



# Question and Answer Document Individualized Education Program (IEP) Measurable Annual Goals

Revised February 2025



# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

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## Terms

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### **“Parent or parents”**

Throughout this guide, when the term “parent or parents” is used, the term includes the definition aligned to [34 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) § 300.30](#). That definition includes biological or adoptive parent, foster parent, guardian, an individual acting in the place of a biological parent with whom the child lives or is legally responsible for the child’s welfare, or a surrogate parent as defined in [34 CFR § 300.519](#). When “parent” is used throughout this document, this may include adult students where appropriate.

### **“A student identified as emergent bilingual” or “emergent bilingual”**

An emergent bilingual student is a student who is in the process of acquiring English and has another language as the primary language. The term emergent bilingual student replaced the term English learner in the [Texas Education Code 29, Subchapter B](#) after the September 1, 2021 update. It is important to note that the term English learner is still used in federal regulations and guidance.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Table of Contents

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Introduction</b> .....   | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Section 1: Measurable Annual Goals</b> .....   | <b>7</b> |
| 1.1 What are measurable annual goals? .....   | 7        |
| 1.2 What are the four critical components of a measurable annual goal? .....  | 7        |
| 1.3 What should the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee consider to ensure annual goals are measurable? .....  | 8        |
| 1.4 Should the goal criterion reflect the passing rate of an assignment/course? .....   | 9        |
| 1.5 Does the IEP goal need to include the student’s enrolled grade level?.....  | 9        |
| 1.6 How many annual goals should the ARD committee include in the student’s IEP?.....   | 9        |
| 1.7 What is the role of the PLAAFP statement in developing measurable annual goals?.....  | 9        |
| 1.8 In which subject areas/courses (with associated TEKS) do students need enrolled grade-level measurable annual goals? .....  | 12       |
| 1.9 Can one annual goal cover multiple subject areas/courses? .....   | 13       |
| 1.10 Should the ARD committee still develop measurable annual goals for a student who receives special education services in a general education (mainstream) setting and does not have modified content in any subject area?.....  | 13       |
| 1.11 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 or her enrolled grade-level?..... | 14       |
| 1.12 How does mastery of annual goals relate to grading and promotion? .....  | 14       |
| 1.13 If a student does not master his or her enrolled grade-level goal(s) but progresses to the next grade level, should the goal(s) from the previous year be continued?.....  | 14       |
| 1.14 Can the time period for the student’s annual goals exceed one calendar year?.....  | 15       |
| 1.15 If the annual ARD committee meeting date falls within the school year (e.g., in March), must an annual goal be written to end at the conclusion of the school year and then a separate annual goal written to begin at the start of the new school year?.....  | 15       |
| 1.16 What are short-term objectives/benchmarks, and when are ARD committees required to write annual goals that include short-term objectives/ benchmarks? .....  | 15       |
| 1.17 What does an annual goal with short-term objectives/benchmarks with the timeframe, condition(s), behavior, and criterion look like? .....  | 16       |
| 1.18 Can mastery of the benchmarks/short-term objectives be the criterion for mastery of an annual goal? .....  | 18       |
| 1.19 What is the difference between an academic goal and a functional goal? .....   | 18       |
| 1.20 Can a goal be both functional and academic? .....  | 19       |
| 1.21 Does a student’s IEP need to include both functional and academic goals?.....  | 19       |
| 1.22 Are related service goals academic or functional?.....   | 19       |
| 1.23 Because speech is an instructional service, are speech goals academic in nature?.....  | 20       |
| 1.24 How does specially designed instruction relate to measurable annual goals? .....   | 20       |
| 1.25 How often should reports of progress toward mastery of annual goals be provided to parents/guardians? .....  | 20       |
| 1.26 How should progress be reported in periodic IEP reports provided to parents/guardians? .....   | 21       |

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Section 2: Academic/Standards-Based Goals</b> .....   | <b>22</b> |
| 2.1 What are academic/standards-based goals?.....  | 22        |
| 2.2 What is the difference between the “enrolled grade-level standards” and a “standards-based goal?” ..   | 22        |
| 2.3 What does ‘aligned to enrolled grade-level content standards’ mean? .....  | 22        |
| 2.4 How should ARD committees use the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum to write goals? .....   | 22        |
| 2.5 Do students need standards-based IEP goals for courses that do not have a STAAR end-of-course requirement?.....  | 23        |
| 2.6 Are ARD committees required to include the number (e.g., Grade 6, 10A) of the particular TEKS and/or Student Expectations aligned to each annual goal? ..... | 23        |
| 2.7 Does having an academic/standards-based goal automatically mean a student has modified content? .....  | 23        |
| 2.8 How do standards-based IEP goals relate to state assessments?.....   | 23        |
| 2.9 Is it a requirement to write goals for each tested objective on a state assessment? .....  | 23        |
| 2.10 Does having an academic/standards-based goal aligned to prerequisite skills automatically qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment? .....    | 24        |
| 2.11 For a student who takes an alternate state assessment, does he/she need annual goals that correspond with the tested content area? .....                    | 25        |
| 2.12 Is it a requirement to write an annual goal for every essence statement for students assessed with an alternate state assessment? .....                     | 25        |
| <b>Section 3: Functional Goals</b> .....   | <b>26</b> |
| 3.1 What type(s) of measurable annual goals might be functional in nature?.....  | 26        |
| 3.2 For which groups of students are functional goals appropriate?.....  | 26        |
| 3.3 Must measurable annual functional goals be standards-based?.....   | 26        |
| 3.4 Does having a functional goal automatically mean a student has modified content?.....  | 26        |
| 3.5 Does having a functional goal qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment? .....   | 27        |
| 3.6 Can a student’s IEP include only functional goals?.....  | 27        |
| <b>Section 4: Postsecondary Goals and Coordinated Set of Activities</b> .....  | <b>28</b> |
| 4.1 What is the difference between annual goals and postsecondary goals?.....  | 28        |
| 4.2 Are annual goals that facilitate movement toward postsecondary goals academic or functional? .....   | 28        |
| 4.3 Must postsecondary goals include the four components (timeframe, conditions, behavior, and criterion)?.....  | 28        |
| 4.4 How does the coordinated set of activities relate to transition planning in the context of annual IEP goals and postsecondary goals?.....                    | 28        |
| <b>Resources</b> .....   | <b>30</b> |

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Introduction

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The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its corresponding regulations at [34 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) §300.320](#) define an individualized education program (IEP), which is what is required for a student who has been determined eligible and who will be receiving special education and related services. An IEP must include, among other requirements, a statement of measurable annual goals to meet the needs of the student that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, as well as meet each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability. Additionally, the IEP must describe how the student's progress toward meeting the annual goals will be measured and when reports on the student's progress on those goals will be provided to the student's parent.

The requirements and expectations around measurable annual goals from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) have significantly expanded since the [Endrew F. case](#) in 2017. This means a more significant focus on goals that are challenging and ambitious. To that end, part of the Texas Education Agency's (TEA's) general supervision requirements include ensuring that goals are measurable, challenging, and ambitious.

This question-and-answer document is intended to provide guidance and best practices to local educational agencies (LEAs) regarding how to approach the development of annual IEP goals and ultimately write and monitor them to meet the above requirements. Therefore, when TEA refers to "measurable" annual goals, it includes both the requirement that the goals indeed be measurable, but they must also be focused on each individual student to ensure they are individualized and challenging enough to result in meaningful progress. This approach to the development of IEPs, including the measurable annual IEP goals, is known as a standards-based IEP process because the approach is focused on the services and supports that are necessary for the student to access and make progress in his or her enrolled grade level general education curriculum based on the grade level content standards. Below are some key features of a standards-based approach.

