

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Annual Goal Development

Measurable Annual Goals
Academic/Standards-Based Goals
Functional Goals

Question & Answer Document



A collaborative project of the
Texas Education Agency and the
Statewide Access to the General
Curriculum Network



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Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 requires that all students who receive special education services have measurable annual goal(s) included in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This may include academic (standards-based) and/or functional (non-standards-based) goals, which are based on the individual student's needs, as documented in his/her Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) statements. The purpose of these goals, as is the purpose of all special education services, is to assist the student in accessing and progressing in the general curriculum. Academic (standards-based) goals are goals directly linked to progressing toward enrolled grade-level content standards; functional (non-standards-based) goals are goals which assist the student in accessing the enrolled grade-level content standards.

Additionally, IDEA and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), require that all students, including those with disabilities, be included in the statewide assessment system. Additionally, because all students are included in the statewide assessment system, they must have access to the general education curriculum that is tested using this system. This access may be with or without accommodations and may include alternate assessments. Due to these requirements, all students receiving special education services in academic areas must have corresponding standards-based annual goals that link to enrolled grade-level content standards. This link to enrolled grade-level content standards is based on where the student is functioning in relation to the grade-level standard and will ultimately assist the student in progressing toward those standards.

Project Forum at NASDSE (www.projectforum.org) has developed a *Seven-Step Process to Creating Standards-based IEPs*. The Project Forum document has been adopted by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs as part of their collection of "IDEAs that Work," and Texas has used the document as a resource in developing training on this process. The seven steps detailed in this document are as follows:

1. Consider the grade-level content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled or would be enrolled based on age.
2. Examine classroom and student data to determine where the student is functioning in relation to the grade-level standards.
3. Develop the present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP).
4. Develop measurable annual goals aligned with grade-level academic content standards.
5. Assess and report the student's progress throughout the year.
6. Identify specially designed instruction including accommodations and/or modifications needed to access and progress in the general education curriculum.
7. Determine the most appropriate assessment option.

This question and answer document focuses on Step 4 of this process, developing measurable annual goals. While the seven-step process above is specific to academic (standards-based) goals, this question and answer document has been revised to include information on both academic (standards-based) and functional (non-standards-based) goals. Regardless of whether the goal is academic or functional, the seven steps remain the same.

This question and answer document is intended to serve as a resource to provide current information about developing IEP goals in order to ensure that the applicable requirements of IDEA 2004 and the ESEA are accurately understood and properly implemented. This document consolidates federal requirements (IDEA 2004 and its regulations) and state guidance regarding standards-based IEPs. We encourage you to disseminate this document to a wide range of educators and parents throughout your local education agency (LEA).

This question and answer document is organized into sections for ease of use. Some information is repeated in multiple sections so that sections can be used individually, if needed.

Section One: Measurable Annual Goals is applicable to all annual goals, regardless of the type of goal (academic or functional).

Section Two: Academic/Standards-Based Goals is only applicable only to goals which are academic in nature. These goals are directly linked to the student's progressing toward enrolled grade-level content standards.

Section Three: Functional Goals is only applicable only to goals which are not academic in nature (and, therefore, are not standards-based). These goals focus on a student accessing the enrolled grade-level content standards.

Online Training Module

The Statewide Access to the General Curriculum (AGC) Network, in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has developed a free online training titled, "Standards-Based IEPs Goal Development Online Training 2009-2010." This free training (workshop #PD100930-A01) is available through the ESC-20 iLearning website at [w](#). The training focuses on the portion of the ARD process related to developing a student's PLAAFP and using the PLAAFP to create enrolled grade-level, measurable, annual academic goals.

This training should take approximately 1 – 1 ½ hours to complete, and upon successful completion a certificate will be created that can be printed by the user.

The intended audience is general and special educators who are involved in the ARD/IEP process, but other individuals, including parents, are welcome to participate.

Questions and Answers

Section 1: Measurable Annual Goals

The questions and answers in this section apply to all measurable annual goals, regardless of whether the goals are academic (standards-based) or functional (non-academic).

1.1 What are annual goals?

Annual goals are statements that describe what a student with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish within a twelve month period in the student's special education program. These goals are skills and/or knowledge that will be mastered, not an activity.

1.2 What is the purpose of an annual goal?

Annual goals identify the areas in which a student with a disability needs special education services/specially designed instruction (see [Question 1.11](#)). That is, they identify specific areas where a student with a disability needs assistance from a special education professional (i.e. special education teacher, speech language pathologist, related services personnel such as Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapist, etc.) The goal addresses critical needs identified in a student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statement that are keeping the student from accessing and/or progressing in the general curriculum.

1.3 What is a measurable annual goal?

Measurable goals are defined as statements that contain four critical components: timeframe, conditions, behavior and criterion. A measurable goal includes the behavior or skill that can be measured at periodic intervals against a criterion of success.

1.4 What are the four critical components of a measurable goal?

- A. **Timeframe** identifies the amount of time in the goal period and is usually specified in the number of weeks or a certain date for completion.
- B. **Conditions** specify the manner in which progress toward the goal occurs. Conditions describe the specific resources that must be present for a student to reach the goal. **The conditions should outline or explain what facilitates learning for the student.** The condition of the goal should relate to the behavior being measured. For example, a goal relating to reading comprehension may require the use of a graphic organizer. The graphic organizer is the condition.

- C. **Behavior** clearly identifies the performance that is being monitored. It represents an action that can be directly observed and measured.
- D. **Criterion** identifies how much, how often, or to what standard the behavior must occur in order to demonstrate that the goal has been achieved. The goal criterion specifies the amount of growth that is expected.

1.5 Does the goal criterion relate to passing an assignment/course?

No. While the passing standard for a course/assignment is generally 70%, the criterion should specify the amount of growth expected to meet the annual goal, not the score required for passing the course/assignment. The criterion should be based on how the progress will be measured, and this may not always be a percentage measure. Examples of criteria are found in [Question 1.6](#).

1.6 What does a measurable goal with the timeframe, conditions, behavior and criterion look like?

The following chart shows the natural flow of a **written** measurable goal **written from the critical needs areas taken from the student's PLAAFP**.

| Timeframe | Condition | Behavior | Criteria |
|---|--|--|---|
| In 36 instructional weeks | using decoding skills and oral practice within a 3 rd Grade passage | Joseph, a 3 rd grade student, will read | 70 words per minute with fewer than 10 errors |
| By the end of the 2011-2012 school year | given counseling with explicit instruction in 3 types of anger management techniques | Sara, a 10 th grade student, will utilize anger management techniques to reduce elopements from the classroom as evidenced by | remaining in classroom 90% of the day at least 4 days per week |
| By May 15, 2012 | given a 4 th grade story prompt and 30 minutes to write | Linda, a 4 th grade student, will write | a three paragraph essay using transition words in sentences and between paragraphs with 5 or fewer errors |
| In 36 instructional weeks, | when provided a visual schedule of the daily routine and asked, "What comes next?" | Christina, a 4 year old student will verbally state the correct activity | in 4 of 5 anecdotal notes recorded. |
| By May 15, 2012 | given a shirt with 1/2 inch buttons and fine motor skill | Jose, a 6 th grade student, will button his shirt | By getting all 1/2 inch buttons in the correct button holes |

| | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| | instruction | appropriately | without assistance 4 of 5 tries. |
|--|-------------|---------------|----------------------------------|

1.7 Does the IEP goal need to include the student’s enrolled grade level?

No. The student’s enrolled grade level will be documented somewhere within the ARD document and does not have to be repeated in the annual goal. The examples in this resource include the student’s enrolled grade level for illustrative purposes only.

1.8 What should the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee consider to ensure that IEP goals are measurable?

A measurable goal meets the following requirements:

- indicates what to do to measure accomplishment of the goal;
- yields the same conclusion if measured by several people;
- allows a calculation of how much progress it represents; and
- can be measured without additional information.

1.9 What is the role of the PLAAFP in developing measurable annual goals?

The decision to include a goal in a student’s IEP should be made only after examining the student’s PLAAFP. A goal should be based on an area of need that is keeping the student from accessing and/or progressing in the general curriculum. The goal should also be something the student can reasonably be expected to attain within one year. The PLAAFP should provide information on where the student is currently performing in both academic and functional skills; this information allows the ARD committee to determine both an area of need and what the student can reasonably be expected to achieve within one year.

1.10 How does an annual goal relate to accommodations and modifications?

Although federal law does not provide definitions of the terms modification and accommodation, the following definitions are used in Texas:

Accommodations- are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of student’s disability but do not reduce learning expectations.

Modifications- practices and procedures that change the nature of the task or target skill.

For example, in a Biology class the assignment might require all students to label a diagram of a pig, naming the various systems and explaining their functions. An **accommodation** for a student with a visual impairment might be using large print handouts to complete this assignment. A **modification** for a student who has ARD-

directed modifications in Biology might be to use preprinted labels to identify the head, midsection, and legs of the pig.

1.11 How does specially designed instruction relate to measurable annual goals?

IDEA 2004 defines special education services as “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability” (34 CFR §300.39(a)(1)). IDEA 2004 goes on to define specially designed instruction as “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability; and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children” (34 CFR §300.39 (b)(3)). The ARD committee will utilize the student’s PLAAFP, which details the student’s current levels of academic achievement and functional performance to develop measurable annual goals. Then the ARD committee will determine what specially designed instruction the student needs in order to meet his/her goals. This specially designed instruction will be detailed in the IEP.

1.12 What is the difference between an academic goal and a functional goal?

Academic goals and functional goals are written using the same four required elements. The only difference between the two is that functional goals do not require a link to the enrolled grade-level content standards.

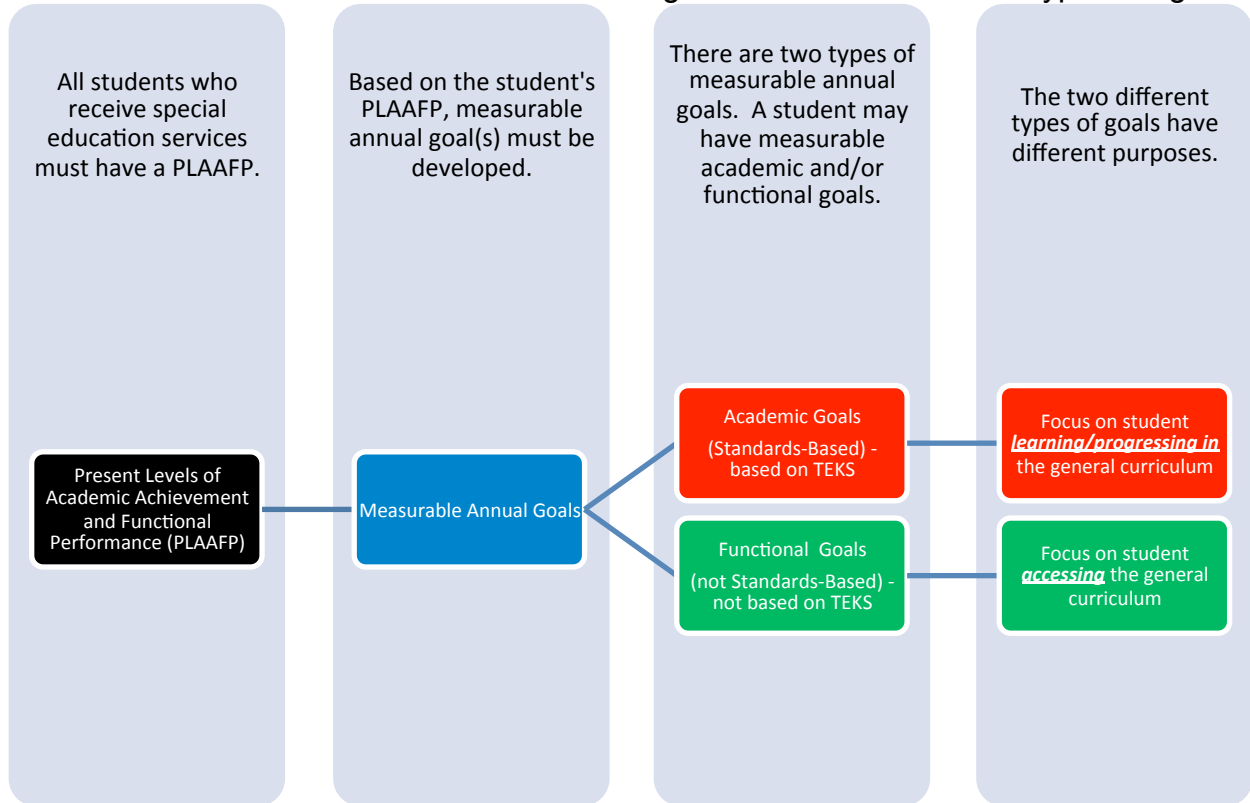
When asked to define “academic achievement” and “functional” in the adoption of the final Federal Regulations to IDEA 2004, the U.S. Department of Education stated:

