

Linking Goals to Standards for Students with Mild/Moderate Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires special education students to participate in statewide accountability assessments (with accommodations and modifications as appropriate) and requires states to hold districts accountable for performance of all students on those assessments. [34 CFR 300.137 (a)(2) and 34 CFR 300.138]

With this increased state and federal emphasis on performance on grade level curriculum content standards and teaching to these standards, how can a special education teacher write goals and objectives that are in alignment with the student's needs and still meet the requirements?



Age-Appropriate Grade Level Standards

All teachers must be familiar with age-appropriate grade-level content standards for all subjects of the students on their caseload. This means the **appropriate grade level the students would be if they did not have special needs.**

Case managers must be able to **articulate to students and families what the standards are** and develop and provide a special education program with the ultimate goal of making progress toward mastery of the standards. [CFR 300.532(b)]

Essential Standards

Certain standards in English/Language Arts and Math have been identified as “essential” to assist students in making progress in performance on statewide tests such as CST, CAT-6 and CAHSEE. Special education case managers working with students with mild/moderate disabilities **should be especially knowledgeable of these Essential Standards in their district.**

Developing Instructional Level Goals

Legal Requirements

According to the IDEA (*CFR 300.374*) and California Education Code (*EC Sec. 56345*) the purpose of writing IEP goals is to assist a student with disabilities in:

- “Meeting the child’s needs that result from the disability to enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for non-disabled children).
- or -
- Meeting all of the child’s other educational needs that result from the child’s disability.”



The Special Education Hearing Office and the courts have established in case law that **school districts should write goals commensurate with the student’s abilities.** *Milford Board of Education [2nd Circuit 1997] 103 F.3d 1114, 1121; Chula Vista Elementary School District [SEHO 2003] 40 IDELR 80.*

Present Levels of Performance

All areas of need identified in assessment should be noted in the present levels of performance, as IEP teams have a legal obligation to formulate goals and objectives that address those needs. [*Ed. Code 56345; 20 U.S.C. 1414(1)(A)(ii); Calif. Code of Regs., Title 5, 3040(c).*] While acquisition of state content standards is the desired outcome for IEP goals and objectives, IEP teams must consider the student’s **instructional level as described in the present levels of performance.** That level forms the baseline for planning progress.

Addressing Needs

Although grade level achievement is the goal, teams may use content standards **of any grade level** in drafting appropriate goals and objectives to address a student’s unique needs. The Ventura County SELPA IEP Goals Bank (included in the goals binder of the SESP software) includes all of the Essential Standards for all instructional levels in English/Language Arts and Math.

Every area of weakness identified in assessment and present levels of performance must be addressed in the IEP. If not, there must be a written explanation. The IEP team develops goals which can be achieved in one year.



To access the Goals Bank, visit the SELPA website: www.venturacountyselpla.com, under “Resources for Teachers”. To access the SESP software online: www.spedtech-eps.com. Ask your program specialist for the password.

Linking Goals to Grade Level Standards

“Backward Mapping”

Using the CARS+ “Handbook of Goals and Objectives” or the SELPA IEP Goals Bank, find the content area in which the student has needs. Search in the age-appropriate grade for a standard which correlates with that need. For some students, a current grade level standard (with or without some adaptation) will be appropriate for a one-year projection of growth, depending on the student’s instructional level. For other students you will need to consider lower grade levels until you find the appropriate standard for the student. (This may be known as “backward mapping”.)



“Unpacking”



Most standards contain many components and for some students only a portion of the standard may be attainable within one year. In this case, it is still appropriate to indicate the grade appropriate standard, even if the goal will be written for only a portion of the standard. (This may be known as “unpacking” the standard.)

Referencing the Standard on the IEP

When the goal you have written is correlated with a standard, mark the box on the IEP goals page “Enables student to progress in the general curriculum” and write the standard on the “standard line” (i.e., Math “Number Sense” 4.1.) If you select a standard in English/Language Arts or Math from the IEP goals bank in SESP, the standard will automatically be inserted for you.

Sometimes the primary purpose of the goal is not related to progress in general curriculum (i.e., self-care, behavioral, motor). In this case mark the box “Other needs resulting from the disability” and a functional domain should be indicated. For the domains, *see Appendix “B”- “CAPA Essential Learnings” of the IEP Instructions.*

Accommodations/Modifications

It is important to inform parents and students if the goal is written to address a standard at a lower grade level or will address only a portion of the standard. If accommodations are needed to achieve the goal (i.e., graphic organizers, math fact tables, teacher prompts), indicate in the “Accommodations” area on the “Accommodations and Modifications” page of the IEP. If there will be substantial modifications to instruction and grading (i.e., a lower grade level) for the student, indicate in the “Modifications” area.



See the Ventura County SELPA “IEP Survival Guide” for instructions on Modified Curriculum on the IEP form. The “Survival Guide” is available in searchable format on the SELPA website under “Special Education Services—IEP Forms”

Examples...

SIXTH GRADER

Area: Writing



1. **Present level of performance:** When given a topic, student writes a simple 2-3 sentence paragraph with appropriate use of conventions (approximate 4th grade level).
2. **Grade-appropriate standard:** 6.1.2 (Writing Strategies– Organization & Focus)
“Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions:
 - a. Engage the interest of the reader and state a clear purpose.
 - b. Develop the topic with supporting details and precise verbs, nouns, and adjectives to paint a visual image in the mind of the reader.
 - c. Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.” (CAHSEE)
3. The team considers which portions of the above standard the student can be expected to achieve *in one year*.

Annual Goal: By: ____, when given a writing topic and after completing a graphic organizer, _____ will write a 3 paragraph expository essay with a topic sentence and a summary conclusion using appropriate grade level language and conventions with fewer than 10 grammatical and spelling errors in _____ of _____ trials as measured by student work samples.

Enables student to be involved/progress in general curriculum

Standard: 6.1.2– Writing Strategies– Organization & Focus

Addresses other educational needs resulting from the disability

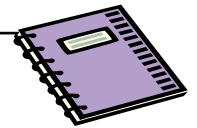
Domain: _____

Core Curriculum Area: _____

In this case, although the student is working at the 4th grade level, and not able to attain all the elements of the standard, the IEP team selected a portion of standard 6.1.2. (“Unpacking the Standard”) Additionally, needed accommodations (graphic organizers) were included in the goal.

TENTH GRADER

Area: Math



1. **Present level of performance:** Student performs simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems with whole numbers without variables.
2. **Grade appropriate standard:** 10.0 (Algebra) “Students add, subtract, multiply, and divide monomials and polynomials. Students solve multi-step problems, including word problems, by using these techniques.” (CAHSEE)
3. **Performance level appropriate standard:** 4.1.1 (Number Sentences & Expressions) Use letters, boxes, or other symbols to stand for any number in simple expressions or equations (e.g., demonstrate an understanding and the use of the concept of a variable).

Annual Goal: By: ____, when given ___ math problems involving the use of letters, boxes, or other symbols to represent numbers, _____ will correctly solve simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division problems with ___ % correct in _____ consecutive trials as measured by student work samples.

Enables student to be involved/progress in general curriculum

Standard: 4.1.1- Number Sentences & Expressions

Addresses other educational needs resulting from the disability

Domain: _____

Core Curriculum Area: _____

In this case the 4th grade standard would be indicated on the “standard” line of the IEP (“Backward Mapping”). This student will probably have substantial modifications to his/her instructional program.