- The IEP is not the student's curriculum but rather the decisions around the services, supports, and specially designed instruction necessary for the student to make progress in the general education curriculum.
- Goal statements are individualized and aligned to the student's enrolled grade-level curriculum, and they focus on what the student is expected to accomplish during the next 12 months.
- The IEP describes how progress will be measured toward mastery of the established goals and how often that progress will be reported.
- The IEP is designed to help close the gap between the student's present levels of academic performance and the expected performance based on grade-level state standards.

The standards-based IEP process is based on the substantive standard from the *Endrew F.* case that students with disabilities can make meaningful progress on challenging and ambitious goals aligned to the student's enrolled grade level general education curriculum. Special education is not a separate and special place for learning; instead, it offers services and supports designed to help

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

students access the general education program. Students may be accessing the curriculum at different levels of complexity, at different paces, and/or in different ways, but they should all be working toward **rigorous** goals.

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

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

**Section Two: Academic/Standards-Based Goals** applies only to goals that are academic in nature. These goals are directly linked to a student's progress toward enrolled grade-level content standards. The [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills \(TEKS\)](#) are the content standards used in Texas for grades K-12. For 3 and 4 year- old children, the content standards are the [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#) or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#).

**Section Three: Functional Goals** applies only to goals that are not academic (and, therefore, are not standards-based). These goals focus on the student's access to the general curriculum.

**Section Four: Postsecondary Goals and Coordinated Set of Activities** applies to goals related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills. Once a student's postsecondary goals are determined, other activities that may need to occur to ensure a successful transition to adult life are developed.

This resource is intended to be used with the [TEA Technical Assistance: Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Development](#) document. If you have a question, concern, comment, suggestion, or find a broken link within these documents, please email the TEA Special Education Division at [sped@tea.texas.gov](mailto:sped@tea.texas.gov).

The Texas Education Agency has developed this document to provide technical assistance to local education agencies. The intention of this document is to provide helpful, general information. It does not constitute legal advice nor is it a substitute for consulting with a licensed attorney. The information should not be relied upon as a comprehensive or definitive response to a specific legal situation. This document may not include a complete rendition of federal law.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Section 1: Measurable Annual Goals

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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 measurable annual goals?

The IDEA ([34 CFR §300.320 \(a\)\(2\)](#)) defines annual goals as statements that are designed to:

- Meet the needs of the student that result from the disability so that he or she can be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum and
- Meet the other educational needs of the student that result from the disability.

[19 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §89.1055\(b\)](#) states that to be considered a measurable annual goal under 34 CFR, §300.320(a)(2), a goal must include the components of a timeframe, condition, behavior, and criterion.

Annual goals:

- Are statements that describe what a student with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish (within 12 months) in the student's special education program.
- Address critical needs identified in a student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statement that are preventing the student from accessing and/or progressing in the general curriculum.
- Are **not** a student's curriculum, nor do they outline everything the student is expected to learn during the course of a year.
- Are **not** activities but include skills and/or knowledge that can be measured and mastered.

### 1.2 What are the four critical components of a measurable annual goal?

Per [19 TAC §89.1055\(b\)](#), the four critical components of a measurable annual goal are timeframe, conditions, behavior, and criterion.

**Timeframe** identifies the amount of time needed to master the goal and is usually specified in the number of weeks or a specific date for completion.

**Conditions** specify how progress toward the goal occurs. Conditions describe the specific resources that must be present for a student to reach the goal and should outline or explain what facilitates learning for the student. The condition of the goal should link to the behavior being measured.

For example, a goal relating to reading comprehension may require using a graphic organizer to aid the student's understanding. The graphic organizer is the condition within the goal that facilitates learning.

Conditions must be specific and not be generic statements such as "using accommodations listed on the accommodations page." It is also important to remember that the conditions listed in the goal must be used each time it is measured. This must occur so that progress can be repeatedly measured over time in the same way.

**Behavior** identifies the performance that is being monitored. It represents an action that can be directly observed and measured.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

**Criterion** identifies how much, how often, or to what level the behavior must occur to demonstrate that the goal has been achieved. The goal criterion specifies the amount of growth expected within the goal's timeframe.

**Examples of a clear timeframe, conditions, behavior, and criterion:**

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Timeframe</b><br>By the next annual IEP         | <b>Conditions</b><br>when provided a visual schedule of the daily routine and asked, "What comes next?" | <b>Behavior</b><br>Becca will verbally state the correct activity | <b>Criterion</b><br>in four out of five daily trials across three consecutive days.                                       |
| <b>Timeframe</b><br>By the fourth reporting period | <b>Conditions</b><br>when given an unfamiliar third-grade leveled text                                  | <b>Behavior</b><br>Dejuan will read                               | <b>Criterion</b><br>75 words correct per minute with 95% or greater accuracy across three consecutive trials for mastery. |

## 1.3 What should the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee consider to ensure annual goals are measurable?

A measurable annual goal meets the following requirements:

- Is observable;
- Yields the same conclusion if measured by several people;
- Allows a calculation of how much progress it represents;
- Indicates what to do to measure mastery of the goal and
- Can be measured without additional information.

When applying these requirements, here are some practical ways to ensure annual goals are measurable:

- If the condition, behavior, and criterion specified in the goal are quantified, then the goal will be observable and measurable.
- The goal must provide enough detail for multiple people to read and implement it the same way. Otherwise, the data obtained will not accurately reflect the progress made by the student.



# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

To calculate how much progress will be made, the PLAAFP statement must provide baseline data. Baseline data should be objective so that it can be observed and measured the same way over time. The same measurement method should be used when collecting baseline data and developing goals. This is the only way to objectively measure how much progress was made.

Short-term objectives/benchmarks may be developed as steps to reach the annual goal.

## 1.4 Should the goal criterion reflect the passing rate of an assignment/course?

No. Although the typical passing rate of an assignment or course is generally 70%, the criterion of an annual goal should be specified as the amount of growth expected within the specified timeframe (typically 12 months for annual goals). It should not be equated to a passing rate of an assignment or course. The criterion of a goal should be established after reviewing a student's baseline performance under specific conditions and determining what the student can reasonably achieve at the end of the specified timeframe. Criterion can be expressed as a percentage, out of \_\_\_ trials, a specified amount of time, or other appropriate data formats, including from rubrics and rating scales. The goal would be considered mastered if the student achieves this level of success.

**Example:** If a student typically comprehends 30% of a grade-level passage presented orally, it may be reasonable, based on the student's unique needs, to expect the student to comprehend 60% of a grade-level passage read orally by the end of the IEP year.

## 1.5 Does the IEP goal need to include the student's enrolled grade level?

No. The student's enrolled grade level will be documented within the IEP and does not have to be repeated in the annual goal. The examples in this resource that include the student's enrolled grade level are for illustrative purposes only.

## 1.6 How many annual goals should the ARD committee include in the student's IEP?

While all students receiving special education services must have **at least one** measurable annual goal, the IDEA does not require a specified number of annual goals. The number of annual goals will vary for each student, depending on the nature and severity of the student's disability or disabilities and his or her needs. After examining the student's PLAAFP statement and identifying the areas of need, the ARD committee will determine appropriate goals that can reasonably be achieved within the time period.

## 1.7 What is the role of the PLAAFP statement in developing measurable annual goals?

The IDEA requires that the IEP contain a statement of the PLAAFP, including how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. The PLAAFP statement is developed from the full and individual evaluation (FIE), progress made on previous IEP goals, information from parents, and other data sources. It provides information about the student's unique strengths and needs arising from the disability. Goals are developed from the baseline data provided in the PLAAFP statement.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

The following examples provide a PLAAFP statement excerpt, the grade-level content standard, a sample annual goal, and a brief explanation with additional information.

