External Sources of Information:	- Reports from mental health agencies - Reports from vocational agencies - Reports from other sources familiar with the student (Case Managers, Foster Parents, etc.)

Present Levels of Academic Achievement

	- Progress Monitoring of IEP goals (CBM, CBA, etc.) - Standardized Testing - State and/or Local Assessments - Grades - Work Samples - Anecdotal Information - Outside Agency Reports

STUDENT SPECIFIC FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Present Levels of Functional Performance [check if need was indicated by parent (P), school (S), or both]

Cognitive P ☐ S ☐	**Executive Functioning** P ☐ S ☐	**Communication** P ☐ S ☐
- Standardized Testing - Assessments of Memory - Checklists / Rating Scales - Anecdotal Information	- Standardized Testing - Checklists / Rating Scales - Direct Observations - Anecdotal Information	- Speech/Lang. Therapist Input - Checklists / Rating Scales - Direct Observations - Anecdotal Information

(continued)

Figure 1 **(continued)**

Behavior P ☐ S ☐	**Social Skills** P ☐ S ☐	**Emotional** P ☐ S ☐
- FBA Info - Direct Observations - Checklists / Rating Scales - Discipline Data - School Counselor Report - Student Interview - Structured Interview - Anecdotal Information	- Checklists / Rating Scales - Direct Observations - School Counselor Report - Anecdotal Information	- Checklists / Rating Scales - Student Interview - School Counselor Report - Direct Observations - Anecdotal Information
Motor Skills P ☐ S ☐	**Adaptive Skills** P ☐ S ☐	**Transition*** P ☐ S ☐
- Occup./Phys. Therapist Input - Checklists / Rating Scales - Direct Observations - Anecdotal Information	- Structured Observation - Checklists / Rating Scales - Direct Observations - Anecdotal Information	- Student Interview - Career / Aptitude Inventories - Checklists / Rating Scales - Direct Observations - Anecdotal Information

*Transition information must be included when a student hits age 16, or younger if mandated by state law or determined to be necessary by the IEP team.

SUMMARY

Targeted Needs:	**Addressed by Goal?**	**Addressed by Modification(s)?**	**Type of Support/ Service:**
_____	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
_____	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
_____	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
_____	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____
_____	☐ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____

Other things to keep in mind:

- Have strengths and needs been identified?
- Has detailed and measurable information from multiple sources been included for each area of concern?
- Is the information current?
- Has clear language been utilized?
- Have all areas affected by the disability been considered?
- Has the degree to which the disability influences involvement in the general curriculum been described?

specifying whether each targeted need will be addressed through the development of IEP goals, special education services, or both. The sum of this information should drive team recommendations regarding supports and services. After the worksheet has been completed, a designated team member is responsible for compiling all information into a comprehensive PLAAFP statement that can be embedded directly into the student's IEP. While developing the statement, the team is encouraged to review the list of key questions at the end of the PLAAFP Worksheet to further enhance the quality of the PLAAFP statement.

Using the worksheet as a guide, teams can successfully develop comprehensive PLAAFP statements that summarize multiple sources of data from a variety of reporters and assessment activities across academic achievement and functional performance domains relevant to the student's identified disability or needs. These data will allow teams to easily identify the student's strengths and needs and to describe how the student's disability

or needs affect their involvement in and access to the general education curriculum. Thereby, teams can discuss a student's current circumstances in order to reasonably calculate goals, progress-monitoring plans, accommodations, modifications, and related services necessary for the student to make appropriate progress that meets the new standard outlined in the recent Supreme Court ruling (Yell & Bateman, 2017).

> **In all IEPs the baseline data in the PLAAFP should provide the basis for goal development and progress monitoring.**

Universal Factors for Consideration

Medical, socioeconomic, and other relevant factors. It is imperative that school-based health records or outside agency medical data be collected and reviewed in order to determine the extent to which medical needs may be contributing to or causing impairments in functioning (Shaw & Páez, 2002). Although several categories of disability identified in the IDEA are rooted in documenting the presence of a medical condition and determining the impact of medical symptoms on academic and functional performance (e.g., TBI, OHI, vision impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment), in actuality, teams should be reviewing and considering medical information for *all* students with disabilities.

