CHILD STUDY TEAM MEMBERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS INDIVIDUALIZED

EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

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Abstract

In special education there are different types of goals to develop for individualized education programs. There are standards-based and functional goals. In New Jersey, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals must be standards-based or linked to them. However, there is a concern as to whether standards-based goals are viewed more favorably when compared to functional goals. This study involved 92 child study team (CST) members located in Sussex, Warren, Morris, and Hunterdon Counties in Northern New Jersey. For the purposes of this research, CST members included anyone who participated in a CST meeting. This study utilized a survey method to collect data on CST members attitudes towards the different styles of goals. Parents, adult students, and teachers along with social workers, psychologists, learning consultants, therapists, and directors were surveyed. The data was examined through t-tests, analysis of covariance, and coded-data analysis. Evaluation of the data revealed that CST members and educators see benefits and problems with standards-based goals. However, those evaluated also saw the same for functional-based goals. This study indicated that both goals are acceptable, but the goals must be appropriate, individualized, measurable, and meaningful. The research indicated inconclusive results. It remains unclear as to which method yields the best results for students.

Keywords: standards-based goals, functional goals, child study team, Individualized Education Plan, cognitive load theory, ecological method

Dedication

I wish to dedicate this research to my family, my colleagues, and my students. My family has provided much support throughout my journey. Kind words and motivational speeches have kept me moving in the right direction. They have also allowed me the time needed to focus on my study and advance in my education.

I also like to thank my colleagues. Each day I join them in an environment where learning is paramount. That philosophy has helped me to stay focused and push through the ups and downs of completing a dissertation. Because of them, I have experienced the desire to keep learning so that I can help lead the students to success.

My students have also had a huge impact on how I view the topic represented here. I work for the children. The excitement they show when making accomplishments has made me even more determined to focus on special education. Without the experiences I have had working my students, I would not have been as dedicated to finding the answers this research has attempted to discover.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Every student deserves to have a free and appropriate education regardless of ability or needs. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that every child who has a disability, and needs special education and related services, shall receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). Latham (2018) goes on to break this statement down even further. Free means that there is no cost to the parents or child. The education is appropriate to the individual. The student will be educated in the public-school system. Every school-aged child with a disability is afforded this right (Latham, 2018).

How does a student qualify for special education? Not all students learn at the same pace. Classroom teachers have been trained to differentiate lessons in order to reach the needs of everyone in the class. Sometimes, through teacher observation, it is noticed that a student may be struggling more than others either academically, socially, or behaviorally. When this occurs, the teacher will reach out for assistance. Many schools have an intervention and referral services team (I&RS). For example, in the Allamuchy Township School District, teachers are trained in a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. When data shows that a student is struggling, and the accommodations made in the classroom environment (Tier I) do not seem to be helping the student enough, a transition to tier II occurs. Tier II is the level where the I&RS or RTI team is called in to help.

"A student is struggling, now what? Investigate why the student is struggling and call in the I&RS team" (Sabol, 2016). This team is typically comprised of the general education teacher, the school administrator, specialists, and parents. During the meeting of the intervention team, "Determine the skills the student needs to acquire [and] create benchmarks and goals. The

benchmarks lead the student to the goal" (Sabol, 2016). Students work on achieving the goals during basic skills meetings and while in the classroom environment. Data is collected regularly for progress analysis. If progress has not been sufficient, and the student has not been able to reach the benchmarks set by the team, the student will be moved to tier III.

In many RTI models, a child enters tier III when a referral is made to the district's child study team. A teacher or a parent can make a referral by writing a formal letter to the district's child study team. This letter will indicate the interventions that have been utilized up to this point, including the outcomes of those interventions. This provides the reasoning for referral. The letter should be as specific as possible so that the CST members understand why the student is being referred: behavior, academic, other reason. This is especially important if the specific district does not have much crossover between people that serve on the RTI team and child study team. This letter is crucial in getting the next steps in the process started. Once the CST receives the letter, they have 20 calendar days to schedule and hold an evaluation planning meeting. Here it is determined if the team will move forward to conduct and initial evaluation or not (Educational Services Commission of New Jersey [ESCNJ], 2015).

At the initial evaluation planning meeting, members of the school child study team and the child's parents/guardians are present. During this meeting, members decide if an evaluation is warranted. Members also decide if specific evaluations should be conducted, and by whom. If the team decides that it is necessary to move forward with the evaluations, consent to evaluate is provided by the parents and the team begins testing. The parents can sign the document at the conclusion of the meeting or may opt to consider and review the information for up to 15 days. According to ESCNJ (2015),

After parental consent for initial evaluation of a preschool age or school age student has

been received, the evaluation, determination of eligibility for services under this chapter

[6A:14-2.3 Parental consent, notice, participation and meetings], and, if eligible,

development and implementation of the IEP for the student shall be completed within 90

calendar days. (p. 62)

After testing has concluded and the school psychologist, learning consultant, and social

worker have interpreted the results of their testing,

A student shall be determined eligible and classified "eligible for special education and

related services" under this chapter when it is determined that the student has one or more

of the disabilities defined in (c)1 through 14 below; the disability adversely affects the

student's educational performance and the student is in need of special education and

related services. Classification shall be based on all assessments conducted including

assessment by child study team members and assessment by other specialists as specified:

Auditorily Impaired, Autistic, Intellectually disabled, Communication Impaired,

Emotionally disturbed, Multiply disabled, Deaf/blindness, Orthopedically impaired,

Other health impaired, or Preschool child with a disability. (p. 68)

It is important to clarify that the school's child study team cannot conduct all the testing.

A diagnosis by a medical doctor is utilized to classify the disability as falling into auditorily

impaired, autistic, emotionally disturbed, deaf/blind, or some other health impairment. A

school's testing, with the assistance of the therapeutic specialists on staff, can determine if a

student qualifies for special education in the areas of intellectually disabled, communication

impaired, or a preschool child with a disability. According to ESCNJ (2015),

"Intellectually disabled" means a disability that is characterized by significantly below

average general cognitive functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive

behavior…

"Communication impaired" corresponds to "communication handicapped" and

means a language disorder in the areas of morphology, syntax, semantics and/or

pragmatics/discourse which adversely affects a student's educational performance…

"Preschool child with a disability" corresponds to preschool handicapped and

means a child between the ages of three and five who either is experiencing

developmental delay…[or] has an identified disabling condition. (pp. 69-73)

Once it is determined that the student falls within one or more of the categories

mentioned above, the student is eligible for special education and an IEP is developed. The

document will contain a summary of the testing that occurred, a section describing the student's

present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, a list of annual goals, and

special education program page that describes the program and related services the student will

receive.

The section on the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance

(PLAAFP) is exactly what it sounds like. It describes how the student is currently performing.

A well-written PLAAFP contains:

Comment[s] on assessments: provide an interpretation for your assessments. For

example: Student scored a 3.1 on the IRI [An informal assessment of reading inventory].

This means that the student is performing at a level that is equal to a student in third

grade, month one. Or, the student has scored an average of 85% on the modified tests.

This means that the student is understanding the material and can demonstrate that

knowledge on a test where the questions are written on a 3rd grade level, multiple choice

questions are mostly used, and the student is not expected to answer questions in essay

format. (Sabol, 2017a)

Another important section of the IEP is the goals. Guidance provided by New Jersey

Administrative code, 6A:14-3.7 (e)2 states:

Where appropriate, a statement of detailed measurable annual academic and functional

goals that shall, as appropriate, be related to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards

(NJSLS) through the general education curriculum unless otherwise required according to

the student's educational needs, or appropriate, student specific, functional needs. For all

students, the annual academic and functional goals shall be measurable and apprise

parents and educational personnel providing special education and related services to the

student of the expected level of achievement attendant to each goal. (ESCNJ, 2015, p. 80)

The above statement, specifically, "shall be related to the NJSLS," leads to the

controversy that is the premise for this study. In legal terminology, the word "shall" is

synonymous to must. Therefore, the IEP goals must be related to the NJSLS. The law does not

state that the goals should be the standards, but the goals should relate to the standard.

Therefore, should goals be strongly connected to the standards (standards-based), loosely

connected to the standards (functionally based), or a combination of the two?

Problem Statement

Individualized Education Plan goals allow the student to progress academically, socially,

and/or physically. However, the state has placed much stress on goal writers to make sure that

the IEP goals connect to the standards. Many electronic tools provided to goal writers include

standards under the goals sections in which a box is selected and automatically the standard

becomes the goal and is placed in the IEP. This makes the writer lean toward picking grade-level goals from the standards for students, even if the student is not functioning on grade level, because it is quick, easy, and standards-based. Many writers believe that standards-based is safe and in compliance.

This creates a problem. There is a concern that students might fail to receive what they need if the assigned goals do not necessarily target their specific needs. Moreover, there are also questions concerning how these goals will assist teachers in their method of skill delivery, if the appropriate skill progression being followed will have the most impact on the student, and if a standard can ever be considered as individualized? Determining the answers to these questions may indicate if using the standards in an IEP is appropriate or not.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of child study team members and educators throughout schools in Warren, Sussex, Hunterdon, and Morris counties in New Jersey towards IEP goals and their schools' alignment or lack of alignment to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. The goals for IEPs should drive instruction. Appropriate, meaningful, measurable, and obtainable goals must guide teachers in what to teach to each individual student. The attitudes of CST members and educators will help to determine the type of goals that yield the most progress in students with IEPs. For this study, the interpretation of standards-based goals are those goals that closely align and almost mirror the standards. The study was not intended to challenge code, but to find methods and directions that work best for students with special needs. However, questioning if code, as written, is properly addressing the needs of the students is something that should be done from time to time. This is a practice that could lead to

changes in the code's wording. Throughout the history of special education, many changes have occurred as a result of updates to the law.

The three main areas of focus of this study were: attitudes of child study team members and the development of goals, teacher training and the attitudes towards the different types of goals, and placement of students in special education and the types of goals they should be aiming to reach. Correlations between variables discovered will point towards best practices when writing IEP goals.

Significance of the Study

In this study, attitudes towards the different ways to write IEP goals was investigated. Best practice for writing goals was attempted to be determined through survey responses that indicated child study team attitudes towards goals and student progress.

The intent of this study was to reveal if goals should be directly aligned to only the standards, freely written to account for learning deficits whether in academic or social skills, or if there needs to be a combination of both methods. In addition, if this study pointed to one of the above methods, the researcher would be able to investigate if this is the method being utilized within the school where the data was collected. Determining the favorable method of goal writing and putting it into practice are two different things. Additionally, if the decided best practice for goal writing is not being utilized, the roadblocks would need to be identified so that the team would not feel deterred from utilization of the preferred method.

This study was also significant because the results were actionable. The study was conducted to reveal best practice so the findings could be utilized to guide goal writing methods in schools throughout Sussex, Warren, Morris, and Hunterdon counties in northern New Jersey. These counties, especially Sussex and Warren, work together often and convene during monthly

professional development sessions where directors and coordinators are in attendance. After

publication, the researcher will present the results of this study during one of these meetings.

Best practice for goal writing will be shared and demonstrated. This will allow for the directors

and coordinators to begin guiding their child study teams and teachers in the most-effective style

of IEP goal writing.

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between Child Study Team positions and the attitudes towards

the different types of Individual Educational Plan goals?

2. What is the relationship between teacher training on goal writing and attitudes towards

the different types of Individual Education Plan goals?

3. Is there a significant relationship between types of experience and attitudes towards

setting standards-based goals for students with special needs?

Limitations and Delimitations

This research had some limitations. The first was in formulation of research aims and

objectives. Additional questions added to the survey instrument could have provided more

information on how to write goals that are appropriate, measurable, meaningful, and effective.

Through adjustments of the questions, results could have possibly led to more information,

which could make a greater impact on how to write goals. Moreover, more information would

yield the greater results towards the mastery of skills for students with special needs.

This study was also contained to specific counties in northern New Jersey. Inclusion of

other states may have drastically changed the results for this study. New Jersey Student

Learning Standards are rigorous. Some view them as more rigorous than other states. If the

standards are more basic in different areas of the county, respondents from these other areas may have answered the survey instrument questions very differently.

Generalizability is the ability for a research pool to represent the population at large. The respondents were from areas that were rural and somewhat affluent. The study did not reach participants from urban settings. Additionally, other states governed by different educational laws and student learning standards did not participate. Because of this, generalizability may not have been supported.

The instrument utilized in this study, *Teachers' Perceptions of IEP Goals,* has been utilized in previous studies (See Appendix B). It is considered to be valid and reliable. However, by borrowing the survey with permission, the researcher is also borrowing the validity associated with it.

The title of the survey instrument was another limitation. This study included parents and CST members. The original survey focused on teachers. Therfore, the respondents felt that some of the questions did not apply to them and that they could not answer parts of the survey.

Although parents and students over the age of 18 were invited to participate, zero students and only two parents participated. Several other categories also demonstrated a limited number of participants. Teachers represented the majority of respondents, with 64 out of the 92 participants. The method of survey distribution limited the reach to parents and students. Additionally, each school has many more teachers compared to the number of social workers, psychologists, learning consultants, directors, and therapists. Therefore, each time a district granted permission for the survey's distribution, the ratio of teachers to other participants was drastically uneven. The number and type of participants was a limitation to the study because the categories were not represented equally.

One final limitation was the interpretation of the data. The open-ended questions were coded using the online program, DeDoose (n.d.). However, the researcher was also able to interpret additional responses and categorize them as *yes*, *no*, or *maybe*. This portion was done with the possibility of human error, thus creating an additional limitation of this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms occur frequently throughout this study and are defined for ease of understanding.

Accommodation: "An alteration of environment, curriculum format, or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks" (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology, 2019, para 1).

Attitude: "An attitude describes a set of beliefs or views held about something and is defined … as an enduring inclination or tendency to respond to [an option] in a specific way. It consists of three related elements: knowledge, beliefs and associations regarding the object; emotional attachment and a positive or negative evaluation; and behavioral intentions towards the object" [use of specific type] ("Attitude", n.d., para. 1).

Benchmarks: Smaller goals, "written following the same structure as annual goals, including the description of the skill, specification of how the skill will be measured, and the criterion against which progress will be measured" (Capizzi, 2008, p. 24).

Child Study Team (CST): A team comprised of parents, special educators, general educators, a representative of the school system, someone who can interpret evaluation results, others with knowledge of special expertise about the child, anyone the parent would like to invite, and the child if appropriate (Center for Parent Information and Resources, 2017).

Cognitive Load Theory: "Cognitive load relates to the amount of information that working memory can hold at one time." Some researchers argue that educators need to present material to students at a level that is appropriate to their learning (Mind Tools, n.d., para.11).

Early Intervention: "Used to describe the services and supports that are available to babies and young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, n.d., para. 1).

Ecological Approach: When standards-based academic goals reflect meaningful knowledge and skills that are tailored to a students' individual needs and applicable to their everyday life. An instructional approach that promotes effective instruction and generalized outcomes for both academic and functional skills (Hunt, McDonnell, & Crockett, 2012).

Functional-based Goal: "Outlines a target skill to be acquired in measurable terms, while including a precise behavior to be accomplished and a specific criterion. It identifies the behavior or skill caregivers/instructors want the individual to learn or accomplish, the context in which the skill will be taught, and a quantifiable level of mastery" (Egan, 2013, para. 1).

Functional Performance: "The ability of the student to apply academic skills in a variety of ways or settings; skills needed by severe and profound students in order to live in society such as personal hygiene, mobility around community, communication" (Iowa Department of Education, 2018, para. 3).

