DEVELOPING PRESENT LEVELS OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL PERFORMANCE (PLAAFPS) & STANDARDS-BASED IEP GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A Discussion Guide

SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY DIVISION

2012
INTRODUCTION

Before an IEP team can develop standards-based IEP goals and objectives designed to improve a student’s academic achievement, a statement of the student’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) must first be established. The PLAAFP should provide a clear picture of how the student is currently performing in relationship to their grade-level academic content standards. This allows the IEP team to better focus standards-based goals and objectives on those standards with the greatest potential to accelerate that student’s learning.

The questions and discussion prompts in this document have been designed to help develop a comprehensive PLAAFP statement and related standards-based IEP goals and objectives in reading and math. The questions can be posed and the prompts discussed in any order, and may be adapted to include additional prompts or other questions to conform to specific district/school’s required IEP forms. Consideration of the questions and discussion prompts will facilitate the development of a PLAAFP that lays the groundwork for standards-based IEP goals and specialized instruction and service planning. For example, responses to some questions may require deeper conversations between a student’s special education teacher and the teacher(s) providing that student’s core instruction. Thorough review of the questions and responses will also help the teacher effectively communicate with parents a student’s performance against grade-level expectations. It is not necessary to write a response to each prompt, these are just provided to help scaffold discussions. A space is provided at the end of each question to make notes that can translate into a PLAAFP statement.
GETTING READY FOR STANDARDS-BASED IEPS: Before the IEP Meeting

Members of the IEP team will want to become familiar with the enrolled grade-level reading and/or math standards and expectations for the student prior to the IEP team meeting. If the IEP crosses grade-levels, team members should also review the standards for the next grade level to ensure that the team is addressing standards that will continue to be essential for future grades and post-secondary success.

The Minnesota academic content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics can be found on the Minnesota Department of Education’s website at this link: http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards/index.htm

While reviewing the standards note those skills and competencies that appear in multiple standards and benchmarks. Also consider whether there are standards that are important to other subjects or content areas that the student will need to master during the year of the IEP.

Consider the type and level of thinking and reasoning (cognitive complexity) required for the student to master each standard. Examples of cognitive complexity levels are provided in the MCA and MCA-Modified test specifications on the Minnesota Department of Education’s website at http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/Testing/TestSpec/index.html

It will also be helpful to have examples of what performance looks like at the student’s grade level and to think about the pre-requisite skills and understandings necessary to achieve this expected performance. These examples are also useful for explaining grade-level expectations to the student’s parents. The new Minnesota Mathematics and Science Frameworks at the following website http://www.scimathmn.org/stemte/ provide examples of grade-level performance in math for each grade-level standard. Just click on a grade, a standard, and the “Overview” tab to find the section called Big Ideas and Essential Understandings.

When IEP Team members are well grounded in the Minnesota academic content standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics, they can respond to the questions and discussion prompts to follow much more efficiently and effectively.
How does the student’s disability affect his/her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum? (34 C.F.R. § 320(A)(1)(i))

Possible Information Sources
- Evaluation Report (if current)
- Most recent IEP
- Input/Feedback from general education teachers
- Observations
- Analysis of assessment on state MCA tests
- Attendance data
- Medical information

Discussion Notes

Discussion Prompts
Given what we know about this student, what is the impact of the student’s disability on:
- cognitive ability/basic psychological processes (consider background knowledge, problem solving, short-term memory, visual and auditory processing, long-term memory storage and retrieval and processing speed, attention),
- academic achievement
- social-emotional/behavioral skills,
- time spent in instruction,
- communication skills,
- health and sensory abilities,
- ability to function within the general education environment.

What special education instruction has been provided and what progress has been made on IEP goals since the student’s last IEP (discuss the specific nature of instruction, allocated time for each subcomponent, instructional variables, use of technology, etc. vs. location or title of provider)?

What has proven effective for making progress on IEP goals and in the general education curriculum?
What do we know about this student and how he/she is able to make progress with his/her own strengths and compensatory abilities?

**Discussion Prompts**
*Where is the student making progress or showing strengths?*
- Consider the instructional settings or environmental variables that make a difference in performance.
- Consider the rate of the student’s growth.
- Consider compensatory strategies, personal strengths, etc.

*What accommodations and/or assistive technologies has the student used successfully in the past?*
*What level of support has been helpful to this student?*
*Should the potential for skill regression be considered?*
*What other information should be included to create a complete picture of how the student functions across the school day and within the special education setting?*

**Possible Information Sources**
- Input/Feedback from general education
- Group discussion of where challenges in learning are not occurring
- Observation notes
- Most Current IEP goals,
- Periodic progress reports
- Teachers/parents/student/support staff
- Progress monitoring tools

**Discussion Notes**
What specific data do we have regarding the student’s present levels of performance in relationship to the grade-level standards?

**Possible Information Sources**
- Strand data from MCA and/or NWEA/MAP
- Trend data from MCA and/or NWEA/MAP
- Evaluation Report (if assessments are tied to academic curriculum)
- Informal assessment measures
- Running records
- Reading inventories
- Classroom observations
- Curriculum-based measures
- Interview data
- Assessment of academic language
- Work samples

**Discussion Notes**

**Discussion Prompts**

The data need to be current, valid and reliable, providing convergent evidence useful for designing the next instructional step.

To what extent does the team agree that the data are current, valid, reliable, etc.?

To what extent is the team able to understand the student’s current performance, given the data?

What is the data telling you about how the student is currently performing?

