

Stephanie DeLussey Writing IEP Goals

michelle_andrews: [00:00:00] Hey there. I'm Michelle Andrews and I'm your host for the Pep Talk podcast. This episode is about writing i e p goals and collaborating with teachers and other professionals. If you are a new Ss l p and S L P, wanting to switch to the school setting, or just want to make sure your i E P goal writing knowledge is up to date. This episode is for you. My guest speaker today is Stephanie Lesi. Stephanie is a dual certified veteran special education teacher, i e p coach, children's book author and teacher mentor. She has a passion for creating engaging, adapted resources for teachers and students with disabilities and is a self-proclaimed data nerd.

She says she understands that not everyone will love IEPs as much as she does, but it is her hope that with appropriate training and resources, Teachers will not only advocate harder for student services and supports, but also bridge the the gap between teachers and families to foster [00:01:00] a true i e P team. She also provides professional development for teachers, and you can connect with her on Instagram at Mrs d's corner and the intentional i e p. First, we need to go over some formalities for the course by going over our financial disclosures. My financial disclosures include I have a Teacher's Pay Teachers Boom, learning and Teach with Medley Store under pep Talk, L L C. I am also the founder and manager of the Pep Talk podcast. My non-financial disclosures include Speech Arcade is an in-kind sponsor for this podcast. Okay, Stephanie, for your financial disclosures, you're the owner of Mrs. D's Corner, where, where you sell resources and courses and materials for teachers and parents.

Stephanie's non-financial disclosures include no non-financial disclosures and yes, they make us word it like that. , okay, so now here are the learner objectives for this course. Define and recognize how to write appropriate [00:02:00] measurable i e p goals. Define the difference between i e p goals and objectives. List at least two ways to co-develop i e p goals with other professionals. Okay, let's get started. Today we are talking all about i e p goals and collaborating. I am so excited to introduce today's guest speaker, Stephanie Lesi. Hi there, Stephanie.

Track 1: Hello. Thank you so much for having me.

michelle_andrews: Hi. I'm so glad you've come on the show today to talk all about i e p goals and collaborating with teachers. This is such helpful information that I know when you're an S L P working in a school, it can be

intimidating to write goals and whole IEPs and all the information that you can give us is going to be so helpful. Um, let's get started by having you just, I know I gave a quick bio, but if you could tell us a little bit more about yourself and how you became so knowledgeable about writing IEPs.

Track 1: Yeah, so I have been in the education world since, oh my gosh, it's been over 10 [00:03:00] years and I have taught pretty much everything from kindergarten through 12th grade. I've done co co-teaching, I have done inclusion, um, pushing and pull out. I have done a resource room setting, the self-contained setting, and I've taught extended school year through an intermediate unit for a couple of summers.

And so I've also taught in multiple different states and I'm certified in like six different states right now because we've moved around a lot. So moving around a lot and having to adjust the different I E P formats and like different state policies and regulations really helped round out my knowledge and understanding of what the basic framework for an I E P is, but then also what best practices are to help you really write that truly collaborative.

I e P.

michelle_andrews: That's awesome and great that you have knowledge, um, not just one school district or one state. Sounds like you have a, a well-rounded knowledge of lots of different situations. That's awesome. [00:04:00] Okay, so let's get started with a basic overview of the I E P. So all the parts in there. I know we're gonna mostly talk about goals, but let's get a, an overview just for those, just starting out and learning about writing IEPs.

Track 1: Yeah, for sure. So what I wanna preface here is that no matter what state you work in, no matter what i e p format your school uses, or i e p writing system your school uses, honestly they're all gonna be different. Some of the the different parts of an I E P are gonna be named or labeled different things in your I E P writing system, which I'll talk about here in a minute.

Um, so just kind of keep that in mind. But at its core, the guts of an I E P have all of the same parts. So all of the IEPs are gonna have your student information page, which is generally that first page. This is where you're gonna find, you know, the student's name, their birthdate, who their teacher is.

Typically the i e P team is listed out on this page or on the second page, and then you're gonna have more information about their, um, initial disability, if [00:05:00] they have a secondary or tertiary disability. This is typically listed

here, who their contact information is, their address. All of that good stuff's gonna be on the student information page.

that leads you then into the present levels of academic and functional performance, which is probably known as so many different things. So you have the present levels, it's called present levels, present ed levels. You have plop, ple, pla. Present levels of academic and functional performance. So whenever you hear any of those terms, it definitely just means the present levels of academic and functional performance.

And this is where all of your data's gonna go. So all of your evaluation data from teachers, from SLPs, from the OTs, from evaluations, all of that's going to be in this specific section of the I E P. That's then gonna lead you into the I E P goals, which you're gonna talk a little bit more about. But based off of the information in the present levels, that's gonna really guide you into what i e p goals should be written for that student you have i e P goals, you also have objectives.

And those [00:06:00] typically fall underneath the i e P goals. You then have your services and supports. This typically is, is labeled a couple of different things, and it might be broken into more specifics. Um, but this includes your accommodations, modifications, your service times if they have speech, if they have O T P T, um, adapted pe.

You know, vision services, um, all of that's gonna be really listed in the services and supports area. So all those related services and all of that, you have special factors. . you're gonna go over. And if the student is, according to the the I D E A federal regulation, so transition age is age 16. In some states it's younger.