In order to meet the expectations for nondiscriminatory assessment as outlined in federal regulations, educational teams should also routinely be considering how sociocultural and environmental factors are contributing to impairments in functioning (Sattler, 2018b). When relevant, PLAAFP statements should include documentation of the student's native language and proficiency with the language of primary instruction. Additionally, teams should consider any possible impact of environmental or economic disadvantage. Finally, IEP teams should consider whether the student has participated in appropriate instruction (e.g., empirically validated curriculum, early intervening services, instruction provided by highly qualified individuals, school attendance history).

At times, other external sources of information are also available for review by school teams and are relevant when describing a student's present levels of performance. These sources vary greatly based upon the student's needs; however, common sources may include outside agency psychological, psychiatric, or treatment plan reports; reports from vocational agencies; or input from social services agencies or caseworkers. Utilization of the PLAAFP Worksheet in ***Figure 1*** would guide teams through systematic discussion of these areas.

In the aforementioned PLAAFP statement regarding Josh, the team did not clearly rule in or rule out the presence of educationally relevant medical, sociocultural, or environmental factors. Had the team simply documented that these factors had been discussed, the quality of the statement could have been improved.

Academic achievement. Academic achievement data should be considered in the PLAAFP section regardless of the student's disability or associated areas of functional need. Even for students whose goals are solely functional and not academic, teams should consider some form of academic data. This section could include present levels of mastery relative to state standards, such as performance on annual state assessments, progress detailed on report cards, or performance on benchmark assessments aligned to state standards. In all IEPs the baseline data in the PLAAFP should provide the basis for goal development and progress monitoring. Examples of data sources for either baseline or progress-monitoring purposes could include curriculum-based assessments, criterion-referenced assessments, and standardized single-subject or multisubject achievement tests (Sattler, 2018b). Less formal information, such as anecdotal reports from parents or teachers, work samples, or teacher-created assessments, could be included. Sample data sources are outlined on the PLAAFP Worksheet in ***Figure 1***.

Revisiting the PLAAFP statement for Josh, only anecdotal information regarding Josh's academic achievement was reported, and the team did not document how Josh's disability influences participation and progress in the general curriculum. Josh's IEP team identified a weakness in ORF; however, the team failed to include quantitative data to support these claims. A wealth of baseline data would have been available from the eligibility determination report, including standardized achievement testing, classroom-based assessments, curriculum-based assessments, grades, and state standardized assessments. The inclusion of these data sources in the PLAAFP statement would have allowed the team to identify student needs with greater precision.

Student-Specific Factors for Consideration

Present levels of functional performance should be considered for all students. Specific functional factors and related sources of data that warrant consideration as outlined on the PLAAFP Worksheet in ***Figure 1*** are detailed further in the sections that follow. If no concerns are noted in a functional area, the team is encouraged to state this in order to reflect that the team has given each area consideration.

Cognitive factors. Depending upon the age and ability level of the student, measures of cognitive functioning may be based upon criterion-referenced or structured observation of the student completing cognitive tasks (play-based assessment, dynamic assessment, standards-based observations), standardized assessment of the student via one-on-one standardized test administration, or norm-referenced teacher and parent ratings of the student's ability to complete various age-expected tasks. Although representing a key component of most initial eligibility determinations, cognitive data are

unlikely to be updated on an annual basis. Additionally, cognitive skills would not typically be targeted for remediation or progress monitoring within an educational setting, nor are they likely to change considerably over time in the absence of illness, injury, or major alterations to the student's environment or personal adjustment (Sattler, 2018b). As such, data from cognitive measures are often historical in the PLAAFP statement. More routinely, anecdotal reports from parents and teachers regarding cognitive skills are considered here, such as observations of student learning style, acquisition and retention rates, and overall speed of processing.

