



Question and Answer Document

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Measurable Annual Goals



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Please note: This Question and Answer document will be updated during the 23-24 school year to reflect changes to dyslexia in HB 3928 and changes to the revised STAAR Alternate 2 Eligibility Requirements.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Section 1: Measurable Annual Goals	5
1.1 What are measurable annual goals?.....	5
1.2 What are the four critical components of a measurable annual goal?	5
1.3 What should the Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee consider to ensure IEP goals are measurable?	6
1.4 Should the goal criterion reflect the passing rate of an assignment/course?	7
1.5 Does the IEP goal need to include the student’s enrolled grade level?	7
1.6 How many annual goals should the ARD committee include in the student’s IEP?.....	7
1.7 What is the role of the PLAAFP in developing measurable annual goals?.....	7
1.8 In which subject areas/courses (with associated TEKS) do students need enrolled grade-level measurable annual goals?	10
1.9 Can one annual goal cover multiple subject areas/courses?.....	11
1.10 For a student who receives special education services in a general education (mainstream) setting and does not have modified content in any subject area, must the ARD committee still develop measurable annual goals?	11
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?	11
1.12 How does mastery of annual goals relate to grading and promotion?.....	12
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?	12
1.14 Can the time period for the student’s annual goals exceed one calendar year?	12
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?	12
1.16 What are short-term objectives/benchmarks and when are ARD committees required to write annual goals that include short-term objectives/ benchmarks?.....	13
1.17 What does an annual goal with short-term objectives/benchmarks with the timeframe, condition(s), behavior, and criterion look like?.....	13
1.18 Can mastery of the benchmarks/short-term objectives be the criterion for mastery of an annual goal?	15
1.19 What is the difference between an academic goal and a functional goal?.....	15
1.20 Can a goal be both functional and academic?.....	16
1.21 Does a student’s IEP need to include both functional and academic goals?	16
1.22 Are related service goals academic or functional?	16
1.23 Because speech is an instructional service, are speech goals academic in nature?	17
1.24 How does specially designed instruction relate to measurable annual goals?	17
1.25 Are measurable postsecondary goals required for students aged 14 and older in an IEP?.....	17
1.26 Are annual goals that facilitate movement toward postsecondary goals academic or functional?	18
1.27 Must postsecondary goals include the four elements (timeframe, conditions, behavior, and criterion)?	18

.....18
1.28 What does an annual goal that facilitates movement toward a postsecondary goal look like?.....19
1.29 How often should reports of progress toward mastery of annual goals be provided to
parents/guardians?.....19
1.30 How should progress be reported in periodic IEP reports provided to parents?.....20

Section 2: Academic/Standards-Based Goals 21

2.1 What are academic/standards-based goals?.....21
2.2 What is the difference between the “enrolled grade-level standards” and a “standards-based goal?” ..21
2.3 What does ‘aligned to enrolled grade-level content standards’ mean?21
2.4 How should ARD committees use the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum to write goals?21
2.5 Do students need standards-based IEP goals for courses that do not have a STAAR end-of-course
requirement?.....22
2.6 Are ARD committees required to include the number (e.g., Grade 6, 10A) of the particular TEKS and/or
Student Expectation aligned to each annual goal?22
2.7 Does having an academic/standards-based goal automatically mean a student has modified content?.22
2.8 How do standards-based IEP goals relate to state assessments?22
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 automatically qualify a student to take an alternate
state assessment?.....23
2.11 For a student who takes an alternate state assessment, does he/she need annual goals that
correspond with the tested content area?23
2.12 Is it a requirement to write an annual goal for every essence statement for students assessed with an
alternate state assessment?.....23

Section 3: Functional Goals 24

3.1 What type(s) of measurable annual goals might be functional in nature?.....24
3.2 For which groups of students are functional goals appropriate?.....24
3.3 Must measurable annual functional goals be standards-based?.....24
3.4 Does having a functional goal automatically mean a student has modified content?24
3.5 Does having a functional goal qualify a student to take an alternate state assessment?25
3.6 Can a student’s IEP include only functional goals?.....25

Glossary 26

Resources 29

Introduction

This Question and Answer document is intended to provide guidance and best practices to local education agencies regarding ways to approach writing annual Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals that ensure involvement and progress in the student's grade-level academic standards. This is also known as a standards-based IEP process. Below are some key features of a standards-based approach.