## Example 1 PLAAFP statement excerpt:

Caden is a 6<sup>th</sup>-grade student identified with an other health impairment (OHI) due to attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). His FIE indicates difficulties with working memory, which impacts his reading comprehension and math problem solving. Teachers report he has difficulty using the correct operation to solve word problems and often confuses math terminology related to operations. When a teacher sits individually with Caden, reviews the word problem, checks that he understands the correct operation to use, and models how to solve the problem with a step-by-step approach, Caden solves grade-level math problems to earn passing grades in the course. When these supports are not used, his math problem solving accuracy is reduced to less than 50%.

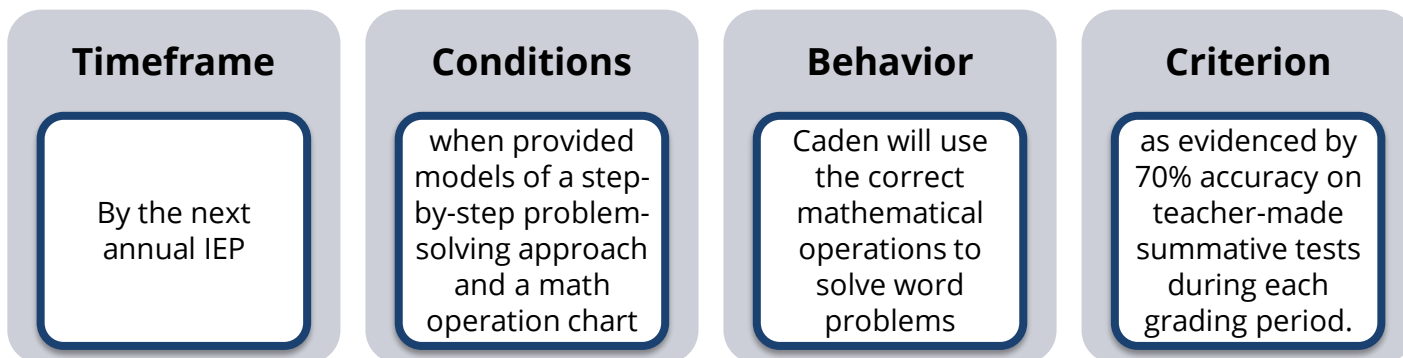
Enrolled Grade Level Standard: [19 TAC §1111.26. Grade 6, Adopted 2012.](#)

(b) Knowledge and skills.

(1) Mathematical process standards. The student uses mathematical processes to acquire and demonstrate mathematical understanding. The student is expected to:

(C) select tools, including real objects, manipulatives, paper and pencil, and technology as appropriate, and techniques, including mental math, estimation, and number sense as appropriate, to solve problems

Sample Annual Goal:



Explanation:

Caden's goal is written to address his critical area of need in math problem solving. The enrolled grade-level standard to which this goal is aligned is a process standard, which describes ways in which students are expected to engage with the content to attain a greater depth of understanding of complex content. Rather than aligning to a narrow or specific skill, in this example, a process standard was aligned with the goal. This allows progress in Caden's critical areas of need to be measured repeatedly throughout the year. While some supports are still present (models and a math operations chart), the goal significantly increases the level of independence from the PLAAFP statement.

## Example 2 PLAAFP statement excerpt:

Trevor is an 11th-grade student identified with autism. He has difficulty with social engagement, including adequate volume of his voice when speaking and succinctly expressing his ideas to the listener. He will take the Professional Communications course during the upcoming school year. It is anticipated that there will be barriers to his access and progress in the curriculum due to his disability. Based on daily observation of his communication skills, teachers estimate Trevor's current performance on the

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

proposed Professional Communications Rubric to be three out of nine.

Enrolled Grade Level Standard: [19 TAC §130.110. Professional Communications \(One-Half Credit\), Adopted 2015.](#)

(c) Knowledge and skills.

(3) The student applies professional communication strategies. The student is expected to:

(D) deliver formal and informal presentations.

Sample Annual Goal:

| <b>Timeframe</b>   | <b>Conditions</b>   | <b>Behavior</b>   | <b>Criterion</b>   |
|--|---|---|--|
| <div style="border: 2px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Within 18 weeks of instruction,</p> </div> | <div style="border: 2px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>when given assistance by the teacher in preparing scripts/notes and repeated practice of formal and informal presentations</p> </div> | <div style="border: 2px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>Trevor will use appropriate voice projection, provide a purpose statement, and conclude his speech</p> </div> | <div style="border: 2px solid #0056b3; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"> <p>as evidenced by obtaining an average of 6 on the attached Professional Communications rubric for at least 2 out of his last 3 speech assignments.</p> </div> |

Sample Professional Communications Rubric:

| Area                     | Score of 1   | Score of 2   | Score of 3  |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Voice Projection</b>  | Appropriate voice projection for less than 50% of the speech | Appropriate voice projection for 50 - 79% of the speech                    | Appropriate voice projection for 80% or more of the speech          |
| <b>Purpose Statement</b> | No clear purpose or organization                             | Grabs the attention of the audience but doesn't clearly define the purpose | Clearly defines the purpose of the presentation in the introduction |
| <b>Conclusion</b>        | No clear ending or recap of the main points                  | Clear conclusion of speech but does not summarize                          | Summarizes and concludes speech                                     |

Explanation:

Trevor's critical areas of need in communication and social engagement resulting from his disability are expected to impact his access and/or progress in the Professional Communications course curriculum. Since this would be a new course for him, the team uses their regular observations and knowledge of Trevor to determine his baseline performance on the proposed rubric. This example provides a reminder to consider the impact of a student's disability in all of a student's enrolled courses, not just those considered core courses.

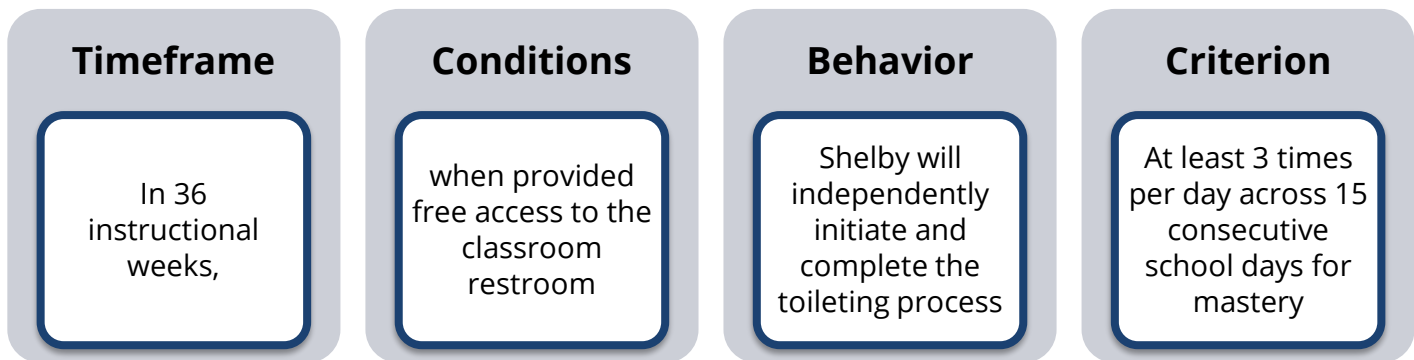
# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Example 3 PLAAFP statement excerpt:

Shelby is a 4-year-old student identified with an intellectual disability (ID). Due to Shelby's intellectual disability, she has difficulty acquiring personal hygiene skills independently. Shelby's critical need in personal hygiene significantly affects her access to and progress within the *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*. Her challenges with initiating and completing the toileting process hinder her learning by frequently removing her from instructional activities, limiting her engagement and opportunity for skill development. Shelby voids in the toilet when taken by an adult in 90% of opportunities but has not begun initiating the toileting process by indicating the need to use the toilet. Her family reports that she will use the restroom when directed or taken at home but does not initiate going into the restroom independently. She has never asked to use the restroom in public.

Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines, updated 2022: [Physical Development Personal Safety and Health Skills \(PK4.IX.C.2\)](#) Child practices good habits of personal health and hygiene.

Sample Annual Goal:



Explanation:

Shelby will show progress in becoming more independent when initiating and completing the toileting process. Progress on this goal helps address a need at home and school.

## 1.8 In which subject areas/courses (with associated TEKS) do students need enrolled grade-level measurable annual goals?

While the IDEA does not mandate that annual goals be developed for specific content areas, there are two situations in which measurable annual goals must be developed for a student.

- Per [19 TAC 89.1055\(b\)\(1\)\(A\)](#), an annual goal must be developed when the content of a subject/course is modified, whether the content is taught in a general education or special education setting. This is why it is critical to understand the difference between accommodations and modifications. If the breadth and or depth of a subject/course is adapted so that it is considered to be modified, the IEP must include annual goal(s) that specifically address how the content is modified in the course/subject area. Please see the [TEA Technical Assistance: IEP Development](#) document for more information on the differences between accommodations and modifications.
- An annual goal must be developed when a student is removed from a general education setting for a scheduled period of time, but the content of the subject/course is not modified (e.g., progressing on enrolled grade level curriculum but requires a more restrictive environment for a period of time due to behavioral concerns). The IEP must include measurable annual goal(s) that specifically address how

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

the student will access or progress in this course/subject. [19 TAC 89.1055\(b\)\(1\)\(B\)](#)

- For a student removed from the general education setting due to the modification of content, the goal will address how the content is being modified.
- For students who are removed from a general education setting but the content of the subject/course is not modified, an annual goal is still required. The purpose of the annual goal is to ensure that even though the student is not in a general education classroom, the expectations are appropriately ambitious, and he or she continues progressing in the general education curriculum. For example, a student who is progressing on enrolled grade-level curriculum; however, due to behavioral concerns, requires a more restrictive environment. In such cases, the conditions listed in the annual goal may be more behavioral than academic. Rather than needing simplified vocabulary or graphic organizers, a student might require reminders to stay on task or the implementation of a positive reinforcement system to progress in the enrolled grade-level curriculum.

## 1.9 Can one annual goal cover multiple subject areas/courses?

For academic goals, the ARD committee will need to analyze whether the identified [TEKS](#), [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), or [The Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#) cross multiple subject areas. If yes, the annual goal(s) may be written for those subject areas. If not, a separate goal(s) will be written for each subject area where the PLAAFP statement indicates a critical need. For example, a student with a critical area of need in reading would require a reading goal. This would likely be an academic goal in English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR). Reading supports could be accommodations for other courses to access the general education curriculum.

It is possible for functional goals to cover multiple subject areas/courses, as determined appropriate by the ARD committee. For example, an annual functional goal with an agenda or planner as an organizational tool could cross multiple subject areas. Similarly, behavior goals often need to be implemented in multiple subject areas. It is important to remember that if a functional goal is written to cover multiple subjects, data should be collected in all specified subjects to ensure that the student is progressing toward attaining the goal. Because multiple teachers may be involved in implementing a functional goal, it is necessary to determine how data will be consistently collected across all implementers and who is responsible for compiling the data and reporting progress.

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

## 1.10 Should the ARD committee still develop measurable annual goals for a student who receives special education services in a general education (mainstream) setting and does not have modified content in any subject area?

Yes, all students who receive special education services are required by the IDEA to have **at least one** measurable annual goal. In this situation, the ARD committee must develop annual goals for each critical educational (academic or functional) need identified in the student's PLAAFP statement.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## 1.11 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 or her enrolled grade-level?

No. All students are expected to achieve grade-level academic standards. Even if written in measurable terms, a goal such as “70% mastery of the enrolled grade-level curriculum ([TEKS](#), [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), and/or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#))” does not meet the IDEA requirements detailed in [34 CFR §300.320\(a\)\(2\)](#) as it is a simply a restatement of the expectations and standard required for all students in general education. Annual goals are based on the critical area(s) of need identified in the PLAAFP statement and describe the knowledge and skills the student requires as a result of his or her disability to access and progress toward enrolled grade-level standards.

Further, the [Student Attendance Accounting Handbook](#) requires that students who are coded with an instructional setting code of 40 must have:

- Special education and related services provided in a general education classroom on a regularly scheduled basis;
- An IEP specifying the special education and related services that enable the student to access the general curriculum and make progress toward individual goals and objectives and
- Certified special education personnel involved in the implementation of the student’s IEP through the provision of direct, indirect, and/or support services:
  - To the student in the general education classroom and/or
  - In collaboration with the student’s general education classroom teacher(s).

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

Mastery of an annual goal does not automatically constitute passing a course. Likewise, passing a course does not automatically equate to mastering an annual goal.

Regardless of the grade earned in the course or the decision to promote or retain, if a student does not master an IEP goal, the ARD committee needs to analyze the progress on the goal to determine what factor(s) contributed to the student not mastering the goal. The ARD committee will determine any IEP adjustments necessary to meet the student’s needs.

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

If a student does not master an annual goal yet progresses to the next grade level or course sequence, the student’s PLAAFP statement should include progress on the annual goal, the factors that contributed to the student not meeting the goal, and his or her present level(s) of performance. If the unmastered goal continues to reflect a critical area of need for the student, and it will be a barrier to learning or accessing the curriculum of the subsequent course, another annual goal should be developed. While it should **not** be the same goal, it can be similar in addressing the same critical need area. This new goal

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

could include more conditions facilitating learning, a revised behavior that aligns with the enrolled curriculum, and/or updated mastery criteria based on the new baseline data reported in the PLAAFP statement.

## **1.14 Can the time period for the student’s annual goals exceed one calendar year?**

No. Measurable annual goal(s) cannot span more than one calendar year (12 months). Although the LEA and parents may anticipate long-term needs and goals for the student, the ARD committee must determine what the student can reasonably achieve or accomplish in one year.

## **1.15 If the annual ARD committee meeting date falls within the school year (e.g., in March), must an annual goal be written to end at the conclusion of the school year and then a separate annual goal written to begin at the start of the new school year?**

Annual goals are not required to stop and start based on the LEA’s calendar.

Many academic standards span multiple grade levels. When a critical area of need is identified in the PLAAFP statement, and it is determined that there is a barrier to learning or accessing the curriculum that is addressed in both the current and subsequent school year, one goal can be developed with a timeframe that extends into the next grade-level (e.g., an ELAR goal addressing reading comprehension, or math goal that is aligned to a process standard).

Consider using the process standards for ELAR, Math, Science, and Social Studies courses to develop an annual goal that spans two different grade levels or courses. For goals written in this manner, it will be important for parents to understand the course scope and sequence. Progress reporting will need to identify the skills and curriculum standards addressed in each reporting period in addition to the student’s progress.

## **1.16 What are short-term objectives/benchmarks, and when are ARD committees required to write annual goals that include short-term objectives/ benchmarks?**

Short-term objectives/benchmarks are the intermediary steps or milestones toward accomplishing an annual goal. They include the same four components as a goal; however, the timeframe is less than the annual goal and documents how a student is expected to progress throughout the year.