In the case example presented, Josh was recently evaluated and found to demonstrate the characteristics of a student with a specific learning disability. As part of his eligibility evaluation, cognitive testing was completed, and a review of cognitive performance levels should be incorporated into the PLAAFP statement.

Executive functioning factors. Deficits in the area of executive functioning can be considered both neurocognitive and behavioral in nature and can lead to significant overall functional impairment. Because deficits commonly emerge in observable ways, methods such as anecdotal reports by parents, teachers, the student, and an occupational therapist; observation of the student across multiple settings and activities; and standardized rating scales are commonly utilized. Unstructured and semistructured interview methods may assist teams in gathering anecdotal information. Structured observations may also be useful when analyzing student executive functioning skills; these techniques are described in greater detail in the Behavior, Social Skills, and Emotional Factors section. Finally, rating scales are also frequently utilized to identify student strengths and needs within this domain. Many broad-band behavior rating scales allow for screening of executive functioning skills. Other standardized rating scales have been designed specifically to assess executive functioning in students. When available, standardized assessment scores from some cognitive processing or neuropsychological measures can also provide valuable information.

Communication factors. As defined in the IDEA (2004), a speech-language impairment would be considered if a student exhibits deficits in one or more of the following communication areas: voice and fluency, articulation, receptive language, and expressive language. Data sources representing communication skills typically include anecdotal information from parents, teachers, and a speech-language therapist; checklists, rating scales, and report forms; nonstandardized assessments of communication skills; and standardized assessments via one-on-one test administration (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.). Additionally, student performance is often quantified based upon informal assessments of student skill on trials administered during speech-language therapy sessions (e.g., 85% accurate for answering "wh-" questions) for those currently receiving services. Standardized tests are used to numerically describe levels of performance on communication tasks compared to a normative sample. When either historical or current standardized test data are available, it is important for those data to be reflected in the PLAAFP statement. Parent and teacher anecdotal reports are also valuable sources of information, as they determine whether the skills directly taught to students in therapy are generalizing to other settings. Parents and teachers may be asked to complete standardized rating scales in order to quantify anecdotal observations. Input from all of these data sources can help educational teams make decisions about the need for assistive technology devices and services that may enhance the functional capabilities of the student (Bray et al., 2002; McGivern & McKevitt, 2002; Sattler, 2018a).

With regard to the PLAAFP example presented previously for Josh, it is not sufficient to simply report that the student has been receiving speech-language services and has not yet met the goals. Documenting historical data leading to initial speech-language eligibility as well as progress toward IEP goals would be imperative. Additionally, noting the impact of a speech-language impairment on academic and educational performance would enhance the quality of this statement.

Behavior, social skills, and emotional factors. Although behavior, social skills, and emotional factors are separated on the PLAAFP Worksheet in ***Figure 1*** to ensure that teams address each area, these factors will be discussed concurrently in this section, as there is overlap in the types of data collected. Students with a range of educational disabilities can exhibit social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties; however, the etiology of such concerns may vary widely depending upon the nature of the IDEA disability (e.g., autism vs. ID vs. emotional disturbance). Common data sources to consider in a PLAAFP statement include anecdotal reports, formal and informal checklists, and semistructured interviews and standardized rating scales with parents, teachers, and students (Sattler, 2018a). A review of attendance data, office disciplinary referrals, and patterns of nurse visits may also be helpful, as social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties can be manifested through a variety of means. Social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties can be evaluated via comprehensive broad-band rating scales that assess for a variety of potential concerns. If ratings on a broad-band scale indicate specific areas of concern, narrow-band standardized rating scales may be utilized to further investigate these areas.

