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Writing Useful IEP Goals

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We all set goals for ourselves. Goals help us change something we want to improve about ourselves. For students needing support to improve their academic skills and succeed in school, an *Individualized Education Program (IEP)* can help. Members of an IEP team, including a parent, write an IEP that includes academic goals that the student should be able to accomplish within a school year.



The IEP team (including a parent) develops goals for an IEP based on:



- The student's present level of performance.
- Reports from the parent(s) and teacher(s).
- Evaluations and performances on state, formal, and informal assessments.

When creating student goals, the IEP team should keep this acronym in mind—**SMART**:

Each goal should:



- Be **S**pecific and focus on one skill.
- Be **M**easurable in order to monitor progress.
- Use **A**ction words to describe how to address the skill.
- Be **R**elevant by keeping the student's abilities in mind.
- Be **T**ime-limited and attainable within a school year.

The number of goals the team develops depends on the student. The IEP team should create only a manageable number of goals by considering one goal for each "big" area of concern.

In the IEP meeting, it is important to determine which team member is responsible for helping the student reach his/her goals. The team can also decide that several members of the team can work with the student on the same skills if they believe it will help the student improve his/her overall achievement in attaining a goal.

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – 2004 (IDEA)* also requires a student's IEP to include a description of the student's progress toward his/her annual goals, the method(s) used for measuring the student's progress, and when parents can expect to receive periodic progress reports outlining their student's goals and progress thus far.

Remember, at any time during the school year, a parent has the right to request a meeting with the IEP team to discuss and/or adjust IEP goals if necessary. The IEP is a "working document" that can be altered at any time with approval by the members of the IEP team.

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