IEP: "An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written statement of the educational program designed to meet a child's individual needs. Every child who receives special education services must have an IEP. That's why the process of developing this vital document is of great interest and importance to educators, administrators, and families alike" (Center for Parent Information Resources, 2017, para. 17).

Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS): "Is an interdisciplinary team of professionals within the school environment who come together throughout the school year to formulate coordinated services and team delivery systems to address the full range of student learning, behavior, social, and health problems in the general education program as well as for students determined in need of special education programs and services. The goal of the committee is to see student improvement in targeted areas" (Three Bridges School, 2018, para. 1).

Modification: "Describes a change in the curriculum. Modifications are made for students with disabilities who are unable to comprehend all of the content an instructor is teaching" (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking, and Technology, 2019, para 2).

No Child Left Behind: The main law for K–12 general education in the United States from 2002–2015. The law held schools accountable for how all (both special education students and general education students) kids learned and achieved (Lee, 2019).

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP): "A summary of the child's academic achievement and functional performance. For students ages 13-21" (Lee, 2019, para.1).

Response to Intervention (RTI): A team response "designed to provide all students with academic and behavioral interventions…The RTI model contains three tiers: Universal Intervention (Tier I), Targeted Intervention (Tier II), and Intensive or Individual Intervention (Tier III)" (Gerzel-Short & Wilkins, 2009, p. 107).

Tier 1, Intervention: High-quality learning environments, curricula, and instructional practices. Includes planning for learner variability and differentiation, and multiple means of

engagement, representation, and action/expression. Provided to all students (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.).

Tier 2, Targeted Intervention - Tier 1 Plus: Supplemental supports and interventions in English Language Arts, mathematics and behavior. Includes, small groups, targeted sustained interventions, and regular progress monitoring. Provided to some students (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.).

Tier 3, Intense or Individual Intervention - Tiers 1 and 2 Plus: Intensive, sustained, individualized academic and behavioral supports and interventions. Includes frequent progress monitoring. Provided to a few students (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.).

Standards-based Goal: Goals developed in reference to standards-based instruction that refers to the practice of making sure students learn what they were taught and actually achieve the expected standards (i.e., that students meet a defined standard for "proficiency") (Great Schools Partnership, 2017).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The history of special education began about 45 years ago. On May 17, 1954, The U.S. Supreme Court decided in the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka case that it was unconstitutional for educational institutions to segregate children by race. Eventually, this would impact the lives and education of students with special needs (University of Kansas School of Education, n.d.).

> April 9, 1965: The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was signed into law by Lyndon B. Johnson as part of the "War on Poverty." ESEA not only called for equal access to education for all students, but also federal funding for both primary and secondary education for students disadvantaged by poverty. (para. 6)

This was another milestone as the words "education for all students" was utilized. All students would take on a new meaning moving forward in education. On October 8, 1971, "PARC v. Penn called for students with disabilities to be placed in publicly funded school settings that met their individual educational needs, based on a proper and thorough evaluation." (para. 7)

Students with special needs were beginning to get fair treatment in the educational setting in the early 1970's, but laws continued to be refined to become what they are today. States began to recognize the need for education for students with disabilities before school-aged years. Programs like Early Intervention were developed. Early Intervention,

> Is the term used to describe the services and supports that are available to babies and young children with developmental delays and disabilities and their families.

[It] May include speech therapy, physical therapy, and other types of services based on

the needs of the child and family. [It] Can have a significant impact on a child's ability

to learn new skills and overcome challenges and can increase success in school and life.

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, para. 1)

However, many students did not get the education they deserved. The law was updated

again on August 6, 1986 when President Reagan signed the Handicapped Children's Protection

Act. This law gave parents of children with disabilities more say in the development of their

child's IEP. The law did see some more updates, but the rewording that is most pertinent to this

study occurred on June 4, 1997.

The Education for all Handicapped Children's Act became the Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act. President Clinton reauthorized IDEA with several key

amendments that emphasized providing all students with access to the same curriculum.

(University of Kansas School of Education, n.d., para. 14)

The words "access to the same curriculum" was how the controversy of standards-based

goals verses functional-based goals began. The law is clear. All students need access to the

same curriculum. The curriculum is written to ensure that students are taught the grade-level

standards. Therefore, IEPs should be written with goals that address these standards. However,

students need goals that target functional or behavioral performance in order to reduce the impact

of the student's learning disability. This research study investigated the attitudes of child study

team members regarding standards-based goals and functional-based goals. The remainder of

this chapter takes a closer look at what the research indicates.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

It is important to take a close look at how students learn. Sweller (1988) developed the idea of Cognitive Load Theory. "Cognitive load relates to the amount of information that working memory can hold at one time" (Mind Tools, n.d., para.11). This should be a key consideration when developing an IEP. Thinking about the circumstances that allowed a student enough working memory space to learn is of utmost importance when developing goals and objectives. An overloaded brain is a brain that cannot absorb information. In addition, information delivered in a way that is inappropriate for the student's cognitive ability means that the student did not make great academic gains and instructional efforts were wasted.

According to the theory, teachers needed to, "ensure that [they] present information at the right level for [their] learners" (para. 20). Planning for this required that a complete and accurate PLAAFP be obtained. It then needed to be analyzed to see the skills that the student needed to gain. Most often, a student was performing below grade level. When this was the case, should students have been expected to reach grade-level goals? Cognitive Load Theory supported this only if the information was presented at the right level for the student. The right level could be achieved by breaking down the goals into smaller chunks of information to present to the student.

Cognitive Load Theory also stated that the next consideration was to reduce the problem space. The problem space was what developed when there was a gap between the current situation and the desired goal. In other words, it was necessary to break the problem down into smaller parts to not overload the student's working memory. There is a parallel here with the goals and objectives piece of the IEP. The overarching skill is the goal. How teachers will get students to reach the goal is through the objectives. The objectives are the steps that students

need to master along the journey to reach the goal. Breaking down the skill (or the goal) into

smaller parts (or benchmarks) falls directly in line with Sweller's (1988) theory. A student

should make the most gains when mastering information presented at the student's

developmental readiness level and the appropriate break-down of information into manageable

chunks.

How else does the Cognitive Load Theory relate to special education? Focus could be a

daunting task for many students in special education. There could a plethora of reasons behind

the student's difficulty to focus. For example, a student diagnosed with sensory processing

disorder has everything around the student enter into working memory. The whispers of teachers

in the background, the students' squeaking shoes in the hallway, the hum of the fan, the buzz of

the lights, the shadows created by leaves blowing in the wind are all processed by the student's

mind. Such a student's working memory is already about 75% full before the student even opens

the book because of all the distractions that this student cannot ignore.

Therefore, several things should be done to address the needs of this student.

Accommodations need to be added to the IEP to reduce the number of items filling up working

memory. Goals need to broken down into smaller segments, and small pieces of pertinent

information need to be introduced at a time. One should remove whatever is not necessary and

focus on what is deemed important and make the environment more conducive to focusing for

the student.

The above scenario was based on one example student, but how many students could

benefit from accommodations for this issue and a plan that follows in suit? The Cognitive Load

Theory suggested the introduction of information at a level and speed appropriate for the

individual student. It also suggested that educators keep in mind, "When too much information

is presented at once, it becomes overwhelming and much of that information is lost" (Mind

Tools, n.d., para 23). One should, use time wisely, narrow the focus, and teach what is most

important.

Russo and Hopkins (2017) also had thoughts on the cognitive load theory. They sought

to understand how this knowledge could be used to help students learn. When developing a

lesson, one should take the following steps using the Cognitive Load Theory to inform the design

of activities and for differentiation of tasks. "Step 1: Identify your primary learning objective"

(p. 22). One should think about what to teach or need to teach. Next, one should ask what a

student really needs to know to be successful in this class and also in life. After this question has

been answered, one should move to step two, "Develop a problem-solving task" (p. 22). In this

stage, the teacher develops a task around the primary learning objective. Once the activity is

chosen, the teacher explores how to break down the task into smaller parts for students who may

struggle with the academics of the project or struggle with focusing. Moreover, the teacher must

consider the higher-level learners and come up with additional tasks for these types of learners.

This is step three of the process, "Ascertain potential secondary learning objectives" (p. 23). All

activities should be differentiated for students. This can be done by providing students with

different assignments or through adding choices to extend the project. This will accommodate

for the different levels of learners within the classroom (Russo & Hopkins, 2017).

After a project has been developed and the secondary learning objectives have been

identified, the teacher analyzes all the pieces of the project to sort through what is necessary and

what is not. Teachers do not want to overload their students, which makes it nearly impossible

to complete the intended task. One should take out what is not necessary for the students with

learning disabilities or for students who struggle with the content. A teacher could keep the extra

material in for the higher-level learners. This is step five, "Redesign the task to remove extraneous cognitive load" (p. 23).

Special educators found ways to help their students understand complex material. In step six, the teacher, "Develops prompts to optimize intrinsic cognitive load" (p. 23). This part is like the accommodations section of an IEP. The inclusion of accommodations gives all students access to the assignment. These helps are provided to students who need them so that they can get the most out of the project. Enabling prompts are designed to reduce the level of challenge through simplifying the problem, changing how the problem is represented, helping the student connect the problem to prior learning, and/or removing a step in the problem (Sullivan, Mousley, & Zevenbergen, 2006).

The Cognitive Load Theory is relative to special education and should be used to influence decisions regarding IEP goals. Do child study team members feel that goals should be standards-based, functional, or a combination of the two? One should individualize the goals so not to overload the student's cognitive ability. This may mean teaching at a different level, breaking down the goal further than previously thought necessary, or taking out the pieces that are not essential for the student. This theory supports the flexibility in goal writing to include both types of goals, standards-based and functional.

Review of the Literature

Goals of Special Education

Special education is not a catch basin where once you get in, you never get out. Students who receive special education hopefully secure the assistance they need, acquire the skills necessary to demonstrate success, and reach a point of declassification. According to Kellems, Springer, Wilkins, and Anderson (2016), "The ultimate goal for school psychologists, special

education practitioners, and other professionals who work with adolescents is to help students acquire the skills and knowledge to live happy, productive, fulfilling lives" (p. 215).

Types of Goals and The Great Debate of Which Is Best

There are two types of IEP goals that this study investigated closely. There are standards-based goals and functional goals. Standards-based goals have a direct connection to the state standards. Sometimes, with the influence of some online goal writing programs, the goal selected was the standard, verbatim. Functional goals focus more on specific skills needed for the student to show growth and success. This can include the development of coping skills or increased focus. For example, the goal can also address specific struggles that a student with reading difficulties may be experiencing. Additionally, the goal could even be focused on self-help skills.

Standards-based Goals

What are standards-based goals? These goals originate with the state standards in the forefront. To write an individualized standards-based goal, the writer must break down the wording of the standard and break down the skill of focus. "Understanding how to deconstruct standards to craft IEP goals aligned with students' unique needs continues to be a key goal" (Van Boxtel, 2017, p. 69).

The history of inclusion of students with special needs has been and continues to evolve. In the 1980's, there was a greater focus on functional skills because the intent was to promote community inclusiveness. By the 1990s, IDEA required that all students participate in standardized assessments. This shift had educators placing more focus on academics as opposed to function.

For the first time, students with disabilities were firmly and completely part of a

statewide school accountability system – a system designed to hold schools and school

districts responsible for the academic achievement of all students in reading and math.

(Cortiella & Wickham, 2008, p. 90)

This was the first of the demands placed on school districts and the focus of

accountability for all students. By 2004, there was even more emphasis on providing access to

the general education curriculum. This was where utilizing the standards when writing IEP goals

became the popular thing to do and almost necessary. Due to the emphasis on accountability and

the wording of the law, school districts had to rethink how to write IEPs.

The shift to a standards-based curriculum for students with significant cognitive

disabilities is well-grounded in an increased understanding of how and what these

students can learn. It is more positive and productive; designed to focus on a student's

capability rather than on a student's disability. (Cortiella & Wickham, 2008, p. 91)

This was also the birth of the inclusive movement. With inclusion, students were

exposed to the entire grade-level curriculum and all the student learning standards associated

with the grade level. There were two main approaches to meeting student needs in an inclusive

learning environment: the *Medical Model* and the *Social Model*. The Medical Model focused on

the disability. In this model, there was a focus on a visible difference between the functioning of

a student with a disability and one without. Here, the intent was to "fix" the disability. (D'Elia,

2019)

The social model took a different look at education. According to Baglieri and Shapiro

(2017), "The school environment becomes the focus where, as administrators, we can now

examine how the environment may facilitate or impede interactions among all children,

regardless of their bodies, minds, and effects" (p. 29). Does this concept address the needs of the

individual? For some students, it may. But special education is not the same for all students. In

education, humans are the clients. Humans are all different. And even though one can classify

disabilities into different categories, that does not mean that everyone with a specific disability is

the same as everyone else who is classified in that category. In special education, difficulties,

discrepancies, or disabilities should be addressed, but with human subjects, behavior, attitude,

and personality also have an impact on the success of the student. The point is that Individual

Education Plans need individualization, and many times these standards are generalized.

How should standards-based goals be written? It was not the intent of the law's writers

to have the standards become the goals for students with IEP. The plan was to increase access to

a general education curriculum and set the bar higher for students with disabilities. Lynch and

Adams (2008) argued that the teacher should first consider the state standards that link the IEP to

the curriculum. This statement indicated that a link between the goal and the standards should be

made. It did not indicate that the standards should become the goals. Therefore, consider what

should be done.

> Establish clear standards for student learning that distinguish product, process, and
>
> progress goals; for each standard, determine if it needs to be adapted for the student; if
>
> adaptation is needed, determine if that adaptation required accommodation or
>
> modification; if modification is required, develop an appropriate modified standard
>
> (Guskey & Jung, 2009, p. 56).

The information gathered during the IEP reporting process must be directly connected to

the writing of the new goals. Every IEP has a section title and present levels of academic

achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP). The PLAAFP should reflect on an

evaluation of the student's skills, comment on his or her strengths and weaknesses, and aid in the development of annual goals based on student's needs and current abilities (Capizzi, 2008). When writing about a student's present levels for the IEP,

> Start with the goals. Indicate progress made towards the goal. Restate the goal and then include how the student performed during assessments. Next, indicate what the student needs to work on to continue the progression through skills necessary for success.
>
> (Sabol, 2017a)

After conducting an analysis of the student's present levels, a new annual goal could be written based on information regarding the student's progress. When teachers instruct their students, there is a sequence to present material that allows for students to learn best. This is the order that they follow when delivering instruction. This thought process can be compared to teaching gymnastics. A coach would not teach a back flip before the gymnast developed the strength and body awareness necessary to perform the skill. One must master basic skills like a back bend or a handstand before moving on to more complicated skills. It would unsafe to skip steps in the progression. This should be similar with classroom teaching. With experience, teachers were able to identify what the student needed to focus on next and write the goal accordingly. According to Capizzi (2008), "These goals should stem from the student's educational needs and intellectual functioning, as documented through assessment. At least one annual goal should be written for each area of education need noted in the PLAAFP" (p. 23).

This may sound like a daunting task, but special educators have been trained to write goals for exceptional children. In addition, experienced teachers have developed a knowledge of how students learn. They understand what needs to be accomplished before the next skill can be introduced. Goal writing was a specific piece and requirement of the special education

certification program. There were three key elements under curricular content knowledge in

which special educators have extensive knowledge. First, both novice and experienced special

education professionals understand the main concepts, discipline design, and the tools of inquiry

of their teaching areas. Special education professionals can organize this knowledge, integrate

cross-disciplinary skills, and develop meaningful learning progressions for individuals with

special needs. The second key element is individualization. One could compare this to

differentiation. Special education professionals understand and use general and specific content

knowledge for teaching across a variety of content areas to individualize learning for children

with exceptionalities. Finally, teachers should be able to modify and adapt curricula to fit the

needs of students with special needs. Beginning special education professionals can modify

general and specialized curricula to make them accessible to individuals with exceptionalities

(Caruana, 2015).

