



Promoting Progress for Students with Disabilities: Using the PLAAFP as the Foundation

[Slide 1 – Promoting Progress for Students with Disabilities: Using the PLAAFP as the Foundation]:

Tessie Bailey: Hi, everyone, welcome to today's webinar, Promoting Progress for Students with Disabilities: Using the PLAAFP as the Foundation. Today's webinar is hosted by the PROGRESS Center, an Office of Special Education Programs funded center, aimed at promoting progress for students with disabilities.

My name is Tessie Rose Bailey and I'm the director of the PROGRESS Center, and I'm excited to get us started today. Today's webinar will be recorded and posted on our center's website, www.promotingprogress.org. Live captions is also available for today's webinar.

[Slide 2 – Webinar Format and Questions]: Tessie Bailey: All participants will be muted throughout the presentation; however, you may submit a question at any time in the question pod, and it looks just like the image that's shown here. For technical issues and questions, Amy Peterson, our lead of universal dissemination, will try to assist you as soon as possible.

For content-related questions, there will be a Q&A at the end of the presentation, so just submit your questions and they will be shared with the presenters as time allows. We also are pleased to have a PROGRESS Center TA Consultant, Steven Prater, and he'll be assisting with links in the chat box throughout the presentation.

And so, there will be links to all of the resources mentioned today.

[Slide 3 - Welcome to the PROGRESS Center!]: Tessie Bailey: As a director of the PROGRESS Center, I am pleased to introduce the PROGRESS Center. It provides information, resources, tools, and technical assistance services to local educators in developing and implementing high-quality educational programming that enables children with disabilities to make progress and meet challenging goals in grades kindergarten through transition age.

To support local educators we share guidance, tools, and resources based on existing research, state and federal law and policy, and local experiences. As part of our year 2 work we are partnering with a select number of local districts and schools to develop the knowledge and skills and infrastructure necessary to promote progress for students with disabilities.

[Slide 4 - Why We Do What We Do]: Tessie Bailey: The Center is -- was developed in response to the Endrew F. Supreme Court decision, and this states that an IEP must be reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances.

Under IDEA, the individual education program, which we will refer to as the IEP, serves as the foundation of promoting progress for students with disabilities. We know that a well-designed IEP ensures that students have access to special education-related services and supplementary aids and services to access and benefit from



high-quality educational programming, as well as other services and supports that may be necessary to promote progress towards ambitious annual goals.

Today's webinar will provide an overview of just one of those IEP components required under IDEA, the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statement, and we'll call this the PLAAFP statement. This PROGRESS Center webinar is part of a robust set of trainings and resources to support local educators in developing an IEP that, when implemented by well qualified educators, will promote progress for students with disabilities.

[Slide 5 - Promoting Progress for Students with Disabilities]: Tessie Bailey: As I mentioned, the PROGRESS Center focuses on promoting progress for students with disabilities through the development and implementation of high-quality educational programming.

Now, for most students with disabilities, this does begin with the development of the IEP, and while today's webinar focuses on the development of this programming through the IEP, we know that it is equally important to ensure that the IEP is implemented as designed within a supportive learning environment by well-trained educators.

[Slide 6 - Introductions]: Tessie Bailey So please stay tuned for the release of our implementation resources later this year.

I'd like to welcome today's presenters. Shaylyn Quinn supports product development at our local partnership sites at the PROGRESS Center. Dr. David Bateman is professor at Shippensburg university in the department of educational leadership and special education, where he teaches courses on special education law, assessment, and facilitating inclusion. He is a former due process hearing officer for Pennsylvania, where he was involved in more than 580 hearings. He also serves as an advisor for the PROGRESS Center.

I'd also like to introduce Dr. Shannon Harmon; she is a nationally certified school psychologist with the Chambersburg area school district. She has over 20 years of experience working collaboratively with parents, teachers, and administrators within the public, private, and charter school settings, to coordinate multi-disciplinary evaluations of students and systems, and to develop comprehensive programs of instruction and intervention that promote academic, behavioral, and social emotional success for all.

Later in the session I'll help facilitate the Q&A, so please submit your questions at any time.

[Slide 7 - Poll]: Tessie Bailey I'd like to pass this over to Shaylyn, who is going to get us started with a poll.

Shaylyn Quinn: Thank you for those introductions, Tessie. So, now that you all have had a chance to hear about our presenters today, we'd like to give you all a chance to introduce yourselves. So, please take a moment to respond to the poll question to let us know what role you joined with us today. You'll see there are options for special educator, general educator, administrator, and other. We know that many of you are joining with us from a variety of roles and we are limited in the number of options to offer you all, so if you don't fit in one of the first three categories, let us know within the chat box what role you joined with us today.



We do have 34% of you as administrators and 31% special educators, a number of other roles as well, related service providers, a counselor, a parent, in the chat box, so we have a great mix and representation from a variety of stakeholders within the IEP, which is exactly what we wanted to see as we jump into today's webinar, because as we know, development of the IEP and of the PLAAFP statement is certainly a team effort.

Our objectives of our session today, we will be explaining the IDEA's definition of a PLAAFP statement and identify those essential elements of a high-quality PLAAFP, and we will review several tips for developing PLAAFP statements that promote progress for students with disabilities.