- The IEP is not the curricula.
- Goal statements are aligned to the general education curriculum.
- The IEP describes how progress will be measured toward mastery of goals.
- The IEP is designed to bridge the gap between the student's present level of academic achievement and the state standards for the enrolled grade level.
- The IEP focuses primarily on access to and progress in the general education curriculum through supports for academic and functional performance.

The standards-based IEP process is based on the belief that students with disabilities can make progress on challenging goals aligned to the general education curriculum at the enrolled grade level with specially designed services and supports. Special education is not a separate and special place for learning, but services and supports that are individually designed to help 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 is applicable to all annual goals, regardless of the type of goal (academic or functional).

Section Two: Academic/Standards-Based Goals is applicable only to goals that are academic in nature. These goals are directly linked to a student progressing 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 is applicable only to goals that are not academic in nature (and, therefore, are not standards-based). These goals focus on the student's access to the general curriculum.

This resource is intended to be used in conjunction with the [TEA Technical Assistance: Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Development](#) document. The Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports Network will ensure that links and information are current. Therefore, there will be times when this document will need to be revised and updated. If you ever have a question, concern, comment, suggestion, or find a broken link within this document, please email the TEA Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports Network at childfindtx@esc4.net.

Section 1: Measurable Annual Goals

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

1.1 What are measurable annual goals?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (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.

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?

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 certain 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 the use of 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 the goal 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.

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

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

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

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

A measurable 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.

- To calculate how much progress will be made, the PLAAFP 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) and 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. If the student achieves this level of success, the goal would be considered mastered.

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 somewhere 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 who receive special education services must have at least one measurable annual goal, 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 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 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 is developed from the full and individual evaluation (FIE), progress made on previous IEP goals, information from parents, and other sources of data. 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.

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

Example 1

PLAAFP Excerpt:

Caden is a 6th grade student 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 §111.26. 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:

Timeframe	Conditions	Behavior	Criteria
By the end of the school year,	when provided models of a step-by-step problem-solving approach and a math operation chart	Caden will use the correct mathematical operations to solve word problems	as evidenced by 70% accuracy on teacher-made summative tests during each grading period.

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 so that students can 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 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 course Professional Communications 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 proposed Professional Communications Rubric at a three out of nine.

QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

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

(c) Knowledge and skills.

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

(D) Present formal and informal presentations.

Sample Annual Goal:

Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
Within 18 weeks of instruction,	when given assistance by the teacher in preparing scripts/notes and repeated practice of formal and informal presentations	Trevor will use appropriate voice projection, provide a purpose statement, and conclude his speech	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.

Sample Professional Communications Rubric:

Area	Score of 1	Score of 2	Score of 3
Voice Projection	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
Purpose Statement	No clear purpose or organization	Grabs attention of audience but doesn't clearly define purpose	Clearly defines purpose of presentation in introduction
Conclusion	No clear ending or recap of main points	Clear conclusion of speech, but does not summarize	Summarizes and concludes speech

Explanation:

Trevor's critical area of need in communication and social engagement that are a result of his disability are expected to impact his access and/or progress in the Professional Communications 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 to be core courses.

Example 3

PLAAFP Excerpt:

Shelby is a 4-year-old student with an intellectual disability (ID). 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

independently initiate going into the restroom on her own. She has never asked to use the restroom in public.

Prekindergarten Guideline: **Physical Development Personal Safety and Health Skills (IX.C.2), Updated 2015**
 Child practices good habits of personal health and hygiene.

Sample Annual Goal:

Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
In 36 instructional weeks,	When provided free access to the classroom restroom	Shelby will independently initiate and complete the toileting process	At least 3 times per day across 15 consecutive school days for mastery.

