Answers to Questions Posed During Pearson aimsweb Webinar:

Standards-Aligned IEP Goals for Frequent Progress Monitoring

Pearson Webinar

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This document provides written answers to the questions submitted for this webinar. For simplicity purposes, I've used Reading-Curriculum-Based Measurement (R-CBM) a simple oral reading measure that assesses general reading skill. The opinions expressed are solely my own.

A recording of this webinar along with a copy of the PowerPoint presentation can be found on the aimswebPlus website under resources, and the aimsweb website: <mark>*www.aimsweb.com/Mark-Shinn*</mark>

Other materials on this topic, including the PowerPoint slides, handouts, and articles to read, also can be viewed on Dr. Shinn's website (markshinn.org)

> **1. If there is lack of progress on a goal as evidenced in progress monitoring data, Dr. Shinn is advocating that the goal be revised before the annual review date for the IEP?**

When an IEP needs to be revised to address "any lack of expected progress" as specified in IDEA, it is not the goal that needs to be revised. It is the intervention. Much like if your goal is to loose 10 pounds in 10 weeks (1 pound per week), if after a few weeks you're not meeting your goal, the smart thing would be to change your weight loss program, not lower your goal. Lowering the goal when there expected rate of progress isn't there is the *easiest* thing to do, but it doesn't increase the likelihood of the special education (SE) intervention meeting the student's unique needs and reduce the gap.

> **2. Questions on standards-based goals for high school age children:**
> **3. What is the best way to the link standards for grade levels and make them relevant for students with moderate/severe disabilities, especially at the middle and high school levels.**

Although I didn't have enough time to flesh out fully how to align IEP goals to "grade-level" standards at the secondary level, let me start by reiterating what I did get a chance to mention. I believe that *for K-8* students with severe basic skill discrepancies that warrant SE intervention, a *norm-based approach* to decision making (e.g., goals, screening criterion) makes the most sense. Is this Grade 4 student significantly discrepant from other Grade 4 students in Reading that SE intervention and specially designed instruction is needed? If that same student's present level of performance (PLOP) is Grade 2, it makes the most sense to write an IEP annual goal that *reduces this achievement gap* (i.e., to be successful in Grade 4, grade-level material) with a norm-based *Criterion for Acceptable Performance* (*CAP*), and a statement about how that CAP increases the probability of passing a grade-level,

state standards test. A description of the process of how *aimsweb* developed their CAPs linked to 20 state tests based on 32,000 students is provided in

Pearson. (2011). *aimsweb State Prediction User's Guide* (pp. 1-21). Bloomington, MN: Pearson.

In this Grade 4 student example, the goal may be:

In 34 weeks (1 year), Matt will read 120 words read correctly with less than 3 errors from Grade 4 Reading Assessment Passages.

From a Norm-Based Interpretation of this IEP goal, attainment would mean the student has significantly decreased the reading achievement performance gap from peers, improving from the 5th Percentile in Fall to the 48th Percentile in Spring.

Standards-Based Interpretation of Grade 4 of this IEP goal, attainment would mean the student has increased the probabilities of passing a Grade 4 standards-based test from a 10% Chance of Meeting Standards in Fall to a 60% chance of passing in the Spring.

In middle school, the question may be whether this Grade 7 student is significantly discrepant from other Grade 7 students in Reading that SE intervention and specially designed instruction is needed? A Grade 7 student who reads 90 WRC would be below the 10th percentile and less than a 50% chance of passing a Grade 7 state standards test. If this middle school student's present level of performance (*PLOP*) was Grade 5, it would make the most sense to write an IEP goal that *reduces this achievement gap* (i.e., to be successful in Grade 7, grade-level material).

For example, with the middle school student, a reasonable goal would be:

In 34 weeks (1 year), Matt will read 150 words read correctly with less than 3 errors from Grade 7 Reading Assessment Passages.

Achieving this a goal of reading 150 WRC in Grade 7 would not only mean the student has reduced the normative achievement gap, it would increase the likelihood of passing a Grade 7 standards-based test to better than 80%.

In both these cases, there is a clear alignment between the IEP goal and progress monitoring in *grade-level material*. But the argument of grade-level standards alignment is strengthened by these additional features:

1. The progress monitoring tests (e.g., aimsweb) have been reviewed favorably for use in frequent progress monitoring by a number of Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Centers charged with evaluating these types of tests.
2. Are consistent with professional norms of practice as described in special education journals such as The Journal of Special Education, Exceptional Children, and in the special education literature.
3. Are content valid with college readiness standards and, in fact, represent the idea of "single rich tasks" that can be used to assess a number of different standards.
4. Are aligned to CAPs that predict likelihood of passing a grade-level state standards test.

In light of the November OSERS memorandum, I would ensure that there is a clearly stated, data-based rationale for the *Criterion for Acceptable Performance* (*CAP*), that adds a statement of the likelihood of passing a standards-based test based on attainment of the CAP to the normative rationale.

The challenge for decades at the high school level is that a *norm-based model* for basic skills discrepancies that require SE doesn't make sense. A Grade 10 student may be discrepant in basic skills reading from other Grade 10 students, but that student may *not* be a person that requires the basic skills intervention SE provides. To me, the model that makes the most sense is the one identified by Gary Germann, a Director of Special Education who ultimately built *aimsweb* upon his retirement. See the references below.

Tindal, G. A., & Germann, G. (1991). Mainstream consultation agreements in secondary schools. In G. Stoner, M. R. Shinn, & H. M. Walker (Eds.), *Interventions for achievement and behavior problems* (pp. 495-518.). Bethesda, MD: NASP.

Tindal, G. A., Shinn, M. R., Walz, L., & Germann, G. (1987). Mainstream consultation in secondary settings: An evaluation of the Pine County Model. *The Journal of Special Education, 21*, 94-106.

Tindal, G. A., Wesson, C., Deno, S. L., Germann, G., & Mirkin, P. K. (1985). The Pine County Model for Special Education Delivery: A Data-based System. In T. Kratochwill (Ed.), *Advances in school psychology* (Vol. IV, pp. 223-250). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

 In Germann's model, the performance discrepancy at high school is not a *normative* one. That is, that Grade 10 student should not be defined as needing a SE basic skills intervention if they are discrepant on, say, a Grade 10 reading passage. In part, this problem is that there really are no "Grade 10 basic skills" and as I will comment on later in this document, it is both pragmatically and conceptually difficult to create and use Grade 10 basic skills reading passages for assessment purposes. Historically, basic skills instruction stops at Grade 6 or Grade 7. Furthermore, most state minimum basic skill proficiencies are defined at Grades 6 or 7.

Instead a grade-level normative approach to secondary special education decision-making, Germann operationalized what I have coined as a "standards-based" performance discrepancy. The question is "at what level is a high school student's basic skills so discrepant such that they may not be benefiting from content area instruction and they require an intensive intervention to support school success?

In 2015, I had a contract with the Tennessee Department of Education to help them flesh out their secondary RTI model (RTI2). We defined a high school student who may need intensive intervention as those students who fell below an identified *minimum basic skill proficiency* (*MBSP*). If a Local Education Agency (LEA), defined the MBSP as end-of-Grade 6 performance, Grade 6 *aimsweb* assessment materials would be the basis for screening and for most students who receive SE, the target for the IEP goal.

A Grade 10 student who receives SE whose LEA has defined MBSP as end-of-Grade 6 performance would have their annual IEP goal written with a CAP linked to a probability of passing a Grade 6 state standards test. Alternatively, if an LEA chose an end-of-Grade 7 performance level as the MBSP, a high school student's IEP annual goal would be written for the student to be successful when reading Grade 7 passage with a CAP linked to probability of passing a Grade 7 standards-based test.

For more information on Secondary MTSS/RTI and special education decision making, see the answers I prepared in response to questions after a webinar I did for Pearson on Secondary Assessment and Decision Making in 2013 that is attached and the following book chapter:

Shinn, M. R., Windram, H. S., & Bollman, K. A. (2016). Implementing RtI in Secondary Schools. In S. R. Jimerson, M. K. Burns, & A. M. VanDerHeyden (Eds.), Handbook of Response to Intervention (pp. 563-586). New York: Springer.

a. *If a student is functioning at a 1st grade level but is in 9th grade what level to you match him to?*

I would write 2 IEP annual goals.

The first goal would be a *frequent progress monitoring goal that reduces the gap*. For example, if this student's PLOP is Grade 1, being successful in reading a Grade 4 passage would mean reducing the normative achievement gap. I would monitor this student's progress weekly using Grade 4 passages.

The second goal would be one that shows the student *is increasing the likelihood of passing a standards-test for minimum basic skills proficiency* (MBSP). If end of Grade 6 performance represents MBSP, increasing the odds of meeting those standards from 3% to 20%, although not ideal, would show that the student is reducing the achievement gap significantly. Yes, the student is still significantly discrepant, but as is obvious, it seems that eliminating an achievement gap this significant with a single year of intervention would be unrealistic. For a number of reasons, I would not monitor this student's progress weekly, but I would complete a Benchmark assessment for this student three times per year (or as often as grades are provided to typically achieving students) for use in reporting growth against a grade-level (but not this student's chronological grade-level), MBSP standard at periodic and annual reviews.

b. *What about students at the high school level, with education level at the awareness level how would we write goals.*

I'm not sure I understand what "awareness level" would be, especially at the high school level. To the greatest degree possible, I would write 2 IEP annual goals.

The first goal would be a *frequent progress monitoring goal that reduces the gap*.

The second goal would be one that shows the student *is increasing the likelihood of passing a standards-test for minimum basic skills proficiency* (MBSP).

4. **Questions on general discrepancy:**
    a. *What about a student who cannot read or write at all?*

I'm not sure I understand what "at all" means. To me, that could mean a Grade 3 student is performing at the 5th percentile compared to Grade 3 students. Or it could mean that a Grade 1 student reads just a few words correctly.

I always want a goal that would be monitored frequently (weekly) that reduces the gap. If that single goal is in grade level material and the CAP includes a statement about likelihood of passing a grade-level standards test, then I would be comfortable. If the achievement discrepancy is more severe, I would include a second goal shows the student *is increasing the likelihood of passing a standards-test for minimum basic skills proficiency* (MBSP). I would monitor that using a Benchmark assessment approach.

    b. *If your student is in 1st grade, but has not mastered kindergarten common core expectations, how are you supposed to work on grade level skills when they are not there yet?*

I always want a goal that would be monitored frequently that reduces the gap. If that single goal is in grade level material and the CAP includes a statement about likelihood of passing a grade-level standards test, then I would be comfortable. If the achievement discrepancy is more severe, I would include a second goal shows the student is increasing the likelihood of passing a standards-test for minimum basic skills proficiency (MBSP). I would monitor that using a Benchmark assessment approach.

    c. *How would the IEP goals look for a Life Skills 4th grade student performing at a Kinder level of comprehension and at a B1st oral reading?*

Same concept. I always want an IEP goal that would be monitored frequently that reduces the gap. If the achievement discrepancy is more severe, I would include a second goal shows the student is increasing the likelihood of passing a standards-test for minimum basic skills proficiency (MBSP).

    d. *What about children who can decode grade level materials?*

Difficult question to answer without more detail. What grade level? How do you know the student can "decode?" How well are they reading?

    e. *What about students with slow processing speeds? They may read accurately but not meet grade level benchmarks.*

I worry that you are confusing poor reading with "slow processing speeds." Kids aren't computers with different microprocessors. Some kids do some things more "slowly" because they don't do them well. That's a more simple interpretation.

How do you progress monitor writing goals? Writing is so subjective….

Written expression CBM (WE-CBM) is an under-used tool in the screening and progress monitoring toolbox. It is an authentic measure that is based on students writing a narrative given a story starter. Students are given 1 minute to think about what they will write and 3 minutes to write the best story they can. The simplest way to score it for most students is production. The total number of words they write (TWW). The score is not converted into a rate per minute. For example, a typical Grade 2 student typically writes between 20-30 words during the test. WE-CBM works well as a simple universal screener and for Benchmarking to show growth and development Grades 2-5. It's a good individual screener for older students suspected of having basic writing skill deficits. It also is a good progress monitoring test, although without intensive intervention, it is not as sensitive to improvement as R-CBM. WE-CBM is also less reliable because what students write is influenced by the topic and student interest. Weekly progress monitoring is desirable, but week-to-week differences can be large. I would consider using what is called a moving median as the score to record. It is important to not share the TWW with students are they will simply add more descriptive words. Another way to score for some students, especially those students who can produce, but their quality is lacking mechanically, syntactically, and semantically is the number of correct writing sequences (CWS). It is not useful to score all students this way. Writing goals is accomplished the same way as other areas using CBM with the exception of the lack of need for a Survey Level Assessment because the story starters are useful across grades rather than in a single grade. Ensure you have at least 3-5 WE-CBM scores and use the median to determine the PLOP. The CAP is written using a normative approach that reduces the writing achievement gap.

Deno, S. L., Marston, D., & Mirkin, P. (1982). Valid measurement procedures for continuous evaluation of written expression. Exceptional Children Special Education and Pediatrics: A New Relationship, 48, 368–371.

Fewster, S., & MacMillan, P. D. (2002). School-based evidence for the validity of curriculum- based measurement of reading and writing. Remedial and Special Education, 23, 149–156.

Gansle, K. A., Noell, G. H., VanDerHayden, A. M., Naquin, G. M., & Slider, N. J. (2002). Moving beyond total words written: The reliability, criterion validity, and time cost of alternative measures for curriculum-based measurement in writing. School Psychology Review, 31, 477–497.

Gansle, K. A., Noell, G. H., Vanderheyden, A. M., Slider, N. J., Hoffpauir, L. D., & Whitmarsh, E. L. (2004). An examination of the criterion validity and sensitivity to brief intervention of alternate curriculum-based measures of writing skill. Psychology in the Schools, 41, 291–300.

Jewell, J., & Malecki, C. K. (2005). The utility of CBM written language indices: An investigation of production-dependent, production-independent, and accurate-production scores. School Psychology Review., 34(1), 27–44.

McMaster, K., & Espin, C. A. (2007). Technical features of curriculum-based measurement in writing. The Journal of Special Education, 41(2), 68-84.

Powell-Smith, K. A., & Shinn, M. R. (2004). Administration and Scoring of Written Expression Curriculum-Based Measurement for Use in General Outcome Measurement. Eden Prairie, MN: Edformation, Inc.

Tindal, G., & Parker, R. (1989). Assessment of written expression for students in compensatory and special education programs. Journal of Special Education, 23, 169–183.

Tindal, G., & Parker, R. (1991). Identifying measures for evaluating written expression. Learning Disabilities Research and Practice, 6, 211–218.

Videen, J., Deno, S. L., & Marston, D. (1982). Correct word sequences: A valid indicator of proficiency in written expression (Vol. IRLD-RR-84). University of Minnesota, Institute for Research on Learning Disabilities.

Watkinson, J. T., & Lee, S. W. (1992). Curriculum-based measures of written expression for learning-disabled and nondisabled students. Psychology in the Schools, 29, 184–192.

Weissenburger, J. W., & Espin, C. A. (2005). Curriculum-based measures of writing across grade levels. Journal of School Psychology, 43, 153–169.

5. **Are you saying we can show progress by writing correct words per minute as a goal?**

For most students with severe discrepancies in basic skills writing, I would use both the TWW and CWS.

6. **Would you say that we should also use a curriculum that can give you and the students interventions to help them in area that they are struggling.**

Of course. Section (1412(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV) of IDEA states that an IEP is to "a statement of special education services and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practical." In 2016, we have so many very good

powerful intervention programs that can give students the specially designed instruction they need to reduce the achievement gap.

7. **Do you feel support facilitators should be doing a balance of inclusion and pull-out to assess progress?**

Good progress monitoring practices is not dependent on a philosophy of special education delivery nor "where" progress monitoring takes place. More important is the quality of the practices and the training the persons progress monitoring use and receive.

8. **My question is based on the following. I have been told that writing goals that are directly linked to aimsweb may not be appropriate because if the student does move and the district they move to does not have aimsweb then there is no way for them to be compliant with the goal. We currently use AimsWeb so I'm not worried about that but is there a way to write the goal without getting specific with AimsWeb grade levels?**

We don't engage (or not engage) in good practice practices because of future circumstances, but on the current ones. We engage in best practices now. Progress monitoring practices is just like any other IEP variable. Just like an IEP team can't ensure the student receives the same instruction, the intervention uses the same intervention program or has the same teacher, we can't ensure that the student will receive the same high quality progress monitoring practices you may provide them. In part, IDEA is designed to protect a student's needs when they change environments. A team is to convene within 30 to examine the student's *current* educational needs. Lots of things may change when a student moves.

For more detailed explanation of goals for writing, look to the response on pages 6-7.

9. **Should I use intensive intervention for assessing and aimsweb for standards?**

Of course. IDEA ensures students receive the specially designed instruction for their unique needs. Teacher-made interventions or re-teaching core curriculum are not likely to lead to meaningful growth that reduces the achievement discrepancy. If we want students to reduce the achievement gap, they *must learn more in the same period of time* as typically developing students. That requires more intensive intervention.

10. **How do you convince the district to hire more special education teachers/ speech therapist so that "intensive" services can be provided? The districts appear to overload the special education teachers, which results in providing "adequate" services. We are basically expected to "handle" our caseload.**

A different question than the topic of this webinar. That said, my first solution is not necessarily to add more people but to look at the tasks people currently do. As special educators, we often are bogged down by too much paperwork, of which long IEPs with silly goals that don't lead to scientifically sound progress monitoring practices. We tend to over-assess some things (e.g., to determine eligibility and annual, 3-year reviews) and have meetings that are way too long. SLPs typically lack a clear focus about who they provide direct services to (e.g., students with production/articulation needs, mechanics) and "speech and language services" for students who didn't qualify as SLD.

11. **Is there an assessment to measure Content in Spanish? How can I write IEPs relevant of literate students in other languages that is not ESL?**

Recent IES practices recommend early and explicit English language reading instruction for EL regardless of the language of instruction. For students who are so discrepant in their reading (or other basic skills) that they require special education, to me, it is clear that we cannot try to reduce the discrepancy in two languages when with most students we currently fail to reduce the achievement gap in one language. I don't believe IDEA was intended to define a disability as a student who was failing to learn to read in Spanish. I would write my goal, monitor progress, and most importantly, provide a high quality English language reading intervention, with appropriate native language support.

12. **Looking at AIMSweb it is only up to grade 8. Is there a high school version?**

As I said earlier, "high school basic skills" is really not very logical and technically, it is difficult to produce "grade-level basic skills assessment materials." Increases in text difficulty for older students typically come from increases in vocabulary and content knowledge requirements that are part of reading, but not as clear as basic skills reading. Lots of high school students have difficulty reading narrative and expository texts. It's a general education problem.

That said, there is an important role for CBM and aimsweb in high school decision making, from individual screening (no benchmarking), progress monitoring at Tiers 2 and 3, SE decision making from eligibility determination to IEP goals and progress monitoring, and annual and 3 year re-evaluations. See:

Shinn, M. R., Windram, H. S., & Bollman, K. A. (2016). Implementing RtI in Secondary Schools. In S. R. Jimerson, M. K. Burns, & A. M. VanDerHeyden (Eds.), *Handbook of Response to Intervention* (pp. 563-586). New York: Springer.

For our new program, aimswebPlus, the roadmap includes grades 9-12.

13. There seems to be a disconnect between AIMSweb IEP goals and standards-based instruction, especially at the junior high and high school level.

The problem is not with the measurement system. Aimsweb is designed for frequent basic skills progress monitoring, especially for IEPs, and for a variety of other decisions, including screening. The problem is with the focus of intervention, how students are defined as having problems that require SE, and related variables at the MS and HS level. Too often, students are referred for SE because they are failing science or social studies for example. Well, discrepancies in science and social studies are *not* special education problems. Nor would the solutions be special education solutions, although, sadly, that's where SE services are too often (mis)directed.

Here are a few of my favorite quotes from our nation's leading authorities on the topic of SE service delivery at the secondary level.

"Many secondary special educators may experience increased pressure from parents, administrators, general educators, and students to provide homework assistance and review or re-teach content-area subject matter.

Deshler, Ellis, and Lenz (1996) acknowledged that special educators may get caught in this tutoring trap, which is a costly error implemented at the expense of teaching students strategies they can use in their inclusion classes."

Without a central philosophy or purpose, special education programs—especially resource rooms—lack definition and can easily become tutoring programs—or anything else others deem it to be.

Be proactive in defining and protecting the purpose and integrity of your program. The mission or vision statement clarifies the intent of the program, its philosophy, and the core responsibilities of the special education teacher, the paraprofessional, and the students.

Conderman, G., & Petersen, T. (2007). Avoid the tutoring trap. Intervention in School & Clinic, 42, 234-238.

SE service delivery should address powerful basic skill interventions that address these areas of disability from IDEA (although some of them are difficult to measure or are reflected in other deficits (i.e., oral expression as shown in reading).

§300.309 Determining the existence of a specific learning disability

The school must demonstrate that the student does not achieve adequately for the child's age or to meet state-approved standards in one or more of the following areas when provided with learning experiences and instruction appropriate for the student.

1. Oral expression;
2. Listening comprehension;
3. Written expression;
4. Basic reading skill;
5. Reading fluency skills;
6. Reading comprehension;
7. Mathematics calculation;
8. Mathematics problem solving.