“Academic achievement” generally refers to a child’s performance in academic areas (e.g., reading or language arts, math, science, and history). We believe the definition could vary depending on a child’s circumstances or definition, and therefore, we do not believe a definition of “academic achievement” should be included in these regulations. (71 Fed. Reg. at 46662)

We do not believe it is necessary to include a definition of “functional” in these regulations because the word is generally used to refer to activities and skills that are not considered academic or related to a child’s academic achievement as measured on Statewide achievement tests. There is nothing in the Act that would prohibit a State from defining “functional,” as long as the definition and its use are consistent with the Act. (71 Fed. Reg. at 46661)

The Texas Legislature and the TEA have elected to not define functional; instead, they allow the explanation given by the U.S. Department of Education to stand on its own.

The chart below serves a visual for showing the differences in the types of goals.



Also note that which type(s) of goal(s) the student has will also have additional implications for curriculum modifications, state assessment decisions, placement decisions, and other issues related to the delivery of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).

1.13 Can a goal be both functional and academic?

For students aged three and four with IEPs: Yes. Because of the developmental nature of young children, many of the standards in the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines and/or in district-adopted prekindergarten curriculum may fall into both categories. For example, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines for science include standards related to learning personal hygiene skills.

At K-12: No. The TEKS address academic areas. Therefore, at K-12, a goal is either related to a student learning the TEKS (academic goal) or related to the student learning a skill he/she needs to learn in order to be able to access the TEKS (functional goal).

1.14 Does a student's IEP need to include both functional and academic goals?

Which type(s) of annual goal(s) to include in a student's IEP is a decision that must be made by the ARD committee only after examining the student's PLAAFP, which must describe the student's current academic achievement and functional performance. While all students who receive special education services must have measurable annual goals, some students may have both academic and functional goals, and some students may have only academic or functional goals to enable them to have access to the general curriculum, as indicated by the students' needs (as defined in his/her PLAAFP) and determined necessary by their respective ARD committees.

Additionally, the National Association of the State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) at Project Forum states in the document "Standards Based IEP: Implementation Update" (June 2010), "It is important to note that the student's IEP resulting from this process does not contain a restatement of the state standards, but rather includes the goals that designate the necessary learning – the specially designed instruction – that will lead to the student's attaining the standards that the team has identified as not yet achieved. If needed, goals related to acquisition of functional skills that will facilitate the achievement of state academic standards are also included." Therefore, if the ARD committee determines that no functional goals are necessary in order for the student to access the general curriculum, then the student's IEP would include only goal(s) that were academic.

1.15 How many annual goals should the student's ARD committee include from the enrolled grade-level content area?

IDEA 2004 does not require a specified number of annual goals; rather, the decision should be based solely on the student's disability and its effect in hindering academic progress. The ARD committee needs to use the student's PLAAFP to determine the area(s) in which the student needs measurable annual goals. The goals will then determine the specially designed instruction the student needs.

1.16 In which subject areas/courses do students need enrolled grade-level measurable annual goals?

IDEA 2004 does not mandate goals for a specific content area; instead IDEA leaves this to be determined by the student's ARD committee and defined in his/her IEP. In order to make this decision, the ARD committee needs to examine a student's PLAAFP and determine, based on the PLAAFP, in which area(s) the student needs measurable annual goals, and, thus, needs specially designed instruction to address those goals. The two situations in which a student must have a measurable annual goal are:

- (a) when content is modified for a specific content area/course, the IEP must include annual goal(s) which specifically address how content is modified in this content area; and/or
- (b) when a student is removed from a general education setting for any period of time, the IEP must include measurable annual goal(s) which specifically address how the student will access or progress in this content. In this case, the student may or may not have modifications to this content, but must have annual goal(s) specific to this content since the setting is not a general education setting.

1.17 Can one annual goal cover multiple subject areas/courses?

Functional goals may cover multiple subject areas/courses, as determined by the ARD committee. For example, an annual functional goal related to use of an agenda or planner as an organizational tool would likely cross multiple/all subject areas. Similarly, behavior goals often need to be implemented in multiple/all subject areas.

For academic goals, the ARD committee would need to analyze whether or not the content standards cross multiple subject areas. If yes, then the annual goal(s) may be written to be implemented in those subject areas. If not, then separate goal(s) will need to be written for each subject area where the PLAAFP indicates a critical need.

Keep in mind that all academic goals should be specific to subject area curriculum standards and cannot be generalized. For example, if a reading goal was implemented in a social studies course, implementation of this reading goal does not constitute modification of the social studies TEKS. If a student's reading deficits are so severe that the social studies content (TEKS) needs to be modified, then the ARD committee must include a goal that is specific to social studies that identifies how the social studies content is modified.

Whether academic or functional, the ARD committee would need to determine in which subject area(s) the goal(s) would be implemented as well as who will be responsible for monitoring and measuring the progress toward meeting the goal. These decisions would need to be documented in the student's IEP.

1.18 For a student who receives special education services in a general education (mainstream) setting and does not have modified content in any subject area, must the ARD committee still develop measurable annual goals?

Yes, all students who receive special education services are required by IDEA to have measurable annual goal(s). In this situation, the ARD committee must develop annual goals:

- (a) from an area of need addressed in the student's PLAAFP that affects the student's ability to make progress and/or access the general education curriculum; and
- (b) to clearly define specially designed instruction that the student will receive.

34 CFR §300.8 (i) states that in order to qualify for special education services, a student not only needs to have a disability (as defined in IDEA), but he/she must need special education as a result of the disability. IDEA further defines special education as "specially designed instruction" (34 CFR §300.39 (a)(1); see [Question 1.11](#)) Because the student's annual goals inform the specially designed instruction he/she needs in order to access or progress in the general curriculum, if an ARD committee is unable to determine a need to include any annual goals, then the ARD committee may need to reconsider if the student's disability creates a need for special education services.

1.19 For a student who receives special education services in a general education (mainstream) setting and does not have modified content in any subject area, can the ARD committee write a "mainstream" or an "inclusion" goal for the student to master the TEKS for his/her enrolled grade-level?

No. A goal that addresses 70% mastery of TEKS simply expresses the standard that is required for all students (not just students who receive special education services), and does not inform the specially designed instruction the student should receive from a special education professional in order to be able to access/progress in the TEKS.

1.20 What are short-term objectives/benchmarks?

Short-term objectives/benchmarks are the steps to be taken between the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and the attainment of the annual goal. Like the annual goal, best practice will entail short-term objectives having a timeframe, condition(s), behavior, and criterion.

When short-term objectives/benchmarks are included, it is expected that at least two short-term objectives/benchmarks for each goal be written. When considering frequency and duration, the ARD committee may specify the time that will be used for purposes of progress monitoring: for example, 80% of any 15-minute observation.

1.21 How are short-term objectives/benchmarks aligned with enrolled grade-level goals?

The short-term objectives/benchmarks are the steps a student takes to progress from the PLAAFP to the enrolled grade-level annual goal. These steps may encompass skills that are below the enrolled grade-level.

1.22 What does a benchmark/short-term objective with the timeframe, condition(s), behavior and criterion look like?

The following chart shows the natural flow of a short-term objective. There is one objective for each of the annual goals in the chart on [Question 1.6](#).

| Timeframe | Condition | Behavior | Criteria |
|--|--|---|--|
| By the end of the first six weeks | using decodable texts | Joseph, a 3 rd grade student, will read and pronounce 50 frequently used words | with 10 or fewer errors |
| By the end of the first grading period | given an agreed-upon list of common classroom situations that trigger angry responses and instruction in one behavior management technique | Sara, a 10 th grade student, will utilize the behavior management technique to reduce elopements as evidenced by | remaining in the classroom 70% of the day at least 3 days per week |
| In three instructional weeks | with guided practice | Linda, a 4 th grade student, will correctly use transition words to connect simple and compound sentences | with 75% accuracy |
| By October 1, 2011 | given a shirt with 1 inch buttons | Jose, a 6 th grade student, will independently grasp the buttons without dropping them | in 3 of 5 trials |

1.23 When are ARD committees required to write annual goals that include short-term objectives/benchmarks?

For those students who take alternate assessments aligned with alternate achievement standards, the IEP must contain a description of benchmarks/short-term objectives as part of the student's annual goals.

Although LEAs may have a local mandate that requires more, IDEA 2004 requires that benchmarks/short-term objectives be part of the annual goal for any student who takes an alternate assessment judged against alternate achievement standards. In Texas, this means all students who take an alternate assessment must have at least two benchmarks/short-term objectives as part of their measurable annual goals. It does not matter if the goal is academic or functional or if the area is tested on the STAAR Alternate. If a student is going to take STAAR Alternate, all of his/her annual goals must have benchmarks/short-term objectives.

For a student who takes any other state assessment, the ARD committee may choose to include benchmarks or short-term objectives as part of the annual goals in order to assist in monitoring the student's progress toward mastery of IEP goals.

Note: For students who are enrolled in a Student Success Initiative (SSI) grade and who do not pass the statewide assessments in the SSI identified subject areas (grade 5 reading and mathematics and grade 8 reading and mathematics), the IEP must include a statement regarding how the student will participate in an accelerated instruction program. For additional information, refer to the Grade Placement Committee Manual on the TEA website for guidelines for an accelerated instruction program at:

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3230&menu_id=793 and the Accelerated

Instruction and Intensive Programs of Instruction PDF document at:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=2147491399>.

1.24 Can attainment of a grade level standard be a student's annual goal?

Even if written in measurable terms, a goal such as "70% mastery of grade-level TEKS" does not meet IDEA requirements detailed in 34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(ii). This is not measurable in and of itself and is simply a restatement of the expectations for all students in general education. IDEA requires that annual goals be based on the student's PLAAFP and inform the specially designed instruction the student needs due to his/her disability in order to progress toward enrolled grade-level standards. The National Association of the State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) at Project Forum states in the document "Standards Based IEP: Implementation Update" (June 2010), "It is important to note that the student's IEP resulting from this process does not contain a restatement of the state standards, but rather includes the goals that designate the necessary learning – the specially designed instruction – that will lead to the student's attaining the standards that the team has identified as not yet achieved." An annual goal should relate to the student's need for specially designed

instruction due to his/her disability in order to address the individualized needs and how those needs interfere with his/her ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum.

1.25 Can mastery of the benchmarks/short-term objectives be the criterion for mastery of an annual goal?

If the annual goal includes benchmarks/short-term objectives, the short-term objectives should have a separate mastery criterion. These benchmarks/short-term objectives are the intermediate steps and serve as a gauge of the progress or lack of progress from the student's PLAAFP toward mastery of the annual goal. Mastering intermediate steps does not, in and of itself, show mastery of the annual goal. Therefore, an annual goal with a criterion such as "as evidenced by mastery of the following benchmarks/short-term objectives" is not appropriate. Best practice when constructing an annual goal is to include a timeframe, condition, behavior, and criterion. As such, the goal would be measurable and would allow for documentation of the student's progress toward the goal throughout the implementation of the IEP.

1.26 Are related service goals academic or functional?

These goals are functional in nature as these skills are not based on enrolled grade-level content standards. The skills addressed by related services are skills a student needs in order to access the content-area TEKS, but are not directly teaching the content required by the TEKS.

1.27 Since speech is an instructional service, are speech goals academic in nature?

This depends on the student's PLAAFP. If the PLAAFP indicates a critical need to directly address the enrolled grade-level content standards in reading and/or language then an academic goal should be written. If the critical need is to teach a skill the student needs in order to access the enrolled grade-level content standards in reading and/or language, this is considered a functional goal.

1.28 Must an IEP for students who are 16 and older include measurable annual transition goals?

No. IEPs are not required to include separate measurable annual goals for transition. For students whose IEPs include a transition plan, the annual goals that are included must facilitate movement toward the postsecondary goals.

1.29 Are annual goals that facilitate movement toward postsecondary goals academic or functional?

They can be either. Annual goals that facilitate movement to postsecondary goals must be made by the ARD committee based on a student’s PLAAFP. Examples of both academic and functional goals are provided in [Question 1.6](#).

1.30 Must postsecondary goals include the four elements (timeframe, condition, behavior, criterion)?

No. IDEA (34 CFR §300.320 (b)(1)) requires that postsecondary goals be written in measurable terms; however, the four components may not be appropriate for postsecondary goals. Instead, LEAs should use the standards developed by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) for sample postsecondary goals (www.nsttac.org). LEAs can also contact the Transition Specialist at their ESC for additional assistance. The Statewide Secondary Transition Network has additional information available at www.transitionintexas.org.

1.31 What does an annual goal that facilitates movement toward a postsecondary goal look like?

The postsecondary goals and annual goals in this example are adapted from www.nsttac.org.

Alex has the following measurable postsecondary goals:

Postsecondary Goal for Education/Training:

After graduation from high school, Alex will enroll in a technical school and take a business math class to advance his career in business.

Postsecondary Goal for Employment:

Upon completion of high school, given opportunities from his boss, Alex will communicate his wants, needs and desires to his boss in order to develop more appropriate workplace communication skills.

The following chart shows measurable annual goals that facilitate movement toward the postsecondary goals above:

| Timeframe | Condition | Behavior | Criteria |
|---|---|---|-----------------------------|
| By the end of the 2011-2012 school year | given explicit instruction in workplace communication skills (e.g., say hello, ask questions or report concerns | Alex, an 11 th grade student, will demonstrate appropriate communication skills during community-based | in 4 out of 6 opportunities |

| | | | |
|-----------------|---|--|--------------------|
| | to boss) in a community vocational training site | vocational training | |
| By May 16, 2012 | given direct instruction in high school Mathematics Models with Applications course, a 10-key calculator/adding device and guided practice, | Alex, an 11 th grade student, will add monetary amounts using a 10 key calculator/adding device | with 85% accuracy. |

The first annual goal example in the chart above is a functional goal, since it is not directly linked to any TEKS. The second annual goal example in the chart above is an academic goal, as it is directly linked to the TEKS for Mathematics Models.

1.32 How does mastery of annual goals relate to grading and promotion?

TEC §28.0216 requires that school district grading policies, “(1) must require a classroom teacher to assign a grade that reflects the students’ relative mastery of an assignment; [and] (2) may not require a classroom teacher to assign a minimum grade for an assignment without regard to the student’s quality of work.” These rules apply to classroom assignments, examinations, and overall grades for each grading period. Because of this, teachers may not assign a grade based on effort, and teachers cannot pass a student who has not mastered the curriculum.

Mastery of an IEP goal does not automatically constitute passing a course and passing a course does not automatically equate to mastering an IEP goal. If the IEP goal is not academic in nature, it may not figure into mastery of the course (and, thus the assignment of a course grade) at all.

TEC §28.021(a) requires that promotion from one grade level to the next be determined “only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency of the subject matter of the course or grade level.” For a student who receives special education services, the ARD committee, which includes the parent, makes the promotion/retention decision, but must base the decision on the student’s mastery of the curriculum, not on his/her behavior or the amount of effort he/she puts into assignments. Again, this decision may or may not include mastery of specific IEP goal(s) related to the required curriculum and must always follow the district’s/charter’s policies related to promotion/retention.

Regardless of the grade earned in the course or of the promotion decision, if a student does not master an IEP goal, the ARD committee needs to examine the goal and analyze the situation to determine what factor(s) played a part in the student’s not mastering the goal. The ARD committee will need to determine whether the goal was

appropriate, whether it was implemented correctly, and will determine any other adjustments that need to be made in the goal in order to meet the student's need. See [Question 1.31](#) for further information.

1.33 If a student does not master his/her enrolled grade-level goal(s) but progresses to the next grade level, should the goal(s) from the previous year be continued?

The measurable annual goal(s) the student needs will be based on his/her PLAAFP. If the PLAAFP indicates a need for standards-based/academic goals, then these goals will need to be based on enrolled grade-level content standards. If a student did not master his/her previous year's enrolled grade-level goal(s) but progressed to the next grade level, the ARD committee will need to determine if the previous goal(s) should be included as short-term objectives/benchmarks to master the enrolled grade-level goal(s).

1.34 Can a student's IEP goal span the entire school year or must the dates match the annual ARD dates?

Since measurable annual goal(s) cannot span more than one year, the ARD committee must determine the appropriate dates of implementation. For a student whose ARD meeting is being held and goals are being developed for the next academic year, the IEP may be written to be implemented beginning with the first day of the next school year and continuing through the end of that school year, even though the next annual ARD will be held before the end of the goal implementation period. At the next annual ARD, the ARD committee would need to review progress toward mastery of the goal(s) which are currently being implemented and follow the same process for the following year.

1.35 How often should progress toward mastery of annual goals be measured?

This is an ARD committee decision. 34 CFR §300.320 (a)(3) requires that the student's IEP include "a description of...when periodic reports on the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards) will be provided." The reporting of progress is distinct and different than the issuing of grades in the courses in which the student is enrolled. The examples in CFR § 300.320 (a)(3) include some possibilities that ARD Committees might consider, but the ultimate decision regarding when progress will be measured is up to the ARD Committee to determine and describe in the IEP.

1.36 How should progress be reported in IEP periodic progress reports to parents?

Report Progress in the same manner the goal (and associated objectives) is measured. For example, if the goal/objective state that the child will master a goal/objective 4 out of 5 times, then report progress in that same way, i.e. how many times out of 5 times the student is able to accomplish the goal/objective. If the goal/objective is written as a percentage, then report progress as a percentage. Notations such as “progress being made” or “continuing” are not adequate for reporting progress.

1.37 Where can I get additional information regarding implementing an IEP in the least restrictive environment (LRE)?

Additional information regarding this topic, please visit www.esc20.net/agcnetwork. The resources include *The Guidelines for Co-Teaching in Texas*, *LRE Question and Answer Document*, and *Working With Paraprofessionals: A Resource for Teachers of Students with Disabilities*.

Section 2: Academic/Standards-Based Goals

The questions and answers in this section apply only to academic/standards-based measurable annual goals. These are goals which focus on the student learning the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum (TEKS).

2.1 Is academic achievement defined in law or rule?

No. When asked to define “academic” during the process of adopting the final Federal Regulations for IDEA 2004, the U.S. Department of Education said the following:

“Academic achievement” generally refers to a child’s performance in academic areas (e.g., reading or language arts, math, science, and history). We believe the definition could vary depending on a child’s circumstances or definition, and therefore, we do not believe a definition of “academic achievement” should be included in these regulations. (71 Fed. Reg. at 46662)

The Texas Legislature and TEA have elected not to define academic; instead, they allow the explanation given by the U.S. Department of Education to stand on its own.

2.2 What are academic/standards-based goals?

Academic/standards-based goals are annual, measurable goals aligned to enrolled grade level curriculum standards. The “standard” in the term standards-based IEPs refers to the curriculum standard on which the goal is based.

The curriculum standards in Texas are the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for student in Kindergarten - Grade 12. Preschool students should have goals that are aligned with The Texas Infant, Toddler, and, Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, or district-adopted prekindergarten curriculum for students aged three and four.

2.3 What is the difference between an enrolled grade-level standards-based goal and the enrolled-grade level standards?

The student’s goal should not contain a restatement of the enrolled grade-level content standards (The Texas Infant, Toddler, and, Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines, Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, or TEKS). Instead, it should include the goals that designate the specially designed instruction (content, methodology, and delivery of instruction) the student needs in order to attain the standards. The TEKS Vertical Alignments, found here: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/special-ed/staaralt/vertalign/>, may serve as a resource when aligning goals to standards.

2.4 What does aligned to enrolled grade-level content standards mean?

Annual IEP goals that are academic in nature should reflect and link directly to specific grade-level TEKS for students in grades K-12. Preschool students should have goals that are aligned with the Texas Infant, Toddler, and, Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, or district-adopted prekindergarten curriculum for students aged three and four.

The IEP does not need to include all TEKS/standards in a specific subject. The IEP should include only the most critical student expectations within a specific content domain.

2.5 Can one academic goal cover multiple subject areas/courses?

The ARD committee would need to analyze whether or not the content standards cross multiple subject areas. If yes, then the annual goal(s) may be written to be implemented in those subject areas. If no, then separate goal(s) will need to be written for each subject area where the PLAAFP indicates a critical need.

The implementation of a goal in multiple subject areas/courses, does not necessarily mean that the content is modified in multiple subject areas/courses. For example, a reading goal may be implemented in multiple content areas because the student's PLAAFP shows that his/her reading deficit is impacting progress in multiple (or even all) content areas. However, implementing a reading goal in a social studies course does not modify the content (TEKS) for social studies. If a student's reading deficits are so severe that the social studies content (TEKS) needs to be modified, then the ARD committee must include a goal that is specific to social studies and identifies how the social studies content is modified.

2.6 How do standards-based IEPs relate to state assessments?

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), commonly known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and IDEA regulations require that all students have access to and instruction in enrolled grade-level content. These laws make allowances for appropriate accommodations and alternate assessments as mandated by a student's IEP. However, even alternate assessments are aligned to the same general education curriculum standards (TEKS).

While the ARD committee makes the determination of which state assessment the student will take (based on the student's ARD-directed standards based academic content), the student must meet the participation requirements for the particular state assessment that the ARD committee has chosen. All assessments are based on enrolled grade-level TEKS. For more information on student assessment, visit the TEA Student Assessment website at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3534>.

