

# Goal Writing: Grade-Level Standards

Fall 2021

# Grade-Level Standards

- There is as vast range of student needs including:
  - Students whose present levels are one to two grades from grade-level standards and could quickly catch up
  - Students whose present levels are far below grade-level standards and need intensive services and supports

No matter where the student falls on this spectrum:

- All students need grade-level standards as targets
- The process of aligning goals is the same for all students

# Goals at the Student's Grade Level



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

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Dear Colleague:

Ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, are held to rigorous academic standards and high expectations is a shared responsibility for all of us. To help make certain that children with disabilities are held to high expectations and have meaningful access to a State's academic content standards, we write to clarify that an individualized education program (IEP) for an eligible child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.<sup>1</sup> Research has demonstrated that children with disabilities who struggle in reading and mathematics can successfully learn grade-level content and make significant academic progress when appropriate instruction, services, and supports are provided.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, low expectations can lead to children with disabilities receiving less challenging instruction that reflects below grade-level content standards, and thereby not learning what they need to succeed at the grade in which they are enrolled.

# Should I Always Set Goals at the Student's Grade Level?

[Letter from OSERS](#) states:

“To help make certain that children with disabilities are held to high expectations and have meaningful access to a State’s academic content standards, we write to clarify that an individualized education program (IEP) for an eligible child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State’s academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.”

# **Should I Always Set Goals at the Student's Grade Level? (cont.)**

“Conversely, low expectations can lead to children with disabilities receiving less challenging instruction that reflects below grade-level content standards, and thereby not learning what they need to succeed at the grade in which they are enrolled.”

# Attainable and Realistic Goals

“We expect annual IEP goals to be aligned with State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. This alignment, however, must guide but not replace the individualized decision-making required in the IEP process”

# Attainable and Realistic Goals (cont.)

“In a case where a child’s present levels of academic performance are significantly below the grade in which the child is enrolled, in order to align the IEP with grade-level content standards, the IEP Team should estimate the growth toward the State academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled that the child is expected to achieve in the year covered by the IEP. In a situation where a child is performing significantly below the level of the grade in which the child is enrolled, an IEP Team should determine annual goals that are ambitious but achievable. In other words, the annual goals need not necessarily result in the child’s reaching grade-level within the year covered by the IEP, but the goals should be sufficiently ambitious to help close the gap.”

# Setting Goals

- Start with Grade Level Expectations
  - We want to screen students on grade level
    - Helps us to understand where they are compared to grade-level expectations
    - Provides data about how the student performs in comparison to peers
  - We want to consider what skills are necessary to get to grade-level expectations
    - Where is the access point for this student?
    - May use survey level assessment to help identify starting place
  - As a team consider where do we want the student to be at the end of the year? What would it take to get them there?

# Process

- Analysis
  - Where is the student?
- Choose Standards
  - Where is the student going?
- Write Goals
  - How will the student get there?

# Analysis

- Consider “Where the student is”
  - Student’s Standardized Test Results
  - Student’s Current Classroom Level of Education and Functional Performance
  - Family and Educator Input

# Choose Standards

- What is the Student's enrolled grade level
- What skills and concepts are part of the Standard
  - What the student should do (verbs)
  - What the student should know (nouns)
- What skills are required for every student to master the selected grade-level standard?

# Write Goals

- How will the student get there?
  - What skills describe barriers for this student's access to and progress toward this grade-level standard?
- Skills broken down
  - What can the student currently do?
  - What is mastery?
  - What are the benchmarks to get to mastery?
- Use [VTAA ALDS](#)
  - Vermont Alternate Assessment Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs)
  - ELA, Math, and NGSS Science

# Vermont ALD

Common Core Standard	Essence Statement	Beginning	Approaching	Meets	Exceeds
<b>READING LITERATURE STANDARDS</b>					
<b>Note: For all Reading Literature Essence Statements and Performance Level Descriptors, “text” refers to a type of literary text, such as a story, poem, or drama. If the Common Core standard specifies the type of text, the Essence Statements and Performance Level Descriptors will specify the type as applicable. Topics, texts, and vocabulary on the assessment are intended to be appropriate for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities (SWSCD).</b>					
<u><b>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1</b></u> Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.	Use or cite evidence from the text to demonstrate comprehension.	Match a picture to a detail in the text.	Answer questions about details in the text.	Cite textual evidence to answer a literal question about the text.	Cite and analyze textual evidence that relates to a literal/inferential statement about the text.

- Using Beginning, Approaching, Meets or Exceeds for access points

# Example

GLS: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text

Present Level:

Access Point: Match a picture to a detail in the text.

Benchmark 1:

Benchmark 2:

Benchmark 3:

Goal:

# Aligning Goals to Standards

About 1-2 years away from grade level:

- Focus on grade-level standards or they will continue to fall behind.

Large gap/further behind grade level:

- Break down skills to what student is working on.

# Review

- IDEA talks about the general education curriculum.
- IEP goals should set high expectations, research shows that when we hold students to high expectations, they are likely to meet them, low expectations become a detriment to the student.
- IEP goals must be aligned with grade-level academic content standards.
- Alignment must guide but not replace the IEP decision-making process.
- Think about the individual student considering the context.
- If student is lower than grade level, not necessarily ending the goal on the grade level but closing the gap.
- Start with grade-level expectations.
- What are the skills and components needed to reach that grade-level expectation?
- What are the access points?
- Even our alternate assessment is based on grade-level standards. Set students up for success by aligning their goals and objectives to those same standards.

# Contact Information

Ana Kolbach

Inclusion and Accessibility Coordinator

[Ana.Kolbach@Vermont.gov](mailto:Ana.Kolbach@Vermont.gov)