[Slide 8 - What does IDEA say about the PLAAFP statement?]: Shaylyn Quinn: So, I'll jump right into our content here now. IDEA outlines the essential requirements of an IEP and there are seven of those, and so one requirement is a statement of the child's present levels of academic achievements and functional performance as Tessie mentioned, and so many educators shorten this phrase and simply call it the PLAAFP statement.

At some schools or districts, you might hear it referenced by those earlier variations such as present levels of performance or PLAAFPs, present levels of educational performance or PLAAFPs. In 2004 the authorization of the phrase academic achievement and functional performance was added to ensure that the written statement in the IEP addresses all areas of need.

And so the IDEA regulation does not specify the complete contents of the statement but do clarify it should include how the child's disability affects the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum and for preschool children as appropriate, how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities.

So we will just be focusing on statements for kindergarten to transition age students in this webinar, and you'll see on the slide we have an image of the PLAAFP tip sheet so that the PROGRESS Center has developed a series of tip sheets that align with the requirements of an IEP according to IDEA. You'll see we have one created around the PLAAFP and it includes a description of the PLAAFP statement as well as descriptions of the four essential elements of a high-quality PLAAFP and several tips for development with that ultimate goal of progress for students with disabilities in mind.

I recommend that you open up the tip sheet using the link in the chat box and follow along as we review some of the content.

[Slide 9 - Did You Know?]: Shaylyn Quinn: As a federal law, all states must ensure that their schools and districts meet the minimum requirements set forth under the IDEA, so many states go above and beyond and establish additional requirements for the IEP so maybe a shorter timeline than what's really required or an additional component of the IEP.

It's important to check with your state Department of Education to see if there are additional rules and procedures you must follow. In the chat box we'll put a link to an interactive map that allows you to click on your state and access the state Department of Education website as well as the state special education agency



website information. Today we will focus on the minimum requirements that all states and the districts and schools must adhere to according to all federal IDEA regulations.

[Slide 10 - Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance]: Shaylyn Quinn: As we have discussed, the PLAAFP statement must include a summary of performance for both academic achievements and functional performance, regardless of the student's disability or need.

Although the IDEA regulations do not define academic achievement or functional performance explicitly within regulations, the U.S. Department of Education did provide additional clarification in response to some questions in the federal register for each of these domains. For example, the Department of Education explained that academic achievement generally refers to a child's performance in academic areas but because academic achievement can vary so much depending on a child's circumstance or situation, a singular concrete definition of academic achievement was not included. However, in the Department of Education's explanation of academic achievement, several examples of academic areas that could be factored into a child's PLAAFP statement were listed, and those include reading, writing, math, science, and history.

However, it's important to keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list by any means, but it's more of a sample of academic areas that are commonly used to measure a child's performance and subsequently used to inform the development of the PLAAFP statement. Regarding the inclusion of the present levels of functional performance in the PLAAFP statement, the Department of Education explained that functional performance generally refers to skills or activities that are not considered academic or related to a child's academic achievement.

That term functional is often used in the context of routine activities of everyday living. What are your routine activities of everyday living? Those are things that pertain to dressing, eating, toileting, behavior, social skills, communication skills, mobility, and executive functioning. The Department of Education in its response to questions similar to academic achievement, explained that a list of functional skills are not included in IDEA because, as you likely noticed in my long-winded list, the range of functional skills is as varied as the individual needs of children with disabilities.

[Slide 11 - Why Is the PLAAFP Important?]: Shaylyn Quinn: So why is the PLAAFP important?

According to the Department of Education, there should be a direct relationship between the present levels of performance and those other components of the IEP. So, if the statement describes a problem with the child's reading level and points to a deficiency in reading skills, the problem should be addressed under both goals and specific special education and related services provided to the child.

A 2006 court decision in Kirby versus Cabell County Board of Education really underscored the importance of the PLAAFP, and it said if the IEP fails to assess the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, the IEP does not comply with IDEA, this deficiency goes to the heart of IEP, the child's level of academic achievement and functional performance is the foundation on which the IEP must be built.

Without a clear identification of present levels, the IEP cannot set measurable goals, evaluate the child's progress, and determine which educational and related services are needed. So, in other words, the PLAAFP statement is the starting point and it needs to be comprehensive and detailed enough so that the team can set appropriately ambitious goals in light of the child's circumstances and plan appropriate supports, instruction and



services. Each annual goal should be directly linked to a need described in the PLAAFP statement and then even further, the PLAAFP statement should provide justification for each support and service that the student receives as part of their IEP.

PROGRESS Center has developed a self-paced online module series that will align with the major IDEA requirements within the categories outlined in this graphic here. So these modules are meant to build teacher capacity to develop an IEP with fidelity, and toward the end of the webinar we'll be sharing our social media and newsletter sign-up that will allow you to stay updated regarding the release of these modules very soon.

[Slide 12 - What Are the Four Essential Elements of a High-Quality PLAAFP?]: Shaylyn Quinn: So, as I mentioned earlier, the IDEA regulations do not specify a particular structure or content of the PLAAFP, but the IEP can begin the process of developing a high-quality PLAAFP statement by focusing on four essential elements.

So, you'll see here student needs, effect on progress in general education, baseline information and connections and/or services. On the tip sheet you'll notice each of those four essential elements are listed in the table with its associated icon as well as the description and some guiding questions. So, IEP teams can utilize those questions to facilitate robust discussion during meetings and to inform the development of a high-quality PLAAFP statement.