2.7 Do students in non-assessed grades/courses need standards-based IEPs?

Yes. All students should be involved in the enrolled grade-level content with aligned IEPs goals to address the individual student's needs.

2.8 Does having a standards-based/academic goal automatically mean a student has modified content?

No. In addition to the ARD committee determining which goal(s) the student's PLAAFP indicates a need for, the ARD committee must also determine if the student needs modified content. Content is modified when the nature of the task or target skill that the student is responsible for learning is different than it is for the general student population. This may be documented anywhere within the contents of the IEP, of which the annual goal is just a portion. However, if content is modified, a standards-based academic goal is required in that content area.

For more information on modifications, see [Question 1.9](#).

2.9 Does having an academic/standards-based goal automatically qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment?

No. A student must meet all of the participation requirements for whichever state assessment the ARD committee assigns. For more information on participation requirements, visit <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/ard/>.

2.10 For a student who takes an alternate state assessment, does he/she need an academic standards-based IEP goal that corresponds with the tested content area?

Yes. For a student who takes an alternate assessment, there must be a corresponding academic standards-based IEP goal for the content area(s) in which the student is taking the alternate assessment. If the alternate assessment the student is taking has modified achievement standards, then the goal must be aligned with the TEKS for the student's enrolled grade level.

If the alternate assessment has alternate achievement standards (STAAR Alternate), then the goal must link to the TEKS. For STAAR Alternate, each knowledge and skills statement has been summarized into an essence statement that serves as a link to the grade-level TEKS. However, essence statements alone do not contain the four required components of a measurable annual goal and should be crafted by ARD committees to reflect a measurable annual goal. Teachers should use the Curriculum Framework documents to select appropriate prerequisite skills.

2.11 Is it a requirement to write goals for each tested objective on a state assessment?

No. It is an ARD committee decision based on the student's PLAAFP.

2.12 How can ARD committees use the TEKS, Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, and Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines to write goals?

The student expectation component of the TEKS is used to provide the framework for annual goal writing by establishing grade-level expectations. Similarly, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines and the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#) provide the student expectations by age. However, student expectation statements alone are not measurable and should be re-crafted by ARD committees to reflect a measurable annual goal.

2.13 Are ARD committees required to include the number of the particular TEKS and/or Student Expectation aligned to each annual goal?

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) may elect to include this process in their local policies, procedures and/or operating guidelines.

2.14 Is it a requirement to write an annual goal for every essence statement for students assessed with an alternate state assessment?

No. It is an ARD committee decision based on the student's PLAAFP.

2.15 Can the Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students (FACES) curriculum objectives be used as annual goals/objectives?

For the academic content area goals (reading/English/language arts, math, science, and social studies), FACES would not be appropriate as this is not considered the standard curriculum (TEKS). However, for functional goals, FACES objectives could be utilized.

2.16 How do you write enrolled grade-level goals when a student is not performing on grade level?

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) has produced a document that illustrates a recommended seven-step process, with accompanying guiding questions, to assist special education teachers and other professionals in developing a standards-based IEP. The Standards-Based

Individualized Education Program Examples are available on the following NASDSE webpages:

http://nasdse.org/DesktopModules/DNNspot-Store/ProductFiles/36_a7f577f4-20c9-40bf-be79-54fb510f754f.pdf

<http://www.nasdse.org/Portals/0/SevenStepProcesstoCreatingStandards-basedIEPs.pdf>

2.17 If a student does not master his/her enrolled grade-level goal(s) but progresses to the next grade level, should the goal(s) from the previous year be continued?

The measurable annual goal(s) the student needs will be based on his/her PLAAFP. If the PLAAFP indicates a need for standards-based/academic goals, then base these goals on enrolled grade-level content standards. If a student did not master his/her previous year's enrolled grade-level goal(s) but progressed to the next grade level, the ARD committee will need to determine if the previous goal(s) should be included as short-term objectives/benchmarks to master the enrolled grade-level goal(s).

2.18 Should ARD committees still consider modified content if there is no modified assessment available?

Yes. The decision is based on the PLAAFP and there must be a corresponding goal in the subject area where the student is receiving the modified content. The elimination of the modified assessment does not equate to the removal of modified instruction in the classroom. If modified instruction is part of the student's specially designed instruction in the student's IEP, its implementation is required by IDEA 2004.

Section 3: Functional Goals

The questions and answers in this section apply only to functional/non-standards-based measurable annual goals. These goals focus on the student accessing the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum (TEKS).

3.1 Is “functional” defined in law or rule?

No. When asked to define “functional” during the process of adopting the final Federal Regulations for IDEA 2004, the U.S. Department of Education said the following:

We do not believe it is necessary to include a definition of “functional” in these regulations because the word is generally used to refer to activities and skills that are not considered academic or related to a child's academic achievement as measured on Statewide achievement tests. There is nothing in the Act that would prohibit a State from defining “functional,” as long as the definition and its use are consistent with the Act. (71 Fed. Reg. at 46661)

The Texas Legislature and TEA have elected not to define functional; instead, they allow the explanation given by the U.S. Department of Education to stand on its own.

3.2 What type(s) of measurable annual goals might be functional in nature?

Goals that are non-academic are considered functional. Some examples may include related services such as occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), counseling, and orientation and mobility training (O&M). Other examples might include behavioral goals and use of an assistive technology (AT) device. While the ultimate purpose for providing these services is to help the student access the general education curriculum, this type of annual goal is not required to be based on TEKS.

Reminder: Because of the developmental nature of young children, many of the standards in the Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, and/or in district-adopted prekindergarten curriculum may fall into both the academic and functional categories. See [Question 1.12](#) for more information.