Explanation:

Progress will be shown by Shelby becoming more independent with initiating and completing the toileting process. Progress on this goal helps address a need both at home and at school.

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

While 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.

- An annual goal must be developed when the content of a course is modified. 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 in such a way that it is considered to be modified, the IEP must include annual goal(s) which 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. The IEP must include measurable annual goal(s) which specifically address how the student will access or progress in this course/subject.
 - 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 is not modified, an annual goal is still required. The purpose of the annual goal in this case 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 to make progress in the general education curriculum. For example, a student who is progressing on grade-level curriculum; however, due to behavioral concerns, requires a more restrictive environment. In cases such as this, the conditions listed in the annual goal may be more behavioral, rather than academic in nature. 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 in order 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, then the annual goal(s) may be written for those subject areas. If not, then separate goal(s) will be written for each subject area where the PLAAFP indicates a critical need. For example, a student with a critical area of need in reading would require a reading goal. This would most likely be an academic goal in the area of English/Language Arts (ELAR). For other courses, reading supports could be identified as accommodations to be able to progress in 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 that includes the use of 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 of the specified subjects to ensure that the student is making progress toward attaining the goal. Because multiple teachers may be involved in the implementation of 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 as well as 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 For a student who receives special education services in a general education (mainstream) setting and does not have modified content in any subject area, must the ARD committee still develop measurable annual goals?

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

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. Achievement of the grade-level academic standards is the expectation for all students. 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 IDEA requirements detailed in [34 CFR §300.320\(a\)\(2\)](#) as it is 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 and describe the knowledge and skills the student requires as a result of his or her disability in order 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 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 need.

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 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 that it addresses the same critical need area. This new goal could include more conditions that facilitate learning, a revised behavior that aligns with the enrolled curriculum, and/or an updated mastery criteria based on the new baseline data reported in the PLAAFP.

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 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 if trying 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 have an understanding of the course scope and sequence. Progress reporting will need to identify the skills and curriculum standards addressed 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 **required for those students who take alternate assessments** aligned to alternate academic achievement standards ([34 CFR §300.320\(a\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#)). In Texas, this means 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. Some LEAs may choose to 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.

Short-term objectives/benchmarks are the intermediary steps or milestones towards 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 the attainment of the annual goal. There are two ways to write short-term objectives/benchmarks:

- List specific subtasks or skills to be mastered in order 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.

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 provide sample short-term objectives/benchmarks for the sample annual goal in [Question 1.7](#) "What is the role of the PLAAFP 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

	Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
Annual Goal	Within 18 weeks of instruction,	when given assistance by the teacher in preparing scripts/notes and repeated practice of formal and informal presentations	Trevor will use appropriate voice projection, provide a purpose statement, and conclude his speech	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.
Short-term Objectives / Benchmarks	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 Rubric:

Area	Score of 1	Score of 2	Score of 3
Voice Projection	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
Purpose Statement	No clear purpose or organization	Grabs attention of audience but doesn't clearly define purpose	Clearly defines purpose of presentation in introduction
Conclusion	No clear ending or recap of 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 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 behavior required also increases with each objective (e.g. present to teachers vs. presenting to the class).

