

## **Present levels of Academic and Functional Performance:**

The “present levels” statement is intended to comprehensively describe a child’s abilities, performance, strengths, and needs. It is based on, and arises out of, all the information and data previously collected and known about the child, most especially the full and individual evaluation of the child that must be conducted in accordance with IDEA’s evaluation/eligibility provisions of §§300.301 through 300.311. A well-written present level will describe:

- the child’s strengths and weaknesses,
- what helps the child learn,
- what limits or interferes with the child’s learning,
- objective data from current evaluations of the child, and
- how the child’s disability affects his or her ability to be involved and progress in the general curriculum.

A fully developed, well-written “present levels” is the foundation upon which the rest of the IEP can be developed to specify appropriate goals, services, supports, accommodations, and placement for the child.

## **Goals and objectives**

In order for the learner to make progress in the general education curriculum and life of the school (educational benefit), academic and functional annual goals and objectives must be written. These goals and objectives should be skill-based, measurable and reflect individual student needs based upon his/her disability (present levels of performance). Therefore, there should be a clear link between the annual goal(s) and the present level of educational performance.

Helpful prompts for the team include:

- What can the student currently do? – Present Levels of Performance
- What challenging, yet attainable, goal can we expect the student to meet by the end of this IEP period? – Goals and Objectives
- How will we know that the student has reached this goal? Measurement used to determine success

Using these types of prompts, or posing similar ones, will help IEP teams develop annual goals for children in a logical, sequential, simple, yet comprehensive manner that connects all the related pieces and leads to an effective, appropriate IEP. It’s also useful to keep in mind that the crafting of annual goals for a child involves considering each area of that child’s needs related to the general curriculum, nonacademic and/or extracurricular activities, and any other educational needs that result from the child’s disability.

Well-written goals and objectives are S.M.A.R.T. S.M.A.R.T. stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. The four critical components of a well-written S.M.A.R.T. goal are:

#### Specific

Specificity refers to the circumstances or conditions that prompt the child's performance of an observable behavior. Conditions are dependent on the behavior being measured and involve the application of skills or knowledge.

- When presented with 2nd grade level text...
- Given a mixed 4th grade level math calculation probe....
- Given a story prompt and 30 minutes to write...

Conditions may also integrate a related service:

- Given appropriate equipment.....
- Given assistive technology.....
- Given a pencil grip.....

#### Measurable

To be measurable the behavior to be observed must be clearly and operationally defined. The behavior statement clearly identifies the performance that is being monitored, usually reflects and action that can be directly observed:

- Sarah will read...
- Claude will write the correct solutions...
- Mary will score...
- Jane will indicate her wants and needs.....
- Chris will write.....

and...

Criterion identifies how much, how often, or to what standard the behavior must occur in order to demonstrate that the goal has been reached. The goal criterion specifies the amount of growth the child or youth is expected to make by the end of the annual goal period...

- 96 words per minute with 5 or fewer errors.
- 85% or more correct for all problems presented.
- Earning 4 or better when graded according to the district narrative writing rubric.

Achievable and Relevant: Refers the team back to the data Present Levels of Performance). Goals should be written as a "comfortable stretch" and seek, to the extent appropriate, to close the achievement gap between the learner with disabilities and his/her non-disabled peers (academic) or allow for more independent participation in school life (functional performance).

Time-bound: Refers to the time frame in which the goal will be achieved (number of weeks or a certain date for completion). A year is the maximum allowed timeframe.

- In 36 instructional weeks...
- By November 19, 2014....
- By the end of 2014-15 school year...

#### Special Education, Related Services, and Supplementary Aids and Services

The IEP must also contain a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child.

What is special education?

The most important thing to remember with determining the special education program for a student is that special education is a service NOT a place. Special education is instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. This means education that is individually developed to address a *specific* child's needs that result from his or her disability. Special education for any student can consist of:

- an individualized curriculum that is different from that of same-age, nondisabled peers (for example, teaching a blind student to read and write using Braille);
- the same (general) curriculum as that for nondisabled peers, with adaptations or modifications made for the student (for example, teaching 3rd grade math but including the use of counting tools and assistive technology for the student); and
- a combination of these elements.

It is also important to remember that the education, services, and supports outlined in a child's IEP do not necessarily cover that child's *entire* education. The IEP only addresses those educational needs resulting from the child's disability. If a child needs specialized instruction throughout the school day, for all activities, the IEP will cover all these needs. If the child does not need specialized instruction in all areas (for example, physical education, music, or science), then the IEP will not include these subjects. The child accesses them through the general curriculum/ class, with no additional special education services.