So here in Florida it's actually age 12. And in a lot of other states it's age 14. So that's when that transition section of the I E P will start being filled out. And so you have that. And then you also have the L R E, which is the least restrictive environment, and that's really the placement of the students.

So where are they? What classroom are they gonna be in? How many minutes are they gonna have? Um, and what does that look like? So generally those are the different areas [00:07:00] of an I E P that you do have

michelle_andrews: Okay. That was a great overview. I feel like I could just, I was taking notes, but just writing it down as if I'm a, a podcast listener. But that, that was really great. That really, you really painted a great picture there. Okay. So next, um, let's talk about writing those. Let's just jump right into talking

about writing i e p goals. , a lot of SLPs have definitely heard the acronym Smart s m a r t goals, but let's, let's just dive into that and give us all of your, all of your knowledge there about writing goals.

Track 1: Yes, so you definitely wanna write smart goals. So if you've never heard the acronym or unsure of what the different letters mean, so it's S M A R T, smart Goals. So they need to be specific. Measurable, attainable, results oriented or relevant? Um, that the r is typically resources oriented or relevant. So I, I share both of them.

It means the same thing, which I'll go over, and then you have time bound. So specific means the goal is specific in naming the skill or the subject area, and it has a targeted [00:08:00] result. Um, so you don't wanna put two different skill areas in one goal. That should be two separate goals. That's best practice, but you just wanna make sure that it's specific in naming the skill.

You want it to be measurable, your goal needs to be able to measure progress of that specific skill. Your goal needs to be attainable, so it has to be realistic for that child. Um, so let's just say maybe you have a student in. You know, seventh grade, who is academically working on a second grade, grade level, um, skill.

And so we don't want to write an i e P goal for that seventh grade skill. We're gonna use those prerequisite skills, which we can talk about that a little bit more if you want. We're gonna use those prerequisite skills to scaffold those skills down to the instructional level of where the student is currently achieving.

So attainable. You want it to be realistic. You want it to be results oriented or relevant. So make sure that your goal is setting what the child must do to accomplish the goal. And [00:09:00] again, that the, the goal is realistic. So back to that attainable aspect. And then you wanna make sure that it's time bound.

So there needs to be a timeframe for when the student must achieve this goal by, and this really goes back to how often and when is progress going to be measured and how are we gonna share that? So that does go back to like the progress reporting, which you talk about at the I E P table as well. So that is what smart.

Goals mean. And then I do just want to share a little bit about determining the criteria of an I E P goal. So when it comes to, and I'm sure that you've seen this as well, when it comes to i e P goals, one thing we see frequently is that

everyone writes, and I'll say everyone 'cause we've all done it. I have done it myself.

We all write 80% accuracy in three or four trials or whatever it may be, and even some schools I've learned like that is their standard. That is what everyone gets. And I'm gonna challenge you to not write 80% accuracy unless it's . Like actually what the student can achieve and what the goal should be.[00:10:00]

So how do you determine the criteria of an I E P goal? First things first is you're gonna look back at that data in the present levels. You need to make sure that you have that baseline data for that skill. If you are setting an I E P goal, there needs to be baseline data in the present level. So, looking at that, let's just say Stephanie is going to be working on the skill of hmm, uh, single digit edition.

Okay, so Stephanie's gonna be working on single digit edition, and she can right now do one-to-one correspondence. She's great with it. And so single digit edition is our next step for Stephanie. And so the baseline data is telling us that right now, . She without supports can perform single digit edition with like 20% accuracy.

I'm just gonna throw out a random number. And so we, in looking at that, you also need to look at overall, so last year on last Stephanie's annual i e P, how much progress in math is she generally able to make in a year? So you can look back and when you're analyzing that data, you [00:11:00] can determine, okay, for math, no matter what the skill is, you're just gonna get an average.

Stephanie can make about 35% increase in that skill mastery over one annual year. So if you write an I E P goal for 80% accuracy, That's gonna be way above generally on average, what the data is telling you that Stephanie will be able to achieve. Because 20% baseline plus an average of 35% increase is 55%.

So you just wanna make sure that you're using that data. Sure. Can you write 80%? Absolutely. Can you write it for 55%? A hundred percent you can. Can you write it for a hundred percent? Yes. There are some skills like safety skills crossing the street. If we put 80% accuracy, Stephanie's gonna cross the street, three outta four trials, Stephanie's gonna get hit.

Or if we are doing, Stephanie can use silverware. You know, 80% of the time Stephanie will use a knife to cut a sandwich in half or cut her lunch sandwich in half. If she does it with 80% accuracy, eight out of 10 times [00:12:00] she's gonna cut herself. So there are some skills, like foundational skills for all things.

So not just academics, but there are some foundational skills like knowing your letter sounds, that needs to be known to 100% accuracy. Students aren't able to read, read, fluently, comprehend, or any of that other loads later, higher level skills without that foundational skill. So I just wanna challenge you when you're looking at criteria and determining criteria.

Don't always use 80% accuracy. Look at the data, and then really think about the skill itself, and that will really lend you to what the criteria should be.

Michelle Andrews: That's such a good tip, especially for Specifically school IEPs I think what you're meaning is that that's what you realistically think the child will be able to achieve within that timeframe of the I E P,

which is a one year, right.

