

Developing Standards-Based IEP Goals and Objectives

A DISCUSSION GUIDE



Preface

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Education issued regulations to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, currently No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which offered states the option to develop a new alternate assessment for a small number of students with disabilities who, although making progress in the general education curriculum, were unlikely to achieve grade-level proficiency within the year covered by their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). In Minnesota, that assessment option became the MCA-Modified, which was administered for the first time in 2011.

Eligibility requirements for the MCA-Modified include a prerequisite that participating students' IEPs contain goals based on the students' grade-level academic content standards in the area(s) being assessed (reading, mathematics, or both). As Minnesota districts and schools work to meet this requirement, standards-based IEPs are increasingly being recognized as "good practice" for any special education student with academic needs. It is our hope that standards-based IEPs will continue to be developed even when the MCA-Modified is no longer offered as an assessment option beginning in 2015.

This discussion guide was designed to help IEP teams develop standards-based IEP goals and objectives. It has been reviewed by and pilot-tested with Minnesota special educators serving students with a wide range of disabilities. Their input and feedback has been invaluable. Based on this feedback, we understand that the first few times you use this guide, the IEP team meeting may take longer than the time you typically have available. To help address this, teachers pilot-testing the guide recommend that you review the discussion prompts included in the guide ahead of time and prepare some of the information you need prior to the IEP team meeting. They also believe, however, that the process laid out in the discussion guide will become more natural and efficient with continued use as the content and quality of each student's subsequent IEP improves. •



Introduction

Before an IEP team can develop standards-based IEP goals and objectives designed to improve a student's academic achievement, a statement of the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) must be established. The PLAAFP, which is required under 34 C.F.R. § 300.320 (a)(1) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Regulations, should provide a clear picture of how the student is currently performing in relationship to their grade-level academic content standards. This allows the IEP team to better focus standards-based goals and objectives on those standards and benchmarks with the greatest potential to benefit that student's learning.

The questions and discussion prompts in this document have been designed to help develop a comprehensive PLAAFP statement and related standards-based IEP goals and objectives in reading and math. The questions can be posed and the

prompts discussed in any order, and may be adapted to include additional prompts or other questions to conform to a specific district/school's required IEP forms. Consideration of the questions and discussion prompts will facilitate the development of a PLAAFP that lays the groundwork for standards-based IEP goals and specialized instruction and services planning. For example, responses to some questions may require deeper conversations between a student's special education teacher and the teacher(s) providing core instruction. Thorough review of the questions and responses will also help the teacher effectively communicate to parents the student's performance against grade-level expectations. **It is not necessary to write a response to each prompt; they are just provided to help scaffold discussions.** A space is provided at the end of each question to make notes that can translate into a PLAAFP statement.

Getting Ready for Standards-Based IEPs: Before the IEP Meeting

Members of the IEP team should become familiar with the enrolled grade-level reading and/or math standards, benchmarks and expectations for the student prior to the IEP team meeting. If the IEP crosses grade levels, IEP team members should also review the standards for the next grade level to ensure that the team is addressing standards that will continue to be essential for future grades and postsecondary success.

The Minnesota academic content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics can be found on the Minnesota Department of Education's website (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards>).

- Standards-based IEP goals do not need to be based on a single benchmark, standard or strand. It may be more effective and efficient to design a goal that integrates essential understandings and skill development across multiple strands, such as reading, writing speaking and listening.
- For example, the ability to ask and answer questions is elaborated across multiple English Language Arts benchmarks, across multiple stands and multiple grades. This ability is also essential in other content areas.
- While reviewing the standards, note those skills and competencies that appear in multiple strands, standards and benchmarks. Also consider whether there are understandings and skills articulated in the standards that are important to other subjects or content areas that the student will need to master during the year of the IEP.
- Consider the type and level of thinking and reasoning (cognitive complexity) required for the student to master benchmark expectations. Examples of cognitive complexity levels are provided in the MCA and MCA-Modified test specifications on the Minnesota Department of Education's website (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/Testing/TestSpec>).
- It will be helpful to have examples of what performance looks like at the student's grade level and to think about the pre-requisite skills and understandings necessary to achieve expected performance. These examples are useful for explaining grade-level expectations to the student's parents.
- The Minnesota Mathematics and Science Frameworks (www.scimathmn.org/stemtc) provide examples of grade-level performance in math for each grade-level standard. Just click on a grade, a standard, and the "Overview" tab to find the section called Big Ideas and Essential Understandings.