And in addition to these guiding questions, another best practice that teams should consider is collecting and summarizing data for the development of the PLAAFP statement prior to the IEP meeting to again help facilitate that robust discussion and really get the ball rolling as soon as the IEP team is able to meet.

[Slide 13 - Student Needs]: Shaylyn Quinn: So starting with student needs here, this essential element of the PLAAFP focuses on the detailed and accurate description of a student's educational and functional needs, so this requires the inclusion of up-to-date information about the student, so things like recent systematic classroom observations, teacher, student and family interviews, universal screening or benchmarks, ongoing progress monitoring data, and standardized tests.

Those are all valuable sources of data, and we really want to see that variety. So historical information also might be relevant to include in the PLAAFP statement such as data from the student's most recent evaluation or relevant medical history. The description might also include how a student is socially adapting or interacting with peers and the staff.

So, during a meeting, an IEP team should discuss how the student responds to the various components of their educational setting or program and services. If the student requires a behavior intervention plan, the team should be discussing and describing how the plan is used in the classroom as well as during those non-structured periods such as lunch. The IEP team also should explain how the student is or has responded to implementation of the plan in various settings.

So those accommodations, interventions, or strategies, were they successful in the past? If we know something does or does not work for the student, we want to take that into consideration when developing the PLAAFP. Although the PLAAFP statement must address all areas of need identified through evaluation and particularly through identified areas of concern, it also should include areas of strength related to those identified needs. For example, a student may struggle with fluency and comprehension, but the student's comprehension



performance significantly improves when an adult reads aloud, so this would give us really useful and actionable information about what supports and services a student might benefit from.

[Slide 14 - Effect on Progress in General Education]: Shaylyn Quinn: In addition to addressing areas of need, the PLAAFP statement should also provide an explanation of how the disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. This information is critical to plan services, accommodations, and modifications in the IEP. Rather than simply naming the disability, describe how characteristics of the disability are impacting the student's progress in the general education curriculum.

Classroom observations and interviews with teachers, family, and the student, if appropriate, are also really helpful here for conveying the impact of the disability. It can be useful to include comparisons to same age and grade peers to communicate how the child's disability may impact the child's performance in the context of their peers. The IEP team should consider including a description of what supports have been helpful in promoting active engagement in the general education curriculum, so those instructional strategies or accommodations or program modifications.

But it's also important to remember that other team members, particularly parents and families, might not have prior knowledge about a child's past instructional interventions or some of that knowledge around nitty-gritty IEP specific terminology or assessment score interpretation, so be intentional with the clarity and the simplicity of the language you use when developing the PLAAFP statement.

[Slide 15 - Baseline Information]: Shaylyn Quinn: The third essential element of the PLAAFP statement on the PROGRESS Center tip sheet includes baseline data and identified areas of concern. So, although current data are part of describing student needs, baseline data are critical to setting ambitious goals.

The data should be specific, meaning they're clearly stated, they should be objective, meaning they're observable behavior rather than more subjective, so think about the difference between describing a behavior as cursing rather than being disrespectful. They should be measurable, meaning quantifiable by a defined standard, and they should be able to be collected frequently.

In addition, data should relate to identified areas of concern and state content standards when possible. Again, accurate baseline data are critical to setting ambitious goals using validated approaches. So, in addition to quantitative data, it is important to include qualitative data in the PLAAFP statement to really gain a complete picture of that student. Ultimately baseline data should inform instruction and development of goals and services to help parents and other school professionals understand the child's performance and how the IEP will address all areas of need.

[Slide 16 - Connection to Goals and/or Services]: Shaylyn Quinn: And lastly, as I mentioned when discussing the importance of the PLAAFP statement, the PLAAFP statement provides the foundation on which the rest of the IEP is built. So because the information in the PLAAFP statement is the starting point from which educators can specify appropriate goals, services, supports and progress monitoring plans, there must be sufficient detail and justification to link the present levels to the listed components of a high-quality educational program.

So, in other words, the PLAAFP statement should provide justification for what the IEP team proposes as components of the IEP.



[Slide 17 - Evaluating PLAAFPs: Identifying Areas for Improvement]: And with that, I will hand it over to Shannon, and I thank you all for bearing with me and my tech issues, and she will take us through the rest of this section.

Shannon Harmon: Great. Thank you so much, Shaylyn.

[Slide 18 - What's the Big Deal?]: Shannon Harmon: I am so happy to be here with you all today, eager to dive into our topic of evaluating PLAAFP statements and identifying areas for improvement.

Shaylyn has already briefly reviewed the requirements regarding the PLAAFP statements as outlined in IDEA, and although the groundwork for these regulations really dates back to 1975 with the signing into law of the education for all handicapped children act, the language regarding the PLAAFP statement as we know it today has really been around since the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, so you may be asking yourself, you know, it's 2021, these regulations were written back in 2004, what is the big deal? Why are we still talking about PLAAFP statements?