Okay. So I love that. That's a great thing to mention. , so when you're writing the i e P goal and you're, you're working on [00:13:00] developing the criteria and stuff like that, um, you, you referred to the present level performance. That is where you do collaborate with the teachers quite a bit on where they are in the classroom. Um,

can you touch on how you collaborate with the teachers for, writing your goals based on the present levels of performance?

I.

Track 1: Yes, absolutely. So as a special education teacher, it is part of my responsibility as an I E P team member to collaborate with all members of the I E P team. So that includes general education teachers, including specialist teachers. That includes collaborating with the parent and the student. And that includes

Um, collaborating with any related services, so the speech pathologist, the occupational therapist, physical therapist, whoever the related services are in that I e p I need to make sure that I'm getting their input. So what I always recommend to teachers and what I've always done is generally around the 30 day out mark from when the i e P is going to be the i e P meetings is going to be held.

So you're gonna schedule that out 30 to 45 days in advance once you have that date. [00:14:00] Or around, you know, that it's gonna be, you know, Stephanie's i e p is coming up on, you know, September 9th. And so we need to, you know,

30 days out we need to be sending out an input form or a questionnaire. So I always send those out to all of the, um, professionals and parents and students.

I do have them fill it out to de it depends on the student and the individual, how they participate in that. But all of that information that is provided from these i e P team members is data that goes in the present levels. So that is one way to collaborate. . Once I get that back from, you know, the gen ed teacher related services and the parents, then I'm going to sit back, write my present levels.

And like I said, the present levels is gonna really tell you what i e P goals the student needs to be working on. You're gonna have that baseline data. So that's when you go sit with the speech pathologist, that's when you go sit with the general education teacher and say, here's what I'm thinking for i e P goals based off of the data.

What do you think? But then also, especially for the general education teacher, you know, . [00:15:00] What is this gonna look like in your classroom? What supports do you need written into the I E P to help Stephanie achieve this goal? And then what supports is Stephanie going to need in your classroom to achieve this goal?

When it comes to working with related services, there are some goals that we can tag team, so maybe we're working on writing. Um, you know, a five paragraph essay and so maybe occupational therapy can come in and they can also work on maybe not writing a five paragraph essay in their service time, but maybe we're just working on writing, staying within the lines, or making sure we're writing straight and not, you know, going up and down and not in the correct direction.

When it comes to speech, I know a lot of my speech pathologists that I've worked with, we've tag teamed a lot of English language arts and reading goals. So comprehension goals, we've tag teamed those. And so it just really comes down to that communication that you have once you have all of the data and you determine, okay, I think these are what our I E P goals should be sitting down with a team, how can we work on these together?

And what [00:16:00] is that going to look like? And then really establishing that open communication with saying . , when are we going to be collecting data? Who's gonna be collecting data? How are we gonna share this data with one another before progress reports? Because we need to be making sure that we're analyzing the data more than once every marking period, right?

To make sure the interventions are working. Um, so it just comes down to what's in the present levels based off of everyone on the team. And all the other data we have, and then that communication and collaboration before the I E P meeting even happens. So that way when you come to that meeting, because the parent's gonna get that draft i e p, right?

And they're gonna see those proposed goals. When you come to the I E P meeting, you can be like, you know, Stephanie and I have already sat down. Mrs. D and I have already sat down and talked about this goal, and this is what we're, we're generally thinking it's going to look like and who's gonna be collecting data and we're gonna collaborate on this together.

So, . Again, back to that, just open communication and making sure that everyone's on the same page and collecting data and sharing that data with each other so that you can use all of that data [00:17:00] to make data-driven decisions throughout the school year.

michelle_andrews: that's really cool. Um, my first, and at this time only year working at a school, it was my first year as an S L P, and I definitely, um, felt so lost writing IEPs. I just felt thrown into it. And, um, I think what you're saying is collaborating with the teachers so far even ahead is so, so important because I would, I would open up, try to write my i e P for the speech only kid, and. It was just like, present levels of performance. I don't know what they're doing in the classroom. I felt so lost. Um, so yes, just even, you know, be the first one to make that, uh, connection with the teacher. Be like, Hey, let's meet, let's talk about this. Um, and you know,

don't, don't be afraid to, to speak up because. As an Ss l p, if you're just sitting there trying to write all this stuff, you really need collaboration with the teacher. You need to be able to talk that out. Um, that's not really information that you even really have. You really have to, to talk it out with, with other,

Track 1: Yes.

michelle_andrews: [00:18:00] other professionals that know that child and are in that classroom. Very true. Let's go over more of the required Criteria of the I e P goal.

Track 1: All right, so talking back about the different criteria of an I E P goal, there are quite a few different criteria that you can use, but the most frequent, frequently used ones in terms of academic goals are really accuracy, duration, frequency, and then distance, which isn't typically a. An academic goal.

It's more of a fine motor, gross motor goal, but we'll talk about that here in a second. So accuracy is where you see that 80% mastery, right? It's usually determined and measured as a percentage. And what that mastery looks like for every skill that you teach is gonna be different. Um, back to that 80%, some goals can be a hundred percent.

Based on data, you could have a 40% accuracy. So just . Making sure that the skill mastery for accuracy measures what the data is telling you. Duration is used in terms of time. [00:19:00] So a student will do this specific task or complete this lesson or attend to the lesson for a certain number of minutes, so Stephanie will.