When IEP team members are knowledgeable about the Minnesota academic content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, they can respond to the following questions and discussion prompts to follow efficiently and effectively.

How does the student's disability affect his/her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum?

34 C.F.R. § 320(A)(1)(i)

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Given what we know about this student, discuss the impact of the student's disability on:

- Cognitive demands/basic psychological processes (consider background knowledge, problem solving, short-term memory, visual and auditory processing, long-term memory storage and retrieval and processing speed, attention).
- Academic achievement.
- Social-emotional/behavioral skills.
- Time spent in instruction.
- Communication skills.
- Health and sensory abilities.
- Ability to function within the general education environment.

What special education instruction has been provided and what progress has been made on IEP goals since the student's last IEP? Discuss the specific nature of instruction and other strategic approaches to content delivery, such as group size, explicit strategy instruction, and use of technology. (Just noting the setting in which instruction is provided or the title of the provider is not specific enough for this discussion.)

What has proven effective for making progress on IEP goals and in the general education curriculum?

POSSIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Evaluation Report (if current)
- Most recent IEP
- Input/Feedback from general education teachers
- Observations
- Analysis of assessment on state MCA tests
- Attendance data
- Medical information

DISCUSSION NOTES

What are the student's greatest strengths and compensatory abilities that contribute to improved academic outcomes?

POSSIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Input/feedback from general education
- Observation notes
- Most current IEP goals
- Periodic progress reports
- Teachers/parents/student/support staff
- Progress monitoring data
- Formative assessment data

DISCUSSION NOTES

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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Under which conditions is the student most successful?
 - Discuss any data that shows differences in performance across subject areas, teachers, or settings.
 - Consider the rate of the student's growth.
 - Consider compensatory strategies, personal strengths.
- What accommodations and/or assistive technologies has the student used successfully in the past?
- Does past performance data suggest the potential for regression?
- What level of support has been helpful to this student?
- What other information should be included to create a complete picture of how the student functions across the school day and within the special education setting?

What specific data do we have regarding the student's present levels of performance in relationship to the grade-level standards?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Does the team agree that the data are current, valid and reliable, and provide convergent evidence that is useful to designing the next instructional steps?

To what extent is the team able to understand the student's current performance, given the data?

What do the data tell you about how the student is currently performing?

What appears to be constraining the student's growth?

Discuss the current performance across sub-components for:

- Reading (phonemic awareness, basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, academic language).
- Writing (handwriting, spelling, written expression).
- Math (numeracy, computational fluency, problem solving, etc.).

Are there patterns in the data across sources? (For example, a student's pragmatic language may influence his or her ability to work collaboratively, affecting both academic and social interactions. Both may limit access to and progress in the general education curriculum.)

What data do you have that can be used to evaluate the need/effectiveness of accommodations and/or assistive technologies?

POSSIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Strand data from MCA and/or NWEA/MAP
- Trend data from MCA and/or NWEA/MAP
- Evaluation Report (if assessments are tied to academic curriculum)
- Informal assessment measures
- Running records
- Formative assessments
- Classroom observations
- Curriculum-based measures
- Interview data
- Assessment of academic language
- Work samples

DISCUSSION NOTES

Given the identified grade-level expectations in reading and/or math, what are the most essential grade-level standards and benchmarks that must be addressed during the year of this student's IEP?

POSSIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Minnesota state standards
- Examples of grade-level expectations
- District learner outcomes
- General education teachers and administrators
- District curriculum frameworks/rubrics

DISCUSSION NOTES

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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- ▶ Based on your review of student data, do patterns emerge that impact multiple standards and benchmarks? For example, think about how the ability to ask and answer questions (benchmarks under key ideas and details in both literature and informational text) affects student's performance on standards and benchmarks related to speaking and listening comprehension and writing production.
- ▶ What appears to be constraining growth? Is mastery of one skill or understanding required for the student to make progress in another? If so, what are those prerequisite skills and understandings?
- ▶ Are there non-academic barriers that should be addressed to help this student meet the standard(s)? Consider social skills, emotional regulation, problem solving, communication, and sustained attention.
- ▶ Are there skills or competencies that show up in multiple standards and benchmarks or other content areas?
- ▶ Are there standards and benchmarks that appear to be high-leverage for this student? You will want to focus IEP goals and specialized instruction on the standards most closely tied to the student's area(s) of greatest need.
- ▶ Transition-Age Students: What skills or competencies will be beneficial for this student to succeed in post-school life? Can they serve a dual purpose—transition preparation and progress towards standards?

What other educationally relevant needs resulting from the student's disability must be addressed that are not tied to standards?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Does the student have other needs that are related to his or her disability but are not directly related to academic standards?

What appears to be constraining independent functioning such that specially designed instruction and related services must be provided?

DISCUSSION NOTES

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POSSIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Discipline/behavioral data, including functional behavior assessments (FBAs)
- Attendance data
- Observations
- Outside service providers
- Classroom teachers
- Mental health screening information
- Medical information
- Transition data (including both formal and informal transition and vocational assessments and interest inventories)
- Functional skills data
- Evaluation reports (adaptive function, organizational checklists, related service provider reports)
- Organization and study skills (illustrating independent classroom functioning)

Once essential grade-level standards/benchmarks are determined, what are the learning progressions* needed to close the gap between the student’s skill level and grade-level content standards/benchmarks? How much growth do we expect this student to make within the year of the IEP and how will that progress be measured?

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Based on the student’s PLAAFP, what are the prerequisite skills/understandings the student must have in order to meet the standards/benchmarks?

Given a learning progression or task analysis, how many steps can be covered to move the student closer to the grade-level standards/benchmarks during the year of the IEP?

How can the teacher use instruction, curriculum and environment to accelerate the student’s learning?

What data gives an indication of this student’s previous rate of growth? Consider prior year’s progress monitoring data, number of attempts or time to move from supported to independent practice on similar goals (refer back to data).

Are there formal data system(s) and processes currently in place that could be used to monitor progress toward this goal? If no existing data systems are available or appropriate, consider using classroom-based formative assessment strategies, unit tests, informal inventories, work samples and weekly quizzes to give you the data that you need to monitor the student’s growth toward the goal.

Note: For a student taking the MCA-Modified, the IEP team must document that the student is highly unlikely to achieve grade-level proficiency during the year of the IEP. Therefore the IEP team must estimate the growth that is reasonable for the student during the year covered by the IEP. Standards-based IEP goals should not be a reiteration of the grade level standards or benchmarks.

POSSIBLE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Minnesota academic content standards
- Student’s PLAAFP
- General education teachers
- District curriculum frameworks/rubrics
- Scope and sequence documents
- MDE MCA Item Samplers

DISCUSSION NOTES

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* A learning progression is a sequenced set of building blocks (subskills and/or bodies of enabling knowledge) that students must master en route to mastering a more remote standard or curricular aim (adapted from Popham, 2012).

Based on the needs identified in the PLAAFP, develop measurable annual standards-based and non-academic goals in the table below.

Remember, SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented and Time-bound. Measurable annual goals should include; 1) Who (the student), 2) Behavior (will do what), 3) Criterion (to what level or degree), 4) Conditions (under what conditions or timeframe).

GOAL I

OBJECTIVE 1:

OBJECTIVE 2:

OBJECTIVE 3:

GOAL II

OBJECTIVE 1:

OBJECTIVE 2:

OBJECTIVE 3:

GOAL III

OBJECTIVE 1:

OBJECTIVE 2:

OBJECTIVE 3:

GOAL IV

OBJECTIVE 1:

OBJECTIVE 2:

OBJECTIVE 3: