



EDUCATIONAL GOAL SETTING

What Is a Goal?

A measurable annual goal is a statement of what the IEP team agrees is appropriate for a child to try to accomplish during the year in a given area where the child has needs. Goals can be written to measure progress in both academic and functional performance. You as a parent play a very important part in determining what the goals are. Your priorities should be considered by the team.

Why Is Educational Goal Setting Important?

Writing measurable annual goals (and short-term objectives or benchmarks for students who take alternate assessments) is a major part of the IEP process. Annual goals are concerned with meeting the needs of a child who requires special education and related services. The goals are directed towards:

1. Closing the gap between the child's indicated ability and present level of academic achievement and functional performance.
2. Helping the child to increase in ability.

Annual goals (and short-term objectives or benchmarks) represent how efforts will be directed to address the student's needs as listed on the IEP. They focus on reducing the problems which result from the student's disability and interfere with learning or educational performance.

Kinds of Educational Goals

Most educational goals fall into one or more of the following areas: [See Profiles in Appendix]

- Academic - reading, written language, spelling, math, science
- Self-Help – eating, dressing, shopping, traveling, safety, budgeting
- Motor Skills - riding a bike, jumping, handwriting, buttoning and zipping
- Social/Emotional Skills - sharing, making friends, trying new things, smiling, responding to teasing
- Vocational/Pre-vocational Skills - following directions, completing jobs, using tools, making change, appropriate social skills in a job setting
- Behavioral – dealing with aggression, staying on task, following instructions, appropriate classroom conduct, dealing appropriately with emotions
- Speech/Communication - learning sign language, speech pronunciation, and verbal memory.
- Evaluation data is used to determine the areas of need. Appropriate goals and services on the IEP should lead to an appropriate placement. After writing the goals and deciding on the needed services, the team should ask, 'Where can the student best receive these services in the least restrictive setting?'

Steps to Goal Setting

Content: A measurable annual goal is made up of:

1. The Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), and
2. The annual goal.

The goal should relate directly to an area of need the student has. The area of need is described in measurable terms in the PLAAFP. For students who take alternate assessments, the goal must also include benchmarks or short term objective (STOs) which are smaller steps to help the student reach the goal. The following information shows the steps in educational goal setting.

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Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) are based on the evaluation data and should be **specific** as to **how** the disability of the student affects academic and functional progress. The PLAAFP should answer these questions:

- What can the child do?
- How does the child's disability affect participation and progress in the general curriculum (core curriculum) (or appropriate activities for preschool age children)?

In order for the PLAAFP to serve as a starting place, it must be measurable, so that the progress of the student can be measured.

Short-Term Objectives (STO) or Benchmarks

Short-term objectives (STO) or benchmarks are only required for students who take alternate assessments. They can, however, be used any time a team chooses to use them. They are steps to help the student move from a present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) to complete an annual goal.

Short-term objectives and benchmarks are helpful because they:

- Describe what the student is expected to learn in a particular area within a specified time.
- Determine the amount of progress the student is making toward meeting the goal.

Measurable Annual Goals

Measurable annual goals describe a skill or behavior the IEP team would like the student to learn or improve. The goals must be measurable and describe what a student can reasonably be expected to learn within 12 months (see examples on pages 39-41 and on pages 58-59).

Measurable Postsecondary Goals

Transition IEPs are also required to have measurable postsecondary goals. See Section 9 of this booklet for detailed information on writing measurable postsecondary goals. They are often written in the student's own words.