Um, stand in line for lunch for, with, for five minutes without touching a peer or whatever it may be. That's a terrible goal, but just to get the idea of the general gist of using duration. Then you have frequency, so that's generally measured in trials, so, That's where you see the three out of four trials, or four out of five trials.

And so you also will maybe see this written as consecutive trials. And the difference between just written writing trials and then writing consecutive trials is, is the word consecutive. So consecutive means back to back. So if you write, Stephanie will perform this task in three of four consecutive trials.

That means that in , Four trials. If Stephanie needs to perform this, this [00:20:00] specific skill to that accuracy three times in a row, or it's not considered mastery when it's just general three outta four times, you could survey Stephanie or give her trials four different trials and as long as she gets three outta the four trials correct.

That's gonna show mastery. So really, again, thinking about that skill, what is best going to showcase the data? What data do we need to show mastery of the skill? And then thinking back to . What criteria will best showcase that you can also double up on it. Um, so like you heard me say when I was talking about don't use 80% accuracy all the time.

Well, a lot of the time you'll see 80% accuracy in three or four trials, so you can double up on accuracy and frequency. I do see that done frequently and I typically write my goals that way. Um, I wouldn't say that there's like a right or a wrong way to do it, or do you have to do that? It's just generally how we typically do it for whatever reason.

And then distance is going to be in terms of distance, right? So Stephanie will prepare her, propel [00:21:00] herself in her wheelchair for 15 feet, or Stephanie will throw a ball with her left hand for a minimum of five feet or whatever it may be. So typically distance is used for gross motor and fine motor. You do have some different measurements for accuracy when it comes to behaviors and things like that.

Like latency. Um, I'm trying to think of the other ones off the top of my head, but there are other ones that we generally use for behavior goals themselves.

michelle_andrews: Okay. Awesome. So when you were going through what's all in the i e P you talked about, there's the i e P goals and then there's objectives, so.

Track 1: Yes. Yes.

michelle_andrews: let's talk about the difference between the two. Is that like long term versus short term, or go ahead and, and tell us what the difference is.

Track 1: Yes, so there is a big difference. Well, let me, let me start with this. Did you know there's a difference, one between objectives and goals, but then there's also a difference between i e p objectives and I E P benchmarks. [00:22:00] So there is a difference between i e p goals and objectives. And when you think about goals and objectives, I want you to think, I like using the analogy of a staircase.

So your I E P objectives are gonna be each step leading up to that top landing, which is your overall overarching i e p goal. So your overall arching i e p goal is the entire staircase, and you've reached mastery. When you get to the top, your objectives are gonna be those smaller steps in between to get you to mastery.

Um, same with benchmarks. Benchmarks are those same smaller steps, but how objectives and benchmarks are written differently. And so I can give you an example. Goal. So for example, objectives are they typically don't match an annual i e P goals. So they're gonna provide students with supports they need to reach that mastery, and they're gonna build on one another.

So think about objectives as breaking down a skill into those necessary or smaller steps that are gonna make up the larger skill. So let's just say, and I love using math. Math is like, I love teaching math, so I like using math goals. But let's say that our annual i e P goal is, By the end [00:23:00] of quarter four, when given addition and subtraction problems within 50, Stephanie's gonna

draw a picture to help her complete the problems in three outta four trials with 70% accuracy.

So that's our annual goal. That's the top of our staircase. That's where we want Stephanie to be within this annual i e p for each of the objectives, we're gonna break down that skill into smaller steps that will build upon each other to get to that larger goal. So maybe by the end of first quarter, when presented with the name of a number, between one and 50.

In verbal or written format, Stephanie's going to identify the correct number in the number format or written format with 50% accuracy, and so they'll maybe be by the end of quarter two. Given visual, verbal and tactile cues, Stephanie's gonna use one-to-one correspondence to count objectives up to 50 and independently with 50% accuracy, maybe by the end of quarter three.

Then, given visual supports and manipulatives, she's gonna perform single digit addition and subtraction with 50% accuracy. Now, I will say, depending on the student, going from identifying a number [00:24:00] to completing addition problems, um, within 50 is a huge skill gap, right? That generally a student may not be able to reach within a year.

But to give you the example of how those skills build upon one another, that's a really good example for i e p objectives. Now, when it comes to benchmarks, . Benchmarks are gonna describe specific progress in those smaller steps. So it's generally going to be the same exact skill, but you're gonna break down, break it down into smaller steps.

So for example, um, Stephanie will trace and then print which terrible i e p goal because tracing and printing are two different skills. So, but we're gonna roll with it. Stephanie's gonna trace and then print 26 letters of the alphabet with 75% accuracy. So that's the overarching annual i e P goal. So maybe the smaller steps are, first we're gonna start with printing 13 lowercase letters of the alphabet.

And then maybe in the second quarter we're gonna do the other 13 lowercase letters. And then in the third quarter, we're gonna [00:25:00] work on 13 uppercase letters. And then in the last quarter of the year of that annual ip, we're gonna work on the remaining 13 um, letters of the uppercase alphabet. So by the end of the year, we'll have all 26.

