



# Writing Effective Individualized Education Program (IEP) Goals

**Central to the creation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) by the IEP team, is development of measurable annual goals, which are based on a student's current levels of academic and functional performance, and which should align to and reference the Pennsylvania Core Standards. In addition, the IEP defines the educational programs, activities, and supports determined by the IEP team to meet a student's needs.**

## **Criteria for Annual Goals**

Measurable annual goals are at the core of a student's individualized education program. Measurable annual goals must provide a clear description of the skills the student needs in order to access, participate, and make progress in the general educational curriculum. The goals must relate directly to the areas of need identified in the Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance section of the IEP. Areas of need are determined by analyzing

multiple sources of information, including evaluations, classroom-based assessments, student observations, and input from parents. A well-written measurable annual goal contains four parts: condition, student name, clearly defined behavior, and performance criteria.

**Condition** - The condition describes the situation in which the student will perform the behavior.

**Examples:** Given visual cues, during independent practice in math, using a self-monitoring checklist, using passages from content area classes, given a writing prompt, using a checklist of tasks on the job site, given picture checklists to follow, given a two-step direction, during lectures in social studies, using software with word prediction, using text-to-speech features

**Student's Name** - Include student's first name in the goal.

**Clearly Defined Behavior** - This portion of a well-written goal specifically describes the target behavior in measurable and observable terms, using action verbs to state what the student will do. Use of vague terms (such as understand, recognize, discover) that cannot be observed directly or counted should not be used.

**Examples:** locate, name, rank, select, point to, solve, analyze, create, compare, describe, read orally

The Big Ideas, Concepts, and Competencies from Pennsylvania Core Standards found on the Standards Aligned System (SAS) portal ([www.pdesas.org](http://www.pdesas.org)) outline what Pennsylvania students need to know and be able to do in various academic, social, and behavioral areas. The SAS portal is a valuable resource to aid in writing goals that are measurable and referenced to the standards.

**Performance Criteria** - There are three distinct components that must be included in the performance criteria of each annual goal:

1. **Criterion level** - Indicates the performance level the student must demonstrate.

**Examples:** Percent of time, number of times out of number of trials, with percent accurate on work sample, designated criterion level on a rubric or checklist, with \_\_\_ or fewer errors, words/digits/correct per minute, with no more than \_\_\_ occurrences of \_\_\_, with a score of \_\_\_ or better on skill specific rating scale, with designated criterion level movement on a prompting hierarchy, independently

2. **Number** - Indicate the number of times behavior must be performed at criterion level to reach mastery.

**Examples:** The student must complete: five out of six consecutive trials, eight consecutive days, four out of five consecutive weeks, three consecutive probes, three out of five random trials, four out of five trials, two times per week, tri-weekly

3. **Evaluation Schedule/Method** - Indicate how frequently the student will be assessed and the method of assessment.

**Examples:** The student will be assessed using: daily and weekly work samples; bi-weekly reading probes; teacher-developed, scoring rubrics

Specific specially designed instruction (SDI), accommodations, and modifications needed by the student to engage in and benefit from instruction in the curriculum may be listed with the annual goals or in the Special Education/Related Services/ Supplementary Aids and Services/ Program Modifications section of the IEP.

**Examples of SDI:** Use of an AAC device, text-to-speech software, specific seating arrangements, training for staff in specific procedures, specific behavioral supports

### Examples of Effective Measurable Annual Goals

*Given a three minute writing prompt and use of a computer with word prediction software, Emily will create a paragraph addressing the topic of the prompt, containing at least three complete sentences, with no more than two grammatical errors, on four out of five consecutive weekly probes.*

*Given a choice of three known items at various intervals during the day, Nasir will indicate his preference by signing, then taking the preferred item, with one or fewer prompts, on four out of five opportunities on three out of four consecutive days.*

*Using a visual schedule, Ben will shift from one school task or activity to the next throughout the school day, independently without verbal outbursts, 80 percent of opportunities, daily for two consecutive weeks.*

## §300.320 Definition of Individualized Education Program

(a) General. As used in this part, the term individualized education program or IEP means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with IDEA, Sec. 300.320 through 300.324, and that must include--

(2) (i) A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals designed to--

(A) Meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and

(B) Meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability;

*Department of Education, Fed. Reg. 34 CFR, Parts 300 and 301 (2006).*



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