Deciding What to Include In the Goal

You may wish to ask yourself some of the following questions as you prepare to write goals for your child:

- What can my child do and not do now? What is the current level of skill or knowledge? (This will be stated in the PLAAFP which is the first part of the goal.)
- How is this need of my child related to the child's disability?
- What do I want my child to know or be able to do at the end of this year? Is this a reasonable expectation?
- Why can't my child do this now? What is it about the disability that interferes with achieving the goal? What needs to be addressed?
- What would be the starting point for my child?
- Is the goal something that can be measured? How will we know when the goal has been completed? Is what we are looking for observable and measurable?
- Do we need intermediate steps such as short term objectives or benchmarks to achieve the goal? (For the students who take alternate assessments, these are required.)
- If we are using short term objectives or benchmarks, how can they be measured? Are they clear, observable steps that will advance the student from the PLAAFP to the measurable annual goal?
- School personnel should know how to write appropriate measurable annual goals. It is not necessarily the responsibility of the parents. However, having a good understanding of how the process works and what makes a good goal can help parents to be more knowledgeable participants in the process and to monitor the student's progress. Parents have every right to expect that the child's goals will match the child's needs and be calculated to help the child be successful.



Examples: Goal Writing

Think about what makes a goal measurable as you review the following examples. Simply adding a number or percentage does not guarantee that the goal is measurable unless the number relates to something you can actually quantify and measure.

Examples of Goals That Are Not Measurable

- Jocelyn will stay on task with 90% accuracy.
- Brandon will have a better attitude toward school 80% of the time.
- Skyler will be 75% successful in the general education classroom.

Rewriting Goals That Are Not Measurable

Example # 1

Vague/Not Measurable

- PLAAFP..... Kylie is at least two years behind her class in reading, and she has difficulty with writing.
- ANNUAL GOAL..... Kylie will increase her reading skills by one year.

Improved/Measurable

- PLAAFP..... Kylie's reading decoding skills are on a 4th grade level and she is in 7th grade.. Her comprehension skills are on a 5th grade level. Her listening comprehension skills are on an 8th grade level..
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL..... Kylie will increase her reading decoding skills to the 6th grade level. She will comprehend written materials at the 6th grade level with 80% accuracy.

Example # 2

Vague/Not Measurable

- PLAAFP.....Joshua has poor study and organizational skills 50% of the time
- ANNUAL GOAL.....Joshua will demonstrate good study and organizational skills 80% of the time

Improved/Measurable

- PLAAFP.....During September Joshua correctly wrote down his daily homework assignment in his assignment book only 25% of the time as measured by teacher records.
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL.....Joshua will correctly write down his daily homework assignments in his assignment book 95% of the time as measured by teacher records by June 5.

Measurable Annual Goals

Example # 1

- PLAAFP.....Anita averages 10 unexcused absences/tardies per month.
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL.....By June 1, Anita will average less than 1-2 unexcused absences/tardies per month.

Example #2

- PLAAFP.....Jill orally reads 6th grade material at a rate of 50 - 75 words per minute and correctly answers 30-40% of factual comprehension questions asked orally.
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL.....By June 15 Jill will orally read 7th grade material at 75 - 100 words per minute with 0 - 2 errors and correctly answer 90 - 100% of factual questions asked over the material.

Example #3

- PLAAFP.....Jeremy submits fewer than 50% his homework assignments. He frequently loses assignments and notes and comes to class without necessary materials.
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL.....By the end of the year he will submit assigned homework on time 95% of the time. He will bring notes and necessary materials to class 95% of the time.

Examples of Measurable Annual Goals with Short Term Objectives

The following are examples of measurable annual goals with short term objectives beginning with the **Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) followed by the Measurable Annual Goal**. Including dates in the objectives serves as a monitoring device for the school and the parents. Short term objectives or benchmarks are required for students who take alternate assessments.