In addition to the goals, there should be listed steps to reach the goals. "IEP team

members should be prepared to formulate [benchmarks] to identify steps toward achievement of

annual goals to map, guide, and monitor instruction" (Capizzi, 2008, p. 20). This goes back to

the coaching gymnastics analogy made before. Before learning a front handspring, the gymnast

should be able to first complete a forward roll, develop arm strength by performing cartwheels

and handstands, and finally, develop body and spatial awareness by working on front walkovers.

Once the gymnast meets all these skills, or benchmarks for the sake of the analogy, the gymnast

is ready to move on to the next skill, the front handspring. Education is the same. Students need

to accomplish smaller tasks before the overarching goal or skill can be reached. It is also

important to note that any skill can be broken down to smaller segments if necessary. This may

require creativity, research, or training on the instructor's part, but it is possible.

How do teachers know if the goal is appropriate? To begin, determine whether it is

flexible enough to operate as an appropriate goal and allow learners multiple ways to

successfully master it. There are five steps of goal development according to Caruana (2015).

The first step is to analyze current levels of performance. From there, a standard should be

chosen. After the goal writer has determined the standard that best fits the area of student need,

the standard needs to be unpacked. Unpacking the standard is where, "each standard is broken

into subcomponents" (p. 241). The standard is also reworded into student-friendly language.

Step four is to analyze the subskills and then finally develop the goal. McLaughlin (2012)

suggested a similar six-step process to develop a standards-aligned goal.

> [First] consider the students grade-level content standards; examine collected data to
>
> determine the students' level of functioning in relation to the standards; identify present
>
> levels of academic and functional performance; develop measurable goals aligned with
>
> the grade-level standards; assess and report progress; and identify specially designed
>
> instruction that includes appropriate accommodations and modifications. (p. 25)

However, each grade level has many standards assigned to each subject. It is not

plausible to utilize all of them or even most of them as goals in an IEP. So, what should be

done?

> Often IEPs include too many goals. This can be confusing to [parents] and the teachers
>
> and put unrealistic expectations on [the] child. To keep the number manageable, consider
>
> setting one goal for each "big" area of concern, for example, basic reading skills, reading
>
> comprehension, math calculation, or study skills. (GreatSchools Staff, 2016, para 4)

Functional Goals

The law states that goals need to be connected to the appropriate grade-level standards. "The U.S. Department of Education reiterated through new guidance that individualized education programs must be aligned to the content standards for the grade in which a student is enrolled" (Samuels, 2015, para. 1). However, Lynch and Adams (2008) stressed that functional skills and academic skills should not be competing priorities. It is time to take a closer look at functional goals. Functional goals were to address skills that are necessary for life beyond or outside of the classroom. These included, "verbal processing, Gestalt processing, and the working memory – all of which reasonably contribute to independent life skill success" (Kellems et al., 2016, p. 216). "The Gestalt Principles were a set of laws arising from 1920s' psychology, describing how humans typically see objects by grouping similar elements, recognizing patterns and simplifying complex images" (Interaction Design Principle, n.d., para. 1). Other examples of functional skills included, personal grooming and hygiene, financial independence, social interactions, and employment or vocational skills (Kellems et al., 2016).

The purpose of education was to prepare students for global success. That included gaining knowledge, skills, and perspectives, that will allow for functionality in the 21st century. (Glimps, 2008, p. 8). The main points from Glimps' report were relevant IEP goals and objectives were needed to help students to understand the impact of globalization… [Students] must develop the skills to become collaborative team members who are creative critical thinkers…[and they should] encounter a curriculum that will assist them in becoming self-determined, responsible, and contributing world citizens.

When a student needs to increase time on a task, that is a functional goal that opens the door to many other future skills in learning. Generally, standards that addressed attention were

skills that were assigned as pre-school student standards that needed to be mastered. The way that a child approached learning was a strong predictor of later success in school. School readiness included the ability to tackle challenging or frustrating tasks with persistence, following directions, taking risks, making mistakes, learning from those mistakes, and working with a group. Young children developed these skills by engaging in play because it strengthened cognitive capacities such as paying attention, remembering rules, and inhibiting impulses to achieve a larger goal (Tomlinson, 2012).

Although these skills were a focus of the very early grade levels, a time-on-task goal could be included in a students' IEP at any grade level. The following is an example of a goal developed by the researcher with benchmarks created to improve a student's focus on assignments:

Goal: Student A will increase time on task to complete work accurately.

Benchmark 1. Student A will discuss with the teacher on how much time to spend on each section of classwork. Student A will then set the timer and use the time to complete the work and check it before showing it to the teacher.

Benchmark 2. Student A will let the teacher know how much time he or she needs to complete the work and check for accuracy. Student A will then set the timer and use the time complete the work accurately.

Benchmark 3. Student A will complete his or her work and check it to maintain accuracy on the assignments.

The above functional goal was developed for a second-grade student, but it can be adapted for any age. Lynch and Adams (2008) stated, "When teachers target IEP objectives at the student's symbolic level, they are able to develop objectives that are appropriate to the

child's level of performance, yet ambitious enough to show progress on the general curriculum standards" (p. 38). The authors described the symbolic level as the point where students begin to relate to words and have basic recognition of numbers and letters. When state standards are addressed and individual needs serve as the foundation for the IEP, both functional and academic skills can be addressed (Lynch & Adams, 2008).

There are other groups of researchers who also support the combination methods. Hunt, McDonnell, and Crockett (2012) demonstrated in their research how an ecological approach has many benefits. Cooper, Heron, and Howard (2007) were also in full support of utilizing a combination of goal writing styles.

Functional goals not only have their place in the early elementary years or for students with more severe disabilities, they have their place when students are transitioning. As written in IDEA, one or more transition goals must be included with each student's IEP, when the student's age or grade level comes with a transition. Many times, these transitional goals were for students who were graduating or aging out of special education. The New Jersey Law indicated that students with disabilities continued to be part of the public education system until the age of 21. Students may be continuing education in a postsecondary program, some may join the workforce, or some can live independently. Goals to address the skills the student will need to reach the level of success outlined in the IEP were written. These, oftentimes, were functional goals.

How else can an IEP writer determine the type of goal that is most appropriate? According to Cortiella and Wickham (2008), there were three main factors that influence whether goals should be functional based or academic based: student age, student interest, and family preference. Therefore, "As a student ages, there is greater emphasis on activities outside

the state's program of study that prepare for maximum independence and the quality of life, such as accessing community resources and work preparedness" (p. 91).

The second factor, student interest, should determine state standard's utilization. For example, a student may be very interested in weather and studying the weather. This student should have goals for cloud identification. Another example would be a student who loves working on the computer. A goal should be on data input. This would allow for the student to pursue vocations such as cashier or library clerk. According to Maccia (2019), "Meaningful work-based learning experiences are unmistakably connected to the real world and require teachers and administrators to address the critical issue of integrating school curriculum with business and industry expectations" (para. 1).

Education should be preparation for life as an adult. When considering what an employer would want in an employee, Maccia (2019) indicated seven characteristics: self-advocacy, self-determination, workplace readiness, job maintenance, independent living, financial planning, and transportation usage. All these characteristics can and should be in a student's IEP if the student is deficient in any of these areas. These would be written as functional goals. The Director of Special Education for Middlesex County Vocational and Technical schools developed a set of goals and objectives necessary to master for future employment for her program. These goals were based on pre-employment skills: life skills, effective skills, and employability skills necessary for her students. The program goals were: life skills (such as good hygiene, appropriate clothing and behavior, and transportation skills), effective skills (such as self-confidence, awareness of own strengths, interests and abilities), and employability skills (recognition of authority, good attendance, job knowledge, ability to give and request assistance, and quality of work production). Additionally, the program offered direct instruction in self-

determination. Students who have self-determination skills are more likely to be successful in making the transition to adulthood, including employment and community independence. Teaching self-determination to students falls into the functional category of goals. These are skills necessary for future success, and it should be taught to the student if the student does not already possess these skills (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997).

The final factor that influenced whether goals should be functional based or academic based is family preference. "Some families prefer to teach those traditionally functional skills such as cooking and personal care at home so that school time focuses on general education academics" (Cortiella & Wickham, 2008, p. 91). In this situation, if the preference is for academic achievement, standards-based goals should be created to address the deficit if appropriate.

The Discussion

It appears there was evidence and support for both standard-based goals and functional goals. So, it is important to understand why there is a debate surrounding the types of goals that should be utilized in an IEP. "IEP goals that are aligned with the state standards and that drive instruction ensuring progress rates appropriate to the individual student's circumstance is a core component of a FAPE" (Maguire, 2017, p. 106). In addition, the law states,

> Such measurable annual goals shall include benchmarks or short-term objectives related to: Meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (Educational Services Commission of New Jersey, 2015, p. 81).

The law stressed that students have goals aligned with state standards. IDEA and NCLB, "intended to promote increased access to the general education curriculum and improved

academic performance for students with disabilities" (La Salle, Roach, & McGrath, 2013, p.

135).

> No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was the main law for K–12 general education in the
>
> United States from 2002–2015. The law held schools accountable for how kids learned
>
> and achieved. The law was controversial in part because it penalized schools that didn't
>
> show improvement. (Lee, 2019, para. 1-3)

In addition, some online IEP development programs even offered a dropdown menu of

goals that are the standards, verbatim. These menu items were added to IEP development

programs to make the process of writing IEPs less time consuming. However, if the standards

were selected as the student's goals, the following requirement may not have been met: "IEPs

require goals and objectives that reflect individual needs as well as general curriculum

standards" (Lynch & Adams, 2008, p. 37). Many times, functional goals were an afterthought

because of the emphasis placed on the implementation of standards within the IEP. "Some

students receiving special education may have additional IEP goals that are pertinent to the

student's development, but extend beyond the general education curriculum" (Guskey & Jung,

2009, p. 58). The wording here indicated that students had academic goals that met the

standards, but sometimes, they had functional goals.

> The discussion continued because there was not much evidence that supported one type

of goal over the other. "There is less definitive evidence that these policies have resulted in

improved opportunities to learn and academic gains as measured through state standardized

assessments for students with disabilities" (La Salle et al., 2013, p. 135).

> The above statement referred to the policies of IDEA and NCLB that required students

have access to the general education curriculum as much as feasible. It also indicates that the

increased access to general education curriculum has not made a significant impact on standardized test scores for students. With many different teaching styles and a variety of curriculums throughout New Jersey, the best measure of growth was a standardized test. Currently, students in New Jersey participate in Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), which recently was renamed to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards Assessment (NJSLA). This test was issued to all students in the educational system unless the student was classified as severely disabled, and it was not possible for the student to participate. Raising the bar and requiring access to general education curriculum has not correlated with increased performance. This was just another reason child study teams were unsure of the best approach to IEP goal writing.

> The reason this ambiguity is problematic is because to the extent that practitioners interpret the guidance to believe they must use and *induvial* grade-level content standards as much as possible *as* an IEP goal, the risk that they will develop IEP goals that are not appropriately individualized as required under IDEA is magnified. (Alarcon & Luckasson, 2017, p. 84)

The problem with the interpretation of the law and the controversy over including standards-based goals came to the federal court in the Jefferson County Board of Education v. Lolita S., 2013 case. In this case, the teacher did not know the level of reading for the student. The previous year, the student's goal indicated that he would comprehend eighth grade recreational reading material. Therefore, the teacher chose a ninth-grade reading goal for him. "She believed she was following correct procedures by selecting a 'ninth-grade goal' for a ninth-grader even though the goal was not based on an individualized assessment of the student's needs" (Alarcon & Luckasson, 2017, p. 84). This happened quite often. Teachers believed that

they were following the law and doing what was expected of them, and students ended up with goals in their IEP that were inappropriate. However, Maguire (2017) said, "With raised expectations within the general education standards, the interaction of the standards with the development of IEP goals, and the rigor necessary to close achievement gaps, have raised the standards for all, including students with disabilities" (p.106).

There were two problems related to the rigor of the expectation: the student did not reach the goal within the school year and the student did not get to focus on what he really needed to accomplish to make academic gains. One researcher questioned if this even makes a difference. IEP quality lacked a correlation with test performance or curricular access. In addition, IEP practices did not significantly impact students' access to or involvement in the general education curriculum (La Salle et al., 2013).

High Quality Goals

One begins by analyzing this goal. Student B will improve math word problem skills and Student B will gain better comprehension skills. First, the goal was not detailed enough. Secondly, it was not measurable. However, there were some key details in the goal statements. There will need to be a focus on solving math word problems and on improving comprehension. Developing a well-written IEP took much time and focus. It was necessary to base goals from a recent assessment report and additional assessments of the student's skills. Utilizing this data, the team could write a complete, measurable, and meaningful IEP that was more suited to the student's needs (Capizzi, 2008).

Since it was incredibly important to have accurate data when developing goals for students, it was equally important to have well-written assessments. "The less objective the assessment, the more vague and ineffective the goal" (Graves & Graves, 2016, p. 47).

According to the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, there were six criteria used to define high quality goals.

> The goal is written in plain language and is jargon-free. The goal emphasizes the positive. The goal describes the child's involvement in age-appropriate activities to address academic and functional areas. The goal is measurable and observable. The goal describes how the child will demonstrate what they know or can do. The goal describes the situations in which the child will demonstrate the goal and does not name placement or educational environment. (Lucas, Gillaspy, Peters, & Hurth, 2014)

Parents and students should be able to understand the goals. A child who knew what was expected was more likely to meet the expectation. It was also important to state the goal positively and indicate the result. For example, Student C will go from recognizing and writing letters A, T, S, and M to recognizing and writing all the letters in his or her name. In this example, students and parents knew exactly what needed to be accomplished and it was stated in a positive way.

It is not age appropriate for an eight-grade female student with a reading disability to read a second-grade book. Students with reading challenges most likely have the same interests as their peers. By eighth grade, a student would probably not be interested in stories that teach manners through cute pictures. It would important to find decodable stories that do not have illustrations and are on a topic of interest.

A well-written goal should be supported by benchmarks that lead the student to the overarching goal. Data could easily be collected regarding progress by noting whether the student successfully completed the task while working toward the goal. This would make it both observable and measurable.

As mentioned earlier, writing a high-quality goal that is appropriate for the student could be time consuming. Online IEP writing programs have attempted to help with the time factor as well as assisting in compliance. "They facilitated the actual writing of the IEP goals and objectives" and they also included, "goal banks or drop-down menus." Teachers did not have to spend time thinking of correct wording for goals because they could point and click. In addition, "Electronic IEP programs were equipped with default features that required special education personnel to complete all required components of a measurable goal, thereby ensuring that each goal contained the legally required components…[and] goal banks frequently aligned goals with state curriculum" (More & Hart Barnett, 2014, p. 103-104).

There were many positive aspects to digital IEP writing programs, however, a recent study of online IEP programs found that some goals in the IEP goal banks were created verbatim from the content standard and not all programs provided the option to select off-grade level goals. The purpose of a goal should be to address the individual needs of the student. If a standard was selected as a goal, it became standardized instead of individualized. It also tended to fail the criteria of being easy to read. So, if the goals contained in the electronic IEP goal bank are too difficult, professionals should create their own personalized bank of goals (Alarcon & Luckasson, 2017).

> Even though computerized technologies may increase compliance with the letter of the
> law, the spirit of the law may be missed if goals are not written to reflect each individual
> student's unique learning and behavioral profile, as well as strengths and needs. (More &
> Hart Barnett, 2014, p. 107)

Training

Although special educators have training for writing goals through programs and coursework, it was important for teachers to remain current through professional development. As expectations changed, a learning curve was interjected. There is a big difference between aligning a goal to a standard and using a standard as a goal. According to Maguire (2017), "Alignment to a standard in development of IEP goals provides the opportunity to individualize the goal to the student, but the need for training is recognized, and guidance form the U.S. Department of Education is highly encouraged" (p. 106).

There is a question concerning the accessible of the training on this topic. According to Maguire (2017), the information and training sessions were sparse as evident through a review of the training materials available, but training is necessary. "Special educators need assistance to develop competence in the area of writing standards-based IEP goals according to the Standards" (Caruana, 2015, p. 237).

Goals should not be the standards. That was not the intention of the guidance put forth by the U.S Education Department. It was important to find a balance between standards-based and functional goals. "Educators have not historically been trained to balance these priorities and they would need improved teacher preparation to ensure high quality instruction occurs" (Cortiella & Wickham, 2008, p. 92).

Even without training, special educators have had to take on a variety of tasks. They needed to align instruction to rigorous standards. They also needed to implement collaborative practices. They must use best practices. And, they needed to have meaningful results for students with disabilities.

What training would help? Special educators need opportunities to practice unpacking the standards to align IEPs and write specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timey IEP goals. It is also important to provide training regarding research-based practices (Van Boxtel, 2017). According to Maguire (2017), "It is the role of leaders within special education to take these tasks on with a readiness to be flexible and continue to learn new ways of considering the future of special education" (p. 107).

In addition to training, educators also expressed a need for obtaining curricular tools. One of the big roadblocks to implementing standards-based goals was access to general education materials when teaching in a special education classroom setting. Special educators reported that they struggled to gain access to comparable curricular tools that were provided to general educators. They also indicated that they taught in classrooms segregated from the general education classrooms and curricula. Plus, students with disabilities had limited opportunity to interact with peers (Roach & Elliot, 2006). These issues were why the law was changed. All students are entitled to equal opportunity and special educators should not have an issue accessing curricular resources.

Support for Standards-Based Goals

There was much support for standards-based goals due to compliance with special education law. All students are deserving of education based on the standards. Matlock, Fielder, and Walsh (2001) stated, "Today's educators are faced with a mandate to change practice and provide instruction, curriculum, and expectations to ensure that students with disabilities are held to the same set of standards as their peers without disabilities" (p. 68).

This became a mandate since special education was previously considered to be a place that students were kept occupied. In 2001, Matlock et al. (2001) described how many districts

have failed to show meaningful progress of students with disabilities in academic areas.

Additionally, there were some educators who assumed that students with disabilities would learn

only the essentials: reading, writing, and math. To further emphasize the need of exposure to the

student learning standards, it has been noted that there have been "historically low expectations

held for students with disabilities and the resulting low-level instruction that was provided to

them" (Thurlow, 2002, p. 196). Things have changed, and there is now an expectation that every

student can learn and should learn the standards. According to Ahearn (2006), "The American

public-school system is [now] focused on progress on academic standards and students with

disabilities must be included in this pursuit of academic achievement in the general education

curriculum" (p. 11).

When appropriate modifications were in place, and the expectations matched what the

student was capable of doing, meeting the standards was possible for every child. Educators

simply had to approach this task in a different way than they approached it for general education

students. The benefit of exposure to the general education curriculum and standards was

supported by law. All students are facing state- and district-mandated standards, and there are no

exceptions (Matlock et al., 2001).

IDEA takes the requirements included in No Child Left Behind and makes some of them

even more explicit. 1. Students access to the general education curriculum; 2. Student

participation in state and district assessments; 3. Public reporting of the participation and

performance of students with disabilities, both in the aggregate with all other students and

disaggregated for students with disabilities; 4. An indication on the IEP as to how the

student will participate in state and district assessment systems; and 5. The designation

on the IEP of any accommodations that the student will need during instructional and

state and district assessments. (Thurlow, 2002, p. 197)

Schools have a responsibility to teach all students the standards by providing access to

the general education curriculum. According to Matlock et al. (2001), there were several steps to

implement the standards for all and be successful.

1. Designing an inclusive educational procedural guide.

2. Developing data-collection procedures.

3. Creating a program-evaluation rubric system.

4. Establishing multiple measures for special education students aligned with district

    assessments for all students. (p. 69)

During the writing process for the IEP, it was important to careful follow the guidelines

to create appropriate goals that reflected the standards. The program developed must focus on

access to the curriculum and not the students' disability.

After educators have selected standards and developed IEP objectives, they must

determine the level of accuracy required for mastery, design the instructional strategies,

choose the programs and materials that teachers may use, and pinpoint how they will

measure student progress. (Matlock et al., p. 69)

There were additional ways to provide access to the standards and have students

demonstrate mastery. If the standards became guidelines, because they could be broken down,

then specific aspects of the standard became appropriate for the student. The students were able

to show mastery utilizing alternate assessments. Thurlow (2002) indicated,

Alternate assessment standards were the same as the general education standards,

although they could be reduced (be a subset of the standards) or expanded (to allow for

demonstration of progress towards the standards in a different way than other students

demonstrated progress). Standards could also include additional standards to address

functional skills. (p. 198)

This movement towards standards-based goals had been written into law. However, there

were those in the background that strongly supported this change. When looking back at history

and understanding that students were not previously treated fairly because they were denied

access to the curriculum, standards-based goals began to be viewed positively. Standards-based

reform came with a promise for students with disabilities, as with other students. It promised to

result in programmatic and instructional improvements. This concept is very different when

compared to how students with special needs were previously treated (Thurlow, 2002).

Using state standards as the framework for an IEP is a vastly different approach from

what has traditionally been followed in special education…the IEP process started with a

focus on the skills the child had achieved and what needs have been revealed through

evaluations of the student completed for the review of the IEP…the [previous] emphasis

would most often be on the child's acquisition of basic developmental and/or functional

skills. (Ahearn, 2006, p. 5)

It became a requirement for school districts to provide access to the general education

curriculum for all students. What does the research say regarding this model of teaching for

students with special needs? Ahearn (2006) claimed that special education teachers were now

teaching to the standards and students with disabilities were achieving in academic areas at

higher levels than had been anticipated. This statement indicated that that there were benefits to

standards-based IEP goals.

Support for Functional-Based Goals

The recent trend in special education had been to write goals that were based on the standards. However, some districts have gone as far as to allow the standards to become individual education plan goals. The law is in support of standards-based goals, but there were times when educators placed too much of a focus on the standard, and forgot that there were basic skills that needed to be mastered to allow for access to the general education curriculum. These basic skills fell into the category of functional-based goals.

> Skills targeted for intervention need to reflect the more educationally relevant functional and ecological orientations that have replaced the traditional maturations frameworks underlying the development of standardized tests…curriculum-based assessments should be structured so that they provide early interventionists with guidance in developing long-range educational plans that allow for teaching continuity of conceptually or functionally related skills. (Notari & Drinkwater, 1991, p. 102)

The history of special education has shown trends towards both functional-based and standards-based goals. In the 1980's, "interest shifted to a more functional approach with a focus on the ultimate goal of preparing students for life in the community with only minimal attention to academics" (Ahearn, 2006). This focus was what caused society to look at functional-based goals as a negative and caused a shift towards standards-based goals.

When talking about how to write and implement functional goals, there should be a reflection on intervention services. When educators provided intervention, it was necessary to identify the area of weakness and then develop a plan for correction. In the article, "Designing Intervention Plans," researchers found that seven steps need to be taken to develop appropriate plans.

The seven steps to intervention planning are to 1. Refine IEP goals, 2. Analyze baseline

functional skills, 3. Identify natural learning opportunities, 4. Select empirically based

strategies to facilitate learning, 5. Ensure fidelity of instruction, 6. Design a data

collection and analysis system, and 7. Evaluate the plan. (Jung, Gomez, Baird, &

Galyon Keramidas, 2008, p. 27)

To write functional goals, there must be time to collect and analyze the data. Skills that

the student does not master should be broken down further to smaller segments of obtainable

skills. These smaller steps to achieving a skill are referred to as benchmarks. Parental input is

also very important. Parents can identify the skills their child struggles with during homework

time. They very often can also indicate what they view as most important for their child. The

team should carefully consider these views so that appropriate goals can be written for the IEP.

"When general education teachers and families help select the objectives based on a student's

performance in daily routines, the objectives are functions [-based]" (Jung et al., p. 27).

The research showed that there is support for functional-based goals. With the ease of

using the standards as IEP goals, individual education plans have become less individualized.

Some rejected the use of the standards-based IEPs because they felt that it violated the

individuality that IDEA requires for each IEP. There was even concern that placing standards in

the IEP will fail to address the underlying problem that a student may be struggling with. There

were some professionals that felt that successful strategies for students with disabilities in the

past will be lost if grade-level academic standards become the focus of the IEP (Ahearn, 2006).

Standards-based with Functional-Based, An Ecological Approach

Throughout the history of special education, the construction of IEP goals has evolved

with time. Students with special needs used to be excluded and sent to a place for special

education. Once the government stepped in and ruled that this was an unfair practice, students

were brought back into the schools because every child became entitled to a free and appropriate

education. However, the government found that the process of just bringing students back was

not appropriate enough for the students, so IDEA was revamped and included that all students

must be taught the student learning standards appropriate to their grade level. Modifying the

standards is possible, and the expectation can be lowered, but some would say that this requires a

combination of goal-writing styles.

"When evaluating student readiness, Ecological Assessments identify the key skills

actually reinforced in target environments, so that specific, concrete, realistic preparations can be

implemented" (Fovel, 2016, para. 8). Hunt et al. (2012) also explored Ecological Curricular

Framework in their research. "The ecological framework was structured to identify and teach

the routines, activities, and skills that students needed to learn to support their full participation

in home, school, work and community settings" (p. 139). After many years of teaching

experience, it is assumed that teachers will develop the ability to determine the skills students

need to be successful. They are also expected to know the sequence in which these skills should

be taught. However, taking on the responsibility of writing a legal document and indicating what

the student needs through the goals developed by the teacher can be a daunting task. Ecological

assessments are tools that can be used to help guide educators in the goal-writing process.

> Ecological Assessments study the nature of all behaviors required to be reinforced in a
>
> particular setting and the specific circumstances under which those behaviors must occur.
>
> It then compares these requirements to the abilities and experiences of the student. The
>
> central question in an Ecological Assessment is, "What does the student need to do to
>
> succeed?" (Fovel, 2016, para. 5)

Throughout special education history, it became clear that there was a problem connected to the education of students with special needs. Without access to the general education curriculum and a focus limited to "blending in with the community. . . making students more competent in typical settings was insufficient to meet the broader goals of full acceptance and membership in the community" (Hunt et al., 2012, p. 139).

As stated earlier, exposure to the standards is a requirement for all students, both special and general needs. Like many other mandates, this did not come with a how-to book. With little training, CST members and special educators fumbled through finding an efficient means to satisfying the mandate through the IEPs. In their research, Hunt et al. (2012) discovered several questions surrounding the mandate:

> First is whether the alternate assessments will drive the selection of goals and objectives and will result in a loss of individualized IEPs that are specifically tailored to students' educational needs…Second is whether the focus on the general education curriculum and high-stakes testing will lead IEP teams to abandon an ecological approach…as a basis for designing students' education programs…Third is a concern that all students, especially those with severe disabilities have significant difficulties generalizing skills from academic to natural performance setting…Finally is the concern over the lack of research evaluating the impacts of students' participation in the general education curriculum. (p. 140)

The research conducted on the topic of ecological assessments and goal writings did not point towards standards-based or functional-based goals. It indicated that there is another way to yield more student progress through goal writing utilizing a combination of approaches. Hunt et al. (2012) recommended

that IEP teams engage in a process that allows them to work within an ecological

curricular framework to develop standards-based academic goals that reflect meaningful

knowledge and skills that are tailored to a students' individual needs and applicable to

their everyday life. [And they] suggest instructional approaches and strategies that

promote effective instruction and generalized outcomes for both academic and functional

skills. (p. 139)

Furthermore, Fovel (2016) added,

The ecological approach-based education on results from assessments.

Ecological Assessment uses the tools of Applied Behavior Analysis – behavioral

definitions, direct observation and data collection, task analysis, simple statistical

analysis, structured interviews – and applies them to the ecosystem of the classroom and

other settings in schools. (para 1.)

However, it could not be properly implemented if staff members were not trained in how to

successfully implement it. Because of this fact, the research group developed guidelines of

working within an ecological framework.

Hunt et al. (2012) described that this process began with assessments. The overall

assessment process includes six steps:

1. A variety of student and family-centered assessments needed to be implemented to

identify individualized, high-priority, quality-of-life goal areas

2. Identify priority, grade-level content standards from state standards frameworks.

3. Identify the *Critical Function* of each selected standard in terms of enriching students'

lives.

4. Identify meaningful, individualized performance outcomes associated with the critical

function selected standards that reflect the student's quality of life goal areas and current

level of symbol use.

5. Generate the IEP goals and objectives to address the performance outcomes.

6. Teach these skills within and across meaningful activities that provide context and

motivation and that are relevant to the student's daily life.

To put this method into the simplest form, CST members and teachers needed to

determine what the student required to be successful while keeping the standards in mind. There

was a focus on how different environments can affect student learning.

An ecological approach to assessment recognizes the complex interrelationships between

environment and behavior. In an ecological assessment a great deal of information is

gathered about the person and the various environments in which that person lives and

works. Among the many factors that can affect a person's behavior are physiological

conditions, physical aspects of the environment (e.g., lighting, seating arrangements,

noise level), interactions with others, home environment, and past reinforcement history.

Each of these factors represents a potential area for assessment. (Cooper, Heron, &

Heward, 2007, p. 55)

In conjunction, each standard can be unpacked and put into student and parent-friendly

language. Then, the standard can be broken down into smaller and smaller chunks. Eventually

through this process, there would be a skill identified that is appropriate for the student. This is

how to make the IEP goal standards based, appropriate, individualized, and effective.

Summary

The changes to special education have been a process that has been documented throughout history. The way children were taught, and the requirements for their instruction, have changed significantly over the last 50 years. As of 1971, students were placed in publicly funded school settings. From there, the continual refinement of laws makes special education what it is today. When it was determined that students with special needs were still not getting the education they deserved, the law was updated. In 1997, it became the requirement that all students, special education students included, need to have equal access to the curriculum and be taught the same curriculum.

Educators and CST members are still trying to find the best way to satisfy the law and help the students in the best way that they can. This includes whether to focus on standards-based goals or functional-based goals. If the goals are the standards, they no longer are considered to be individualized. If the goals are functional, will the program for the student meet the requirements of the law? There is support for both types of goals in the research. There is also support for a combination of the types of goals through utilization of the ecological approach.

The literature on the topic of attitudes towards the different types of IEP goals points in many directions. There is support for functional-based goals, but there seems to be favoritism towards standards-based because of special education laws. However, a combination of types may be the most beneficial for students. The research conducted for this study attempted to determine what professionals believe is best for the students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Methodology Overview

The sampling method utilized in this study was one of convenience. The participants were Child Study Team Members (18+ year-old students, parents of students with an IEP, teachers, therapists, social workers, psychologists, learning consultants, coordinators of CST, Directors of CST). The characteristics of the participants were males and females who were over 18 years old. To achieve a valid result, 92 participants took part in the study. The population requested to participate included the general public.

To increase the number of participants in the study, the researcher reached out to additional subjects during a monthly meeting of Sussex and Warren CST directors. The researcher presented information to the group, and their participation was requested. The researcher also contacted Child Study Team members from Sussex, Warren, Morris, and Hunterdon Counties via email to request participation in the study by the individual contacted and his/her colleagues who were part of the child study team. A letter explaining the study was also provided to local child study team directors, which was distributed to possible participants in their districts.

Before the participants were asked to complete the survey instrument, they were provided with additional information related to the study. They were able to read the purpose of the study (see Chapter 1).

Additionally, the researcher made participants aware of the procedures that would occur for participation. They were informed that they will be able to access the survey through email and/or a participation link that would bring the user to a Google Form. Once opened, the participant would electronically sign the consent form and answer Likert-type questions along

with open-ended questions regarding demographics. They also had the opportunity to share

thoughts through two open-ended questions regarding the topic. Additionally, they were aware

of the estimated time needed to complete the survey, roughly 10-15 minutes.

Finally, before beginning the survey, the participants were made aware of the risks and

benefits associated with their participation. A disclaimer to the survey indicated that, as with all

studies involving humans, there was a risk to confidentiality. To minimize this risk in this study,

personal identifiable information was not collected. The demographic portion of the survey was

limited to information that was necessary for correlations to be determined. The survey did not

collect email addresses. In full disclosure, the participants were informed that there was no

direct benefit related to participation in this study. However, the research conducted could

possibly help to develop guidelines for writing more appropriate Individualized Education Plans

and lead to more productive programming by special educators.

Participants

This study sampled child study team members. Members included social workers,

psychologists, learning consultants, special educators, general educators, parents, and individuals

who have or are receiving special education. This study was confidential and involved

individuals who were 18 years or older in age. The study included 92 participants across

demographics, and it included all district factor groups represented in northern New Jersey.

Measures

This study expanded on the knowledge gained from previous studies on special education

goals and the rigor programs required for student growth and success. Utilization of a previously

used survey aided in the investigation to determine child study team members' attitudes towards

standards-based individualized education plan goals (See Appendix A). Data was collected and organized for analysis

The first measure utilized in this study measured demographics. It allowed for a correlation of data across sex, race, age, degree, type of child study team member, highest degree, specialty area, and the category of disability felt to be most familiar. The second measure was in the form of a survey titled, *Teachers' Perceptions of IEP Goals survey* (see Appendix B). This survey consisted of fourteen Likert-style questions that utilized a five-point scale and two open-ended questions. The range for responses went from one, "almost always," to five, "never." It was designed to measure three main factors: educator training, teacher collaboration during planning, and the impact of accountability as it relates to state standards. It was also,

> created with the intention of ascertaining if a relationship exists among the factors
>
> (collaboration, training, ambiguity of accommodations, attitudes, progress in the general
>
> education curriculum, and accountability…and if these factors affect teachers'
>
> perceptions related to students with disabilities and their IEP goals. (Smith, 2013, p. 41)

The survey instrument utilized Likert-style questions that measure perception. How an individual perceives a situation becomes what he/she believes to be true. An opinion regarding a condition generates an attitude toward the scenario. This attitude can range from positive, negative, neutral, or somewhere in between. Because perceptions lead to attitudes, the scale from this survey was utilized to determine the attitudes of the participants towards the factors measured: collaboration, training, ambiguity of accommodations, attitudes, progress made in the general curriculum, and accountability.

Validity and Reliability

Smith (2013) created the survey while writing her dissertation on *Teachers' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Standards-based IEP Goals.* The reliability was determined by utilizing Cronbach's alpha. "Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a measure of scale reliability" (UCLA, 2018, para. 1). It was determined that the survey, *Teachers' Perceptions of IEP Goals*, is valid and reliable because the "assumption is that if the coefficient is high, then every item on the survey is measuring the same construct (teachers' perceptions of the efficacy of standards-based IEP goals)" (Smith, 2013, p. 44).

Smith created the survey instrument specifically for her study. Because she created the instrument, the use of experts was necessary to determine validity; whether or not the survey measured what it was intended to measure. Her expert panel, who received a paper copy of the survey, consisted of three special education prekindergarten teachers, one current and two former general education kindergarten teachers, and a director of intervention services. The online survey was also reviewed for ease of usage and other suggested areas of review. After Smith made the recommended changes to the wording of some of the questions, the panel deemed the instrument as valid (p. 44).

Since the instrument utilized in this research study had been utilized previously in Smith's study, tests for validity and had already been conducted. This researcher did not re-test this instrument for validity but transferred the previous tests and generated borrowed validity. Although it is an approved method to conduct research using a previously published study, it is a limitation to this study.

Cronbach's Alpha was utilized to test the reliability of the results of this study. The questions from the survey were broken into six different categories: accountability, ambiguity, attitudes, collaboration, progress in the general education curriculum, and training. The responses were analyzed through SPSS to determine the reliability of the responses.

Survey questions 12, 13, and 14 fell into the accountability category. It was determined that with an internal consistency score of .837 that the questions for this section of the survey were highly reliable. A similar result was found for the ambiguity category. Cronbach's Alpha results indicated a score of .804. Therefore, questions 6, 9, and 10 were also deemed consistent. These results can be viewed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1

Reliability of Accountability

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.837	.837	3

Item Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V13	2.42	1.599	91
V14	2.47	1.537	91
V15	2.34	1.558	91

Table 2

Reliability of Ambiguity

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.804	.800	3

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V5	2.03	1.043	92
V10	2.22	1.299	92
V11	1.70	1.184	92

Category 3 of the survey questions was attitudes. The original survey contained one question, number 6, from this category. Because there was only one question, it could not be compared to the other survey answers to determine internal consistency. "I talk to the teacher/related service providers of the child with an IEP in my classroom for input regarding implementation of IEP goals," was not a question that was factored into the calculations for this study and therefore was eliminated from the study.

Collaboration was the next factor analyzed. The survey contained four questions that fell into this category based on the categorization developed by the author of the survey, Smith (2013). When using Cronbach's Alpha run on the data for questions 1, 2, 8, and 12, the result was a score of .632. Guidelines from the test indicate that a score of .7 or higher equates to a high internal consistency. Here, the score was well below what is expected to determine consistency. The survey questions here were grouped into the same category, but they seem to ask questions about a variety of topics. For example, question 2 asks respondents their level of agreement to the following statement about reading IEPs: "I have read the IEP's for the students with disabilities in my classroom." Question 7 asked participants to provide an agreement rating

to: "There is an adequate amount of time allotted in my instructional week to work with other professionals regarding individualized needs of my students with disabilities." One question focuses on reading IEPs while the other askes about time allotted. Because the questions asked very different things, this could suggest why there was a low level of internal consistency for this group of questions. Table 3 shows the results of Cronbach's Alpha in the category of collaboration.

Table 3

Reliability of Collaboration

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.632	.625	4

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
V2	1.14	.529	91
V3	1.99	1.362	91
V8	3.47	1.353	91
V12	2.00	1.422	91

Progress in the general education curriculum was the next category of questions. However, this category only contained one question. Again, the test of internal consistency could not be conducted because there were not enough questions. Participants were asked to provide a scaled score to the comment, "I recognize the benefits of students with disabilities being placed in the general education classroom." Although this question could not be tested for

reliability, the results provided by the participants were utilized in this study. The results were factored in with other questions so that a type of goal preference score could be determined.

The final category tested for internal reliability was training. Questions 3 and 5 were analyzed. The result was .361, which means there was a low level of consistency. This could have been because of the phrasing of the questions. Question 3 asks participants if they feel they had enough training, while question 5 asks if they would like more training. Educators could have felt that they had adequate training while still desiring more education. Many educators consider themselves to be lifelong learners and would always indicate that more training is desirable. This could explain the low internal reliability calculated for this category. Table 4 shows the results of Cronbach's Alpha in the category of training.

Table 4

Reliability of Training

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.361	.361	2

Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q1	1.97	1.233	91
Q2	3.51	1.205	91

Procedures

The previous study conducted by Smith focused on teachers and their perceptions. This study took a sampling of a broader pool. It included Child Study Team members and adult

students who either continue to have or have had an IEP. This included child study team

directors, coordinators, social workers, learning consultants, psychologists, school therapists,

parents of a student with special needs, and adult students with special needs. Students who

were younger than 18 years old did not participate in the study.

The survey, *Teachers' Perceptions of the Efficacy of Standards-based IEP Goals*, with

the permission of the developer, was distributed using Google Forms. Questions from the

original study were retyped into the new online form for ease of participation and collection of

data. After the study was approved by IRB, distribution of the survey began.

The researcher commenced by reaching out to CST members in the district of

employment. From there, the study was introduced at a dual-county CST meeting (Sussex and

Warren) that occurs monthly. A brief introduction of the research project was presented to the

members with a request for participation. Directors and coordinators who attended these

meetings were asked to share the request for participation with the other members of their child

study teams and their teachers.

Participants were informed of their confidentiality of participation in the study. With

Google Forms, participants accessed the survey through a link and then responses were

automatically uploaded into a summary document and spreadsheet. This created easy access to

the survey for participants since they received a direct link to the survey in their emails.

Participation took no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete. Participant information was

gathered, but the respondents' names were not part of the output data sheet provided through

Google Forms. Participants' data was separated by case and identified through the timestamp

provided by the automatic response data spreadsheet.

In addition to the process of distribution, the surveyor acquired permission from school officials before asking school personnel to participate. During a monthly meeting of Sussex and Warren CST directors, information was presented to the directors and coordinators by the researcher, and participation was requested. Child Study Team members from Sussex, Warren, Morris, and Hunterdon Counties were contacted to request participation in the study. In addition to reaching out to colleagues from Sussex and Warren, the researcher used prior connections with teachers and administrators and requested participation individually. Direct emails including the background of the study were sent out with requests for survey completion. In these individual emails, the researcher asked if the individual contacted could send the survey to other colleagues.

Research Questions

This study was intended to investigate and determine theoretical responses to the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between Child Study Team positions and the attitudes towards the different types of Individual Educational Plan goals?

RQ2: What is the relationship between teacher training on goal writing and attitudes towards the different types of Individual Education Plan goals?

RQ3: What is the relationship between participants' experience and their attitudes towards setting standards-based goals for students with special needs?

Methodology Selected

For RQ1, child study team positions and coded responses to the open-ended questions were compared. Participants were asked to respond to the following: "Do you see problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade level expectations?" And, "Do you see the benefits of IEP

goals that include grade level expectations?" Answers to these two questions were examined and

coded with the assistance of the online analysis program, DeDoose (n.d.). After completing

coding, responses, based on each CST position, were compared to determine if the respondents

favored functional or standards-based goals. RQ1 was examined using a calculated preference

score derived from the Likert-style items Q2, Q3, Q8, Q12, Q13, and Q14.

Similarly, to the previous question, RQ2 looked at teacher training in the area of goal

writing and attitudes towards the different types of goals: functional or standards-based. This

time, there was an analysis of two survey item responses and the coded open-ended responses.

Item Q5 asked respondents to indicate if they would like more training on goal implementation

to include grade-level expectations. Survey item Q9 was also included. This question indicated

the respondents' level of knowledge of resources available to assist in providing access to the

general education curriculum for students with disabilities. DeDoose (n.d.) was used to examine

the positivity or negativity of the coded responses in conjunction with a preference score.

For RQ3, the preference score derived from the six survey elements was again utilized

and compared to the experience type selected to determine significance. The survey instrument

asked respondents to indicate where they have the most experience. "I have the most experience

with working with students with...developmental delays, speech and language delays only,

mild/moderate delays, or significant disabilities."

The respondents were divided into four categories based on their responses to the

multiple-choice question above. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) test compared all four

means. After that was conducted, the Bonferroni test broke the information down further to

determine if there was any correlation amongst the sub-categories.

Summary

Analysis of each research question was conducted utilizing a variety of statistical measurement tools. The data was examined extensively. Coded responses were compared to calculated responses to see if respondents were consistent in their views. Data was interpreted and calculated to provide scores for goal-style preference and training confidence. Once these calculations were determined, they were used in the T-tests and ANOVAs that were run through SPSS. The next chapter explores in detail the analysis and conclusions for each research question.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of child study team members throughout schools in Warren, Sussex, Hunterdon, and Morris counties in NJ towards IEP goals and their alignment or lack of alignment to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. It was further examined if certain demographics like position on the child study team, training, or experience influenced these attitudes.

Demographic Information

In total, there were 92 respondents to the survey. Of those 92 who participated, 79 were female and 13 were male. Eighty-nine people chose to respond to the question regarding race (three people chose to leave the question blank). The respondents consisted of four different races. Eighty-five respondents selected Caucasian. One respondent selected Biracial, one indicated Native American, and two reported Hispanic. Of the selection, the races of African American, Asian, and Pacific Islander were not represented through this study.

Age was another demographic category collected through the survey. In this category, 91 of the 92 respondents chose to respond. The results yielded that there were no respondents in the age group of 18-21. There were 13 participates that fell into the category of 22-30 years of age. Twenty-seven selected 31-40. Most participants fell into the 41-50 age group with a representation of 30 people out of the 92. Fifteen people indicated that they were between the ages of 51-60 and six selected the category of 61+ years of age.

The next demographic question was "My title as a member of the CST." The responses showed that teachers were the largest population reached by this survey with 64 participants (69.6%). Other options on the instrument were student (adult student who had had an IEP in the

past or currently has one), parent, social worker, psychologist, learning consultant, therapist, director or coordinator, and other. The breakdown of information was as follows: zero students, two parents, two social workers, one psychologist, two learning consultants, three therapists, and six directors or consultants. Twelve people responded that they fell into the category of other.

The next two questions dealt with degree held and certification. All 92 respondents chose to answer the question related to degree, but there was one respondent who did not answer the question regarding certification. The categories for degree were: high school student, college student, bachelor's degree, master's degree, master's plus 30, or doctorate. Most people polled hold a master's degree (35 out of 92). One respondent indicated that he or she was a high school student. However, this is not possible given the responses from all participants who answered about age. This survey did not reach any college students. Thirty-five percent are holding a bachelor's degree. Twenty-two percent have a master's plus 30 credits. Three respondents have earned a doctorate in education. Along with the degrees held, respondents were asked to indicate their certifications. For this question, participants were able to select more than one response so that the information from the survey output would reflect all areas that an individual might fall into. The results are as follows: 65% elementary teacher, 57% special education, 20% early childhood special education, 19% pre-kindergarten, 12% administrator, 5% learning consultant, 3% behavior specialist, 3% therapist, 2% social worker, 2% psychologist. The remaining had one respondent and represented 1% of the total responses: paraprofessional, high school teacher, substitute teacher (with a child with special needs), social studies teacher, lead teacher for the department, teacher/supervisor/principal, middle school teacher, industrial arts, supervisor, reading specialist, middle-school math, middle and high school science, school counselor, gifted and talented endorsement, and bilingual education.

The final demographic information gleaned from the survey was experience. Participants were asked to identify one area they felt they have the most experience. The question was, "I have the most experience working with students with…" The possible responses were: developmental delays, speech and language delays only, mild/moderate delays, and significant disabilities. Most people (54%) felt that they had the most knowledge and experience in working with students with mild to moderate delays. Many respondents (28%) had the most experience in working with students with developmental delays. Twelve percent felt their expertise is in working with students with significant disabilities. And, a small percentage of respondents (6%) indicated that their experience is with students who only have speech and language delays. Table 5 shows all the demographic data collected through the survey instrument.