When behavior, social skills, or emotional factors significantly impede functioning within the school setting, the educational team is required to conduct an assessment of these areas of concern. In addition to the data sources discussed previously in this section, an FBA also includes more systematic observations across a variety of settings (e.g., recess, cafeteria, physical education). Observation techniques that are commonly utilized to collect data regarding behaviors of concern include frequency, duration, and interval recordings (Hintze et al., 2001; Sattler, 2018b). When feasible, incorporating comparison with typically developing peers provides a better understanding of age-expected functioning (e.g., student on-task ratings of 55% compared to peer on-task ratings of 90%). The A-B-C (antecedent-behavior-consequence) observation method is another commonly used technique to assist with determining behavioral triggers and

> When behavior, social skills, or emotional factors significantly impede functioning within the school setting, the educational team is required to conduct an assessment of these areas of concern.

factors maintaining the behavior of concern.

Motor skills factors. Motor skills factors that warrant consideration include gross motor skill movement, fine motor skill movement, sensorimotor skills, and visual-motor skills. When relevant, information in these domains typically includes anecdotal reports from parents, teachers, an occupational therapist, and a physical therapist; formal or informal checklists, rating scales, and report forms; nonstandardized assessments of motor skills, and standardized assessments via one-on-one test administration (Sattler, 2018b). Informal measures commonly utilized include observations of the student performing motor tasks in naturalistic settings (e.g., ability to kick a ball, hold a writing utensil, go up and down stairs) or OT and PT sessions (e.g., 90% legibility for all lowercase letters written in a timed trial). Standardized, norm-referenced tests of motor functioning can be utilized to provide the team with objective data that describes student functioning compared to a normative sample. However, to monitor generalization of learned skills, anecdotal reports and observations of the student across settings are necessary. Input from multiple sources enables teams to clearly understand the degree of impairment and need for specially designed instruction that will grant the student meaningful access to the curriculum.

Adaptive skills factors. *Adaptive behavior* generally refers to student functioning across the communication, social, work, daily living (home, school, community), functional academic, and motor skills domains. Data in these areas can be accessed through observation, interview, and completion of standardized rating scales. Observation of the student in natural environments yields important information that can corroborate information provided on static rating scales completed by parents or school staff. Furthermore, it is often beneficial to conduct follow-up interviews with raters after rating scales have been completed in order to better understand the nature of the student's identified strengths and needs (Harrison, & Boney, 2002; Sattler, 2018a). In recent decades, measures of student self-determination have also become an increasingly valuable component for understanding overall adaptive functioning and one's ability to contribute meaningfully to decision making across home, school, and community settings. This information can be useful in determining whether IEP goals or modifications may be necessary in order to enhance self-determination skills (Shogren & Ward, 2018).

Transition factors. Federal law requires "appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills" (IDEA regulations; 34 C.F.R. § 300.320[b][1]). The primary objective when reviewing transition factors is to consider the student's post–high school goals as well as the student's preparedness for pursuing those goals. All formal and informal data sources discussed when analyzing academic and functional performance areas outlined earlier should also be considered when discussing transition (e.g., review of records; medical history; interviews; aptitude or achievement; social, emotional, and behavioral rating scales; adaptive behavior; observations) (Levinson, 2002; Sattler, 2018a). At times, state vocational rehabilitation agencies can arrange to have a thorough vocational assessment completed when deemed appropriate.

Specific to transition planning, observations of the student should occur in naturalistic environments, which translate to desired postsecondary environments. Depending upon the needs of the student, observations may be narrative in nature or may involve more structured task analysis, in which the student's proficiency level with the steps that constitute a given task are monitored by self or others. For example, for a high school student working on a transition goal of accessing community services, the PLAAFP section could include a summary of progress made on a task analysis rubric (e.g., steps for accessing public transportation, a local Laundromat, or a grocery store). Depending upon the postschool options under consideration, environmental analysis (or observation of the environment) may be necessary in order to determine what skills the student would need to be able to perform given the demands of the task and environment. Open-ended or scripted interviews are also an important assessment component when transition goals are being monitored. Finally, the use of informal questionnaires, report forms, and rating scales completed by those individuals most knowledgeable of the student's performance levels are crucial to a vocational assessment. This information is useful in highlighting student strengths and needs that may not be specifically addressed on more formal vocational assessment tools.