Example #1

- PLAAFP.....Tyler engages in turn taking activities using gestures and facial expressions for two minutes with 5-6 prompts.
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL.....Tyler will independently engage in turn taking activities with a conversation partner using gestures, facial expressions, picture communication symbols, vocalization, & AAC devices for 5 minutes with fewer than 5 prompts.
 - STO # 1..... Upon receiving a full physical prompt he will engage in turn taking for 5 minutes with fewer than 5 prompts by 10/30
 - STO # 2.....With partial physical assistance, he will engage in turn taking for 5 minutes with fewer than 5 prompts by 12/20
 - STO # 3.....With a verbal cue he will engage in turn taking for 5 minutes with fewer than 5 prompts by 2/31
 - STO # 4.....With a non-verbal cue he will engage in turn taking for 5 minutes with fewer than 5 prompts by 3/31

Example #2

- PLAAFP..... Shelby recognizes 5 community signs with 90% Accuracy
 - STO #1 Given 2 choices, she will point to the correct community sign with 90% accuracy 3 out of 4 times by 11/1/08
 - STO # 2..... When given the name with a picture of the sign, she will correctly repeat the name with 90% accuracy 3 out of 4 times by 2/1/08
 - STO #3..... When 20 flash card of community signs are randomly shown, she will correctly name the sign with 90% accuracy 3 out of 4 times by 4/1/08
- MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOAL..... When 40 flash cards of community signs are randomly shown, she will correctly name the sign with 90% accuracy 3 out of 4 times by 6/1/08

*Community Signs example developed by Randy Shelble,
Director of Special Education, Salt Lake School District, used with permission*

How Many Goals Should My Child Have?

If an IEP has too many goals, it can be confusing or frustrating for everyone. It is important to have realistic expectations about how many things the student can work on. Try to keep the number of goals manageable. Often it is enough to set one goal for each major area of concern. For example, you could have a goal for math calculation, reading comprehension, basic reading skills, behavior, and adaptive PE.

The school is required to use assessments that measure progress in the core curriculum, or the curriculum that is required by the state for all students. IDEA also emphasizes that children with disabilities should have access to the general curriculum. Often, it is possible to choose goals in the areas of the core curriculum (general curriculum) that your child will be studying. Even if your child will not be able to work at the level of typical students, you as a parent may still wish to encourage aligning your child’s goals with the core curriculum. This will help your child to have access to the core curriculum, and over time to make progress in it. However, the priority should always be on the things your child needs most.

Accommodations and Modifications

Regular Education Program and the IEP

The need for accommodations and modifications in the regular education program should be addressed in the educational goal setting process and they **may be included in the IEP**. Accommodations and modifications pertain to instruction in the general curriculum as well as to state and district assessments. **In order for a student to be able to use accommodations in state and district assessments, the accommodations must be written in the IEP and used in the classroom on a regular basis.**

Accommodations are the changes in the how—the way things are usually done in school/class/assessment, in order to provide the student an equal opportunity to participate. The changes do not fundamentally or substantially alter or lower the school, district or state standards. The student is learning the same material (general curriculum) as other students.

Examples of Accommodations

- Break assignments into segments of shorter tasks. Give frequent reminders.
- Increase amount of time to complete assignments.
- Give tests orally. Increase time for test completion.
- Give the student a copy of the class notes. Use graphic organizers for note taking.
- Seat the student in an area free from distractions. Use mics and speakers in the class.
- Provided texts in an alternate format such as Braille or audio.

Modifications

More information on accommodations in state and district assessments can be found in the *Utah Performance Assessment System for Students – Assessment Participation and Accommodations Policy*. This information is available from the Utah State Office of Education and on their website, www.utah.schools.gov

Modifications fundamentally or substantially alter or lower the standards or requirements. They change what the child is learning. Modifications could include adapted programming, content or instruction.

Examples of Modifications

- Reduce and simplify materials, assignments, homework, school projects, or tests.
- Grade on Pass/Fail option if grade falls below a “C” grade. Grade on corrected work.
- No homework or reduced homework requirement for a subject.
- Change the class behavior expectations for the student (based on the disability and Behavioral Intervention Plan.)

Parents should carefully examine school policies to determine whether modifications need to be made to accommodate the unique needs of their child.

More examples of accommodations and modifications are available from the Utah State Office of Education website, www.schools.utah.gov or by contacting the Utah Parent Center at 801.272.1051 or www.utahparentcenter.org