Determining & Writing Effective IEP Goals
The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Aristotle
Assumptions

• IEP development is a planning process—it is more than filling out a form.

• Connecting IEPs to state standards and the general curriculum is fundamental to a student-centered focus aimed at achieving quality results and ultimately addressing the achievement gap.
Assumptions

• Writing a good IEP is dependent upon knowledge about curriculum and effective instructional practice. It is not an isolated event.

• Writing an IEP that is consistent with regulation and best practice does not guarantee better results for students, BUT it is a critical first step.
Sometimes the hardest thing to see is the most obvious.

Who Moved My Cheese
Spencer Johnson
Accessing the General Education Curriculum

- What is meant by the general education curriculum?
  - The full range of courses, activities, lessons, and materials routinely used by the general population of a school
- What is meant by access?
  - Participation in the knowledge and skills that make up the general education curriculum

Alabama Department of Education
IEP Process In Simplest Form

1. Present Levels of Performance
2. Annual Goals
3. Implementation
IEP Process

1. Determine Vision or Desired Outcome
2. Identify Student Needs
3. General Curriculum Considerations
4. Write Measurable Goals
5. Select Instructional Services & Program Supports
6. Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
7. Implement & Monitor Progress
IEP Process

Determine Vision or Desired Outcome
Vision → Desired Outcome

- What are the family’s/student’s dreams and goals for the future?
- What does the family/student see the student doing 3–5 years from now?
- What is the student’s desired post-school outcome?
IEP Process

1. Determine Vision or Desired Outcome
2. Considerations
3. General Curriculum

Diagram shows the process flow with the steps connected.
If educational research can tell us anything, it is that students are more likely to learn something at school if it is taught than if it is not.

Grounded in the General Curriculum

- What do the state/district standards expect?
- What is expected within the regular classroom?
- What instructional strategies or approaches have been or are being used in the general classroom?
- What results have been documented for this student?
- What extracurricular activities or events are part of school life?
IEP Process

Determine Vision or Desired Outcome → General Curriculum Considerations → Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
## Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance

Statements of student’s performance—

- Social/Behavior
- Academic and Nonacademic
- Curriculum Based
- Statewide/District-wide Assessments
- Response to Intervention Data
- Standardized Tests (if needed)
- Strengths
- Concerns or Challenges
- Benchmarks or Objectives Mastered
Sources for PLAAFP

- Curriculum-based information (response to intervention data)
- Achievement history (rate and trend)
- State assessment results
- Parent information
- Behavior data (classroom, office discipline referrals, observations)
- Formal assessment results
Collect and examine materials for making data-based IEP decisions.

- Courses of study and/or curriculum guides
- Current assessment data
  - State assessments
  - Classroom assessments (curriculum-based)
  - Eligibility data (if current and related to learning the standards)
- Student work samples
- Previous year’s IEP
- Other information (e.g., grades, discipline referrals, attendance reports)
## Consider the Whole Child

- Academic
- Recreation & Leisure
- Community Participation
- Home/Independent Living
- Jobs and Job Training

- Post-secondary Education
- Other Educational Areas
  - Health consideration
  - Communication
  - Motor
  - Social or emotional
  - Assistive devices
IEP Process

1. Determine Vision or Desired Outcome
2. Identify Student Needs
3. General Curriculum Considerations
4. Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
5. Write Measurable Goals
Measurable annual goals are statements that describe what a student can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a 12-month period in the student’s special education program.
Identifying Goals

- Review area(s) of instructional need.
- Determine which aspects of the need might be met with accommodations in the general classroom and which require specialized instruction.
- Consider the difference between actual performance and benchmarks (indicators) for grade.
Identifying Goals—Things to Consider

• Identify the critical academic or functional skills the student will need to learn in order to demonstrate “proficient” or “applying” performance.

• Which of these are essential to meeting the desired vision/outcome?

• Which are challenging yet attainable?

• Which are essential to student’s ability to participate in the general curriculum (priorities)?
Identifying Goals—Things to Consider

• Where might “alternate” content standards be considered? Where might modifications be needed such as choosing a different performance standard?

• Consider whether or not the need might be met using an accommodation or by teaching a compensatory (functional) skill.

• Identify what you can realistically expect within one year, focusing on challenging, yet attainable outcomes.
## Developing SMART IEP Goals

| S | Specific — based on the student’s Present Level of Academic Achievement/Functional Performance. |
| M | Measurable — progress is objectively determined at frequent data points. |
| A | Achievable — realistic, related to the most critical needs. |
| R | Results-oriented — developed with a standards outcome in mind. |
| T | Time-bound — has clearly defined beginning and ending dates. |
• If a large number of needs are identified in the present level, the IEP Team must consider how each need impacts the students’ progress in the general education curriculum.

• Select the need that has the greatest impact on progress, and develop a goal to address that need.
Annual goals are related to needs resulting from the student’s disability **that directly affect** involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.