Application of PLAAFP Worksheet

As referenced throughout this article, the PLAAFP statement presented previously for Josh was insufficient. ***Figure 2*** illustrates how the PLAAFP Worksheet can be used to compile sources of available data. Following the completion of the worksheet, the case manager or designee could then summarize all information into an enhanced PLAAFP statement as follows.

Josh is a fifth-grade student currently attending the local elementary school. Josh reportedly has many strengths, including

Figure 2 **Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance worksheet**

Name: *Josh Sample*	**Date of Birth:** *4/7/2009*	**School:** *Local Elementary*
Disability: *SLD Reading Fluency Speech/Lang Imp.*	**Grade:** *5th*	**Date Completed:** *12/10/2019*

UNIVERSAL FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

General Strengths: *math calculation; math problem solving; good attendance; receptive language & articulation; hard worker; positive attitude to school; completes work; well -behaved; friendly; athletic*

General Needs: *Reading ; Expressive language*

Special Considerations

Medical: *No medical concerns reported by parent; generally in good health; no current daily medications; Records from school nurse indicate no concerns; passed most recent school-based vision and hearing screenings*

Sociocultural & Environmental Considerations:

- *English primary language*
- *Attendance data- student has missed less than 5 days of school each school year*
- *Enrolled in Local Elementary School since Kindergarten*
- *No reports/indications of environmental or economic disadvantage*

Other External Sources of Information:

- *No history of outside agency involvement*

Present Levels of Academic Achievement

- *WIAT-III (admin date 11-15-19)*
  ORF Standard Score (SS) = 69 (rate SS = 68; accuracy SS= 69)
  Basic Reading SS = 102 *Math Calc SS = 108*
  Reading Comp SS = 85 *Math Prob Solving SS = 110*
  Word Reading SS = 86 *Math Fluency SS = 110*
  Word Decoding SS = 85 *Written Expression SS = 86*
- *12/6/19- DRA2+ Level 28 instructional (comp score =16, fluency score = 8)*
- *1st MP Grades: Math- A; ELA Reading- D; Science- B; Social Studies- C; ELA Writing- B*
- *DIBELS 8th Edition (5th grade)*
  Benchmark 1 (8/23/19) ORF- WCPM- 58; 8 errors; 88% accuracy
  Benchmark 2 12/5/19) ORF – WCPM 57; 6 errors; 90%
- *State Standardized Assessments:*
  3rd gr.ELA: Bel Basic ; Math: Adv;4th gr ELA: Bel Basic; Math: Prof
- *5th grade ELA Classroom based fluency assessments- (beg 3rd grade level probes- from school curriculum)*
  9/6/19: 63 WCPM *10/11/19: 69 WCPM* *11/22/19: 56 WCPM*
  9/20/19: 71 WCPM *10/25/19: 55 WCPM* *12/6/19: 72 WCPM*
  9/27/19: 65 WCPM *11/8/19: 66 WCPM*
- *5th grade ELA assessments- Reading/Written Response Assessments:*
  9/5/19- 1/4 on rubric; 9/17/19- 1/4 on rubric; 10/3/19- 2/4 on rubric; 10/16/19-
  1/4 on rubric; 11/1/19- 2/4 on rubric; 11/14/19- 2/4 on rubric; 12/9/19- 1/4 on rubric
- *Teacher Anecdotal Reports: Josh's ELA Reading teacher reports that even with differentiation, Josh continues to struggle with the ELA Reading general education curriculum. Josh's Science and Social Studies teacher indicated that Josh is maintaining acceptable grades, but often does not finish assigned reading during class time unless the work is read aloud to him. Josh is reported to be successful with all general education requirements within the math curriculum without differentiation.*

(continued)

Figure 2 **(continued)**

STUDENT SPECIFIC FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

Present Levels of Functional Performance [check if need was indicated by parent (P), school (S), or both]

Cognitive P ☐ S ☐ *WISC-V (11-14-19)* *VCI SS = 85; VSI SS = 92; FRI SS = 100; WMI = 95; PSI = 98; FSIQ = 91* **no clinically significant cog weaknesses*	**Executive Functioning** P ☐ S ☐ *Teacher & parent reports indicate student performs within age-expected levels with regard to attention , self-regulation, & organizational skills; Josh does complete all assigned classwork/homework, but work often needs to be read aloud or modified so that he can complete the work in the same timeframe as his peers; this is believed to be directly related to reading fluency deficits, not executive functioning deficits*	**Communication** P ☒ S ☒ *Initial eligibility determination 10/15/17: CASL-2 Exp Lang SS = 75* *Re-evaluation 11/7/19: CASL-2 Exp Lang SS = 82* *IEP Goal#1 (expr. vocab)* *PM data: Josh met goal for 2nd gr. level vocab & is now working on 3rd gr. level vocab. Josh has averaged 78% points on scoring rubric over past 3 PM assessments; goal is 90% points; goal will continue* *IEP Goal #2 (definitions)* *Adding details to definitions from the 5th grade ELA/Sci/SS general ed. curriculum is a new goal area for Josh* *Baseline: 1 detail* *PM data: Josh is able to provide 4-5 details on average with moderate cueing & use of definition web; goal is 5 details with use of definition web without cueing; goal will continue*
Behavior P ☐ S ☐ *Josh is described by teachers as a "hard worker" in all classes; parent/teacher/self-report rating scales administered by school psychologist as part of eligibility evaluation indicate average behavioral functioning; school counselor reviewed records and no discipline data has been recorded from K-5*	**Social Skills** P ☐ S ☐ *Observations of Josh in home, school, & community settings indicate he has a large group of friends and gets along well with students of all ages. The school counselor noted that on classroom sociograms completed during guidance lessons at the beg. of the year, Josh was very well liked by his peers*	**Emotional** P ☐ S ☐ *Parent/teacher/self-report rating scales administered by school psychologist as part of eligibility evaluation indicate average emotional functioning; Parent reports indicate Josh has never been in need of outside agency psychological/psychiatric/ mental health supports*
Motor Skills P ☐ S ☐ *Observations of the student indicate no gross or fine motor concerns; strengths in athleticism; review of records indicated OT screening for handwriting in 1st grade, but screening results suggested no need for further evaluation & Josh has not been re-referred for OT screen since that time*	**Adaptive Skills** P ☐ S ☐ *Josh does not have any motor, social, or daily living skills needs; data regarding communication skills is reported in communication section above*	**Transition*** P ☐ S ☐ *Student is not of transition age at this time*

*Transition information must be included when a student hits age 16, or younger if mandated by state law or determined to be necessary by the IEP team.

(continued)

Figure 2 (continued)

SUMMARY			
Targeted Needs:	**Addressed by Goal?**	**Addressed by Modifications?**	**Type of Support/Service:**
1.) Reading Fluency- accuracy	☒ Yes ☐ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	***Itinerant Learning Support-***
2.) Reading Fluency- rate	☒ Yes ☐ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	*– 30 mins daily-research based repeated reading intervention program requiring a written response following reading*
3.) Oral expressive vocabulary- naming, defining, comparing, and categorizing 3rd grade level vocabulary	☒ Yes ☐ No	☐ Yes ☒ No	*– 10 mins daily-research based sight word building intervention*
4.) Written expressive vocabulary- add details to definitions of vocabulary words from general education curriculum using definition web without cueing	☒ Yes ☐ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	*– 5 mins daily- practice self-assessment of written response using general ed. reading/written response rubric*
5.) Written expression (as impacted by expressive language needs)- improve score on ELA reading/written response rubrics	☒ Yes ☐ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	***Itinerant Speech/Lang Support-***
6.) Small group for standardized state assessments	☐ Yes ☒ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	*- 30 mins/week- research based expressive lang curriculum targeting 3rd grade level vocabulary; -10 mins/ week practice use of definition web using vocab. from the 5th grade ELA/Sci/SS general ed. curriculum*
7.) Opportunities for tests and assignments to be read aloud in ELA, Science, & Social Studies	☐ Yes ☒ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	
8.) Strategic partnering with higher level peer when textbook reading is required for Science & Social Studies classwork	☐ Yes ☒ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	
9.) Modified homework assignments with fewer items assessing same concepts	☐ Yes ☒ No	☒ Yes ☐ No	***Implementation of modifications in the ELA, Science & Social Studies areas***
10.) Provision and use of instructional level materials in the regular education classroom for independent reading and classroom based assessments	☐ Yes ☒ No	☒ **Yes** ☐No	

