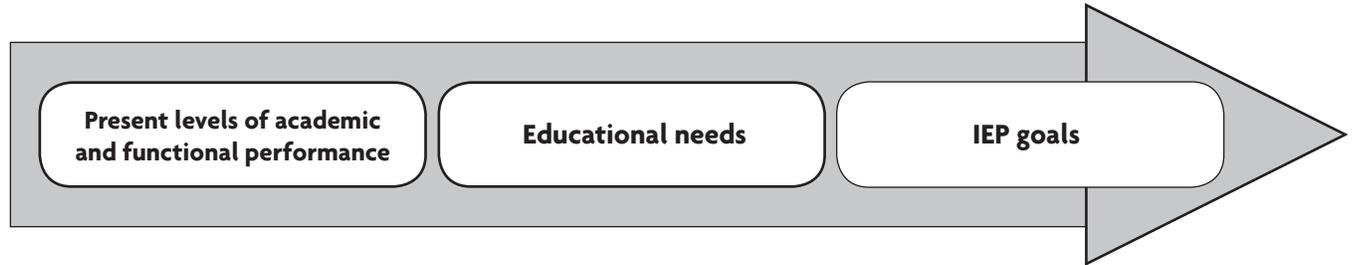




Individualized Education Program (IEP) Goals

The special education IEP process is a logical one. Each year the IEP team, which includes parents, develops an IEP for an eligible child. The child's present levels of performance¹ determine the educational needs of the child. The team develops goals to meet those needs.



Let's take a closer look at IEP goals. The IEP must address all the educational needs that result from your child's disability or disabilities, regardless of the disability label. Some of these needs will be addressed by IEP goals².

According to the U.S. Department of Education, "The IEP must include annual goals that aim to improve educational results and functional performance for each child with a disability. This inherently includes a meaningful opportunity for the child to meet challenging objectives. Each child with a disability must be offered an IEP that is designed to provide access to instruction strategies and curricula aligned to both challenging State academic content standards and ambitious goals, based on the unique circumstances of that child."³

- The IEP will include instructional goals that describe what your child is **expected to accomplish within the one year** period of the IEP when provided with special education instruction and related services
- Goals **may cover any of several areas**: academic, behavioral, functional, social, or other skills that are important for your child to master
- The IEP Team will discuss:



- Each goal will have at least two **short-term objectives or benchmarks**
 - Objectives are steps leading to the accomplishment of the goal
 - Benchmarks are signs that show development of the skill or behavior

¹ A Place to Start: Understanding the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statement, [PACER.org/parent/php/php-c186.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c186.pdf)

² Other needs may be addressed through accommodations, modifications, related services, or assistive technology. See [PACER.org/parent/resources/understanding-the-spec-ed-process.asp](https://www.pacer.org/parent/resources/understanding-the-spec-ed-process.asp)

³ U.S. Department of Education, "Questions and Answers on U.S. Supreme Court Case Decision *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District Re-1*," December 7, 2017

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- Goals and objectives must be **measurable** so that the IEP team will know if your child is making progress on each one⁴
 - Goals must include a clear beginning or baseline level and an expected ending level (this level may be found in the goal or in the present levels statement)
 - The goal or the objectives will state how progress will be measured
 - If your child’s IEP includes at least one goal that addresses **grade-level academic content standards**⁵ in reading and/or mathematics, it will meet the requirement for a “standards-based IEP”

Let’s look at an example:

The **present levels of performance statement** says that your son writes disorganized paragraphs with incorrect spelling and punctuation 50 percent of the time. Your son had a writing goal on his last year’s IEP which he achieved in one year.

The goal is to increase his level of producing organized paragraphs with correct spelling and punctuation to 90 percent of the time within one year with appropriate special education instruction.

One **objective** covers paragraph organization.

- Skill to be performed: Write an eight-sentence paragraph
- Conditions for evaluating: When given a subject by the teacher
- Criteria for evaluating: Include a topic sentence and at least three supporting details
- Evaluation procedures: Work to 90 percent accuracy as measured on monthly paragraph samples

A second objective covers spelling and punctuation.

- Skill to be performed: When writing a paragraph
- Criteria for evaluating: Include correct spelling and punctuation
- Evaluation procedures: Work to 90 percent accuracy as measured on monthly paragraph samples

Progress on this goal and objectives will be measured by daily work, teacher observation, and monthly paragraph samples. Progress will be reported five times a year, as often as general education peers, with four written reports and one IEP conference. In the first progress report, he had reached 65% organization of his paragraphs with a 70% accuracy in spelling and 65% in punctuation. At this rate of progress, it is likely that your son will achieve the goal within one year.

In summary, IEP goals must be written so that your child can be “involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum” and be “appropriately ambitious in light of the child’s circumstances.”⁶

⁴ Individualized Education Program (IEP) Progress Reports: How will you know if your child is making progress on IEP goals?, [PACER.org/parent/php/php-c255.pdf](https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c255.pdf)

⁵ This term means grade-level learning expectations for all students. The Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards are statements adopted by the state that identify what all students in a particular grade are expected to know and be able to do by the end of that grade. Minnesota standards are set for English language arts, math, science, social studies, the arts, and physical education.

⁶ US Department of Education, “Questions and Answers on U.S. Supreme Court Case Decision *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District Re-1*,” December 7, 2017