- For preschool children, as appropriate, to participate in age-appropriate activities.
Measurable Annual Goals

Measurable annual goals should include the following:
• The student ...(WHO)
• Will do what ...(BEHAVIOR)
• To what level or degree...(CRITERION)
• Under what conditions or timeframe...(CONDITIONS)
Writing Goal Statements

- Focus on what you want the student to do versus the process for getting there.
- Use behavioral terminology.
- Add the measure.
Choosing a Measure

- What are the performance standards used in the general classroom? In the state standards?
- What has been the rate of growth for this student in the past?
- What will it take for this student to be able to be successful in the general classroom?
- What is the actual deficit between current skill and desired skill?
- What will it take to have confidence that the skill is at a mastery level?
By the end of the school year, Janice will read and analyze a short story for literary elements of main idea, point of view, plot, setting and characterization at a proficient level as determined by the sixth grade performance standards.

Instead of...

Janice will use a graphic organizer to analyze a short story.
Identifying Needs—An Example

- Johnny is in the sixth grade. He has a reading fluency rate of 120 wpm when given passages written at the 3rd grade level. He is able to read two syllable nonsense words that follow common letter sound correspondence with 100% accuracy.

- Johnny demonstrates understanding of grade-level materials when information is presented orally, including science, math, and social studies information.

- The requirement to read material at grade level interferes with Johnny’s ability to perform proficiently or to expectations without support or adaptations.

- To meet Johnny’s goals for the future, continued intervention to develop independent reading skills is required.
Getting Started

• Review what we know
  ▪ Area of need—reading fluency and comprehension.
  ▪ What do we know about past instruction and progress?
  ▪ What has been our experience with similar students/situations?
• Given what we know and what we think we can expect, write a goal statement.
Possible Goals

• Given a literary passage written at the sixth grade level, Johnny will read fluently (120–130 wpm) with at least 90% accuracy on repeated trials over a three-week period.

• After reading a variety of written material at the sixth grade level (e.g., classroom content material), Johnny will respond to comprehension questions (both meaning and inference) with 85–90% accuracy.
Give It A Try—Make It Better

- Randy will have basic needs met by making appropriate requests to a variety of adults.
- When tested, Sara will read at the fifth grade level.
- Barry will read and define 100 new words taken from his grade level textbooks with 100% accuracy.
- Sara will turn in homework on time, complete in-class assignments, and pass tests given in class.
Goal Writing Considerations

- Can organize by essential components of instruction.
  - For reading, may include phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension.
  - For math, may include understanding, computing, applying, reasoning, and engaging.
- Can organize by a more general intended outcome.
1. Review your IEP goals.
2. Are they SMART goals?
   a) Specific
   b) Measurable (who, behavior, criterion, conditions)
   c) Achievable
   d) Results-oriented (standards related)
   e) Time-bound
3. Are they connected to (derived from) the PLAFP?
IEP Process

1. Determine Vision or Desired Outcome
2. Identify Student Needs
3. General Curriculum Considerations
4. Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
5. Select Instructional Services & Program Supports
6. Write Measurable Goals
Selecting Instructional Services & Program Supports

A statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, . . . and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child—

(i) To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;

(ii) To be involved in and make progress in the head general education curriculum

34CFR § 300.320 (a)(4)
Considerations for Selecting Instructional Services & Program Supports

- Is the service or program research-based, or does it have evidence that it is effective?
- Is it matched with the needs of this student, including is it culturally appropriate?
- Is it aligned with the general curriculum?
Considerations for Selecting Instructional Services & Program Supports

- Will it require accommodations or modifications within the general classroom?
- What implications does this service or program have for participation in the state- or district-wide assessment?
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Determining Progress

- How will we know we are making expected progress?
- What is the rate of growth we should expect to document from initiation of IEP to goal achievement?
- What will we do if we note that progress is not occurring?
IEP Review

- Are the instructional programs or services research or evidence-based?
- Are the instructional programs or services relevant to the goal and likely to lead to the desired outcomes?
- Is progress monitoring and regular reporting clearly documented?
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• Research in the area of reading implies that reading requires intense instruction—small groups of three to five, one or two to one.

• If a student cannot read, his likelihood of success is minimal.

• Ultimately, a student’s ability to function in the general curriculum may depend on obtaining some basic skills in special education.

• Remember, the IEP is about what is required from special education. In the end, what makes special education special for this student?
If my focus is directed toward what is needed in order to facilitate this student’s access to the general curriculum so she can be successful in setting and reaching her desired vision, how might that shift how I see myself as a special education teacher?
“Good talk about good teaching can take many forms and involve many conversation partners—and it can transform teaching and learning.”

Parker J. Palmer

Wouldn’t the same hold true for IEP development?
Keep the conversation going.
Resource Documents

- A Seven-Step Process to Creating Standards-based IEPs
  (NASDSE; http://www.nasdse.org/)

- Connecting the IEP to the General Curriculum: A Talking Paper
  (Carol B. Massanari)
  http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/images/stories/MPRRC/Products/Generic/IEP/connecting%20the%20iep%202007%20cmcb.pdf

- Advocacy Brief: Understanding the Standards-based Individualized Education Program (IEP)
  (NCLD; http://www.ncld.org/)
References

- Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives by Barbara D. Bateman and Cynthia M. Herr
I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence I can reach for. Perfection is God’s business.

Michael J. Fox

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