Well, as described so well by Dr. Mitchell Yell and colleagues in the module developing high-quality IEPs which I believe we have a link to which will be posted in the chat, the IEP process, including the PLAAFP statements, is certainly described in legislation, the rules and the laws issued by the U.S. Department of Education, but we know that these laws are often clarified through litigation. According to Dr. Yell, the law tells us what we have to do in special education but the court decisions that result from lawsuits often provide us with guidance and understanding of the how and to what extent these things must be done.

So as noted by Dr. Bailey in 2017 there was this landmark case before the U.S. Supreme Court, the Endrew F. versus the Douglas County School District Case, and in a unanimous ruling, the Supreme Court ultimately raised the standard for our schools and our court systems when it comes to defining free and appropriate public education or FAPE.

The Endrew F. case, either through court decision or opinion of the court delivered by Chief Justice Roberts, essentially tasked school teams with the responsibility of ensuring that we have a comprehensive picture of the student's present levels, so that we can clearly detail a child's current circumstances by providing a comprehensive analysis of a student's strengths and needs, so that we can reasonably calculate a program of support unique to that student's identified strengths and needs, and so that we can make sure that we are targeting appropriately ambitious goals for the individual student to ensure more than a minimal or de minimis level of progress.

[Slide 19 -PLAAFP Statement]: Shannon Harmon: But the critical point here is this: we cannot do those three things without ensuring that we have current and comprehensive data regarding a student's present levels of both academic achievement and functional performance included in our PLAAFP statements of a student's IEP.

As Shaylyn noted, the PLAAFP statements should be a springboard to determining the annual goals and services and supports that a student needs. If we fail to develop a PLAAFP statement that is built based upon consideration of all of the areas of students' academic and functional performance or if we fail to address each of the student's needs, functional or academic, that are identified for a student, the Endrew F. case has taught us it may be considered a denial of FAPE.

The PLAAFP statement is the driving force behind every aspect of the IEP and that's why it's a big deal.



Understand also that the PLAAFP statement should represent that baseline level of performance for a student from year to year upon which we are going to develop appropriately ambitious goals for the student. It is the data that is contained in a student's PLAAFP statement that should serve as the roadmap for what goals the student needs to achieve next and how we're going to continue to monitor a student's progress to ensure that the program of support that we have developed and implemented is effective for the student.

[Slide 20 - We recommend the PLAAFP be...]: Shannon Harmon: Let's quickly review some basic recommended guidelines for crafting PLAAFP statements, some of which have already been mentioned by Shaylyn, and later Dr. Bateman will provide more detailed insight into the major components of the PLAAFP statement as outlined in IDEA.

The PLAAFP statements should be current. The information contained in the PLAAFP statement should be the most recent assessments, observations, evaluations, and progress monitoring data that is available to the team. The PLAAFP statements should be relevant. The information must be relevant and comprehensive related to both academic achievement and functional performance, strengths and needs specific to that student. Talking just about a child's category of disability is not necessarily relevant. What is relevant is the individual needs in the particular skill areas as a result of their disability. The PLAAFP statement should also be objective. The PLAAFP is not the place for statements such as the teacher thinks, or the team feels. Keeping information in this section data-driven is extremely important. Fourthly, the PLAAFP statement should be measurable. Quantifying your PLAAFP statement, that is, making sure that the information presented is measurable is really the only way that teams can see where we are starting, where we need to go, and determine the mile markers in between that need to be met to make it to the goal.

Next the PLAAFP statement should be understandable, be clear, be concise, be jargon-free in the language used in PLAAFP statements. If you use acronyms, be sure to define them. If I say, PSSA, DWKI, GRA, is that meaningful to everyone? Probably not, unless you work in my district, in my state. If I say a score of 619 was earned on a particular measure, is that information meaningful? Again, probably not in and of itself. This section should not just be a reiteration of scores. These statements should clearly explain what the assessments are, what the student performance levels mean, and what the child can and cannot do. Not just for the parents' sake, but also for any other school who may be receiving your IEP when a child moves into their area.

And finally, just a reminder that the data that you include in your PLAAFP statement will serve as the baseline for the development of IEP goals, so providing a detailed picture again of what the child can and cannot do in specific academic and functional performance areas will establish the baseline for monitoring of student progress.

Tessie Bailey: Can I ask you to repeat what you said for current again, for one of our participants?

Shannon Harmon: Absolutely.

So, the information that we include in our PLAAFP statement should be the result of the most recent assessments, the most recent observations or evaluation information, and the most recent progress monitoring data that's available to the team.

Tessie Bailey: Thank you.

Shannon Harmon: Sure.



[Slide 21 – Marsha, Marsha, Marsha...]: Shannon Harmon: So, let's move on to a sample PLAAFP statement for a student named Marsha.

As I go through Marsha's statement, I would ask that you continuously ask yourself, is the information in this PLAAFP statement current, is it relevant, objective, measurable, understandable, and does it provide the baseline information necessary to draft appropriately ambitious goals and a quality program of support for this student?

Marsha's IEP is dated 5/7/2022 her grade is listed as ninth grade. The PLAAFP statement starts out by saying Marsha's currently a 15-year-old ninth grade student attending high school. According to the evaluation report completed by the school psychologist on 8/17/17, Marsha qualifies for special education services under the disability category intellectual disability. How can we enhance Marsha's PLAAFP to ensure that it meets the recommended guidelines?

