

Criteria for Well-written Individual Education Plan Goals and Objectives

The Individual Education Plan (IEP) should be a **reflection of a student's abilities and needs that defines in very clear and concise statements what annual goals and objectives will enable the student to access and progress in the general curriculum toward enrolled grade-level content standards and their lifelong goals.** The goals can be academic (standards-based) or functional (non-standards-based) to assist in accessing the content standards. It is a collaborative process for the parents, teachers, support personnel, related services and administrators to develop for the individual.

The IEP goals and objectives are based on the individual student's needs as documented in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP). Student data will determine where the student is functioning in relation to the grade-level standards. This, in turn, will be part of the decision making process in determining the correct state assessment for a student. The Texas Education Agency has developed the STAAR ALT Curriculum Framework as a continuum of development toward grade-level expectations. Determining where a student is functioning on this continuum will drive the appropriate objective for progress. This resource is at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/special-ed/staaralt/frameworks/>.

Annual goals are statements that:

- Describe what a student *can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a twelve month period.*
- The goal *addresses specific needs identified in the PLAAFP* that are keeping the student from accessing or progressing in the general curriculum.
- A student needs assistance from special education (i.e. a teacher, speech language pathologist, Occupational Therapist or Physical Therapist) to make progress.
- It should be a reflection of a priority for the student in achieving long-term goals.

Criteria for prioritizing goals might include:

- Will the student be able to use the skill in the immediate environment?
- Is it a functional, useful skill?
- Will the student be able to use it often?
- Is the skill a prerequisite for learning more complex skills?
- Will the student become more independent?

The goal must be measurable and observable. It must contain a timeframe, conditions, behavior or skill, and criterion for success.

A measurable goal should meet the following requirements:

- Indicates what to measure for the goal to be met
- Yields the same conclusion if measured by different people
- Allows a calculation of how much progress it represents
- Clear to everyone without additional information
- Under what conditions in which the goal will be observed (what types of accommodations are part of the acceptable conditions for mastery)

Goals and objectives should be free of vague and ambiguous words or phrases *such as feel, hear, know, learn, listen, see, understand, show an appreciation of, show an awareness of, show an interest in, become acquainted with, become interested in, etc.* **Instead strong action verbs should be used that are very observable.** For example, answer, arrange, categorize, choose, collect, combine, compare, copy, define, explain, generate, label, match, predict.

Every measurable goal allows a clear yes or no determination as to whether it has been achieved. Different evaluators who can agree on whether or not it was accomplished can reliably assess it.

The **timeframe will indicate the amount of time** to achieve mastery or progress.

The **conditions specify the manner in which progress occurs.** It *defines what specific resources must be present for the student to reach the goal.* For example, a reading comprehension goal may require the use of a graphic organizer. The graphic organizer is the condition.

Behavior is the action that can be directly observed and measured for progress.

Criterion identifies how much, how often, or to what standard the behavior must occur to demonstrate achievement.

Short-term objectives are the stepping-stones needed to reach the annual goal. There are usually two or more for each annual goal. **They will meet the same requirements for a measurable goal given above.** *The objectives should be logically ordered, developmentally sequenced, or otherwise related sub steps of the annual goal.*

You do not need a goal or objective for everything that a student will learn or have the opportunity to explore. Annual goals highlight the most important educational goals for the student for the following year.

RESOURCES:

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Annual Goal Development on the Region 20 website.

http://www.esc20.net/default.aspx?name=ci_se.agc.Home

http://www4.esc13.net/uploads/facilitatingIEPs/docs/SPED_ParentHandbook.pdf

The **Education Service Center Region 13** has created a **parent handbook to answer in simple terms commonly asked questions about special education and the process**. It contains:

- collection of basic information about special education and the IEP Process
- tips on how to make the process easier
- how to build collaboration and what is going on “behind the scenes” for educators

For an example of well-written annual goals and objects:

<http://www.theupsideofdowns.org/images/stories/iep.goal.bank.pdf>. The objectives would have to be written with more detail to be measurable and observable, but it is an example of what objectives might be written under an annual goal. Not all the objectives given would be written for a student. You would choose just two or three.