3.3 For which groups of students are functional goals appropriate?

For any student whose PLAAFP statement indicates a non-TEKS based critical need that is preventing the student from accessing the general curriculum, the ARD committee may need to consider a functional goal. The decision should not be based on the student's disability/label, but, rather on how the student's disability is impacting his/her access to the general curriculum. For example, a PLAAFP for a student with a learning disability might indicate a need for a goal related to organizational skills if the student is having difficulty keeping track of assignments, due dates, etc. A PLAAFP for

a student with an orthopedic impairment might indicate a need for a goal related to how to properly hold a writing instrument so that he/she can complete required assignments.

Reminder: Because of the developmental nature of young children, many of the standards in the Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, and/or in district-adopted prekindergarten curriculum may fall into both the academic and functional categories. See [Question 1.12](#) for more information.

3.4 Must measurable annual functional goals be standards-based?

No. Because there are no state adopted standards for functional goals, there is no standard on which to base these goals. For example, if the ARD committee decides the student needs a goal to help him/her transition independently between class periods, there are no TEKS related to this skill. Write the goal in measurable terms (including timeframe, condition(s), criterion and behavior), but base in on the student's PLAAFP and the skills that the student needs for transitioning between classes independently.

3.5 Can one functional goal cover multiple subject areas/courses?

Functional goals may cover multiple subject areas/courses as determined by the ARD committee. For example, an annual functional goal related to use of an agenda or planner as an organizational tool would likely cross multiple/all subject areas. Similarly, behavior goals often need to be implemented in multiple/all subject areas.

3.6 Does having a functional goal automatically mean a student has modified content?

No. A functional goal is not based on enrolled grade-level content standards. Instead it addresses a skill a student needs in order to have access to the enrolled grade-level content standards. Because it is not based on the enrolled grade-level content standards, it does not impact the student's curriculum, and thus, does not change the nature of the task or target skill the student is expected to learn.

Functional goals do not substitute for a student learning enrolled grade-level content standards. Instead, they are supplemental skills a student needs in order to access the enrolled grade-level content standards. These goals should be taught in addition to, not in place of, enrolled grade-level content standards.

3.7 Does having a functional goal qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment?

No. State assessment decisions need to be based on the participation requirements for each assessment. Functional goals do not impact curriculum, and thus, should not impact state assessment decisions.

3.8 Can you use the Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students (FACES) curriculum objectives as annual goals/objectives?

For the academic content area goals (reading/English/language arts, math, science, and social studies), FACES would not be appropriate as this is not considered the standard curriculum (TEKS). However, for functional goals, FACES objectives could be utilized.

3.9 Can a student's IEP include only functional goals?

The ARD committee must examine the student's PLAAFP, which must describe the student's current academic achievement and the student's functional performance. The ARD committee will then utilize the information in the PLAAFP to determine in which specific academic and/or functional area(s) a student needs goals. While all students must have measurable annual goals, some students may have both academic and functional goals, and some students may have only functional goals to enable them to have access to the general curriculum, as indicated by individual student's needs in his/her PLAAFP and as determined necessary by his/her ARD committees.

For example, a student's PLAAFP may indicate that student has the cognitive ability to progress in the general curriculum, but that he/she has a behavior issue that is impeding his/her access to the general curriculum. In this case, the ARD committee may determine the student would only need functional goal(s) related to behavior. However, if the student's behavioral needs are severe enough that they require him/her to be removed from the general education setting for any portion of the day, then he/she would also need a goal specific to the course/curriculum from which he/she is removed, regardless of whether or not the content is modified (See [Question 1.16](#)).

Glossary

| Term | Acronym |
|---|----------------|
| Admission, review, and dismissal | ARD |
| Code of Federal Regulations | CFR |
| Elementary and Secondary Education Act | ESEA |
| Free and appropriate public education | FAPE |
| Functional Academic Curriculum for Exceptional Students | FACES |
| Individuals with Disabilities Education Act | IDEA |
| Individualized education program | IEP |
| Least restrictive environment | LRE |
| Local education agency | LEA |
| National Association of State Directors of Special Education | NASDSE |
| No Child Left Behind | NCLB |
| Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities | PPCD |
| Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance | PLAAFP |
| State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness | STAAR |
| Student Success Initiative | SSI |
| Supplementary aids and services | SAS |
| Texas Administrative Code | TAC |
| Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills | TAKS |
| Texas Education Code | TEC |
| Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills | TEKS |

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West Virginia Department of Education (2004). *Connecting West Virginia Content Standards and Objectives to Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development*. Retrieved January 2008 from <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ose/StandardsBasedIEPs.pdf>

Additional Resources

Early Childhood Outcomes and Prekindergarten Guidelines Alignment Document

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147494988>

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE): Question and Answer Document

English:

<http://portal.esc20.net/portal/page/portal/doclibraryroot/SpEd%20Stwd%20AGC%20Left%20Nav/LRE-QA.pdf>

Spanish:

<http://portal.esc20.net/portal/page/portal/doclibraryroot/SpEd%20Stwd%20AGC%20Left%20Nav/LRE-QASp.pdf>

The Legal Framework for the Child Centered Process

<http://framework.esc18.net>

NCLB Alternate Achievement Standards for the Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities Non-Regulatory Guidance

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/altguidance.pdf>

NCLB Modified Academic Achievement Standards Non-Regulatory Guidance

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/nclb/twopercent.doc>

Standards-Based IEP Goal Development Online Training

Access information at www.esc20.net/agcnetwork

TEA Special Education

www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/

TEA Student Assessment

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index3.aspx?id=3534>

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=6148>

Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines

http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/ed_init/pkgguidelines/PKG_Final_100808.pdf

Texas Project FIRST

<http://www.texasprojectfirst.org/>

Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines

<http://www.earlylearningtexas.org/media/20496/texas%20infant%20toddler%20and%20three-year-old%20early%20learning%20guidelines.pdf>