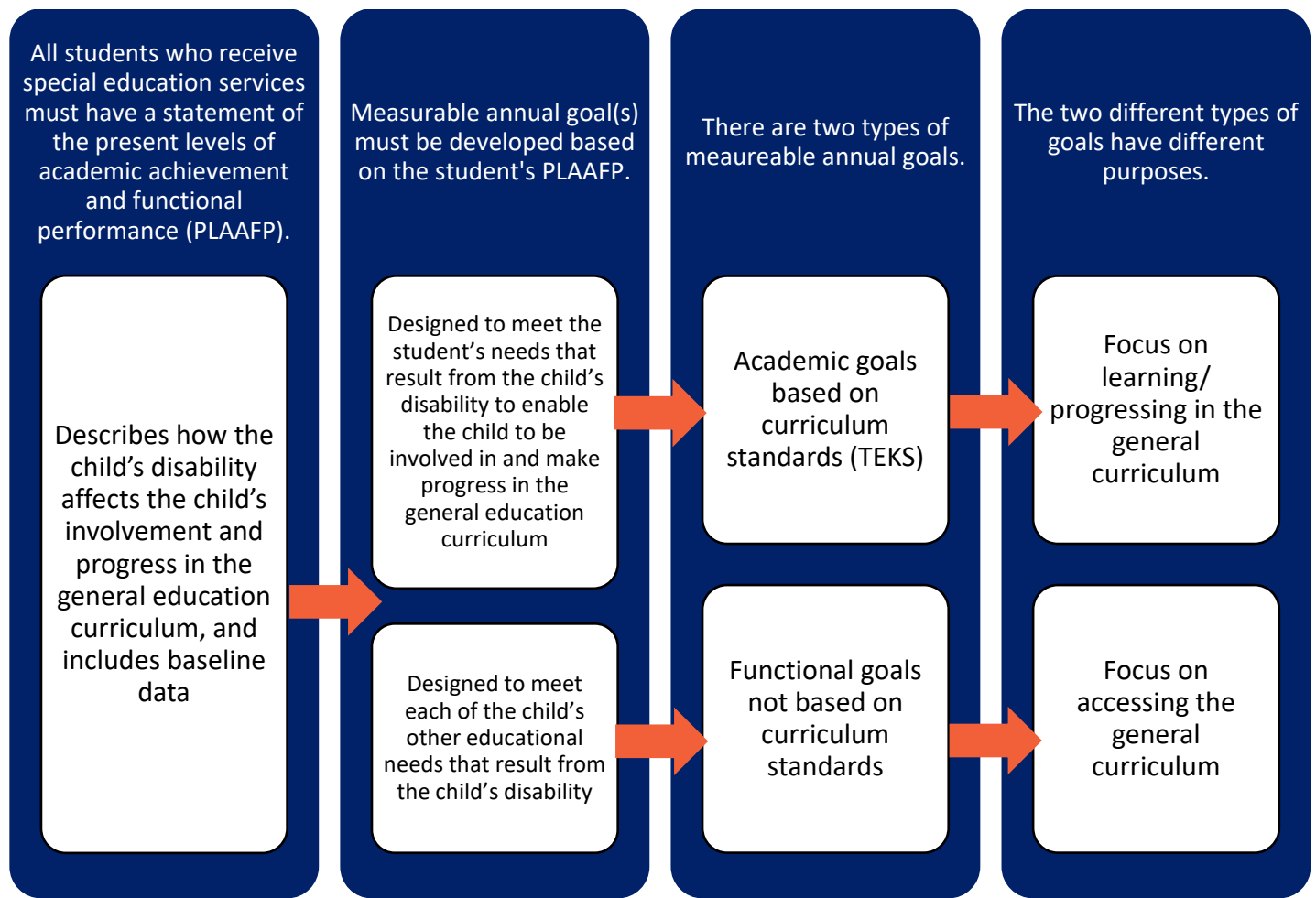
1.18 Can mastery of the benchmarks/short-term objectives be the criterion for mastery of an annual goal?

No. Short-term objectives/benchmarks are intermediate steps that serve to 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.

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

Academic goals align to the enrolled grade-level curriculum of the student (*Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)*, *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, or *Texas Infant, Toddler, and Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines*) in order to demonstrate 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.



1.20 Can a goal be both functional and academic?

For students in kindergarten–12th grade:

No. A goal cannot be both academic and functional. Academic goals are aligned to 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 it is possible for a goal to be both academic and functional for students of this age, it is likely that the goal is one or the other. If the behavior being measured is within the adopted curriculum, it would be considered an academic goal. For example, in the *Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines*, there is a standard in the Physical Development Domain that addresses good habits of personal health and hygiene. While hygiene skills may seem to be functional in nature, for a prekindergarten student this would be an academic goal aligned with the curriculum.