math calculation and math problem-solving skills, a strong attendance history, receptive language and articulation skills, a positive attitude toward school, and a strong work ethic. He is noted to be friendly and well behaved and to demonstrate strengths in athleticism. Observations and reports indicate he has a large group of friends and is well liked by peers. General needs noted by the team include reading and expressive language skills. These will be detailed further below.

The team reviewed special considerations and have found that no educationally relevant medical concerns are indicated. With regard to sociocultural and environmental considerations, no concerns are reported. English is Josh's primary language. Josh has matriculated within the same school throughout his educational career and there are no attendance concerns. There are no known effects of economic disadvantage. Josh was initially found eligible for itinerant speech-language services in third grade and has been receiving therapy in school since that time. Based upon a review of records and parent reports, there is no history of outside agency involvement past or present.

With regard to present levels of academic achievement, the results of psychoeducational assessments conducted by the school psychologist, in conjunction with a review of work samples, grades, curriculum-based assessments, and standardized state assessments, led the team to determine that Josh meets criteria to be identified with a specific learning disability in reading fluency. Josh's first-marking-period grades were Math, A; English Language Arts (ELA) Reading, D; Science, B; Social Studies, C; and ELA Writing, B. His ELA Reading teacher reports that his reading grade reflects performance with differentiated work for his current instructional level. On current standardized achievement testing using the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test–Third Edition (Wechsler, 2009), Josh was found to demonstrate low performance in the area of ORF. His rate and accuracy were both classified within the low range (standard score [SS] = 68 and 69, respectively). Deficits in ORF are also noted on curriculum-based measures using the DIBELS 8th Edition

(University of Oregon, 2018–2019; beginning-of-year ORF = 58 words correct per minute [WCPM]; middle-of-year ORF = 57 WCPM). Josh's fluency skills impact overall reading performance, as reflected on the most recent Developmental Reading Assessment Second Edition PLUS (DRA2+; Beaver & Carter, 2011), placing his instructional level greater than 2 years below expectations (Josh's DRA2+ level = 28). Josh has also performed below basic on the ELA portion of state assessments in both third grade and fourth grade. Biweekly teacher administered reading probes on Josh's instructional level (beginning third grade) have shown limited growth since the start of the current school year, with his assessed fluency falling between 55 and 72 WCPM, with a goal of 90 WCPM. Per anecdotal teacher report and a review of classroom-based assessments, Josh's decreased vocabulary skills continue to impact his success on fifth-grade ELA assessments, including performance on grade-level reading and written-response rubrics. (Scores of 1 or 2 out of 4 have been obtained on all rubrics completed to date this school year.)

With regard to the student's ability to participate in the general education curriculum, Josh's ELA Reading teacher reports that even with differentiation, Josh continues to struggle with the ELA Reading general education curriculum. Josh's Science and Social Studies teachers indicated that Josh is maintaining acceptable grades but often does not finish assigned reading during class time unless the work is read aloud to him. Josh is reported to be successful with all general education requirements within the math curriculum without differentiation.

