WRITING MEASURABLE AND APPROPRIATE IEP GOALS FOR ACADEMIC ISSUES

Where do the goals which are included in a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) come from?

How does the teacher decide what area to write a goal for?

How do you write a measurable goal?

These are very important questions and it is vital to be able to answer each of these questions to understand a child’s IEP program.

- Goals do not come from the teacher’s curriculum book – entirely.
- Goals do not come from parent’s desires and wishes – entirely.
- Goals do not come from thin air – mostly.

Goals do come from evaluative measures.

The child’s strengths and needs are measured in various ways:

- Formal testing
- Informal testing
- Curriculum reviews
- Observations by teachers, parents and caretakers, etc.
Our son Steven is a good kid. He is 10 years old, and he likes to go to school. However, it’s so difficult for us to get him to do his homework or to study before a test. His teachers say he is a pleasant child, is lazy about doing academics. In class, he is always laughing and making jokes. His reading is OK. He seems to be able to read the words, but he cannot remember what he reads to answer a question. His math skills are pretty basic. He can do basic addition and subtraction, but he struggles with simple division and multiplication. Sometimes he seems to not be paying attention to a lesson and instead drawing elaborate doodles and drawings. The teaching staff feels if he applies himself, he can do the work, but most often Steven studies with us and still he barely passes.

In formal testing, he is performing well below grade level and has only very basic reading and math skills. He scores on a 1st grade level in both areas, and he is in 4th grade! At home, it is impossible to get him to do his homework, but we work with him, so he keeps up with his class in both subjects. His teachers think we just don’t help him enough at home. Homework time is a mess of tears, frustration, and exasperation!

What do we know about Steven? He is a well liked child who wants to please; he wants his teachers and classmates to like him. How difficult it must be for him to keep up with his 4th grade materials when his academic skills are on a 1st grade level. Steven needs IEP goals to address his academic needs: His measurable goals need to begin where he is and move forward from there. This means he cannot be expected to learn 4th grade materials until he has mastered the 2nd and 3rd grade levels. He should receive work at his academic level. Moving him forward with measurable goals will help him learn and advance at the rate he is capable of. This should help reduce the frustration and exasperation!
Here are examples of measurable academic goals for Steven:

**MATH:** Steven will learn and be able to solve addition and subtraction problems using 2 and 3 place numbers with 80% accuracy. (That is, he will get 8 out of 10 problems correct in his homework assignments, class assignments, and in testing situations.)

1. Given 10 homework problems, Steven will solve addition and subtraction problems using 2 and 3 digit numbers with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive weeks.
2. Given 10 problems during daily class work, Steven will solve addition and subtraction problems using 2 and 3 digit numbers with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive weekly samples.
3. During lunch in the cafeteria, Steven will generalize learned math skills by accurately adding whole dollar prices for purchasing and subtracting whole dollar amounts to anticipate change during 4 out 5 opportunities per week across 3 consecutive weeks.

**READING:** Steven will read a short paragraph of 5 sentences and be able to relate 4 of the 5 facts presented in the paragraph, as shown by class participation, homework assignments and formal test situations.

1. Given a 5 sentence paragraph from a second grade leveled text, Steven will match a picture from the story to the supporting facts 4 of the 5 statements presented with no more than one prompt across 3 consecutive weeks.
2. Given a 5 sentence paragraph from a second grade leveled text, Steven will verbally state 4 of the 5 facts presented in the paragraph with no more than one prompt across 3 consecutive weeks.
3. Given a 5 sentence paragraph from a second grade leveled text, Steven will retell the story using 4 of the 5 facts presented with no more than one prompt across 3 consecutive weeks.

In the specially designed instruction section of the IEP, it should be noted that Steven enjoys sports, and both his math problems and reading topic can be about sports, sports figures, and games. Baseball is his favorite. Using favorite topics will help motivate his interest. Steven also enjoys playing games. Playing games will be a wonderful way to help him practice his new skills.
Related Articles:

- What is Contained in a School-Age IEP?
- IEP Basics for Families of School-Age Students
- Accommodations and Supports for School-Age Students with ASD

Additional Resources:

- Writing Effective IEP Goals
- IEP Goal Bank
- Standards-Based IEP Sample Measurable Goals, Math
- Standards-Based IEP Sample Measurable Goals, English and Reading