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 that must be made by the ARD committee after examining the student's PLAAFP. The PLAAFP should identify the student's critical areas of need that are present as a result of the student's disability. From the PLAAFP, 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 in order 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 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 texts that are legible. In this situation OT, is part of an academic goal.

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

It depends. If the PLAAFP indicates a critical need which 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. 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, it would be considered a functional goal.

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. The specially designed instruction is what is provided to help the student achieve his/her annual IEP goals.

1.25 Are measurable postsecondary goals required for students aged 14 and older in an IEP?

It depends.

Not later than when the student reaches 14 years of age, the ARD committee must consider and, if appropriate, address in the student’s IEP the state transition planning components of Texas Education Code §29.011. Based on the student’s transition needs, annual IEP goals and objectives may be developed to address these transition planning components, as well as additional activities to assist the student with developing skills, knowledge, experiences, and contacts with resources, as needed.

If the ARD committee determines that postsecondary goals are needed, the postsecondary goals must be based on age-appropriate transition assessments. The specific coordinated set of activities, including instruction, to be provided for the student to achieve their postsecondary goals must also be documented in the IEP if it includes postsecondary goals.

However, the IEP in effect when a student turns 16 years of age MUST contain appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments and a description of the transition services to assist the student in reaching those goals. Postsecondary goals may be written to support identified needs related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills.

1.26 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 information provided in the student's PLAAFP. It is critical that the PLAAFP contain relevant information about the student's strengths, needs, preferences, and interests to develop an appropriate IEP that plans for the future. Postsecondary goals are required to be based upon age-appropriate transition assessments, and it is recommended that this baseline information be included in the student's PLAAFP.

1.27 Must postsecondary goals include the four elements (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 may not be appropriate for postsecondary goals.

If a postsecondary goal is stated in a manner that can be counted as occurring or not occurring, it is a measurable postsecondary goal. Statements that indicate what a student "will" do rather than "plans to" or "hopes to" do, indicate measurable postsecondary goals.

The following are examples of postsecondary goals:

Allison, who plans to further her education, could have the following postsecondary goals:

- Education/Training: Upon graduation from high school, Allison will attend college and major in education.
- Employment: After graduation from high school, Allison will obtain employment at a daycare while attending school.
- Independent Living: After graduation, Allison will live at home while attending college.

Steven, who plans to learn a trade, could have the following postsecondary goals:

- Education/Training: Upon graduation from high school, Steven will attend a technical school.
- Employment: After graduation from high school, Steven will obtain employment as a computer technician.
- Independent Living: After graduation, Steven will live in an apartment while he attends technical school.

Gregory, who plans to get a job, could have the following postsecondary goals:

- Education/Training: After graduation from high school, Gregory will receive training through his employer.
- Employment: Upon graduation from high school, Gregory will obtain employment at a home and garden center.
- Independent Living: After graduation, Gregory will live in a group home.

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

The following examples show measurable annual goals that facilitate movement toward postsecondary goals. A postsecondary goal does not have to include timeframe, condition, behavior, and criterion. However, it is a recommended practice to include these elements when developing goals that facilitate movement toward the postsecondary goals.

Example 1

Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
In 36 weeks,	Given repeated review of the Child Guidance curriculum, opportunities to brainstorm with the teacher, and assistance with organizing ideas,	Allison will create lesson plans that include appropriate strategies for optimizing development of toddlers and preschool children's skills	As evidenced by creating at least 2 plans for toddlers and 2 plans for preschool children by the end of the course.
This is an academic goal as it aligns with the standards in the Career and Technical Education (CTE) course of Child Guidance.			

Example 2

Timeframe	Condition	Behavior	Criteria
In 36 weeks	Given guided practice, a copy of his personal information, and writing supports	Gregory will accurately complete all required fields of an application for employment	In 4 out of 6 opportunities.
This is a functional goal as it is not directly aligned to any of the TEKs.			