If you're keeping your own score sheet, I'm sure you may already be questioning whether the information presented in this present level statement is going to be current. Although this is certainly just an introductory statement, the only information that is referenced in this section so far is from a 2017 evaluation compiled by the school psychologist.

We know that this might simply just be documentation of the date and the type of eligibility determination for this student, but I'm going to definitely be looking for additional information to come that is going to give us a more current representation of the student's present levels. Also, given the student's identified disability category of intellectual disability, I also know that I'm definitely going to be looking for present level information across not just the academic domain, but also across the functional performance domains to be reported since the very federal definition of intellectual disability itself does require a student to be showing deficits across functional areas such as cognitive and adaptive functioning.

But remember that the disability category or definition itself doesn't define the needs for this individual student. It is the student's individual patterns of performance that are truly going to define their strengths and needs. So, what we need to be looking for here and next is the assessment information that speaks to those current patterns of performance. So, on my score sheet, if I were noting any areas of concern, I would be putting a check mark next to current.

[Slide 22 – Marsha, Marsha, Marsha...]: Shannon Harmon: Let's continue to review Marsha's PLAAFP statement. Next up we have some academic performance information reported. Marsha's grade for the third marking period of seventh grade were as follows. We see the content areas, subject areas listed below, as well as the range of grades from a through f. What are some concerns that you might have as you review the information that's presented in Marsha's PLAAFP statement? Immediately I am concerned that Marsha is currently a ninth-grade student and yet the grades that are reported here are for Marsha's seventh grade school year. Not only is this information no longer current, we could hardly consider this information to be relevant anymore, either.

Grades that are 2 years old simply don't speak to the students specific strengths and needs across the academic areas at the present time, nor are they going to serve as an appropriate baseline upon which to develop ambitious goals for the student for the upcoming school year. Certainly, for a student participating in any or all of the general education curriculum, including a review of grades, could certainly be appropriate for a PLAAFP



statement; however, you would want to make sure that those grades are the most current ones available. It would also be helpful to clearly detail perhaps the grading scales specific to the student's school to give further context and meaning to those grades.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to know whether those grades were earned based on modified content within those instructional areas or with what level of supports, services, accommodation, or modification they were earned. Again, not only would we have concerns about currency and relevancy of this information, but I would also be putting a checkmark next to baseline information as without the data being current and relevant, it would be difficult to consider that appropriate baseline.

[Slide 23 – Marsha, Marsha, Marsha...]: Shannon Harmon: In the next part of Marsha's PLAAFP statement we have a review of map data.

Marsha took the map during sixth and seventh grades. Seventh grades scores are as follows, then there's math map data from fall, winter, and spring as well as ELA map data from fall, winter, and spring. Again, I think that we can all agree that we would have significant concerns regarding the currency and the relevancy of the scores presented here. Reporting scores from seventh grade for a ninth grader is not sufficient in a present level statement. This data certainly would not be an accurate baseline for Marsha to develop grades for a ninth grade IEP moving into 10th grade.

An additional concern that I would have is whether this information is even understandable to the reader. What is a map test? Was a score of 195 on the math map when she actually took it in seventh grade, a good score?

Well, map stands for measures of academic progress and it is a measure of growth in students' skills across the reading, math, science and language areas, but use of acronyms such as map in a present level report are simply not universally understood and reporting out on raw scores such an assessment without providing any type of context are generally meaningless to the reader. It's important to us that we don't assume that the reader has the same background knowledge that we have.

If the goal truly is for our teams to help drive development of appropriate ambitious IEP goals, we do need to make sure that everyone who comes into contact with the IEP has a clear understanding of the baseline data that's being used to develop the student goals. For a student who's participating in any or all of the general education curriculum, again, including benchmark assessment data, may be appropriate for the PLAAFP statement. We just want to assure that we are including the most current benchmark assessment data that is available, that we are presenting this data in a way that it is understandable by describing the data collection tools that we are using, and that we are making sure that the data is meaningful by putting it into context for the reader.

Adding in information such as expected range of scores, qualitative descriptors such as average, below average, well below average, or even assigning percentile ranks to scores are all ways that we could make those scores reported here for Marsha more understandable. And remember, when we are ensuring that our data is current and relevant and understandable, we can feel more confident that the information we're presenting is going to help serve as an appropriate baseline for determining ambitious goals for our IEP.

[Slide 24 – Marsha, Marsha, Marsha...]: Shannon Harmon: Let's move on to review the final section of Marsha's PLAAFP statement. Remember we're thinking to ourselves, is this information in the concluding section of



Marsha's PLAAFP statement current, relevant, objective, measurable, understandable, and does it provide baseline information for the team? Marsha continues to qualify for learning support services. The team continues to believe that Marsha is benefiting from pull-out learning support classrooms for her ELA and math classes. Teachers report that she's doing well, participating in the general education curriculum for science, social studies, related arts, and lunch.

So, before we talk about the concerns regarding the information contained on this slide, let's talk a little bit about what information is actually missing from her PLAAFP statement that should have been included prior to introducing a concluding statement. On the previous slides, we did review her grades and benchmark assessment data. If that data would have been current, we certainly could consider that data to be relevant, objective, measurable data. But, think to yourself, what other relevant, objective, and measurable data should have been presented here that was not before moving on to a concluding statement? Remember, this is a student who was first identified as eligible for special education services in 2017, as noted in the introductory statement.

It is now the year 2020. We can assume that this student has been receiving support services for several years.

As such, we should have IEP progress monitoring data available to us, and yet that was not reported in this section. Where is the IEP progress monitoring data? Omitting that data is extremely problematic because how can we objectively determine if the student is making appropriate progress towards their learning objectives without multiple current data sources? The team's concluding statements state Marsha is benefiting from pull-out learning support classrooms or that she's doing well, participating in the general education curriculum, is purely subjective in nature because there is no data to stand behind that.

Not only that, but there is no functional performance level information reported at all. This is not only problematic because the functional information is one of the major components outlined in IDEA, but it's also problematic because we know that, to have even qualified as a student with an intellectual disability, Marsha would have been demonstrating a range of cognitive and adaptive functioning needs that would certainly warrant attention here. Are there communication needs, motor needs? Needs with regards to activities of daily living. And if so, where is the assessment information that speaks to that specifically in this section?

Finally, I would also like to point out that this IEP is dated May of 2020. Can anyone think of anything fairly significant that was occurring during May of 2020? Sure, COVID, schools across the nation were transitioning to remote learning. That change in instructional model along with the impact on Marsha's functioning as a result of that change would probably be pretty important information that should have been reflected in this section as well. Her ability to access the curriculum and her overall present levels of performance may have significantly changed as a remote learner versus a face-to-face learner and the team needs to consider that information for Marsha as part of her PLAAFP statement.

As we have reviewed these recommended guidelines for creating PLAAFP statements and as Dr. Bateman picks up from here and continues to provide additional insight into the major components of the PLAAFP statement, I would challenge you all, the next time that you are crafting a present level statement in a student's IEP, to use this same type of checklist and line of questioning to your own work.

Is the PLAAFP statement that you are working on current, relevant, objective, measurable, understandable, and does it provide a quality baseline information upon which to identify a student's strengths and needs and to



identify appropriate goals and supports for the student? If you can answer yes to those items, then you are well on your way to creating an appropriate, high-quality PLAAFP statement which will be of ultimate benefit to the student in the long run. I thank you all for your time and attention.

Dr. Bateman, I will turn it over to you.

[Slide 24 – Developing IEPs: Writing Appropriate Present Levels Statements]: David Bateman: Thank you. And I appreciate the great introduction that you and Shaylyn have provided.

Before I go on, I just want to let you know that there's a wealth of information that's included as a part of this presentation that we may not get to, but there's also some great resources that are added as a part of this. Please avail yourself of all the resources and pay close attention to the guidance that both Shaylyn and Shannon just provided because what it does is lay the foundation for effective PLAAFP statements.

And why are we focusing on this? Well, this talk about -- without a good PLAAFP statement you can't write appropriate present level -- can't develop an appropriate IEP for a child. The PLAAFP statement dictates everything.

And so, we want to focus on that.

[Slide 25 – Major Components of PLAAFP]: David Bateman: So as a part of this, I'm going to hit this pretty quickly but there are four major components of PLAAFPs.

The first part is, all of your PLAAFPs need to be data-based. There needs to be student-specific information relating to current academic achievement and functional performance, both Shaylyn and Dr. Harmon emphasized that very nicely. It needs to be current information. Thinking about addressing this, but we also need to make sure that we're clarifying, we also are emphasizing the strengths of the student, that the student has strengths.

What are the areas where the student actually shines? What does the student do well? This will help lay the foundation for any kind of instruction.

Obviously as part of the PLAAFP statement, since it's the eligibility determination we've made for the child to receive special ed and related services, we want to address the needs. And then the last thing, the effect of the students -- of the disability on the involvement.

I'm going to hit each one of these four components just very quickly, just in trying to highlight these so that we have some sense of -- and give you some interesting points about this.

[Slide 26 – Data-Based Student Specific Information]: David Bateman: The first one on data-based student specific information. Make sure it's objective measures. Measures that you understand, I understand, someone else walking in the room also understands.

Whether you like it or not, many of our students are mobile, they move from place to place to place, they're transient, so what we have to think about is what is good for the student is that someone else could pick this up and understand what's going on. Follow the guidance that Dr. Harmon just gave you to the map information.



But also, so parents can understand it. Parents don't understand our jargon. Make sure it's there. Data from any student evaluation is also a critical source of information, keep that. Also include appropriate, this is important, this is what's important for me, is the name of the test that was administered, the administration date. That lets me know how current it is. And any other pertinent information that is a part of this. Because when I work with school districts, the first thing I do is, when I have a child who there's an issue with, I grab the PLAAFP statement of the IEP because that tells me the needs of the child, what we should be focusing on, and that lays the foundation for the rest of the IEP.

The PLAAFP statement is vital and it's important that we have good accurate information, but without the name of the test, without the administration date, I don't know if it's current, I don't know if it's a valid test that we can use, things like this. So also, the score should be self-explanatory, if not, explanation should be included. Is this a district-wide test? Is this a statewide test? What it is and where we can go from this.

Keep this as a part of this and address this.

[Slide 27 – Strengths of Student]: David Bateman: The next section, and I want to make sure we understand, the strengths of the student.

We need to reflect specific skills the student has mastered or is close to mastering and reflect anything that is performed well.

