

A Step-by-Step Process to Creating Standards-based IEPs

Each state determines the **academic content standards** for all students enrolled in public schools. The standards describe what students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level. They are the basis for what is taught: the **general education curriculum**.

Federal and State education laws require that all students, including those with significant disabilities, have **access** to the general education curriculum. Most students will follow the NC Standard Course of Study even if they are not on grade level in all academic skill areas. A small number of students with the most significant intellectual disabilities will follow the NC Extended Content Standards. While these standards are greatly modified, they are still connected to the general education curriculum.

Before developing IEPs, all IEP team members, including parents, should become familiar with the general education curriculum, including the state's academic content standards and the state testing program. In order to make informed decisions about appropriate annual goals, supports and special education needs, the IEP team should consider how your child is performing as compared to the state's academic content standards for the grade that your child is in.

The following is a *six-step process* for developing IEPs that are aligned with state academic grade-level content standards.



Each step includes guiding questions for you and the other members of the IEP team to consider in making decisions based on data (information). This process will help identify your child's strengths and needs. Goals can then be developed that focus on closing the gaps between your child's current levels of academic achievement and the grade-level standards. Of course, the IEP should address *all* of your child's educational needs related to his/her disability. When appropriate, the IEP can include functional, behavioral and/or transition goals, as well as academic goals based on the unique needs of your child.

At any point in this process, you may hear words, expressions or terms that are new to you. Ask to have them explained so that you can actively participate in the discussion. If necessary, ask to have test scores explained so that you know what they mean for your child's education. You can also ask for examples of the kinds of things your child was (or may be) asked to do during a particular test. This will help you, and other members of the IEP team, better understand exactly what skills are involved.

The six major steps that IEP teams can take to develop a standards-based IEP:

STEP

01



Learn about the grade-level academic content standards for your child's grade.

To find the North Carolina K-12 Standards, please visit:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/>

To learn about the Extended Content Standards please visit:

<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/acre/standards/extended/>

- If you are not sure which set of standards your child is following, ask for that information.
- What is each content standard saying that students must know and/or be able to do?
- What is the general intent, or main point, of that content standard?

STEP

02



Develop the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP).

Consider the factors related to your child's disability and the way they affect how your child learns and demonstrates what he/she knows.

- How does your child's disability affect participation and progress in the general curriculum?
- Under what conditions does your child learn and perform best?

Describe your child's **strengths** and **needs** when it comes to functioning in the school setting and learning the general curriculum.

- Are there work samples or data from classroom, district and/or state assessments that can provide useful information about your child's strengths and needs?
- Do you see any patterns in the data?
 - What does the team know about your child's progress over time?
 - How has he/she responded to previous academic instruction?
- Is your child on track to reach grade-level proficiency within a year?
- If not, how can special education help close any gaps that you find between your child's current skills and the grade-level standards?

STEP

03



Develop measurable annual goals with the academic standards in mind.

- What meaningful and useful skills can your child learn *now* to move closer to reaching the grade-level standards?
- With the right help, how much can your child reasonably improve in each chosen skill area over the next calendar year? This can become an annual goal for the IEP.
- Are the conditions for meeting the goal clearly stated and understood by everyone on the IEP team?
- What kind of special education and related services are needed for your child to reach his/her annual goals?
- How and where will the special education and any related services be delivered?

STEP 04



▶ **Assess and report the student's progress throughout the year.**

- How will the IEP team know if your child is making adequate progress and on track to achieve each annual goal?
- Which tools and strategies be used to measure your child's progress?
- How and when will your child's progress on the IEP goals be reported to you?

STEP 05



▶ **Identify accommodations, modifications and/or assistive technology needed to access and progress in the general education curriculum.**

- Are there any barriers that make it difficult for your child to access the general curriculum?
- What programs, accommodations and/or interventions have been successful with your child in the past?
- What supports does your child need *now* to learn best, and gain the skills needed to progress in the general curriculum?
- What accommodations are needed for your child to show his/her knowledge in the general education curriculum?
- How can the IEP team find out if assistive technology might help your child overcome some of the challenges related to his/her disability?
- Is there a need to modify the content and/or the complexity of the materials used with your child so that he/she can learn in the general education setting?

STEP 06



▶ **Determine the most appropriate assessment options.**

To learn about the North Carolina Testing program, please visit: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/testing/>

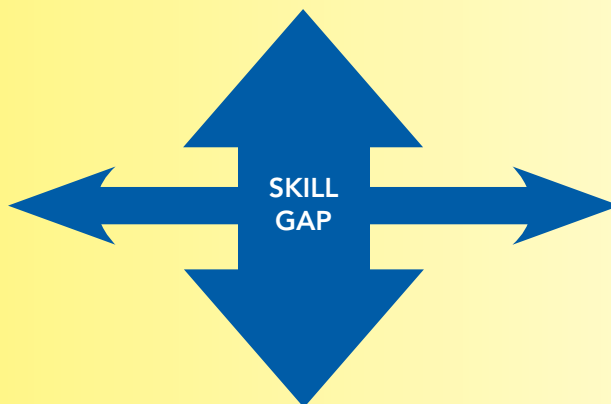
To learn about Testing Students with Disabilities in North Carolina visit: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/accountability/policies/tswd/>

- What types of assessments are offered in the North Carolina Testing Program?
 - Note: If the Extended Content Standards are used with your child, he/she will probably be tested using the *NCEXTEND1*
 - Ask: How is the *NCEXTEND1* different from other assessments?
- How are the assessments administered? Consider setting, delivery of instructions, time allotted, etc.
- What accommodations are allowed on the assessments?
- Are there any accommodations that can help your child better demonstrate what he/she knows on the assessments?
- Are the assessment accommodations being considered also used in the classroom?

For each academic area addressed by the IEP:

Grade Level Standard

Write IEP annual goals and provide special education to increase skills and help close the gap



Provide accommodations and supports so child can participate in spite of gap

Child's Current Level of Performance

Example of a Standard:

One 4th grade English Language Arts standard calls for the student to "refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text."

Possible suggestions for the IEP:

Goal #1:

Given a reading selection on his/her instructional level, the student will be able to answer factual questions such as who, what, when and where with 80% accuracy.

Goal #2:

Given an instructional level reading selection, the student will answer inferential questions such as why, or why not, and identify at least one detail from the text that supports each conclusion with 75% accuracy.

Special Education: Teach the student to review text and identify key content related to each question. Teach the student to use highlighting and graphic organizers to record and sort text details that support their responses.

Accommodations: Provide audio text in addition to printed version; provide graphic organizer(s) appropriate for task; allow highlighting and/or underlining of instructional materials.

Note: The IEP team would follow a similar process for students using the Extended Content Standards.

– Adapted from, *Standards-Based Individualized Education Program Samples, Project Forum*, National Association of State Directors of Special Education



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