1.29 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 that is used for report cards, the reporting of IEP goal progress is distinct and different than 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 child'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.

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

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

Section 2: Academic/Standards-Based Goals

The questions and answers in this section apply only to academic/standards-based measurable annual goals. These are goals which focus on the student learning the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum (TEKS, 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 *Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)* for student in Kindergarten–Grade 12. Preschool students should have goals that are 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, is used to customize it to the student’s needs and are 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 that is 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 challenging academic achievement standards for the state.

When developing grade-level, standards-based goals, it is essential to have knowledge of the enrolled grade-level curriculum as well as 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 along with the curriculum standards to determine where in the curriculum the student may encounter barriers as a result of their disability. It is in the areas where a critical need is identified that an annual goal should be developed.

The annual goal serves to ensure 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 Expectation aligned to each annual goal?

No. Local education agencies (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 clearly see how the annual goals align to 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 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 that some adaptations 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 that is 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 goals when they align 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 unique needs of the student. When annual goals align to 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 and identified critical areas of need.

2.10 Does having an academic/standards-based goal 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 must:

- Meet the definition of a student with a significant cognitive disability;
- Require specialized, extensive support to access the grade-level curriculum and environment;
- Require intensive, individualized instruction in all instructional settings; and
- Access and participate in the grade-level TEKS through prerequisite skills.

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

- Racial or economic background,
- English learner status,
- Excessive or extended absences,
- Location of service delivery,
- Anticipated disruptive behavior or emotional distress, or
- Low performance on past state assessments.

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. By accessing the curriculum through prerequisite skills, the student has modified content 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 and identified critical areas of need.

Section 3: Functional Goals

The questions and answers in this section apply only to functional/non-standards-based measurable annual goals. These goals focus on the student accessing the enrolled grade-level standard/curriculum (TEKS, 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 that is preventing the student from accessing the general curriculum, the ARD committee may need to consider a functional goal.

The decision should not be based on the student’s disability condition, but rather on how the student’s disability is impacting his or her access to the general curriculum. For example, the PLAAFP for a student with a learning disability might indicate a need for a goal focusing on organizational skills if the student is having difficulty keeping track of assignments, due dates, etc. In this case, a functional goal to address this critical area of need would be appropriate.

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 or she can arrive on time to access instruction, there are no TEKS containing this skill at the middle school level. If this is considered to be 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, which describes the student's current academic achievement and functional performance. The ARD committee will then use the information in the PLAAFP to determine in which specific academic and/or functional area(s) a student needs goals. While all students must have measurable annual goals, some students may have both academic and functional goals, some students may have only academic goals, and some students may have only functional goals to enable them to access the general curriculum.

Glossary

Term	Definition
<p>ARD Committee Meeting Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee Meeting</p>	<p>* ARD Committee – A committee composed of a child's parent; the child, when appropriate; and specified school personnel who are involved in the education the child. The ARD committee determines a child's eligibility to receive special education services and develops the child's individualized education program (IEP). The ARD committee is the IEP team defined in federal law.</p> <p>*ARD committee meeting – A meeting of the ARD committee to address issues related to the student, including the annual review of the student's special education program that includes an update of the student's progress, a review of the current IEP, and development of a new IEP for the upcoming year. The ARD committee may also meet to revise a student's IEP prior to the annual review if appropriate.</p>
<p>CFR Code of Federal Regulations</p>	<p>* The codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government. It is divided into 50 titles that represent broad areas subject to federal regulation. Each volume of the CFR is updated once each calendar year and issued on a quarterly basis. References in this document are to regulations that implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).</p>
<p>ECSE Early Childhood Special Education</p>	<p>*The local education agency's (LEA's) services for young children with disabilities, ages 3 through 5. These services may be provided in a variety of settings. Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), preschool programs for children with disabilities must be delivered in the least restrictive environment.</p>
<p>ESSA Every Student Succeeds Act</p>	<p>* A law signed on December 10, 2015, amending, and reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.</p> <p>For more information on ESSA, visit the U.S Department of Education ESSA website</p>
<p>FAPE Free Appropriate Public Education</p>	<p>* Special education and related services that are provided at public expense under public supervision and direction and without charge, meet the standards of the Texas Education Agency, include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the state involved, and are provided in conformity with an IEP that complies with federal and state requirements.</p>

QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

Term	Definition
<p>FIIE Full and Individual Initial Evaluation</p> <p>FIE Full and Individual Evaluation</p>	<p>*A comprehensive evaluation that consists of data gathered from multiple sources for the student being considered for special education and related services.</p>
<p>IDEA Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</p>	<p>*The federal law that provides assistance to states for the education of children with disabilities. This law gives every child with a disability and, as a result, a need for special education, the right to a free appropriate public education. Part C of the IDEA requires services to begin at birth and extends until the child turns three. Early Childhood Intervention programs deliver Part C services. Part B of the IDEA requires services for children from ages 3 through 21. Most children receiving Part B services are in public schools.</p> <p>For more information on Part B and Part C, visit the U.S. Department of Education IDEA website.</p>
<p>IEP Individualized Education Program</p>	<p>*A written statement of the education program for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised by the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee, of which parents are active members. The IEP includes specific information about the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP), participation in state and district-wide assessments, transition services, annual goals, special factors, special education, related services, supplementary aids and services, extended school year services, and least restrictive environment, among other things.</p>
<p>LRE Least Restrictive Environment</p>	<p>* The educational setting or instructional arrangement that the ARD committee determines is most appropriate for the student. To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities must be educated with children who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of students with disabilities from the general educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the student's disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.</p>
<p>LEA Local Education Agency</p>	<p>*A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools. LEAs include public school districts and open enrollment charter schools.</p>

QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT: IEP MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS

Term	Definition
<p>PLAAFP Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance</p>	<p>*PLAAFP for the school-aged student summarizes the current strengths and needs of the student in both academic and functional performance areas. It must include how the student’s disability affects the student’s involvement and progress in the general education curriculum, regardless of the setting in which the student currently receives services. Additionally, it may describe the current instructional level of the student compared to the grade level Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), and, if the student is below grade level, the PLAAFP also may describe the prerequisite skills the student needs in order to achieve grade-level proficiency.</p> <p>* PLAAFP for the preschool student summarizes the current levels of present performance related to the student’s developmental domains, functional performance, and pre-academic skills. It must include how the student’s disability affects the student’s participation in appropriate activities. Additionally, it may describe the student’s current developmental levels compared to the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines or LEA-adopted prekindergarten curriculum.</p>
<p>SDI Specially Designed Instruction</p>	<p>*Instruction adapted, as appropriate, to the needs of the eligible child with a disability, which may include 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 local educational agency that apply to all children.</p>
<p>STAAR® State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness</p>	<p>* The required state assessment in Texas</p>
<p>STAAR® Alternate 2</p>	<p>STAAR Alternate 2 is an assessment based on alternate academic standards and is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities receiving special education services. Students must meet participation requirements to take this test. STAAR Alternate 2 was developed to meet federal requirements of both the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).</p>
<p>TEKS Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills</p>	<p>*The required curriculum for each grade level used in the Texas public schools. The TEKS are the state standards for what students should know and be able to do. It is the general curriculum referred to in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).</p> <p>For more information on the TEKS, visit the TEA Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills website.</p>

*Retrieved/adapted from The Legal Framework for the Child-Centered Educational Process <http://framework.esc18.net> (May 2021)

Resources

[Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports Statewide Network Individualized Education Program \(IEP\)](#)

[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](#)

[TEA Secondary Transition Guidance](#)

[TEA STAAR® Alternate 2 Resources](#)