And what's important about this, is anything that the student performs well compared to their peers, anything, any kind of thing recommendation and sometimes you may seem like you might be stretching to gather good information for the strength section but it really does clarify what we talk about the student, we understand what they like, what they need, but also what they do well.

This is vital. Keep in mind -- sometimes it might be something nebulous such as a student attends school regularly or the student is always there participating. Great statements but we need to think about what can we do to reflect it so we have a better idea of the whole picture of a child.

[Slide 28 – Needs Resulting from the Disability]: David Bateman: And then the last section I want to address real fast is the needs resulting from the disability. These are any of the important skills and behaviors that are critical for the student to learn.

And what we need to think about as they [the students] -- we want them to make progress in the general education curriculum. This is in heart what we're doing in special education. This is the specially designed instruction. We identify their specific needs and then we plan programs that can help address that so we can get the student as close to their general education peers as possible. That's what we're striving to do.

We're working to help mitigate those differences and help us address where we are with this. So, the needs dictate the specific program that we're going to be providing for the student. So, if we have a student who has a need in reading, just telling me a need in reading isn't enough. I need to know what the specific needs in reading are. Is it word identification, is it phonemic awareness, is it comprehension? Don't just give me an umbrella term with reading. The same thing as Dr. Harmon highlighted, just don't tell me the child has a learning disability; tell me the specifics of the child's needs, because the needs are actually what dictates the programming for the child, not the disability label.



Keep this as we talk about this.

[Slide 29 – PLAAFP Test Questions]: David Bateman: Now, similar to how she highlighted very specifically, there's some PLAAFP test questions you need to pay attention to.

And these PLAAFP test questions, everyone will have access to this so I'm going to go through it rather quickly, but I want to make sure that you understand that you should be able to answer these questions to help guide effective classrooms.

First, similar to what we highlighted, does the PLAAFP provide a descriptive snapshot of the student including both strengths and areas of need? That should be clear for you. Is the parent or guardian present and clearly considered? We'll talk more about that later, but we make sure we pay very close attention where this is.

Third, do statements about the student have data to support them? Don't just tell me the student misses school. Tell me how many times this student misses school. Don't tell me the student goes to the nurse frequently. Tell me how many times the student goes to the nurse. I don't want to violate HIPAA things, don't tell me necessarily what the student goes to the nurse for, tell me how many times this actually happens. Tell me how many times the student is tardy. Just give me accurate data so we understand where we are with this. Are these data sources understandable to the parents, the guardians, the student, another teacher? Make sure it's clear, understandable.

And fourth, 4A, does the data provide information about skills that are strengths or weaknesses for the student? Building on this, does the PLAAFP make it clear what content or instructional -- are an instructional priority for the student so we have some sense where we are with this?

4C, are the content skills listed specific enough that you could identify areas for standard reference instruction based on the PLAAFP? Are we going to be able to identify how this ties to the specific state standards? Because many of your states are working towards addressing specific state standards as a part of the goals. Where does this kid relate to this and how are we going to address this?

Five, are the PLAAFP summary statements present for each skill area that connect the data to priorities for instruction and general curriculum access included? How are we going to access the general education curriculum as a part of this? Six, could you write observable and measurable individualized goals based on the PLAAFP? If it's not measurable, it doesn't count. And I don't mean that as a pun, but we need to make sure that we can count these and build on where we are with this. And last, if you remove the student's name, could someone who knows the student identify the student based on reading this PLAAFP statement? This is vital to help us understand what's going on. But just to reiterate, we need to write PLAAFP statements that will be helpful and beneficial to the student and to the teachers and staff who are working with the student.

As I alluded to before, many of these kids are transient, and what we need to make sure as a part of this, that we're piggybacking on a program and writing a program that can be taken with them that will be beneficial to them, other teachers will be able to grab it and run with it, and so they understand precisely what's going on, and they can then clarify why we're addressing these specific goals and he is opposed to this kid has a learning disability, tell me what the specifics are. Don't just tell me the label; tell me the needs as a part of this.



So, what I'm going to do now is, we have reserved some time as a part of this for questions, alright? So, I'm going to turn this over to Tessie, so she can lead us through questions as part of this.

[Slide 30 – PLAAFP Component and Statement Continued]: Tessie Bailey: Yes, we have received lots of questions. I'm going to ask Dr. Harmon to also come on as well.

We just got a question just now, I want to make sure we put it out because I think it aligns with what you said, Dr. Bateman, if a need is identified in the PLAAFP, do we have to have a goal to address it? Could we have a single goal that addresses multiple needs or do we need a specific goal for every individual need?

Shannon Harmon: That's a two-part question, I'll take the first part.

The first part is for each need, that can be addressed in different ways.

It doesn't necessarily have to be addressed through a goal.

It could be addressed through the accommodations or modification section of the IEPs.

[Slide 31 –Questions]: Shannon Harmon: Different states have different ways that they address this. Or for older kids, it could be possibly addressed through a transition statement. Something that we're providing as part of relating to transition as a part of this. Second part of your grade question, because this is something, we need to clarify for everyone, that a goal may address multiple needs. So, there doesn't have to be a one to one correspondence, but for every need, there needs to be something in the IEP that addresses that. The same way for anything that -- any kind of accommodations, modifications, what we're doing, there needs to be some need to address that. It's a two-way street on this.

We're not going to put goals in a child's IEP unless there's a specific need for which it needs to be addressed. So when I review IEPs, first I look at all the needs, is there a goal, a way of addressing the goal through an accommodation or maybe even a change in part of that, then I make sure for every goal that there's a specific need. So, I go both ways, because if there's a goal in there without a need, I tell the team, take that goal out because we need to make sure it's individualized to the child's specific needs.

Tessie Bailey: Excellent. Our participant said a special thank you for that.

Shaylyn, we had a question about do I really have to address the functional part if my student only presents with academic needs?

Shaylyn Quinn: Yeah, that's a great question, and I think it's a common misconception among educators who might have a purely academic need or purely academic goal, but IDEA does require that there has to be present levels of academic achievement and functional performance in the statement, and ultimately that's to ensure that students with disabilities have supports for all areas of need, regardless of whether it might have been a main concern, and also as we mentioned throughout those strength pieces of it, is that really perhaps there are some functional strengths there that could be leveraged to address some of the academic areas of concern.

Tessie Bailey: Thanks.

And so, Dr. Harmon, Dr. Bateman mentioned this a little bit, but can you talk about how transition should be addressed in the PLAAFP? This came from a question prior to the webinar.



Shannon Harmon: Thank you. Federally, transition goals must be included in a student's IEP by the time the student reaches 16. Some states have transition mandates at younger ages. For these students reporting out obviously about academic levels would remain relevant for them, but the PLAAFP statement also needs to be sure to include baseline data from things like transition assessments, related to training, education, employment, if appropriate daily living or independent living skills as well.

Of course, if the student already had post-secondary goals identified in their IEPs, data reflecting progress towards those goals should also be included in a review of the PLAAFP statement, but as always, we want to make sure that the PLAAFP statement includes a comprehensive review of students strengths and needs, but also that we're intentional about gathering information, about -- or related to the student's post-school interests, where are they heading in employment, are they heading to further education? And the IEP team, through the PLAAFP statement, really should be considering the student's desired goals and how their current skill set matches those goals, as that information would assist the team with transition planning

Tessie Bailey: Excellent.

And Dr. Bateman, I just got another one, what data that could be collected from general ed assessments would help with the development of the PLAAFP?

David Bateman: I would make sure that we clarify that we get information from the child's general education teacher, and all the general education teachers which may engage with this child, so I would get current grades, I would get any behavior data that we have from the general education teacher, but I would also make sure that the gen ed teacher would also clarify any strengths that this child has in the classroom, but also any needs, and how -- and the last thing, and I know I'm talking rather quickly, but emphasize, where is this child's need assistance compared to his or her peers so that we can clarify that precisely as we talk about the development of the IEP later on, so we can use that information included as we address this.

Tessie Bailey: Excellent. We just got a question, and I just want to quickly address it, can you draw a more distinct line between best practice for present level and the requirements for compliance?

And I will just say that the tip sheet outlines the requirements for compliance in order to meet that, and then some of the things that were addressed today is how you can meet those compliance requirements. But I think one more question has to do with standards. How do you address the standards within the PLAAFP? And the student's performance on those standards? Do you use state tests or something else?

David Bateman: Shannon, do you want to take this?

Shannon Harmon: I think it's a combination.

Certainly, you would want to take a look at your state standards and be able to comment on student progress with state standards. I think you always want to have multiple sources of data pointing to students strengths and needs as well, too, we often talk about triangulating data for students to make sure we have multiple sources pointing to the identification of a need for a student so that we can appropriately develop baseline goals for them.



Tessie Bailey: Thank you all. And I'm going to thank our presenters today and then I'm going to close up.

There's a lot of other questions; some of them are related to some of our future webinars around goal setting so we will share some of those as well. As you'll see on some later slides, there will be opportunities for submitting some of your questions. So, thank you, Dr. Bateman, and Dr. Harmon, and Shaylyn for sharing today.

[Slide 32 – Promoting Progress: The Role of the Goal]: Tessie Bailey: I want to share a couple of things that are coming up that may be relevant to you.

You'll see in the chat box we have an upcoming webinar around setting the IEP goals. We did get several questions about those, so attending that webinar we'll share some of our great resources as well as several of our strategies that we have for working on.

[Slide 33 – Staying Connected with the PROGRESS Center]: Tessie Bailey: Something else I just want to quickly share is, our social media. The best way to stay up to date about what we have coming is to follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

As Shaylyn mentioned, we do have a series of online self-paced modules that will help you walk through each of the components. So today you got a little snapshot of what the PLAAFP module might look like, but you'll also get some additional information and probably some of the other questions that you have answered in that module. So please follow us @k12progress and you can find us on Facebook and Twitter.

I also recommend signing up for our newsletter, which is down at the bottom, and through the newsletter, you will also find resources from other national centers that may be relevant to your work.

[Slide 34 – Disclaimer]: Tessie Bailey: And as we close up today, I want to thank you so much for attending.

[Slide 35 – Contact Information]: Tessie Bailey: In the chat box you'll find a link to the newsletter, but you will also find a link to our survey, and we really appreciate your feedback. It helps us improve our future webinars and helps us think about the resources that local educators need to promote progress for students with disabilities. So, thank you for attending today, and thanks again to our presenters for sharing their wealth of knowledge.