With regard to functional performance, cognitively, results of direct assessment using the Wechsler Intelligence Scales for Children–Fifth Edition (Weschler, 2014) indicated low average performance on the Verbal Comprehension Index and average performance across all other cognitive composites. Additionally, a review of records, current parent reports, and current reports by school staff yields no concerns in the areas of executive functioning, behavior, social skills, emotional factors, motor skills, or other adaptive skill areas. Josh is not of transition age at this time.

Finally, communication needs continue to be noted by parents and school staff. When initially evaluated in third grade by the speech-language therapist, the primary area of need identified was expressive language, as measured by the Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language–Second Edition (CASL-2; Carrow-Woolfolk, 2017). There was also an Expressive Language Index SS of 75. This finding was consistent with both teacher and parent anecdotal reports of expressive vocabulary weaknesses and a review of work samples. Based upon current speech-language standardized testing and IEP progress-monitoring data, Josh continues to evidence a speech-language impairment. On a recent administration of the CASL-2, Josh's performance on the Expressive Language Index continues to fall below age expectations (SS = 82). In direct speech sessions, Josh is currently working on naming, defining, comparing, and categorizing third-grade-level vocabulary. He met his goal for second-grade vocabulary in the last annual IEP cycle. On current progress monitoring, Josh has averaged 78% of possible points on his scoring rubrics over the last three progress-monitoring assessments. His IEP goal is to earn 90% of possible points. This goal will be continued. As of his most recent annual IEP review, Josh is also now working on a goal related to adding details to definitions from the fifth-grade ELA, Science, and Social Studies curriculum. With moderate cuing and use of a definition web from the speech-language therapist, progress-monitoring data collected during speech sessions indicate that Josh is able to provide four or five details, as compared to a baseline score of one detail when this goal was initiated. The definition web is being used to give a framework for what kind of details to include when defining words. His IEP goal is to provide five details with the use of a definition web without cuing from the speech-language therapist. This goal will continue to be monitored.

Based upon the needs outlined above, the IEP team is recommending the provision of itinerant learning support, itinerant speech-language support, and implementation of modifications within the ELA, Science, and Social Studies areas to support access to, and progress in, the general education curriculum.

Summary

IEP teams have long been required to identify student strengths, needs, goals, and plans for progress monitoring as well as consider how a student's disability impacts access to the general education curriculum as part of the IEP present-levels section. However, the recent special education ruling handed down by the Supreme Court in the *Endrew* case has raised the bar by requiring IEP teams to determine whether the IEP is reasonably calculated to enable the (student) to make progress in light of the (student's) circumstances" (*Endrew*, 2017, p. 1002). The only way teams can successfully answer this question is through the development of comprehensive PLAAFP statements that incorporate multiple sources of data, from a variety of reporters and assessment activities, and across academic achievement and functional performance domains relevant to the student's identified disability or needs. When all data are discussed and compiled using the PLAAFP Worksheet in ***Figure 1***, teams should easily be able to identify the student's strengths and needs and to describe how the student's disability or needs affect their involvement in and access to the general education curriculum. As a result, teams can comprehensively discuss a student's current circumstances in order to reasonably calculate goals, progress-monitoring plans, accommodations, modifications, and related services necessary for the student to make appropriate progress that meets the new standard outlined in the Supreme Court decision in the *Endrew* ruling.

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ORCID ID

Mitchell L. Yell https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2614-7196

Shannon Harmon, *School Psycholgist, Chambersburg Area School District, Chambersburg, PA* , **Michelle Street,** *School Psychologist, Chambersburg Area School District, Chambersburg, PA;* **David Bateman,** *Professor, Educational Leadership and Special Education, Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, PA;* and **Mitchell L. Yell,** *Fred and Francis Lester Chair, Department of Educational Studies, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC.*

Address correspondence concerning this article to Mitchell L. Yell, University of South Carolina, 235-G Wardlaw, Columbia, SC 29208-0001 (myell@sc.edu).

NOTE

1. The oral arguments in the *Endrew* case can be heard at https://www.oyez.org/cases/2016/15-827#!

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