Short-term objectives/benchmarks outline how a student will progress toward attaining the annual goal. There are two ways to write short-term objectives/benchmarks:

- List specific subtasks or skills to be mastered to reach the annual goal. Skills can be broken into discrete components and listed in a step-by-step manner that guides the instruction and learning process.
- Describe the expected performance levels that should occur during a specified segment of time throughout the annual timeframe.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

Short-term objectives/benchmarks are **required for those students who take alternate assessments** aligned to alternate academic achievement standards ([34 CFR §300.320\(a\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#)). In Texas, all students who take the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®) Alternate 2 assessment ([STAAR® Alternate 2 Resources](#)) must have short-term objectives/benchmarks as part of every annual goal. At least two short-term objectives/benchmarks for each annual goal must be included for these students. [19 TAC 89.1055\(b\)\(2\)](#)

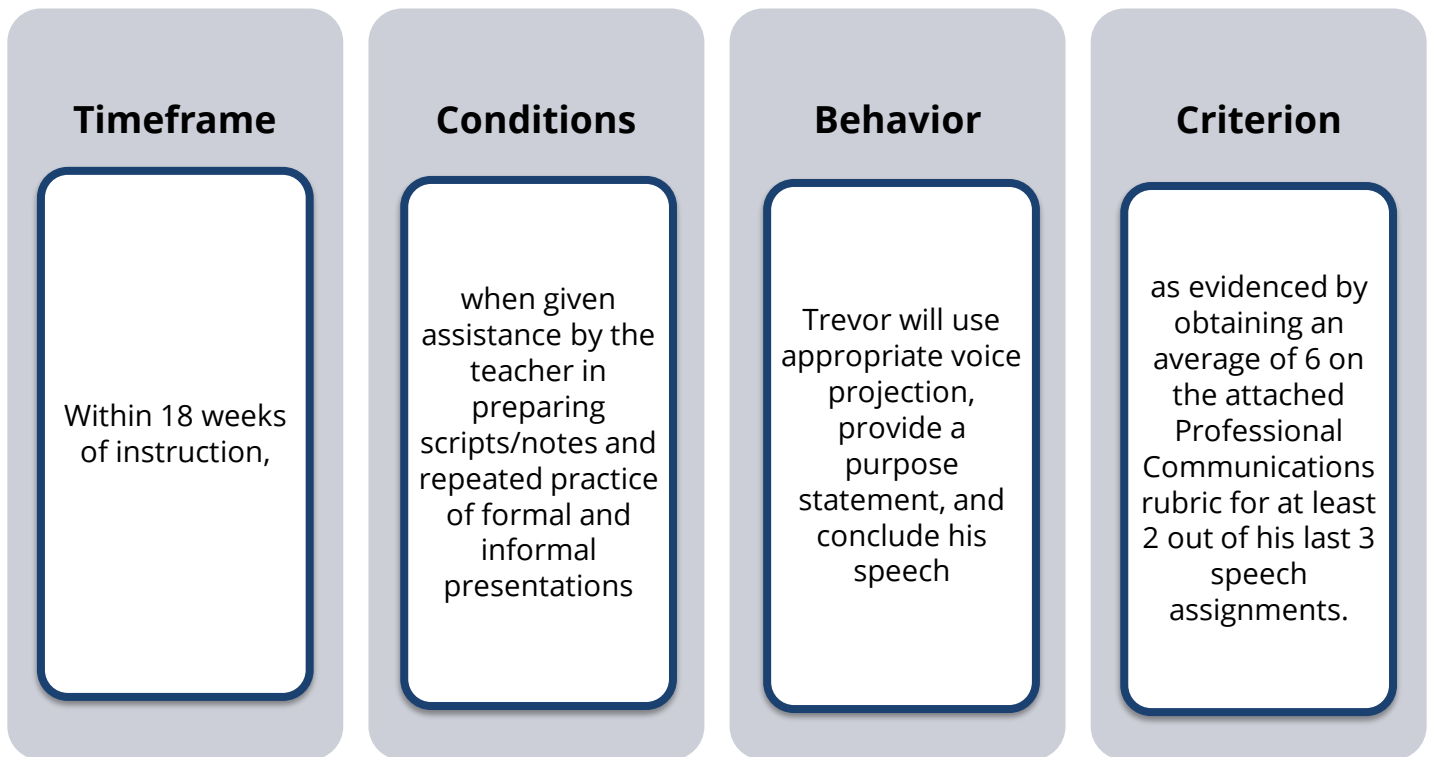
Some LEAs may establish local operating procedures that include short-term objectives/benchmarks for additional student groups, but this is **not** required at the state or federal level.

## 1.17 What does an annual goal with short-term objectives/benchmarks with the timeframe, condition(s), behavior, and criterion look like?

The following example provides sample short-term objectives/benchmarks for the sample annual goal in [Question 1.7: "What is the role of the PLAAFP statement in developing measurable annual goals?"](#)

Two short-term objectives/benchmarks are listed for each example, as there must be **at least two** objectives/benchmarks written if included. However, more can be written as appropriate.

### Example of an annual goal:





# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Example of short-term objectives/benchmarks:

| Timeframe                           | Conditions  | Behavior   | Criterion   |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| By the end of the first six weeks,  | when given assistance by the teacher in preparing scripts/notes and repeated practice | Trevor will successfully present practice speeches to familiar teachers        | as evidenced by obtaining an average of 4 on the attached Professional Communications rubric. |
| By the end of the second six weeks, | when given assistance by the teacher in preparing scripts/notes and repeated practice | Trevor will successfully present a speech to a small group of adults and peers | as evidenced by obtaining an average of 5 on the attached Professional Communications rubric. |

## Sample Professional Communications Rubric:

| Area                     | Score of 1   | Score of 2   | Score of 3  |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Voice Projection</b>  | Appropriate voice projection for less than 50% of the speech | Appropriate voice projection for 50 - 79% of the speech                    | Appropriate voice projection for 80% or more of the speech          |
| <b>Purpose Statement</b> | No clear purpose or organization                             | Grabs the attention of the audience but doesn't clearly define the purpose | Clearly defines the purpose of the presentation in the introduction |
| <b>Conclusion</b>        | No clear ending or recap of the main points                  | Clear conclusion of speech but does not summarize                          | Summarizes and concludes speech                                     |

## Explanation:

Trevor's example includes conditions that we will assume are addressed in the PLAAFP statement as strategies or accommodations (e.g., the use of video modeling) that he requires as a result of his disability. His progress is measured by decreasing the conditions and increasing the level of mastery in the criterion based on the rubric. The rigor of the required behavior also increases with each objective (e.g., presenting to teachers vs. presenting to the class).

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

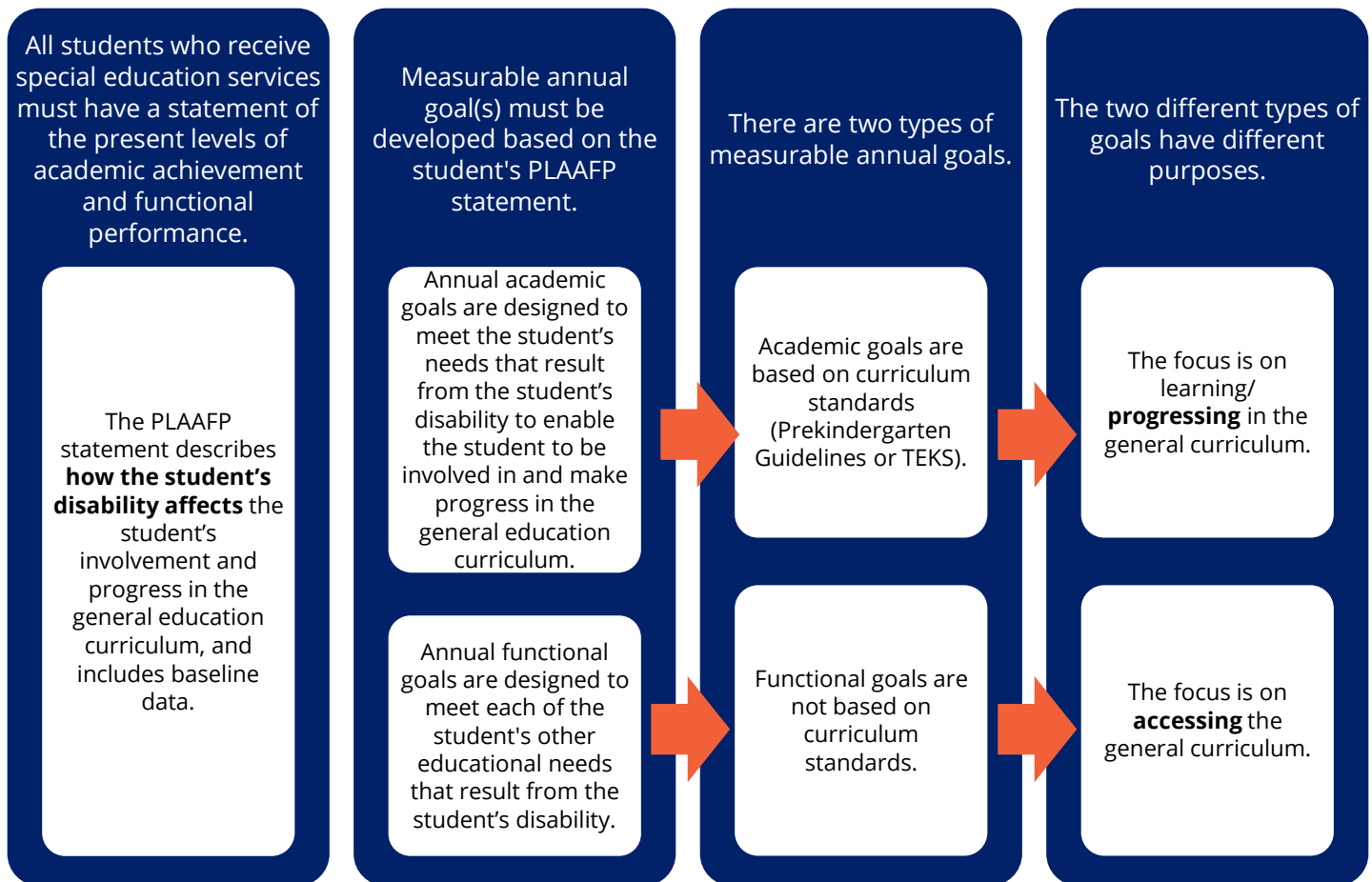
## 1.18 Can mastery of the benchmarks/short-term objectives be the criterion for mastery of an annual goal?

No. Short-term objectives/benchmarks are intermediate steps that gauge the progress toward mastery of the annual goal. Mastering intermediate steps does not, in and of itself, indicate 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. Regardless of whether the objectives/benchmarks are related to a student not participating in the general state assessment, short-term objectives/benchmarks **cannot** be used as the criterion to indicate mastery of the annual goal. [19 TAC 89.1055\(b\)\(2\)](#)

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

Academic goals align with the enrolled grade-level curriculum of the student ([TEKS](#), [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), and/or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#)) to demonstrate that the student is progressing in the curriculum. Functional goals are nonacademic and do not require a link to the enrolled grade-level content standards. Functional goals are related to everyday skills and activities and enable the student to access the general education curriculum.

The chart below serves as a visual of the two types of goals.



# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## 1.20 Can a goal be both functional and academic?

For students in kindergarten–12<sup>th</sup> grade:

No. A goal cannot be both academic and functional. Academic goals are aligned with the [TEKS](#) and focus on progressing in the enrolled grade-level curriculum. Functional goals are nonacademic and exist to help students access the curriculum.

For students aged three and four: Because of the developmental nature of young children, many of the standards in the [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#) and/or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#) may seem to be both academic and functional in nature. While a goal can be both academic and functional for students of this age, the goal likely is one or the other. If the behavior being measured is within the adopted curriculum, it would be considered an academic goal. For example, the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines have a standard in the Physical Development Domain that addresses good habits of personal health and hygiene. While hygiene skills may seem functional in nature, this would be an academic goal aligned with the curriculum for a prekindergarten student.

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

The type(s) of annual goal(s) to include in a student's IEP is a decision the ARD committee must make after examining the student's PLAAFP statement. The PLAAFP statement should identify the student's critical areas of need that are present as a result of the student's disability. From the PLAAFP statement, rigorous annual goals that can reasonably be achieved within twelve months are developed. While all students who receive special education services must have at least one measurable annual goal, some students may have both academic and functional goals, while other students may have only one type of goal (academic or functional).

## 1.22 Are related service goals academic or functional?

Related service goals are functional in nature as these skills are not based on enrolled grade-level academic standards. The skills addressed by related services are skills a student needs to access the content area standards but are not directly teaching that content.

There are times when it is appropriate to write a standalone goal for a related service. These goals must address critical areas of need through services or therapies that help provide the student with greater access to the curriculum. For example, a student with a visual impairment may require orientation and mobility services to help him or her safely navigate the school. Arriving safely and on time to class provides greater access to the curriculum.

There are other times when it is appropriate for the related service to align with an annual goal (academic or functional). In these cases, the related service might be listed as a condition within the goal. For example, counseling as a related service could be listed as a condition within a behavior (functional) goal to help reduce elopements from class. Another example is a student in the first grade whose critical area of need in fine motor skills requires occupational therapy to achieve the grade-level standard to compose legible texts. In this situation, OT is part of an academic goal.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## 1.23 Because speech is an instructional service, are speech goals academic in nature?

It depends. If the PLAAFP statement indicates a critical need that is directly aligned to the enrolled grade-level curriculum (e.g., [TEKS, Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#)) in communication, language, and/or speaking, then an academic goal must be written.

It would be considered a functional goal if the critical area of need is to teach a skill the student requires to access the enrolled grade-level curriculum in communication, language, and/or speaking.

## 1.24 How does specially designed instruction relate to measurable annual goals?

IDEA ([34 CFR §300.39 \(a\)\(1\)](#)) 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.” It 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 decides the specially designed instruction that addresses the unique needs of the student that result from the student’s disability and ensures the student’s access to the general education curriculum. Specially designed instruction is provided to help the student achieve his/her annual IEP goals.

## 1.25 How often should reports of progress toward mastery of annual goals be provided to parents/guardians?

Although it is common practice to provide IEP progress reports on the same grading cycle used for report cards, the reporting of IEP goal progress is distinct and different from the issuing of grades and report cards and should be determined by the ARD committee on an individual student basis.

IDEA requires that the student’s IEP include a description of how the student’s progress will be measured and “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.” ([34 CFR §300.320 \(a\)\(3\)](#)). The examples provided by IDEA include some possibilities that ARD committees can consider, but the ultimate decision regarding when progress will be reported is up to the ARD committee to determine and describe in the IEP.

## 1.26 How should progress be reported in periodic IEP reports provided to parents/guardians?

Progress should be measured and reported in the same manner as the goals (and associated objectives) are measured. For example, if the goal/objective states that the student 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 the student can 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” **alone** are not adequate for reporting progress.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Section 2: Academic/Standards-Based Goals

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The questions and answers in this section apply only to academic/standards-based measurable annual goals. These goals focus on student learning and progress toward the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum ([TEKS](#), [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#)).

### 2.1 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 IEP goals” refers to the curriculum standard on which the goal is based. The curriculum standards in Texas are the [TEKS](#) for Kindergarten-Grade 12 students. Preschool students should have goals aligned with [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#) or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#).

### 2.2 What is the difference between the “enrolled grade-level standards” and a “standards-based goal?”

The enrolled grade-level standards are the [TEKS](#), [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#) curriculum. A standards-based goal is **aligned** to an enrolled grade-level standard. It is not simply a restatement of the enrolled grade-level standard. Other information obtained from the PLAAFP statement is used to customize it to the student’s needs and is outlined in the required components of an annual goal.

### 2.3 What does ‘aligned to enrolled grade-level content standards’ mean?

The general education curriculum is the state’s grade-level academic content standards. Therefore, an IEP developed to ensure that the student has access to the general education curriculum and meets the state’s educational standards will be aligned with state academic content standards. This alignment ensures that students with disabilities receive high-quality instruction that will give them the opportunity to meet the state’s challenging academic achievement standards.

When developing grade-level, standards-based goals, it is essential to know the enrolled grade-level curriculum and how the student’s disability impacts their involvement and progress in that curriculum.