Lowercase, all 26 uppercase. And so that's really the difference between writing an objective and a benchmark. Is there one that's better over the other? There's

not. Um, they both get you to the end result. And it really comes down to how your school wants you to write those i e p objectives or benchmarks.

And a lot of the time you'll see teachers and I e P teams use objective and benchmarks interchangeably. Um, but they do have a difference when you write them and now you know what they are.

Michelle Andrews: Awesome, thanks. Okay. I'm thinking I'm gonna throw out some SS I p objectives and goals, and then you let

me know if that's, , a true objective versus a goal, just to make sure that we all have this fully wrapped, we can fully wrap our mind around this. Okay. So what I was thinking while you were talking about that is as an S L [00:26:00] P, , say I have a child that needs to work on the SS sound.

So maybe their goal, their i e p goal. could be something like, , just the, the bones of it. Don't take this as the ac uh, actual, um, full thing, but just that uh, because we haven't gotten that far yet in this. But, so they're working on ss sound and sentences with probably maybe even 50% accuracy, and that can be like their goal, but then to get to that, At the end of the year, maybe they need to start with an objective of working on SS, just in single words, or maybe even isolation, and then, or maybe within single words, the first quarter is that you want them to do that with 20% accuracy and then the second quarter, 40% accuracy to kind of work their way up to then the i e P goal.

Does that sound like what you mean?

Track 1: Yes. So if you are the second example that you shared, so if they're gonna work on the SS sound [00:27:00] and you're changing the accuracy, that's gonna be more of a benchmark so you can change the support. So maybe with, you know, verbal supports or . Uh, gestural supports or visual models, you know, Stephanie will be able to make the s sound with 20% accuracy to start, and then maybe by the end of the year it's 60% accuracy or whatever it may be when you, that would be a benchmark.

And so you can a hundred percent do that. And then the other example you gave was the SS sound in sentences would be the overall goal, and then maybe it's just in isolation and then it's in words, and then it's in one sentence, and then maybe it's in multiple sentences. That would be more of an objective.

Yes.

michelle_andrews: Okay, so just changing something small like amount of cues that you're giving the child, that's

benchmark, but then if you're changing,

okay, they're gonna go to isolation, to words, to then sentences. Those are. Walking your walking up the staircase of the objectives to, to

the goal. Okay, got it. Okay. The, that, that's a great way to, think [00:28:00] about it for myself and hopefully other SLPs out there. , so next, okay, I think we've done some examples of goals, but, , can you give some more examples of the full, i e p goals? , Let's try to think of some speechy ones a little bit. , um, let's see. Say, let's do something different than, , even articulation. Maybe they're working on, , answering w

questions.

Track 1: Yes.

michelle_andrews: How about, how about a goal for that? Let, let's, um, act like you're the teacher. I'm the s l

Track 1: Yeah.

michelle_andrews: let's talk

Track 1: Oh, you're gonna put me

michelle_andrews: here.

Track 1: Alright, back to the smart aspect. So there are different formulas that you can use to make sure you hit all the parts. I really like to do a given, insert the blank. The student will be able to insert the blank with the accuracy and the measurement. So if we're gonna do well questions, so given a text on the student's instructional level, and then [00:29:00] you could say, Stephanie will be able to answer.

What questions, so who, what, when, where, why questions about the text with, I'm gonna throw a number out there just because based on data with 90% accuracy in three or four trials, so how you're being very specific with giving an instructional text. You could also be even more specific here and say the

specific d r A level, um, a specific lexile level, a specific set of decodable readers, whichever you're using.

You can also list that in the present levels. You're gonna wanna do that as well to let them know like, Stephanie's d r a level is this, and this is where she's currently reading on a first grade, you know, second month level. So that way they could go back and look at it. So being very specific with that.

And then saying, you know, here's what I want her to do. I want her to be able to tell me the WHA answers to a text. And so [00:30:00] writing out who, what, when, where, why. So maybe I know sometimes wha people include the how. I know I usually do. But being really specific, or maybe it's just, we'll answer what questions.

And you could do objectives for that too. So answering who, what, when, where, why is actually five different skills.

So maybe in your objectives you're gonna write. Then Stephanie will answer what questions about an in an instructional text or a text on their instructional level. She's gonna answer why questions.

She's gonna answer how questions. So your larger goal can be that answer why questions, and then your objectives can be those smaller steps. The who? The what, the when, the where the why

michelle_andrews: Okay. That's so helpful that that was my next question I was about to ask you, because I think sometimes SLPs or or anyone writing an I E P Often get nervous, like, oh, do I need to just stuff all these things in one goal or in one objective, but breaking it down or even like sometimes even with speech, with speech sounds, I've, you see some goals sometimes that are written, like, student will [00:31:00] produce s l r and it's like, let's break it down a little bit more.

Um,

Track 1: that's a lot of skills in one goal.

michelle_andrews: it's a lot of skills, right? But then to break it down in the objectives,

um, a little more specifically too, , even from there, that was a great example. Do we wanna do another example? That was kind of fun,

Um,

Track 1: go for it.

michelle_andrews: kind of, let's see, what's a common one that you would collaborate with an SS l p on?

Track 1: Uh, we do a lot of comprehension. Goals. Let me, hold on. Let me grab my, my skill matrix that I have and I can pull up,

I should just leave this binder on my desk because I reference it every single day. , like, it's ridiculous. So let's do phonologic. I'm just gonna open up to one. So phonological awareness. Um,

michelle_andrews: Okay.