### **Accommodations and Modifications**

In addition to specialized instruction some students with disabilities will need accommodations and/or modifications in the school setting to benefit from their education. Sometimes people get confused about what it means to have a modification and what it means to have an accommodation. A modification means a change in what is being taught to or expected from the student. Providing an alternate curriculum to that of the student's typical peers is an example of a modification. An accommodation is a change that helps a student overcome or work around the disability. Allowing a student who has trouble writing to give his answers orally is an example of an accommodation. This student is still expected to know the same material and answer the same questions as fully as the other students, but he doesn't have to write his answers to show that he knows the information.

### **Supplementary Aids and Services**

Supplementary aids and services are often critical elements in supporting the education of children with disabilities in regular classes and their participation in a range of other school activities. IDEA's definition of this term reads:

"Supplementary aids and services means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education-related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate ..."

Speaking practically, supplementary aids and services can be accommodations and modifications to the curriculum under study or the manner in which that content is

presented or how a child's progress is measured. But that's not all they are or can be. Supplementary aids and services can also include:

- direct services and supports to the child, and
- support and training for staff who work with that child.

That's why determining what supplementary aids and services are appropriate for a particular child must be done on an individual basis. Below are some examples of the kinds of supplementary aids and services that can be considered:

- Supports to address environmental needs (e.g., preferential seating; planned seating on the bus, in the classroom, at lunch, in the auditorium, and in other locations; altered physical room arrangement)
- Levels of staff support needed (e.g., consultation, stop-in support, classroom companion, one-on-one assistance; type of personnel support: behavior specialist, health care assistant, instructional support assistant)
- Child's specialized equipment needs (e.g., wheelchair, computer, software, voice synthesizer, augmentative communication device, utensils/cups/plates, restroom equipment)
- Pacing of instruction needed (e.g., breaks, more time, home set of materials)
- Presentation of subject matter needed (e.g., taped lectures, sign language, primary language, paired reading and writing)
- Materials needed (e.g., scanned tests and notes into computer, shared note-taking, large print or Braille, assistive technology)
- Assignment modification needed (e.g., shorter assignments, taped lessons, instructions broken down into steps, allow student to record or type assignment)
- Self-management and/or follow-through needed (e.g., calendars, teach study skills)
- Testing adaptations needed (e.g., read test to child, modify format, extend time)
- Social interaction support needed (e.g., provide Circle of Friends, use cooperative learning groups, teach social skills)
- Training needed for personnel
- Consultation needed for personnel

## **Related Services**

Related services help children with disabilities benefit from their special education by providing extra help and support in needed areas, such as speaking or moving. Related services can include, but are not limited to, any of the following:

- speech-language pathology and audiology services
- interpreting services
- psychological services
- physical and occupational therapy
- counseling services

- orientation and mobility services
- medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes
- school health services and school nurse services
- social work services in schools
- parent counseling and training

### **Service Delivery**

This is where the details are specified about the services that a child with a disability will receive—the when, where, how often, how long of service delivery. The service delivery statement in the IEP should include:

- how often the child will receive the service(s) (number of times per day or week);
- how long each “session” will last (number of minutes)
- where services will be provided (in the general education classroom or another setting such as a special education resource room); and
- when services will begin and end (starting and ending dates).

### **Extended School Year (ESY) Services**

The IEP team should also consider whether or not a child needs to receive services beyond the typical school year. This is called Extended School Year or ESY services. Some children receiving special education services may be eligible for ESY services. Whether or not a child needs ESY in order to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is a decision that is made by the IEP team. [Hyperlink CTSDOE Guidance](#)

### **Extent of Non-participation**

Each student’s IEP must include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children. This provision highlights the value IDEA places on educating children with disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate, with children who are not disabled. If a child’s IEP places the child outside of the regular class, involvement in the general curriculum, and/or participation in extracurricular or nonacademic activities, the IEP must explain why. Since the IEP is driven by the child’s needs, the explanation of nonparticipation should reflect the child’s needs.

### **Accommodations to State and District-wide Assessments**

IDEA requires that students with disabilities take part in state or districtwide assessments. These are tests that are periodically given to all students to measure achievement. It is one way that we determine how well and how much students are learning. To support the participation of children with disabilities in such large-scale testing, accommodations or modifications may be necessary in how the test is administered or how a given child takes the test. It’s the responsibility of the IEP team to decide how the student with a disability will participate, and then to document that decision in the child’s IEP.