Table 5

Demographic Information

Demographic Variable	N	%
Sex		
Male	13	14.1%
Female	78	85.9%
Race		
African American	0	0%
Caucasian	85	95.5%
Hispanic	2	2.2%
Biracial	2	2.2%
Asian	0	0
Native American	1	1.1%
Pacific Islander	0	0%
Age		
18-21	0	0%
22-30	13	14.3%
31-40	27	29.7%
41-50	30	33%
51-60	15	16.5%
61+	6	6.6%
CST Title		
Student	0	0%
Parent	2	2.2%
Teacher	64	69.6%
Social Worker	2	2.2%
Psychologist	1	1.1%
Learning Consultant	2	2.2%
Therapist	3	3.3%
Director or Coordinator	6	6.5%
Other	12	13%
Highest Degree		
High School Student	1	1.1%
College Student	0	0%
Bachelor's	32	34.8%
Master's	35	38%
Master's +30	21	22.8%
Doctorate	3	3.3%

Analysis of Research Question One

What is the relationship between Child Study Team positions and the attitudes towards the different types of Individual Educational Plan goals? In the demographic portion of the survey and item Q19, participants were asked to complete the following statement: "My title as a member of the CST." Participants could select student, parent, teacher, social worker, psychologist, learning consultant therapist, director/coordinator or other as a response. The results of item Q19 were then compared with items Q15, "Do you see problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade level expectations? If so, please explain," and item Q16, "Do you see the benefits of IEP goals that include grade level expectations? If so, please explain." The responses to these open-ended questions were uploaded into the online program Dedoose (n.d.). "Dedoose was … designed to support researchers, evaluators, and their teams looking to incorporated qualitative and mixed methods approaches in their working with text, audio, video, images, and survey and test data" (Dedoose, n.d., para. 1). Utilizing this program, the open-ended questions were coded with specific categories of responses. The short-text entry in response to, "Do you see problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade level expectation?" was coded into the following: depends on the student, no, and yes. The responses to the question, "Do you see the benefits of IEP goals that include grade level expectations," were coded to fall into the categories: for some students, no, and yes. Table 6 shows a Chi Square to compare the responses to Q15 and Q16 for each respondent.

Table 6

Chi-Square Calculator Instrument Questions 15 and 16

	Results			
	Yes, I see Problems	Could be Problems	No Problems	*Row Totals*
Yes, I See Benefits	20 (17.88) [0.25]	4 (2.91) [0.41]	13 (16.21) [0.64]	37
There could be Benefits	11 (7.73) [1.38]	2 (1.26) [0.44]	3 (7.01) [2.29]	16
I don't see benefits	12 (17.39) [1.67]	1 (2.83) [1.18]	23 (15.78) [3.31]	36
Column Totals	43	7	39	89 (Grand Total)

Note. The chi-square statistic is 11.5779. The *p*-value is .020782. The result is significant at *p* <

.05. This also means that these variables are dependent on one another.

When looking at the responses by those who categorize themselves as teachers, 45%

indicated that they do see problems with IEP goals that include grade level expectation, but at the

same time they see the benefit of IEP goals that include grade level expectations. Teachers

indicated that, "Grade level expectations for IEP goals can cause problems if the expectations are

too high because they are written for the average child. The child with disabilities should have

goals based on their individual needs." Teachers also stated that,

> Too many of my students are significantly below grade level. By the time they reach 4th
>
> and 5th grade where the content becomes more abstract, it is near impossible to modify
>
> the gen. ed curriculum and teach content on their level. Most are reading at a K-1
>
> reading level so finding independent texts that they are able to read that contain the
>
> higher-level text features and text structures skills is not possible.

But at the same time, teachers feel that it is important to have grade-level expectations for

students receiving special education services. Thirty-nine percent indicated that there is a benefit

of having grade-level expectations. One teacher answered, "Yes, of course [there is a benefit of

grade-level expectations]. The goal is to eventually integrate the student into the mainstream

classes with as much of a basic knowledge of the subject matter as possible." Another teacher also indicated, "I feel IEP goals should include grade level expectations to keep the student on track for future grade level expectations."

Participants who labeled their position on the child study team as "other" responded opposingly to respondents in the teacher category. Sixty-seven percent indicated that they feel that there are no issues with the use of IEP goals that include grade level expectations and saw that there could be a benefit depending on the student. One answer to the question regarding problems with grade-level goals was, "Students with severe disabilities should be using EE especially if they are being DLMed." Here, the respondent refers to EE, which is a reference to the Essential Elements. "The Dynamic Learning Maps Essential Elements are specific statements of knowledge and skills linked to the grade-level expectations identified in the Common Core State Standards," and their purpose is "to build a bridge from the content in the Common Core State Standards to academic expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities" (Dynamic Learning Maps Consortium, 2013, p. 5). The respondent also references the DLM.

> Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) assessments are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for whom general state assessments are not appropriate, even with accommodations. DLM assessments offer these students a way to show what they know and can do in mathematics, English language arts, and science. (Dynamic Learning Maps Consortium, n.d., para.1)

About 9% of the participants in the "other" category saw a benefit to having grade-level goals as part of the IEP, but 14% indicated that it depended on the student. One participant said, "Yes, [there is a benefit] when appropriate to the student."

When analyzing the next group, learning consultants, 25% indicated that they see problems with the use of IEP goals that are aligned with the Student Learning Standards. In addition, all learning consultants felt that there was no benefit to having grade-level expectations as part of the IEP. This response summarizes the reasoning behind having issue with grade-level expectations.

> The INDIVIDUAL Educational Plan needs to be just that, individualized. Children with an IEP require specialized instruction and should move from current level of performance forward with sensitivity for their age. Once a student plateaus there may be a need to shift instruction to life skills. Instruction also needs to accommodate the student's need in terms of approach, such as multi-sensory, visual or auditory approach.

The attitude toward grade-level expectations being a benefit for students with IEPs was very different for this group when compared to the previous respondents. The learning consultants surveyed answered "No." It is important to this study to see why this was the response. One participant indicated, "For the most part, no I do not see the benefits of IEP goals that include grade level expectations. I prefer skill-based expectations."

When looking at the responses from parents, they too agreed with the teachers. Overall, all respondents from this category indicated that they see problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade-level expectations, but they can also see the benefit of grade-level expectations. However, this depends on the individual student.

The next two categories of respondents, psychologist or social worker, were from school child study teams. When asked about seeing problems with the use of grade-level goals, the psychologists did not see problems with their use, but the social workers did. Additionally, both

the psychologists and the social workers saw the benefit of adding grade-level expectations. One

of the psychologists indicated,

> No. [there are no problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade-level
>
> expectations] It is important to scaffold the goals so that they fall under grade level
>
> expectations but are attainable within a year's time for the student. Exposure to grade
>
> level material but expectations to master different levels of that material is important.

The therapists who participated in this survey were of the same opinion. "IEP goals are

individualized to meet the students' needs so they can succeed as close to grade level as possible.

If written correctly I don't see a problem." However, one respondent from the social worker

category indicated, "for some students more functional goals are more aligned with their needs."

When analyzing the responses from that same group regarding the item that questions if

they can see a benefit to grade-level expectations, this group indicated that they could. One

psychologist said, "Students need exposure to material no matter their abilities. Students with

disabilities can absorb material that they might not be able to show mastery of." This social

worker responded almost identically. "There are benefits of exposure to grade level

expectations. Students should be exposed to some grade level concepts."

The final CST position analyzed in relation to attitudes towards the use of grade-level

standards as goals within an IEP was director/coordinator. This group felt that there could be a

problem with standards-based goals, but at the same time could see the benefit. It depended on

the student. "There may be instances where meeting grade-level expectations is just not

appropriate. If this is the case, and there are goals like this in an IEP, they may not be entirely

appropriate for the IEP." Depending on the student, "Students who are higher functioning and

are able to work on grade level with support should have some grade level goals. [For] Other

students, these goals may not meet their individual needs."

Table 7 divides each type of respondent into a role as a CST member and then indicates

how each group answered survey instrument Q15 and Q16. Figure 4.1 follows the table. It

shows the same data in graph form.

Table 7

Charted Responses of Instrument Questions 15 and 16

	Teacher	Other	Learning Consultant	Parent	Psychologist	Social Worker	Therapist	Director or Coordinator
What is the relationship between Child Study Team positions and the attitudes towards the different types of Individual Educational Plan goals?								
15. Do you see problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade level expectations? If so, please explain:								
Depends on the Student	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
No	27	8	0	1	1	0	3	0
Yes	29	4	2	1	0	2	0	4
16. Do you see the benefits of IEP goals that include grade level expectations? If so, please explain:								
For Some Students	13	3	0	1	0	0	0	2
No	26	5	2	0	0	0	2	0
Yes	25	4	0	1	1	2	1	4
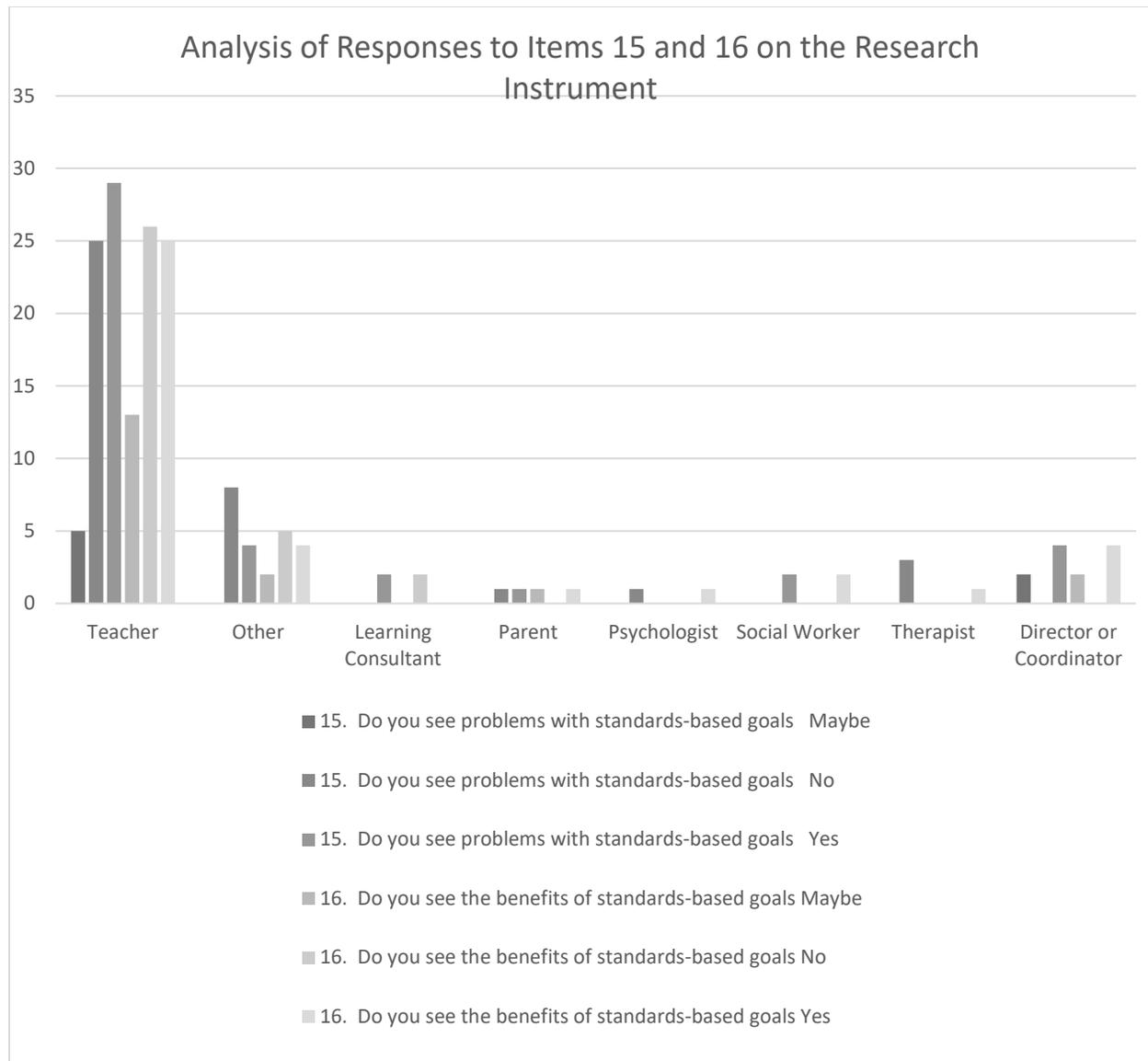
Figure 4.1. Analysis of responses to instrument items 15 and 16

To further analyze this question, a calculation helped to determine an overall rating score that measured whether the respondent was pro standards-based or pro functional-based goals based on the coded answers for items Q15 and Q16. Through this analysis, the respondents were almost equally split between pro standard-based and pro functional. Each participant's response was placed into the following grid square. In the figure, the darker hues indicate a strong

favorable feeling towards standards-based or functional goals. The lighter gray colors indicate a preference towards neither type. The white indicates that both types are favorable.

	I see problems with standards-based goals	There could be problems with standards-based goals	I do not see problems with standards-based goals
I see benefits with standards-based goals	20	4	13
There could be benefits with standards-based goals	11	2	3
I do not see benefits with standards-based goals	12	1	23

Lighter hue =Favors both methods
Medium hue = Favors Neither -these respondents are undecided
Dark hue in the lower right = Favors Functional-based Goals
Dark hue in the upper left = Favors Standards-based Goals

26% - Pro Functional
22% - Pro Standards-based
48% - Like both
04% - Undecided

Figure 4.2. Goal-type Preference

In addition to determining if the participant favored standard-based or functional goals through the two open-ended questions, several of the Likert-style survey questions were utilized to calculate a rating of "Pro functional goals" or "Pro standards-based goals." On items Q2, Q3, Q8, Q12, and Q13, the higher the total of the scores, the greater the positivity towards functional

style goals. Question Q14 was also utilized. However, this question was phrased so that the

results were opposite to the other five questions. Because of this, the reverse of the Likert scales

was utilized in the calculation. The following are the items that respondents provided a rating of

1 – 5:

> Q2 - I wrote or gave input in writing goals that are aligned with the general education
>
> curriculum on the IEPs for the students with disabilities in my classroom.
>
> Q3 - I have received sufficient training to work with students with disabilities that have
>
> goals aligned with the general education curriculum.
>
> Q8 - I recognize the benefits of students with disabilities being placed in the general
>
> education classroom.
>
> Q12 - I use the results from curriculum-based assessments to help me create IEP goals
>
> that address the needs of my students with disabilities.
>
> Q13 - Grade level expectations help me to address the goals of my students with
>
> disabilities.

A higher Likert rating on items Q2, Q3, Q8 and Q12 indicated that the respondent

showed favoritism towards functional style goals. A lower total for these questions indicated

favoritism towards standard-based goals. However, item Q14 was utilized in calculating this

rating as well, but the Likert-style response yielded the reverse on this question, "Sometimes, I

ignore the grade level expectations and focus on meeting the individual goals of the child." To

utilize the question and continue with a higher score equating a more positive attitude towards

functional goals, it was necessary to flip the responses. For example, a score of 1 was

recalculated at a score of 5, 2 was converted to 4, 3 remained the same, 4 became 2, and 5

became a 1. Table 8 is a Chi Square illustration of each CST role or group and preference for

either standards-based or functional goals.

Table 8

Chi-Square Calculator for Types of Child Study Team Members

	Results		
	Functional	Standards-Based	Row Totals
Teacher	7 (9.09) [0.48]	56 (53.91) [0.08]	63
Social Worker	1 (0.58) [0.31]	3 (3.42) [0.05]	4
Psychologist	1 (0.43) [0.74]	2 (2.57) [0.13]	3
Learning Consultant	1 (0.58) [0.31]	3 (3.42) [0.05]	4
Other	4 (3.32) [0.14]	19 (19.68) [0.02]	23
Column Totals	14	83	97 (Grand Total)

Note. The chi-square statistic is 2.317. The *p*-value is .677679. The result is *not* significant at *p* <

.05. This also means that the variables are independent of on another.