### 2.4 How should ARD committees use the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum to write goals?

The enrolled grade-level curriculum provides knowledge and skill statements and student expectations that all students are expected to learn. The ARD committee must consider the unique needs of the student and the curriculum standards to determine where in the curriculum the student may encounter barriers due to their disability. An annual goal should be developed in the areas where a critical need is identified.

The annual goal ensures that the student has access to and makes progress in the general education curriculum.

## **2.5 Do students need standards-based IEP goals for courses that do not have a STAAR end-of-course requirement?**

Yes. If a student has a critical area of need that will impact progress in the enrolled grade level curriculum, then standards-based annual goal(s) would be required in that course, regardless of whether there is a corresponding end-of-course state assessment.

## **2.6 Are ARD committees required to include the number (e.g., Grade 6, 10A) of the particular TEKS and/or Student Expectations aligned to each annual goal?**

No. LEAs may elect to include this process in their local policies and/or special education operating procedures but are not required to do so. It is, however, very helpful to have the enrolled grade-level standard available on the IEP documents so that service providers can see how the annual goals align with the enrolled grade-level standards and what adaptations the student needs.

## **2.7 Does having an academic/standards-based goal automatically mean a student has modified content?**

No. It cannot be assumed that an annual goal means the content is modified. Students with disabilities who receive special education services require specially designed instruction as a result of their disability. Specially designed instruction requires adaptations to be made. This can mean adaptations in content, methodology, and/or delivery of instruction. It is important to understand that content is modified when the depth and/or breadth of the curriculum is reduced to a level that no longer reflects the amount of learning expected for the subject or course. Only the ARD committee can determine whether and, if so, what and how content must be modified.

## **2.8 How do standards-based IEP goals relate to state assessments?**

The [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) and IDEA regulations require that all students have access to and instruction in enrolled grade-level content. All state assessments in Texas are aligned to the enrolled grade-level content standards.

Students with disabilities have critical areas of need that result from their disability and require annual goals to ensure access to and progress in the enrolled grade-level curriculum. Academic goals are standards-based when aligned directly with the enrolled grade-level TEKS. This is true even when the enrolled grade-level standard must be adapted in some way due to the student's unique needs. When annual goals align with the enrolled grade-level standards, they are aligned with state assessments.

## **2.9 Is it a requirement to write goals for each tested objective on a state assessment?**

No. The ARD committee decides on the appropriate goal(s) for the individual student based on the student's PLAAFP statement and identified critical areas of need.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## 2.10 Does having an academic/standards-based goal aligned to prerequisite skills automatically qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment?

No. Only a student who meets all the participation requirements for the alternate assessment ([STAAR® Alternate 2 Resources](#)) may take it. The participation requirements indicate a student's IEP documents the following:

- Academic goals aligned to prerequisite skills significantly below enrolled grade-level TEKS in ALL content areas
- Routinely participates in alternate or non-traditional methods of assessment (e.g., isolating information; tactile support; pointing to, reaching for, or touching an answer choice; formulating a response using a choice board)
- Significant needs that impact access and progress in ALL academic areas, which affect the student's ability to function independently
- Functional goals (e.g., personal care and hygiene, communication, social skills) implemented across ALL settings to support access to the enrolled grade-level TEKS with the need for ongoing adult assistance (e.g., prompting, cueing, physical assistance) for student progress.
- The need for ongoing, individualized, specialized supports (e.g., voice output devices, tactile support, symbol or picture text support, repeated prompting and cueing, isolating information to present one at a time, adult assistance) to function safely in daily life and to participate in academic instruction across ALL settings
- Requires ongoing adult assistance (e.g., prompting, cueing, physical assistance) to initiate, perform, and complete self-care routines (e.g., feeding, dressing, toileting, personal hygiene). NOTE: The student's requirement of adult assistance is NOT due to a physical disability alone but rather to the student's significant cognitive disability.
- Requires ongoing, individualized, specialized supports (e.g., modifications, task analysis, direct instruction, assistive technologies, first/then charts, tactile schedules, social narratives) and ongoing adult assistance (e.g., prompting, cueing, physical assist) to follow directions, daily routines, and schedules
- In the process of developing a functional and consistent mode of communication (e.g., currently non-verbal, uses very limited non-symbolic communication) OR uses traditional response modes (e.g., verbal, sign language, written) but may be inconsistent when expressing wants and needs AND requires individualized supports to participate in on-topic academic and social exchanges at an age-appropriate level.

In addition, the decision to administer the STAAR® Alternate 2 may not be based on:

- A student's disability category,
- Educational environment,
- Instructional setting,
- Demographic information (i.e., sex, ethnicity, race, at-risk, homelessness, immigrant, emergent bilingual, migrant, economically disadvantaged),
- Need for STAAR accommodations,
- Below-grade-level reading skills,
- Excessive or extended absences,
- Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, or
- Expected poor performance on STAAR and its impact on accountability calculations.



# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## **2.11 For a student who takes an alternate state assessment, does he/she need annual goals that correspond with the tested content area?**

Yes. The student has modified content by accessing the curriculum through prerequisite skills and would require annual goals.

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

No. The ARD committee decides on the appropriate goal(s) for the individual student based on the student's PLAAFP statement and identified critical areas of need.

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Section 3: Functional Goals

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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, Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#)).

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

Goals that are non-academic are considered functional. Some examples may include goals pertaining to behavior, social skills, related services, or the use of an assistive technology (AT) device. While the ultimate purpose of these goals is to help the student access the general education curriculum, they are not required to be based on the [TEKS, Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#), or the [Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#).

[See Question 1.19: "What is the difference between an academic goal and a functional goal?"](#)

### 3.2 For which groups of students are functional goals appropriate?

For any student whose PLAAFP statement indicates a non-standards-based critical need 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 condition but rather on how the student's disability impacts his or her access to the general curriculum. For example, the PLAAFP statement for a student with a learning disability might indicate a need for a goal focusing on organizational skills if the student has difficulty keeping track of assignments, due dates, etc. A functional goal to address this critical area of need would be appropriate in this case.

### 3.3 Must measurable annual functional goals be standards-based?

No. There is not a state-adopted functional curriculum. The purpose of a functional goal is to help the student access the enrolled grade-level curriculum. For example, if the ARD committee decides that a middle school student needs a goal to help him/her transition independently between class periods so he/she can arrive on time to access instruction, no TEKS contain this skill at the middle school level. If this is considered a critical area of need, a functional goal that addresses this need would be included in the student's IEP.

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

No. Functional goals are developed and implemented for a student to access the enrolled grade-level standards, and do not modify content in a course or subject. In addition, remember that functional goals do not substitute for a student learning enrolled grade-level content standards.

## **3.5 Does having a functional goal qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment?**

No. Functional goals do not change the depth and/or breadth of the enrolled grade-level curriculum. Therefore, functional goals should not impact state assessment decisions.

## **3.6 Can a student's IEP include only functional goals?**

Yes. The ARD committee must examine the student's PLAAFP statement, which describes the student's current academic achievement and functional performance. The ARD committee will then use the information in the PLAAFP statement to determine which specific academic and/or functional area(s) a student needs goals in. While all students must have measurable annual goals, some students may have both academic and functional goals, some may have only academic goals, and some may have only functional goals to enable them to access the general curriculum.

## Section 4: Postsecondary Goals and Coordinated Set of Activities

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### 4.1 What is the difference between annual goals and postsecondary goals?

Annual IEP goals describe what a student with a disability can reasonably be expected to accomplish within 12 months based on the critical needs identified in the student's PLAAFP statement. Postsecondary goals are required no later than the first IEP to be in effect when the student turns 14 years of age or younger if determined appropriate by the ARD committee. These goals describe what the student will do after they exit public school.