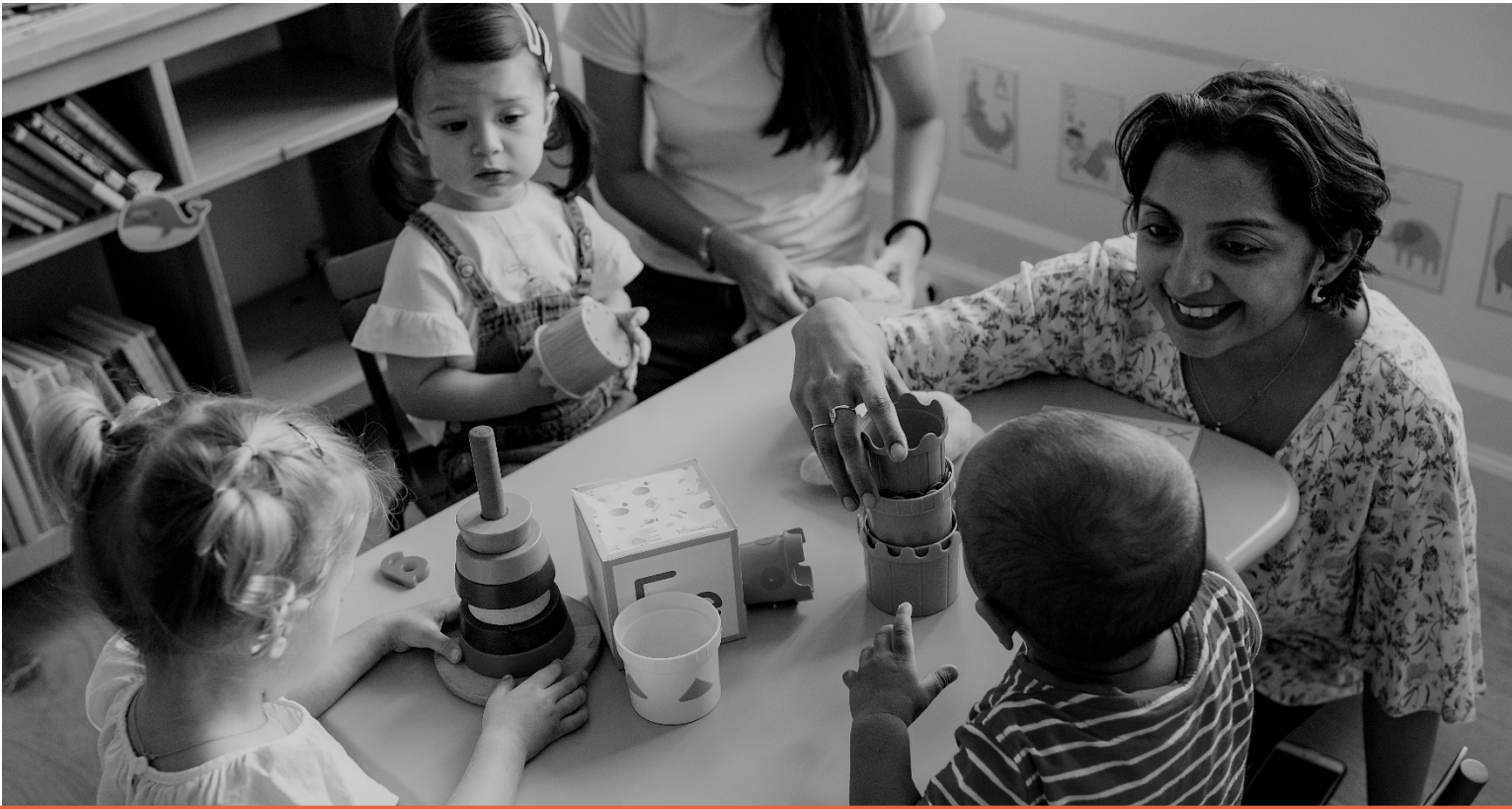
[TEA Technical Assistance: Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) Development](#)

[TEA Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills](#)

[Texas Complex Access Network \(TX CAN\): A Step Towards IEP Quality and Rigor](#) (online course)

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

[Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#)



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