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S.M.A.R.T. Goals

November 2021

1. **Myth:** As long as I can measure the IEP goal, it meets the criteria to be a S.M.A.R.T. goal.

**Fact:** Being able to measure the goal does not mean it automatically meets the criteria for a S.M.A.R.T. goal.

The Missouri State Plan for Special Education specifically outlines the criteria utilized for writing IEP goals. Missouri uses the S.M.A.R.T. method as outlined in the [State Plan, Regulation IV](https://dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/regulation-iv-fapeieplre-0), page 47: “Measurable goals are **specific to a particular skill or behavior** to be achieved, **measurable/quantifiable**, **attainable, results oriented, time-bound**, and can reasonably be accomplished within the duration of the IEP.”

The Missouri Standards and Indicators say:

200.810 A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals: The IEP includes goals that:

200.810.b Are written in terms that are:

200.810.b.(1) **S**pecific to a particular skill or behavior to be achieved,

200.810.b.(2) **M**easurable,

200.810.b.(3) **A**ttainable (can reasonably be accomplished within the duration of the IEP),

200.810.b.(4) **R**esults oriented, and

200.810.b.(5) **T**ime-bound (generally happen within one (1) year)

1. **Myth:** In order to meet compliance standards, IEP goals must be aligned to state standards.

**Fact:** Aligning IEP goals to state curriculum standards is the best practice. In order to be in compliance with the Missouri Standards and Indicators (Reference Standards and Indicators 200.810) the goal must meet the S.M.A.R.T. criteria.

Special educators must have knowledge of the state grade level curriculum standards in order to determine what specific skills the student must work on during the IEP cycle. The Missouri State Plan requires the IEP team to choose goals which enable the student to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum. Without a solid grasp of the general education expectations for all students, it will be extremely difficult for the IEP team to isolate the skill deficits in alignment with grade level standards to allow the student to make progress in the general education curriculum.

Align goals for students who are participating in the state alternate assessments to the Essential Elements. The Essential Elements were created for students who require an alternate curriculum based on their complex and unique needs.

1. **Myth**: IEP goals can be written based on what I teach in my special education classroom.

**Fact:** IEP stands for Individualized Education Program and the individualized component is key. Everything in the IEP is based on the student’s unique needs. IEPs should drive the instruction in your special education classroom.

The evaluation information and Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) set the table for IEP goal development. Missouri Standards and Indicators (200.740) addresses the foundation PLAAFP. 200.740.a. states the PLAAFP must be consistent with the most recent evaluation/reevaluation results in the evaluation report. 200.740.d states the PLAAFP considers the most recent evaluation/reevaluation results.

The IEP should tie together the evaluation/reevaluation report to the goals and services. Many of you have heard consultants talk about the “golden thread” in training. The “golden thread” should connect the evaluation/reevaluation report to the PLAAFP, annual goals, and services. This creates an individualized approach to what is needed based on each student’s disability and the disability’s impact in the general education curriculum. It is the prescriptive plan for moving the student forward and working to close achievement gaps.

The expectations outlined in 200.740 of Missouri’s Standards and Indicators are not being met if a special education teacher writes the same goals for all of their students. If all students in a special education classroom have basic reading goals, and have a goal for learning the Dolch sight words, yet there is nothing in their evaluation/reevaluation report or PLAAFP about the need for learning Dolch sight words, the goal is not based on any student’s individual needs.

1. **Myth:** Benchmarks and objectives are the same. They should only be used with annual goals if the student is MAP-A eligible.

**Fact:** Benchmarks and objectives do not have the same meaning. Benchmarks represent the interim steps a student will take to reach the goal. Objectives represent the intermediate knowledge, skills and/or behaviors the student must learn in order to reach the annual goal.

There is nothing preventing an IEP team from determining benchmarks/objectives are appropriate for a goal/goals in any student’s IEP. In fact, some goals may actually lend themselves to benchmarks/objectives in order to make them specific and measurable.

Reminder: If a student is MAP-A eligible, they must have benchmarks/objectives for every IEP goal, including goals for skills being addressed through related services.

1. **Myth:** The post-secondary transition goals on Form C must meet the S.M.A.R.T. criteria.

**Fact:** Measurable post-secondary goals in the areas of employment, education/training, and independent living are not written in the S.M.A.R.T. goal format. The goals on the IEP in Form C of the post-secondary transition plan are considered to be measurable if they describe an observable outcome and are written for after high school.

Examples of post-secondary goals which are measurable (observable):

* I, Student, will be employed as a welder.
* I, Student, will attend a technical institution for welding.
* I, Student, will live in an apartment with roommates.

Be cautious when using some verbs such as apply, obtain, etc. The goal must describe an observable outcome and it would be difficult to impossible to observe a process such as applying for jobs, applying to post-secondary training or college, obtaining a job, looking for an apartment, etc.

1. **Myth:** Writing a goal to increase reading level from a third grade level to fourth grade level is addressing a specific skill.

**Fact:** SMART goals should contain specific skills that target discreet areas of academic achievement and functional performance. They include clear descriptions of the skills that will be taught. A teacher does not teach students to increase their reading level from one grade level to another. A teacher teaches specific reading skills/strategies so the student can increase their reading level as a result of learning the skill or skills. Below are some examples of partial goals comparing non-specific skills to specific skills:

*Non-specific skills:* XXX will improve his reading skills from a third grade level to a fourth grade level.

*Specific skills*: Given fourth grade material, XXX will read a passage of text orally at 110 wpm.

*Non-specific skills*: XXX will increase study skills for academic success.

*Specific skills*: XXX will demonstrate the following study skills: skimming written material and use reference materials in social studies class.

*Non-specific skills*: XXX will decrease her anger and violation of school rules.

*Specific skills*: Provided with anger management training and adult support, XXX will be able to use an approved strategy to remove herself from environments that cause her to lose control of her behavior. Then use objectives to list the approved strategies such as: verbally requesting a walk, verbally requesting a break, presenting a communication card to request a break.

*Non-specific skills*: XXX will complete assignments to obtain a C or better in all courses.

*Specific skills*: Given self-regulation training, XXX will increase his time on task during independent work from 2 minutes to 5 minutes per given assignment.

Another Example: By the end of this IEP cycle, in order to increase reading comprehension, XXX will read a third-grade level passage and answer comprehension questions involving factual and inferential skills with 80% accuracy from the baseline of 69% accuracy when given independent-level texts as measured by special education teacher.

Can you answer the following questions about the goal?

1. What is the intent of this goal? What skill is being developed?

2. What is not necessary in the way this goal is written?

3. What will instruction look like?

4. Where will it be measured?

5. How often will it be measured?

6. What will measurement look like?

Another method to use when writing S.M.A.R.T. goals:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Behavior/Specific Skill | Condition |
| **Increase reading fluency** | When presented with a reading passage at her instructional level  (DRA 14F) |
| Criteria | Time Bound |
| From 35 words read correctly\* per minute to 60 words read correctly per minute  (as measured by running records)\* | *During the course of this IEP* |

S.M.A.R.T. Goal: *During the course of this IEP*, **Suzie will increase her reading fluency** when presented with a reading passage at her instructional level (DRA 14F) from 35 words read correctly per minute\* to 60 words read correctly per minute as measured by running records.\*

\*Both the baseline and the how measured can be indicated within the goal box and not written in the goal.

Resource which may be helpful in seeing the difference between the components of a S.M.A.R.T. goal: <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/ieps/how-to-tell-if-your-childs-iep-goals-are-smart>