When looking at the results of this comparison, it could be concluded that the majority of

respondents prefer standards-based goals. This result was contradictory to the first analysis

where it seemed as though respondents were split, and a determination of pro functional or pro

standards-based could not be achieved. Therefore, the researcher decided it was important to

report on both results.

To further analyze RQ1, the results of the scores based on coded responses to items Q15

and Q16 were compared to the rating score determined from the Likert-style questions. The

findings indicated that 26% of the responses, when compared with one another, yielded the same

result as being pro functional goals or pro standard-based goals. The remaining results reported out a different response. This leads the researcher to believe that respondents cannot clearly define a preference towards either style of goal.

It is possible that this result was due to the low number of respondents in several of the categories, therefore the following analysis was conducted with the groups divided into two categories: those with direct contact with students and those with indirect contact with students. Table 9 shows the responses divided by category of direct or indirect contact.

Table 9

Chi-Square Calculator Indirect/direct Contact

	Pro Functional	Pro Standards	Marginal Row Totals
Indirect Contact	3 (3.29) [0.02]	20 (19.71) [0]	23
Direct Contact	10 (9.71) [0.01]	58 (58.29) [0]	68
Marginal Column Totals	13	78	91 (Grand Total)

Note. The chi-square statistic is 0.0388. The p-value is .843866. This result is not significant at $p < .10$. The chi-square statistic with Yates correction is 0.0218. The p-value is .882569. Not significant at $p < .10$.

However, after analyzing the data using a T-test, the results were significant. In the following tables, Group 1 included staff with direct student contact: teachers and therapists. Those with indirect student contact were placed in Group 7: CST coordinator/director, social worker, psychologist, and LDTCs. The following results were gathered from a T-test analyzing perceived preference towards either standards-based or functional-based IEP goals based on child study team position. Table 10 shows the results of the T-test.

Table 10

T-test of Direct/Indirect Contact

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Score	1.00	11	7.6364	2.06265	.62191
	7.00	67	10.4328	3.77481	.46117

Independent Samples Test						
	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Equal variances assumed	3.225	.076	-2.390	76	.019	-2.79647
Equal variances not assumed			-3.612	22.969	.001	-2.79647

Independent Samples Test			
	t-test for Equality of Means		
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.16999	-5.12671	-.46624
Equal variances not assumed	.77424	-4.39824	-1.19471

The results were significant at a score of .076. The data reveals that teachers and

therapists (respondents who work directly with students) see things significantly differently than

people who deal with students from a distance. The teachers and therapists have a mean score of

10.43 while the members with indirect contact have a mean of 7.64. The data indicates that both

groups favor standards-based goals. However, the members of the team that write the IEP goals

see more of a benefit to standards-based goals than the people who execute the plans. The data

also indicates that neither group strongly favored functional goals. It would be necessary to post

a score of 15 points or higher to indicate a preference towards the use of functional-based goals.

Additionally, the Levene's test for Equality of Variances indicates that the probability of a

random result is significant at the .00 level.

Analysis of Research Question Two

What is the relationship between teacher training on goal writing and attitudes towards

the different types of Individual Education Plan goals? For the analysis of this goal, the

previously calculated score derived from the Likert-style questions was utilized. The calculation

was then compared to items Q5 and Q9. Item Q5 was a Likert-style question where participants

were able to select 1 (almost always) through 5 (almost never) as a comment to the statement, "I

would like more training in writing and implementing goals with grade level expectations for

students with disabilities." Item Q9 was also a Likert-style question where participants could

select 1-5, almost always-almost never as a comment to, "I am aware of resources that are

available to assist me with providing access to the general education curriculum for students with

disabilities." The responses were calculated to determine a "Confidence in Training" score.

The researcher utilized the rating determined through the Likert-style questions for each

respondent, and then compared that utilizing a T-test to the "Confidence in Training" score. This

score was calculated through responses to survey items Q5 and Q9. Item Q5 asked those

surveyed to provide a rating for the comment, "I would like more training in writing and

implementing goals with grade level expectations for students with disabilities." For this item, a

higher response equated to not needing more training. To get this to correlate with the other item

responses, these responses were flipped so that a higher response indicated a greater need for

more training.

The next item used was item Q9, "I am aware of resources that are available to assist me

with providing access to the general education curriculum for students with disabilities." Again,

a higher score here indicates a greater need for more training.

Respondents were then split into two categories, 0 - pro standards-based goals and 1 - pro

functional-based goals. Each respondent received a score that indicated his or her confidence

level in training. This score was analyzed based on the perceived preference toward functional

or standards-based goals. Table 11 illustrates the results of the T-test that was conducted.

Table 11

T-test of Training

Group Statistics					
	IEP_Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Training Score	.00	82	8.4756	1.98280	.21896
	1.00	10	9.6000	1.89737	.60000

Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Training Score	Equal variances assumed	.017	.897	-1.700	90	.093
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.760	11.534	.105

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
				Lower	Upper
Training Score	Equal variances assumed	-1.12439	.66134	-2.43826	.18948
	Equal variances not assumed	-1.12439	.63871	-2.52227	.27349

The two groups here do not view training needs differently. This does not mean that they desire more or less training, but the respondents had different views. There was a low number of respondents that fell into the pro functional-based goals category and this again may have impacted the significance of this study. The pro standards group's mean score was a 5.55 while the pro functional goals group had a mean of 6.20. Statistically, there is no difference here. The

interpretation of the data for RQ2 is that training level does not impact whether a respondent would prefer either type of goal.

Analysis of Research Question Three

Is there a significant relationship between types of experience and attitudes towards setting standards-based goals for students with special needs? In other words, does working with a specific population have an impact on whether a CST member prefers either functional or standards-based goals?

The respondents were divided into four categories. Group 1 consisted of members who were most familiar with and had the most experience with students with developmental disabilities. Group 2 included those who work mostly with students with mild or moderate delays. Group 3 comprised members who felt they were mostly familiar with students with significant disabilities. Group 4 included those who considered themselves to be the most experienced in working with students with speech and language delays. Again, the calculation score indicated if the respondent fell into the categories of pro functional or pro standards based. Table 12 shows the results of an ANOVA that compared the four groups of respondents.

Table 12

ANOVA of Experience

Descriptives

IEP Preference

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1.00	25	9.7600	3.66606	.73321	8.2467	11.2733	5.00	19.00
2.00	49	10.3878	4.02501	.57500	9.2316	11.5439	5.00	20.00
3.00	11	9.0909	2.62505	.79148	7.3274	10.8544	6.00	14.00
4.00	5	11.8000	5.40370	2.41661	5.0904	18.5096	6.00	18.00
Total	90	10.1333	3.84883	.40570	9.3272	10.9395	5.00	20.00

ANOVA

IEP Preference

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	32.498	3	10.833	.724	.540
Within Groups	1285.902	86	14.952		
Total	1318.400	89			

For this research question, the researcher chose the ANOVA because it compares four means. Based on the ANOVA test, there was a significance of .540, which is not significant. This means that there is no difference in preference toward the type of goal based on the types of disabilities the respondents work with most. The mean scores were as follows:

Developmental Disabilities	9.76
Mild/Moderate Delays	10.39
Significant Disabilities	9.09
Speech and Language Disabilities	11.80

Here, the respondents continued to indicate a preference towards standards-based goals. A score of less than 15 would indicate that the group is pro standards-based IEP goals, and a score

greater than 15 would indicate pro functional-based goals. With the means all less than 15, one

can conclude that these respondents favor standards-based goals. However, the closer to a score

of 15, the more open the respondent is towards functional-based goals. Table 13 illustrates the

Bonferroni test that was conducted utilizing the same data.

Table 13

Post Hoc Tests Bonferroni

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: IEP Preference

Bonferroni

(I) Disability Category	(J) Disability Category	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1.00	2.00	-.62776	.95039	1.000	-3.1944	1.9389
	3.00	.66909	1.39907	1.000	-3.1093	4.4475
	4.00	-2.04000	1.89435	1.000	-7.1560	3.0760
2.00	1.00	.62776	.95039	1.000	-1.9389	3.1944
	3.00	1.29685	1.29014	1.000	-2.1874	4.7811
	4.00	-1.41224	1.81538	1.000	-6.3150	3.4905
3.00	1.00	-.66909	1.39907	1.000	-4.4475	3.1093
	2.00	-1.29685	1.29014	1.000	-4.7811	2.1874
	4.00	-2.70909	2.08561	1.000	-8.3416	2.9234
4.00	1.00	2.04000	1.89435	1.000	-3.0760	7.1560
	2.00	1.41224	1.81538	1.000	-3.4905	6.3150
	3.00	2.70909	2.08561	1.000	-2.9234	8.3416

The Bonferroni test compared each group to all others. It allowed the researcher to see if

any part of the comparison is statistically significant. The data from this test indicated that the

results of the comparison are statistically insignificant since each comparison was calculated to a

significance of one. The data here further indicates that the type of disability that the respondent

works with most does not lead to a goal-style preference.

Chapter 5: Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

In the study of attitudes toward IEP goals, the researcher collected and analyzed data to determine the best practices for writing IEP goals. The researcher utilized a survey instrument to collect the data, categorized the results, and conducted several analyses to answer the three research questions:

RQ1: What is the relationship between Child Study Team positions and the attitudes towards the different types of Individual Educational Plan goals?

RQ2: What is the relationship between teacher training on goal writing and attitudes towards the different types of Individual Education Plan goals?

RQ3: What is the relationship between participants' experience and their attitudes towards setting standards-based goals for students with special needs?

Summary of Findings

What is the relationship between Child Study Team positions and the attitudes towards the different types of Individual Educational Plan goals? The findings indicate that there is a significant relationship between position and a preference towards a specific type of goal. From the data, it can be determined that all groups favor standards-based goals but to varying degrees of favoritism using the calculation from the Likert-style questions. However, the analysis of the open-ended coded responses demonstrated that there are many variables that could be a factor in determining which types of goals are more suitable for students. This has been determined because a majority of the respondents received a different rating (either pro standards or pro functional) when they were calculated utilizing the two different methods. Child study team members cannot decide which method is best. The research also supports this finding. There

was evidence to support both styles of goals. Hunt et al. (2012) were in favor of the use of the combination of goal types and supported the ecological approach as best practice. Cooper et al. (2007) were also in support of utilizing a combination of goals. Using standards-based goals while including basic skills or functional goals was found to be a favored practice through Ahearn's research. Cortiella and Wickham (2008) also indicated through their research that "Balancing a state's curriculum with a functional-skills approach while using functional teaching provides rich and broad education opportunities for students with…disabilities" (p. 91)

The data, and the way it was analyzed, indicated that respondents felt that standards-based is more beneficial to students. Both groups showed a favoritism towards standards-based goals, but the people who work indirectly with students had an even stronger positive disposition towards standards-based. However, when an analysis of the open-ended questions was conducted, it was clear that although standards-based was favored, respondents did express issue with that type of goal. This analysis also indicated that respondents were not fully convinced that one style of goal writing was more or less appropriate for students. Those surveyed could support both types of goals and could see the benefits for students when goals were written appropriately.

What is the relationship between teacher training on goal writing and attitudes towards the different types of Individual Education Plan goals? After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that training does not have an impact on the respondents' attitudes towards the different types of goals. Some participants felt that they could use more training while others did not feel that they could benefit from more training in goal writing. They responded differently, but there was not a correlation between training needs and an attitude towards a specific type of goal.

Is there a significant relationship between types of experience and attitudes towards setting standards-based goals for students with special needs? Many of the respondents to the open-ended questions indicated that the type of goal most appropriate depends on the student. This question took a closer look at the different types of disabilities the respondents worked with most. The participants were divided into four categories: (a) those who worked mostly with students with developmental disabilities, (b) those who worked with students with mild/moderate delays, (c) those who worked with students with significant disabilities, and (d) those who worked with students with speech and language disabilities.

An ANOVA helped to analyze the data because it allowed for the comparison of the four groups. The results indicated that the type of disability the respondent worked with most did not have an impact on the replies. Based on the open-ended question responses, one could have assumed that people who worked with students with significant disabilities would have a different opinion towards the types of goals compared to a respondent who mostly worked with students with mild delays. This was not the case. The population in which the participant worked did not impact the responses. Therefore, it can be concluded that the types of experience did not indicate a significant relationship towards the respondents' attitudes towards the different types of goals.

Implications for Practice

It is clear, through the high preference towards standards-based goals, that students will continue to need exposure to and taught the standards for the individual grade levels. What was not clear through this study was a way to write goals to yield the most progress in students who have IEPs. Standards-based goals need to be part of the focus for students with IEPs. However, the standards cannot be the goal. The research conducted by Hunt et al. (2012) suggested an

ecological curricular framework. This is a method for using both types of goals. Based on their

research and the results of this study, this is an area that needs further exploration. A successful

education program needs to have a proper balance between standards-based and functional goals.

This idea supported by Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory.

Cognitive Load refers to the capacity for learning that one has during certain times and

situations. For maximum learning to occur, teaching needs to be focused and tailored to the

individual. There needs to be proper pace of delivery with consideration to the level of skill

complexity.

The Cognitive Load Theory indicated that for education to be successful, skills need to be

broken down into manageable steps. What does not need to be part of the lesson should not be

part of it to avoid student cognitive overload. This is similar to the Ecological Framework where

educational goals were based on the student and not on the state-driven standards. The idea of

using the standards as a basis for goal-development so students with special needs are held to

high standards was not tossed aside by Hunt et al. (2012), but they proposed that there needs to

be a focus on the standards that will bring meaningful skills to the students (Mind Tools, n.d.).

Ahearn's (2006) research led to similar conclusions. She looked at several states to

investigate how standards were included in IEP goals. Many states that utilize standards-based

IEP goals "embrace this approach as the major ingredient to provide access to the general

education curriculum for students with disabilities" (p. 11). However, the way that these states

would incorporate the standards varied. "Some states are developing approaches to provide

access to the general education curriculum without designating the alignment of some IEP goals

to their curriculum as standards-based" (p. 11). This allows for functional goals to be part of the

IEP and reinforces that a combination method of goal writing may yield the most progress in students with IEPs.

Cortiella and Wickham (2008) indicated that it is possible to add standards-based goals to IEPs and not forget about the specific functional skills needed for the student to succeed. "A number of the grade level standards can be taught in practical and useful ways and within existing general education classroom activities" (p. 91). The useful and practical ways refer to functional skills that students need in addition to the standard.

Both the Cognitive Load Theory and the Ecological approach to developing curriculum are scientifically based. Both consider the whole child and the variables that positively or negatively impact the way a student learns. The key ideas from both research groups are (a) teach at the students' levels, (b) teach what is meaningful and critical, and (c) use the standards as guidelines that keep expectations high for all students.

From the conclusions drawn from this study and the review of the literature, child study team members should write goals that are appropriate for the students. The students' gaps in learning need to be addressed. It is also imperative that the team decide what skills are most appropriate for mastery to generate the most success for the students' futures. These goals need to be tied to the standards set for the students' grade levels. This may take more time and data analysis of the progress, along with an analysis of the educational sequence to write goals that are most appropriate for students. Because of the strong responses to the open-ended questions and the conflicting responses to the Likert-style questions, it can be determined that child study team members and educators see pros and cons to both types of goals. The respondents indicated that the goals in an IEP need to be individualized and appropriate. Not all students are

the same, and IEPs should reflect what the student needs. IEPs must be tailored to the

individual.

The idea of adding standards to an IEP seems to make the IEP less individualized.

However, through the research, it was found that it can be done appropriately and be made

personalized. There can be a focus on what the student needs to be successful while reaching the

standard when it is broken down into obtainable chunks or benchmarks. Again, it appears as

though there is a preference towards a combination-style approach or an ecological approach.

Recommendations for Research

This study had limitations regarding participants and generalizability. To address this,

future studies should broaden the respondent pool. Additional states, that have differing student

learning standards, should be asked their opinion regarding IEP goals and their alignment to their

standards. Since the expectations for students vary widely across the United States, the impact

may yield a very different result than what was concluded through this study.

Additionally, parents and 18-year-old or older students should represent a greater

percentage of participants. To do this, many of the questions from the survey should be

reworded so that these participants can assume that their opinions are relevant. Parents represent

an important part of the team. Workshops and trainings aimed toward running legally compliant

meetings indicate how pertinent it is to make sure that parents' rights are not violated. Helping

to educate parents in the processes and procedures set in place to better their child's education

has become a responsibility of the CST. Parental participation and opinions are important and

should be represented in a study like this one.

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of child study team members and

educators towards IEP goals and their alignment or lack thereof to the New Jersey Student

Learning Standards. Although the data indicated that many participants saw problems with

standards-based goals, the results showed that the respondents favored standards-based goals

over functional. It is recommended that future research be conducted to indicate best practices

for goal writing. Research into how to write goals appropriately utilizing the standards is would

help professionals in the field of education positively impact their students. Instead of asking

respondents to indicate a preference towards a goal-writing style, research should be conducted

to find out the most efficient way to guide professionals in writing appropriate, individualized,

measurable, and obtainable goals for students with IEPs.

It is hypothesized that students whose program is centered on written goals that address

both functional performance and grade-level standards will reach the status of "declassified" in a

shorter period of time when compared to students whose goals are written to mirror grade-level

standards. The study should be expanded to determine the characteristics of a well-written goal

that positively influences instruction. Educators need to capitalize on the benefits of both types

of goals and remove the problems with each.

Each aspect of a well-written goal needs dissecting. What does appropriate mean?

Ahearn (2006) said that "Teachers [need to] scaffold instruction (i.e., provide supports as

necessary) and prerequisite skills [functional skills] are used to work towards the grade level

standards" (p. 8). With the research of Hunt, McDonnell, and Crockett (2012), the idea of an

ecological approach should be considered. Data should be collected to determine how the

environment can affect the students' abilities to learn. This also brings attention to Sweller's

Cognitive Load Theory (1988). When writing goals, it is important to keep the modifications

that create a situation where the student is mentally and physically prepared to learn. Teachers

need to unpack the standards, find what the student needs to work on, and incorporate functional

skills needed for success. Cortiella and Wickham (2008) were in support of this concept.

Survey questions to guide researchers to determine best practice for accomplishing this task

would be a beneficial follow-up to this study.

It is also imperative that goals be individualized. Survey questions that indicate the

preferred way of collecting meaningful data would be an additional option to expand the study

and generate guidelines for developing goals that guide student instruction. If individuals collect

data, it would also be beneficial to indicate how that data is utilized to tailor instruction. This is

only possible if goals are measurable. If a goal is not measurable, should it be discarded, or

should it be rewritten? The opinions related to this question of respondents could assist in

developing guidelines for writing better IEP goals.

Finally, goals should be obtainable. How do goal writers know what is feasible for

students to achieve? Is it based on past learning trends and demonstrated abilities? Is it based on

the Student Learning Standards and what the state expects students to learn? Again, this would

be another question that could lead to data that could help goal writers develop more effective

goals for the students.

Recommendations for Practice

From the analysis of the data collected and the recommendations gleaned from the review

of the literature, several trends have evolved that would be suitable as recommendations for goal-

writing practices. To write successful and impactful goals, the team needs to know the students,

make connections to standards when writing goals, provide regular progress reports, and place

careful consideration on modifications.

The most important, first step in developing appropriate goals for students is to know

their present levels of academic achievement and functional performance. This is achievable

through standardized testing, classroom assessments, online tools that provide performance

levels, and teacher observations. Once the child study team has the data on student performance

levels, they can move onto the next recommendation extracted from this study.

Child study teams should use standards as milestones to create an individualized plan.

There needs to be a focus on what is critical for the student to learn. This should be based on

what the student has been able to successfully accomplish and what would be the next step in the

learning progression. Use this information and write the goals to match what the student needs

to learn next.

Once a focus is decided and the goal has been written, the overarching goal needs to be

broken down into obtainable steps. These steps should be listed in order and go from the most

basic part of the goal and gradually increase in difficulty to lead the student to success and

mastery of the goal. During this phase of goal writing, indicators of success need to be decided.

Determine what success looks like and develop a progress monitoring system. This system

should allow for progress reports that demonstrate student progress and effectiveness of the

benchmarks.

Finally, modifications need to be decided. With the Cognitive Load Theory in mind, the

CST needs to decide on ways to make the environment work for the student and prevent

cognitive overload. The student may need relaxation techniques, a smaller environment, or

breaks that incorporate the use of large muscle groups with grounding activities (Ex: carrying a

weighted bag down the hallway and back). Other ways to maximize learning potential should

also be considered.

From the results of this study in conjunction with the literature review, it can be

concluded that child study team members need to move forward with a combination approach.

The team should utilize both standards-based and functional goals in the IEPs. Collect data on the student to achieve a better understanding of his or her academic achievement and functional performance. It is the recommendation of this researcher that CSTs develop goals that improve academic function and make a connection to the student learning standards.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the attitudes of child study team members throughout schools in Warren, Sussex, Hunterdon, and Morris counties in New Jersey towards individual educational plan goals and their alignment with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Respondents indicated that they see both benefits and issues with standards-based goals. Respondents indicated that goals that are standards-based have a benefit because they help to push students and make sure that the students are receiving the education deserved. At the same time, respondents indicated that sometimes the standards are too difficult for some students and that they are inappropriate as goals. Additionally, some respondents replied one way on the Likert-style questions, but upon analysis, they saw both positive and negative aspects of implementing standards-based goals. Many use standards-based goals and see the benefit of their use. But at the same time, these same individuals expressed that they also saw issues with using standards-based goals.

It is possible that the problem educators face is not having to decide between functional-based or standards-based goals but having to interpret the meaning of standards-based goals. When IDEA required standards-based goals, many CST members and educators believed that the standards had to be the main piece of the goal. This interpretation led to educators choosing standards to place into IEPs as goals. The research conducted for this study, and the analysis of the results of the survey responses, indicate that there may be a misconception. Child study team

members do not have to choose between functional or standards-based goals. It is recommended that they collect and analyze information on student progress. Professional educators can then utilize their expertise to indicate what skills are needed and the progression in which to obtain these skills for each student. From here, a scope and sequence can be developed that is individually tailored to the student. Finally, the standards that are grade appropriate can be broken down so that they can be obtainable for every student. This way, students with special needs can be exposed to both the general education and grade appropriate curriculum but generate a product that is modified to his or her individual differences. By creating benchmarks or chunks of the standard, every student can have an interpretation of the standard that is reachable.

Several researchers strongly supported the idea that a combination of goals should be utilized. Hunt et al. (2012) developed an Ecological Curricular Framework that allows for focus on life-quality outcomes while providing instruction of standards-based academic goals. Their study indicated that there needs to be a combination of the types of goals and indicated how to implement it. Ahearn's (2006) research focused on the meaning of standards-based, but indicated that goals should be both standards-based and include basic skills or functional-based goals. The results of this study are in agreement.

The study conducted here indicated that all students need exposure to the standards. However, not all students should be expected to fully master those standards. Goals within the IEP need to be appropriate, effective, individualized, and measurable. Since the respondents saw both benefit and issue with standards-based goals and with functional-based goals, it can be assumed that the respondents do not discredit either style of goal. Perhaps, the best way to write goals for students with IEPs is by using the ecological method.

As suggested earlier under the recommendations, this study can be expanded and honed to focus on how to write goals that yield the most growth for students with disabilities to maximize the chances of success in the professional world. The study can also focus on the younger grade levels to determine what needs to be mastered early in the school career to prepare students for life in the community.

Child study team members and educators continue to be unsure of the most appropriate type of goal. Both types of goals have their benefits as well as their flaws. More research will need to be conducted to determine the best way to individualize goals and make education meaningful, appropriate, effective, individualized, and measurable for students.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

TITLE OF STUDY

Child Study Team Members' Attitudes Towards Individualized Educational Goals and their

Alignment with Standards

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
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PURPOSE OF STUDY
You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information.
The purpose of this study will be to explore the attitudes of child study team members throughout schools in Warren, Sussex, Hunterdon, and Morris counties in NJ towards IEP goals and their alignment or lack of alignment to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. 1. What is the relationship between Child Study Team member's attitudes and the construction of Individual Educational Plan goals? 2. What is the relationship between teacher training on goal writing and attitudes towards the different types of Individual Education Plan goals? 3. Is there a correlation between collaborative teaching in inclusive settings and attitudes towards setting standards-based goals for students with special needs?

STUDY PROCEDURES
Participants will be able to access the survey through email and/or a participation link that will bring the user to a Google Form. Once the form is open, the participant will electronically sign the consent form and answer Likert-type questions along with some open-ended questions regarding demographics. The participant will also have the opportunity to share thoughts through two open-ended questions regarding the topic. It is estimated that the survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete.

RISKS

As with all studies involving humans, there is a risk to confidentiality. To minimize this risk in this study, personal identifiable information will not be collected. The demographic portion of the survey will be limited to information that is necessary for correlations to be determined. Email addresses will not be collected.
You may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time if you choose.

BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you for your participation in this study. However, the research conducted will help to develop guidelines for writing more appropriate Individualized Education Plans and more productive programming by special educators.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your responses to the Perceptions of IEP Goals survey will be anonymous. Please do not write any identifying information on your response sheet. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:
• Names will not be collected
• Email addresses will not be collected
• Responses will be collected and stored on my g-mail account that is password protected. The account access is limited to the researcher.
• Responses will be discarded/deleted after the study has been published.
Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to electronically sign this consent form. After you sign the consent form, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Withdrawing from this study will not affect the relationship you have, if any, with the researcher. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the provided information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I can print a copy of this consent form. By checking "I agree", I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

☐   I agree

Appendix B

Survey Instrument: Perceptions of IEP Goals

Perceptions of IEP Goals

This survey, "Teachers' Perceptions of IEP Goals" developed by Traci Nicole Smith and utilized with her permission, is designed to examine educators' perceptions of IEPs. Many IEPs are written in alignment of students with disabilities' goals with grade level expectations. The survey pool has been expanded to include all members of the child study team.

Please respond to the questions by choosing the number that best fits your agreement or disagreement of the statements.

1. I have read the IEPs for the students with disabilities in my classroom.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	ALMOST NEVER

2. I wrote or gave input in writing goals that are aligned with the general education curriculum on the IEPs for the students with disabilities in my classroom.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	ALMOST NEVER

3. I have received sufficient training to work with students with disabilities that have IEP goals aligned with the general education curriculum.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

4. Accommodations on the IEPs for students with disabilities have been clearly defined by the IEP team.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

5. I would like more training in writing and implementing goals with grade level expectations for students with disabilities.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

6. I talk to the teacher/related service providers of the child with an IEP in my classroom for input regarding implementation of IEP goals.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

7. There is an adequate amount of time allotted in my instructional week to work with other

professionals regarding individualized needs of my students with disabilities.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	ALMOST NEVER

8. I recognize the benefits of students with disabilities being placed in the general education

classroom.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	ALMOST NEVER

9. I am aware of resources that are available to assist me with providing access to the general

education curriculum for students with disabilities.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	ALMOST NEVER

10. I know how to implement modifications for students with disabilities in my classroom.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	ALMOST NEVER

11. I have administrative support in implementing grade level content for students with

disabilities in my classroom.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

12. I use results from curriculum-based assessments to help me create IEP goals that address

the needs of my students with disabilities.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

13. Grade level expectations help me to address the goals of my students with disabilities.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

14. Sometimes, I ignore the grade level expectations and focus on meeting the individual goals

of a child.

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
ALMOST ALWAYS	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	ALMOST NEVER

15. Do you see problems with the use of IEP goals that include grade level expectations? If so, please explain:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

16. Do you see the benefits of IEP goals that include grade level expectations? If so, please explain:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Demographic Information

Sex:

Mark only one oval.

◯ Male

◯ Female

Race:

Mark only one oval.

- ○ African
- ○ American
- ○ Caucasian
- ○ Hispanic
- ○ Bi-racial Asian
- ○ Native American
- ○ Pacific Islander

Age:

Mark only one oval.

- ○ 18 - 21
- ○ 22 - 30
- ○ 31 - 40
- ○ 41 - 50
- ○ 51 - 60
- ○ 61+

My title as a member of the CST:

Mark only one oval.

- ⬭ Student
- ⬭ Parent
- ⬭ Teacher
- ⬭ Social Worker
- ⬭ Psychologist
- ⬭ Learning Consultant
- ⬭ Therapist
- ⬭ Director or Coordinator
- ⬭ Other

Highest Degree

Mark only one oval.

- ⬭ I am a high-school student
- ⬭ I am a college student
- ⬭ Bachelor's
- ⬭ Master's
- ⬭ Master's +30
- ⬭ Doctorate

Certification

Check all that apply.

- ◯ Pre-Kindergarten
- ◯ Early Childhood Special
- ◯ Education Special Education
- ◯ Elementary Teacher
- ◯ Behavior Specialist
- ◯ Therapist
- ◯ Social Worker
- ◯ Learning Consultant
- ◯ Psychologist
- ◯ Administrator

Other: _____

I have the most experience with working with students with...

Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Developmental Delays
- ◯ Speech and Language Delays
- ◯ Only Mild/Moderate Delays
- ◯ Significant Disabilities

Appendix C

Permission to Use Survey

Survey

Traci Smith <tracinsmith@yahoo.com>

Thu 6/7/2018 4:19 PM

To: Hunter, Alyce <Alyce.Hunter@CentenaryUniversity.edu>;

Cc: Sabol, Melissa <melissa.sabol@CentenaryUniversity.edu>;

Hi Melissa,

I am pleased you are interested in my topic and survey. It has been 6-7 years since I created that survey with my committee. I honestly cannot remember if I used any codes or validity stats. I hired a grad student to complete my inferential statistical calculations. Whatever information is in the dissertation is the only part I can access. I graduated in 2013 and moved forward. I'm not sure if I kept anything from my doctoral days, but I doubt it.

You have my permission to use anything you'd like to use available through my dissertation.

Please let me know once you've defended. I'd love to read it!

Thanks for asking permission. I wish you the best of luck. Earning my Ph. D. has opened many doors for me!!! It's a grueling process, but one you'll be grateful that you completed.

Finish strong!
Traci

Sent from my iPhone

Appendix D

IRB Approval Letter

February 27, 2019

TO: Melissa Sabol
FR: Tara Veerman, IRB Chairperson

RE: IRB APPLICATION – *Child Study Team Members' Attitudes Towards Individualized Educational Goals and their Alignment with Standards.*

Your IRB application was reviewed via exempt procedures and has been accepted. Your IRB approval for data collection runs through *February 26, 2020*. If further time is needed for data collection, please contact the IRB prior to that date.

If during the data collection period any component of the study changes please contact the IRB regarding guidance on how to amend your application.

Otherwise, please see the IRB Manual and/or committee regarding end-of-year reporting procedures.

Best of luck on your study.

Sincerely,

Tara J. Veerman
IRB Chair