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

Annual goals that facilitate movement toward postsecondary goals can be either academic or functional, depending on the results of transition assessments and other information about the student, including the PLAAFP statement. The PLAAFP statement must contain relevant information about the student's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests to develop an appropriate IEP that plans for their future.

### 4.3 Must postsecondary goals include the four components (timeframe, conditions, behavior, and criterion)?

No. IDEA ([34 CFR §300.320 \(b\)\(1\)](#)) requires that postsecondary goals be written in measurable terms; however, the four components of a measurable annual goal may not be appropriate for postsecondary goals. A postsecondary goal identifies what the student will achieve after completing secondary education in education/training, employment, and (where applicable) independent living. A postsecondary goal is considered "measurable" if it is an outcome, not a process. For more information about postsecondary goals, including the formula for writing appropriate, measurable postsecondary goals based on the results of age-appropriate transition assessments, visit the Texas SPED Support website: [Writing Appropriate Measurable Postsecondary Goals | Texas SPED Supports](#)

### 4.4 How does the coordinated set of activities relate to transition planning in the context of annual IEP goals and postsecondary goals?

The transition services specified by [34 CFR §300.43\(a\)\(1\)](#) should "facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities and should address, as appropriate for each student, instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and (if appropriate) acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation. These activities should support the student's attainment of their postsecondary goals. Note the term "activities," which denotes *tasks* rather than *skill-building*.

For more information about the coordinated set of activities, visit the Texas SPED Support website: [Coordinated Set of Activities | Texas SPED Support](#)

The following list summarizes the difference between each required element in the context of annual IEP goals:

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

**Postsecondary goals:** Descriptions of what the student will be doing after exit from public school.

**Annual IEP goals related to transition service needs:** Academic and/or functional skills the student will master within a year that will likely be needed in adult environments.

**Coordinated Set of Activities:** List of the tasks to be completed this year to establish supports and services beyond the exit from public school.

|                  | Postsecondary Goal   | Annual IEP Goal  | Coordinated Set of Activities  |
|------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Example 1</b> | Upon graduation from college, Levar will be employed as a high school history teacher with support from Vocational Rehabilitation Services to obtain hearing aids and to request accommodations on the job site. | By the next annual IEP meeting, during classroom instruction and interactions, Levar will demonstrate self-advocacy skills by requesting assistance or accommodations, such as asking for repetition or clarification of spoken instructions, in at least three out of four opportunities per month. | By December, Levar will meet with the Vocational Rehabilitation counselor to develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE).  |
| <b>Example 2</b> | Upon exit from the 18+ program, Derek will live in an apartment with family support and independently use public transportation to get to work and other community locations.                                    | Within 36 instructional weeks, given access to an online route mapping tool and a list of destinations, Derek will calculate how much time he will need to reach each destination and record the results on a trip planning sheet in eight out of ten opportunities throughout the year.             | By October, Derek will apply for the Communication Impediment indicator and obtain a Texas identification card (state identification), with support from his sister.   |
| <b>Example 3</b> | After graduation from high school, Alonna will enroll in a technical college to pursue certification as an aircraft powerplant technician, with accommodations to support executive functioning.                 | By the end of the school year, when given a note-taking guide, Alonna will summarize at least three key points from eight lectures across her core subjects with 85% accuracy, as determined by a teacher-made rubric.   | By May, Alonna will develop a draft Summary of Performance with support from their special education case manager and will contact the disability services office for three technical colleges to inquire about accommodations for ADHD. |

# QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

## Resources

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[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\) Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)

[IRIS Center for Training Enhancements. \(2004\). \*IEPs: Developing High-Quality Individualized Education Programs\*](#)

[Specially Designed Instruction \(SDI\) Field User Guide](#)

[Standards-Based IEP Process Training](#)

[TEA Secondary Transition Guidance](#)

[TEA STAAR® Alternate 2 Resources](#)

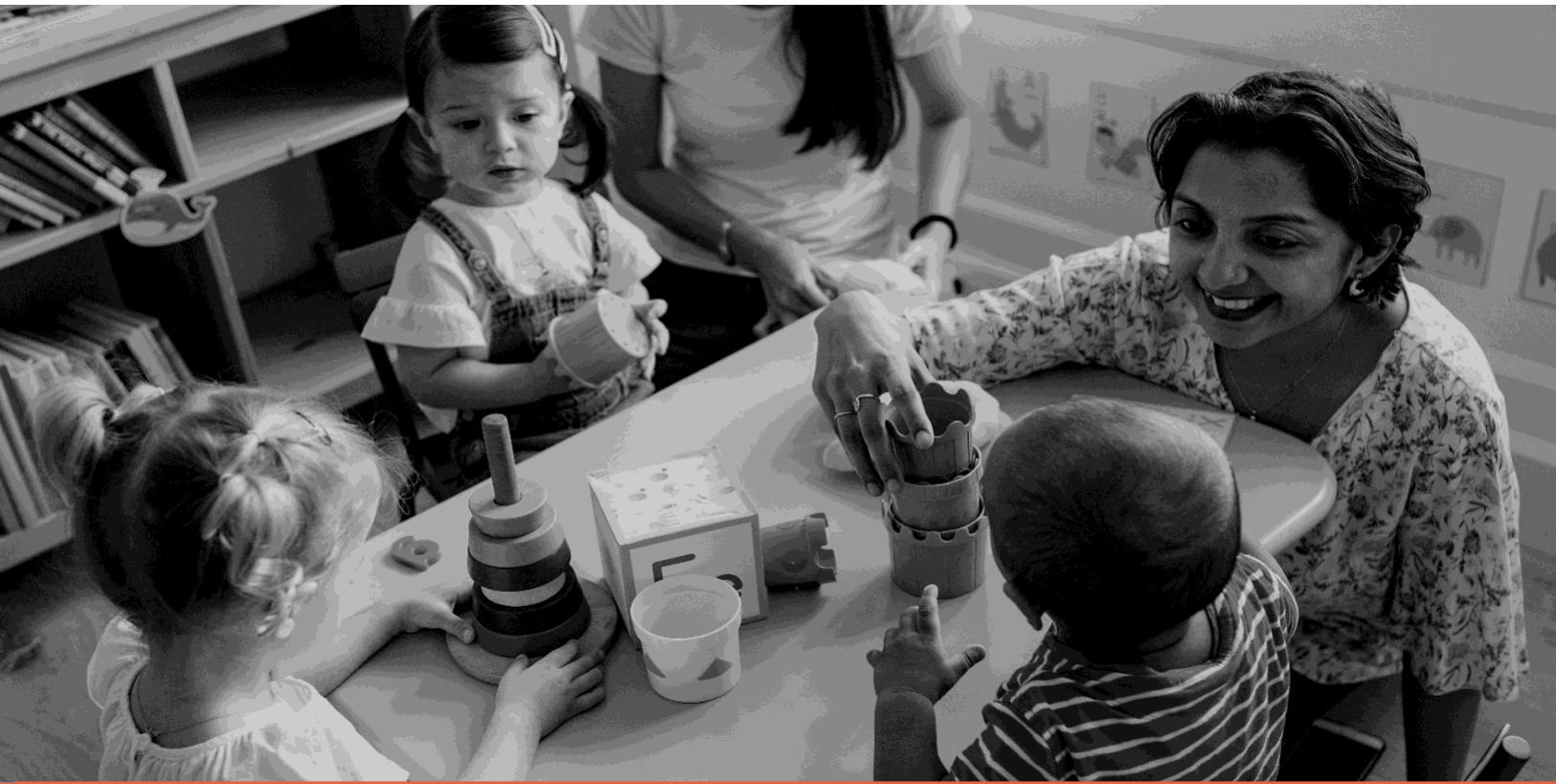
[TEA Technical Assistance: Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Development](#)

[TEA Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills](#)

[A Step Towards IEP Quality and Rigor for Students with Complex Access Needs](#) (online course)

[Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#)

[Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#)



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