What appears to be constraining the student’s growth?

Discuss the current performance across sub-components for:

- reading (phonemic awareness, basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, academic language),
- writing (handwriting, spelling, written expression),
- math (numeracy, computational fluency, problem solving, etc.)?

Are there patterns in the data across sources (think of issues with pragmatic language impacting both academics and social skills and how both may limit access and progress in the general curriculum for example ability to work collaboratively)?

What data do you have that can be used to evaluate the need/effectiveness of accommodations and/or assistive technologies?
Given the Identified grade-level expectations in reading, and/or math, what are the most essential grade-level standards and benchmarks that must be addressed during the year of this student’s IEP?

Discussion Prompts

Based on your data review, are there patterns in the data across sources? Think about how pragmatic language may affect both academics and social skills, as both may limit access and progress in the general curriculum (e.g., the ability to work collaboratively).

What appears to be constraining growth such that progress in one sub-skill is required to make progress in another?

Are there pre-requisite skills that this student must have?

Are there skills or competencies that show up in multiple standards or other content areas?

Are there standards that appear to be high-leverage for this student? You will want to focus IEP goals and specialized instruction on the standards most closely tied to the student’s area(s) of greatest need.

Transition-Age Students: What skills or competencies will be beneficial for this student to succeed in post-school life? Can they serve a dual purpose—transition preparation and progress towards standards?

Are there non-academic barriers that should be addressed to help this student meet the standard(s)? (Consider poor social skills, emotional regulation, problem solving, communication, etc.)

Possible Information Sources

• Minnesota state standards
• Examples of grade-level expectations
• District learner outcomes
• General education teachers and administrators
• District curriculum frameworks/rubrics

Discussion Notes
What other educationally relevant needs resulting from the student’s disability must be addressed, but not necessarily tied to standards?

**Possible Information Sources**

**Behavior**
- Discipline data
- Attendance data
- Functional Behavior Assessments
- Observations
- Outside service providers
- Classroom teachers
- Mental health screening information
- Medical information

**Transition Data**
- Transition evaluations, assessment/inventories
- Vocational assessment

**Functional Skills**
- Evaluation Report (adaptive functioning, organizational checklists, related service provider reports, etc.)

**Organization and Study Skills** (illustrating independent classroom functioning)

**Discussion Notes**

**Discussion Prompts**

Consider any other relevant data that informs needs that arise from the disability but are not related to academic standards.

What appears to be constraining independent functioning such that specially designed instruction and related services must be provided?
The IEP Team’s responses to the previous questions and discussion prompts should provide you with the information and data needed to build a comprehensive PLAAFP statement from which standards-based IEP goals and objectives can be developed. Space is provided below for you to draft your PLAAFP statement. Only the most essential information from your discussions needs to be included in the PLAAFP.

**Draft PLAAFP Statement**

The questions and discussion prompts to follow will help you establish standards-based IEP goals and objectives and determine the best method to use to monitor the student’s progress in meeting their standards-based IEP goals.
Once essential grade-level standards/benchmarks are determined, what are the learning progressions* needed to close the gap between the student’s skill level and grade-level content standards/benchmarks?

* a learning progression is a sequenced set of building blocks (subskills and/or bodies of enabling knowledge) that students must master en route to mastering a more remote standard or curricular aim (adapted from Popham, 2012).

### Possible Information Sources
- Minnesota academic content standards
- Student’s PLAAFP
- General education teachers
- District curriculum frameworks/rubrics
- Scope and sequence documents
- MDE MCA Item Samplers

### Discussion Notes

### Discussion Prompts

Where is the student currently functioning relative to the essential standards?

What are the prerequisite skills/understandings that this student must have in order to meet the standards/benchmarks?

What are the learning progressions or task analyses steps needed to move the student closer to the grade-level standards/benchmarks?

How can the teacher use instruction, curriculum and environment to accelerate the student’s learning?

What accommodations and/or assistive technologies would mitigate the effect of the student’s disability and would help the student compensate within the increasing demands of the grade-level curriculum?
How much growth do we expect this student to make toward meeting the essential standard(s) within the year of the IEP; and how will the student’s progress be measured on a regular basis?

Discussion Prompts

What data gives an indication of this student’s previous rate of growth? Consider prior year’s progress monitoring data, number of attempts or time to move from supported to independent practice on similar goals (refer back to data).

What existing data system(s) and processes are currently in place that would be useful to monitor progress toward this goal?

Consider using classroom-based formative assessment strategies such as unit tests, informal inventories, work samples and weekly quizzes, when no formal progress monitoring system or process will give you the data that you need to monitor the student’s growth toward the goal.

Note: Since you must document that the student is highly unlikely to achieve grade-level proficiency during the year of the IEP to be eligible to take the MCA-Modified, the team must estimate the growth that is reasonable for the student.

Note: Standards-based IEP goals should not be a simple reiteration of the grade-level standard/benchmark.

Possible Information Sources

• Strand data from MCA and/or NWEA/MAP
• Trend data from MCA and/or NWEA/MAP
• Evaluation Report (if current)
• Informal assessment measures
• Math fluency measures
• Classroom observations
• Curriculum-based measures

Discussion Notes
Based on the needs identified in the PLAAFP, develop measurable annual standards-based and non-academic goals in the table below.

Remember, SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-oriented and Time-bound. Measurable annual goals should include; 1) Who (the student), 2) Behavior (will do what), 3) Criterion (to what level or degree), 4) Conditions (under what conditions or timeframe).

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