Track 1: so recognizing and producing rhyming words. Which is not specific at all because there's so many different rhyming words,

michelle_andrews: Right.

Track 1: you want to, when you're writing a goal, um, recognize and produce [00:32:00] rhyming words. You want to say which specific rhyming words. So are you doing, um, cat bat at sat? Are you doing what, what word families are you doing and targeting within that specific goal? Um, so you could say, we'll, we'll do C, B, C. Uh, word families recognize and produce rhyming words in C v C word families, right?

So consonant, foul. Consonant. And then your objectives could break it down into what specific word families do you wanna work on? Short, a long, a, um, which would be a lot of objectives. You don't want to put too many in there. Um, so just making sure that you're, you're being very specific, but that's definitely something you could collaborate with an SS l P on and English Language Arts skills definitely help a lot, uh, with, with collaborating with an S L P.

There's a lot of things that we can collaborate on together when it comes to those e l A skills.

michelle_andrews: Very good. [00:33:00] So how many objectives would be too many? What's a good

Track 1: Oh, that's a,

michelle_andrews: to shoot for?

Track 1: Great question. So in the law, there's nothing that says a student has to have, you know, so many objectives or so many i e p goals. And so I don't even like to give a number in terms of like best practice, like you should have eight. I really feel it depends on the student themselves.

So what are the skill priorities for that specific year? No matter how old the student is, what are the skill priorities? And this is where the parent's input comes into play a lot too. What do they need? . What, where do they see their student in the next year and how can we help that child get there? So skill priorities is always the first thing.

And then thinking realistically, like how many i e p goals can this student work on in an annual year? 30 probably isn't the right number because if you think about setting 30 goals for yourself for a year, I'm already overwhelmed and I feel like I'm setting myself up for failure [00:34:00] because I probably am.

Um, Experts say when, and my business coach says, when you're setting goals for yourself, that eight to 10 is usually the sweet spot. Um, it shouldn't be three, you should be more. And I was like, eight. That sounds like so many, but you really break them down into different quarters and different times of year for business goals and things like that.

So thinking that in terms of setting goals for students, when it comes to objectives, though, some schools will tell you specifically, , your each i e P goal needs to have two objectives, or three objectives, or four objectives. So one, think of skill priorities and think realistically, how many skills can this student master and achieve in one annual year.

But then also following the policy that your school has set for how many objectives each i e p goal needs to have.

michelle_andrews: Okay, that makes sense. just being realistic about

what you think the child can, can achieve in the year.

Track 1: Yeah.

Michelle Andrews: Okay. So each school district might have different policies on how many [00:35:00] objectives. So they might tell you, please write this many. Okay. So you'll just

need to follow your school district's policies.

Track 1: Yes. And so actually when it comes to objectives, I'm gonna go in, I'm gonna, I'm gonna be a, a law nerd here for a minute. 'cause I was excited when I learned this. So for our students that are in self-contained, we have to write. Objectives for them per the I D E A law for students that are in a self-contained and take, hold on, let me rephrase that.

Students who are in the alternate state testing route, so students who take that alternate alternative state testing have to have objectives for all of their I E P goals. The law says if students are taking just the same tests that the neurotypical same aged peers are taking, they don't need objectives.

However, the Department of Education then steps in and leaves it up to the states. So if you have students who are not taking this, the same state test that their gen ed peers are taking and they have objectives, it's probably because your state [00:36:00] has stepped in and say, Nope, they do. They still need them.

Um, so for students who do take the alternative state test, they have to have objectives legally. Per the I D E A federal law. Now your state law, again, might step in and say, yes, you need to have objectives, and then your school also can step in and say, yes, they have to have objectives. So just keep that in mind too.

Michelle Andrews: Okay, thanks. Yeah, that's a great information to have for sure. Um, okay, I know we talked a little bit about the importance of collaborating with teachers and other professionals, but, um, Can you give us some more tips and tricks on what that actually looks like? How you fit that into your schedule as a teacher, as an SS I P? Um, how can we make that easier?

Track 1: Yeah, so this is really going to change team to team and really the teacher. S L P pair that you're working together. It might be different for every S L P you work with. It might be different as an S L P for every teacher you work with, but what you really need to do is just set intentional [00:37:00] ti time aside and figure out how frequently you're going.

We going to meet to talk about the goals and how the student is performing towards those goals. Are they making progress? Are they not? What's working,

what's not working? This might look very different. This might be us actually meeting in person to talk about it. It might just meet us having a shared Google form or a shared Google Drive folder where we're putting in notes for each of our sessions.

We're putting in our digital data. We can all see it. It's all graphed and just, you know, again, collaborating. . Via, you know, the internet. Um, this might look like you doing digital, but then meeting once a month to discuss it. It really depends on, Again, the S L P teacher team, what works best for both of you, and it's really important at the beginning of the year or whenever you're starting at a new school to meet with the teachers that you're working with or teachers meeting with all of your related service providers and having that open communication about [00:38:00] what your strengths are as a teacher and how y'all can compliment each other, but then also like

How are we gonna collect data on these goals together? What is the expectation? How many data points do we need? And who's gonna be doing what when? How are we gonna be sharing this data with each other? Because it shouldn't just be we come to the progress notes and you know, every quarter, and I'm putting my stuff in and you're putting your stuff in, and that's it.

We wanna make sure that we're talking about and analyzing it, so, . Setting that intentional time aside, you can also write that into the I E P, um, making sure, and you, you would write it into this section. And this is the section that's called something everywhere else, but it's under the services and support section and you can write teacher trainings into here.

So if. If a student gets a new A a C device, typically the s l P, in my experience, I've always worked with my S L P to learn how to use this a a C device, what that's gonna look like. So that training is actually written into the I E P in this section. And so you [00:39:00] can write team collaboration time into an I E P as well to make sure that you do get it.

You don't have to. 'cause a lot of the time we collaborate without ever writing it into an I e P. There's so much more that we do that. Than what is written into IEPs all of the time. Um, but if you're struggling to find that time or, you know, you, you, your admin isn't giving you that time during the day or during a month or whatever it may be, write it into the I E P because then it does have to happen and they have to figure it out.

So you have that option. But just setting intentional time aside, like I said, to, to collaborate and communicate about the data and what the expectations are for

each member. Is really just the starting point. And then you guys together get to mold what that's gonna look like for, for you as a team. And then you, y'all can change things up if it's not working as, as needed.

So just set intentional time aside, communicate and analyze that data together and it, it will change the game for sure.

Michelle Andrews: Those are [00:40:00] such great, realistic . Suggestions. That was really good. , okay. So you touched on data collection.

Track 1: Yes.

Michelle Andrews: Let's talk about that a little bit more. 'cause that's definitely a part of your goals. You have to collect data on the goals that you wr, that you have written. What are some ideas for streamlining that data collection?

Track 1: Yeah, so again, this really goes back to your criteria. So when it comes to writing i e P goals, so your present levels are gonna tell you essentially what i e p goals you need to write, and then when you're writing your I E P goals and you choose your criteria, for the most part, it's gonna tell you

Really how to collect data. So when you're thinking about your data collection and you're writing i e p goals, you wanna make sure that you're thinking about how you're gonna be collecting that data on that specific skill. Like what is the best . Avenue how my best going to show the student is mastering this skill or is not mastering this skill.

And so you really have to think with the end in mind here and how [00:41:00] you need to collect data and then how you're best gonna choose criteria to meet that data and get it to show what you need it to show. Um, so that's really step one. And that is sometimes more thinking backwards and the data collection in mind and writing an i e P goal is probably

What takes the longest when it comes to i e P writing? . Um, and then when it comes to data collection, really you have so many options. You have paper pencil options, which I am a, a big proponent of. I just use sticky notes and then I transfer that into a, a one form where all of my students' i e p goals are on one sheet.

And so when I do progress for monitoring or progress reports, I just have one sheet and I can input it all. But if you are more of a digital person, it really helps with graphing. Your, your data points when it comes to analyzing that data,

because you should be analyzing the data. There's so many ways to do digital data collection.

You have Google Forms, but you have different apps as well. A lot of the [00:42:00] programs that teachers use and SLPs use online and like boom cards, they collect data for you as students go through the skills or through the activities. So using a variety of just different methods and what works best for you and the team.

and then really just implementing those and analyzing it. That is probably the biggest part. Like you can have all the data in the world, but if you don't analyze it and know what it's saying, how do you make data-driven decisions from just a couple of numbers on a page? So you wanna make sure that you're analyzing that data.

More often, and I know I said this earlier, more often than once a marking period, because if you need to update a student's interventions or a student's supports, or if you're noticing Stephanie really needs some more service time with me as the speech path, like you should be recommending that when you notice that, when you have that data to prove that and not waiting a couple of weeks or a couple of months.

So really just analyzing the data is probably the biggest part. [00:43:00] And then just . There is no right or wrong way to collect data, so find the system that works best for you. Again, whether that's paper, pencil, or you have data forms or data sheets or digital data or different apps, like you'll really find what works best for you and it can change.

It can change real fast depending on the skill. It can change based off of your. The students in your classroom, it can change off of a para being taken out of your classroom. Um, it can change year to year, so it just be flexible. All individuals on an I E B team are very flexible. We're very, very good at it, and so just be flexible and just know that you have other options out there than what you're currently doing and ask for help if you are unsure.

michelle_andrews: That's such a great answer. As an SS l p, I know we have Courses that are hours long on taking data. But I feel like in just a few minutes you summed that up really well, That was awesome. Um, which then does what you talked about just now kind of leads into my next [00:44:00] question. , what if you do need to change the goal before the next I e P meeting? , say the child miraculously mastered all of their goals and objectives very quickly, or it's just

not working out that you can just tell they're not gonna Reach the, the annual i e p goal in time. ? What do you do next?

Track 1: Yeah, so if you have the data to show that a student mastered a skill or is not gonna meet mastery, your first thing that you should do is talk to the parent and let them know. But you can have an amendment or some states it's called a revision meeting. At any time in the school year, you can have as many as are needed in that school year.

An i e P is not. Set in stone. It's a living, breathing document. So if at any time you feel like your student needs more supports or less supports, or we need to change this goal, or we need a new goal because we mastered this goal in two months and we still have eight months left of this i e p, or that's not 12, we have 10 months left of this i e p, um, you can change it at any time.

So just know that, [00:45:00] but make sure that you're communicating with the parent and that you have the data to back up what you're proposing because if you don't have the data to back it up, Your team isn't gonna be able to stand behind you and say, yeah, let's give 'em more service minutes. Or especially if you're taking things away, you're not gonna be able to do that without the data to back up that the student isn't using that support or they're not, that's not helping them, and we should try something else.

So if you think something needs to change in an i E P call, an I E P meeting and then talk to the parent and have the data to back it up.

Michelle Andrews: Okay. Yeah, having that data is very important and being able to document, this is why I'm saying what I'm saying. Uh, yeah, if that makes sense. Let's talk a little bit about presenting an I E P meeting. I, this is, Slightly, I mean, it's still on the topic of, of IEPs, but just since you're such an expert about IEPs, I definitely want your insight on this. I know when I had to be the leader and the one basically talking the whole time, and yes, I know I have a podcast, I talk a [00:46:00] lot, but, um, thrown in my first year at to school, I was just so shocked that I had to be this leader in this professional meeting. I know it depends on who's the case manager of that i e p, but what are your tips on presenting an I E P.

Track 1: Yeah, so in some states, and I've, I've worked in both. So in some states, the teacher that is the caseload manager and they're responsible for everything, so . Scheduling the meeting, holding the meeting, writing the I E P, finalizing the I E P, all of the things. And then other states, there is a separate

caseload manager from the special education teacher, and that caseload manager is the one that's gonna set up the meeting, run the meeting, do all of the things.

So first step is just kind of figuring out how it works in your specific school setting and who's doing all of those things. But when it comes to i e P meetings, there's so many things I could say. I'm just gonna keep it real short though. Make sure there's an agenda for the I E P meeting. So what type of meeting is it going to be?

is it gonna be an annual i e p? Is it an amendment or revision? Is this a [00:47:00] reevaluation? Is it an eligibility? Is it an initial? There's so many different types of i E P meetings. Make sure everyone at the meeting knows why you're there and what the purpose of that meeting is, and then making sure everyone at the table is part of the table.

We don't want anyone sitting on the outside. Skirts and we don't want parents just sitting on one side of the table and then the school professionals are sitting on the other side. You really wanna just make, be inviting and make sure that everyone feels welcomed. And then going through the i e p in, in order and stopping after each section to ask the team.

And more importantly, asking the parents if they have any questions, any concerns, um, any suggestions, and really just stopping and asking them for their advice. And then if they need, if you need to take a break or whatever it may be, like, we can absolutely do that. But just going through the i e P in order, explaining things, having the data to, to back up your decisions to show your baseline graph your data, to show how the student did last year on i e p goals, have work [00:48:00] samples so that you can show how a student is doing.

That's always a really great part of it. Um, but yeah, when it comes to presenting at i e P meetings, just . Have an agenda and go through the agenda in order, and just when you're going through the I E P or a specific section of an I E P, especially the goals, stop after each one and ask clarifying questions, and that's really helpful in making sure that everyone's on the same page and understands what a goal is, how it's gonna be implemented, who's gonna collect data, and all of those things.

michelle_andrews: I love that. So the parents and everyone else in the meeting don't feel like you're just reading to them quickly. You know, they really feel like they're a part

of it, and they can answer, they, they can ask questions to you and stuff during each section. I love that. I know I, if you're a first time school, s l p or you're gonna move, move to the schools. I just, yeah, I definitely wanna encourage you that If your first i e p meeting you'll probably be sweating. It'll be nerve wracking if you're the leader of it, but, um, each one you do, it'll get so much better. , just like my [00:49:00] podcast, I feel like the first one I recorded, I have improved since then. time you, you do something, you're gonna get better and better.

So, , don't let your first i e p meeting even dictate how you feel like you're going to present. It'll get easier and easier each time. this has been so, so helpful. , Let's do what is one last closing statement or pep talk you can leave our listeners with.

Track 1: My biggest piece of advice for when it comes to i e p writing an i e P process is don't I e p alone. Don't go out alone. , you have an entire team to help you write an i e p. If you have questions, please ask. , if you're unsure of something, ask if you don't know how to implement something, or if you want to try collaborating on i e p goals.

ask. You have, again, you have a whole i e p team behind you. You're a part of this great process that helps students succeed and show mastery and really grow long term, and it's one of the best things [00:50:00] that comes out of special education. Like our jobs as educators and related service providers and i e P team members is, it's a heavy one at times and our paperwork is a lot, but it, it matters.

Every single day what we do matters and we have such power to either build up a student or tear them down. So if you're unsure of how to implement something or write something or what something means, just ask because you have a team behind you and so don't i e p alone.

michelle_andrews: I love that. That's so perfect and how collaborating is so, so important and you, you don't have to i e p alone, you know, you have that team, you have that support.

Thank you for listening. We hope you learned something today. All of the references and resources throughout the episode are listed in the show notes and also listed on the Pep Talk podcast for SLPs website. If you want to learn more about Stephanie, make sure to check out her Instagram. At Mrs d's corner and the intentional i e p. Where she shares helpful information. Stephanie, [00:51:00] thank you again for joining me here today.

Track 1: Yes. Thank you so much for having me.