A Seven-Step Process to Creating Standards-based IEPs[1]

Note: This document is a companion to the "Standards-based IEP Examples" tool found at **www.projectforum.org**.

This document presents a seven-step process for developing IEPs that are aligned with state academic grade-level content standards. Each step is followed by guiding questions for the IEP team to consider in making data-based decisions. This process can help school personnel to: (a) consider each student's strengths and needs to develop goals focused on closing the gaps between the student's levels of academic achievement and grade-level standards; and (b) use data to make decisions, including selecting the most appropriate assessment option. The goal is to support IEP teams to develop documents that, when implemented, provide access to the general curriculum and enable students to demonstrate academic achievement linked to grade-level content.

Prior to developing IEPs, all IEP team members, including parents, need to be familiar with the general education curriculum including the state's academic content standards and state assessments used for calculating adequate yearly progress (AYP). In order to make informed decisions about each student's strengths and needs, the IEP team should consider how the student is performing in relation to the state's grade-level content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.

The seven major steps that educators can take to develop a standards-based IEP are:

Step 1: Consider the grade-level content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled or would be enrolled based on age.

Ask:
- What is the intent of the content standard?
- What is the content standard saying that the student must know and be able to do?

Step 2: Examine classroom and student data to determine where the student is functioning in relation to the grade-level standards.

Ask:
- Has the student been taught content aligned with grade-level standards?
- Has the student been provided appropriate instructional scaffolding to attain grade-level expectations?
- Were the lessons and teaching materials used to teach the student aligned with state grade-level standards?
- Was the instruction evidence-based?

Step 3: Develop the present level of academic achievement and functional performance.

Describe the individual strengths and needs of the student in relation to accessing and mastering the general curriculum.

Ask:
- What do we know about the student's response to academic instruction (e.g., progress monitoring data)?
- What programs, accommodations (i.e., classroom and testing) and/or interventions have been successful with the student?
- What have we learned from previous IEPs and student data that can inform decision making?
- Are there assessment data (i.e., state, district and/or classroom) that can provide useful information for making decisions about the student's strengths and needs

[1] These steps are adapted from materials on the Alabama website regarding standards-based IEPs found at http://www.alsde.edu/html/sections/section_detail.asp?section=65&footer=sections

(e.g., patterns in the data)?

Consider the factors related to the student's disability and how they affect how the student learns and demonstrates what he or she knows.

Ask:
- How does the student's disability affect participation and progress in the general curriculum?
- What supports does the student need to learn the knowledge and attain the skills to progress in the general curriculum?
- Is the student on track to achieve grade-level proficiency within the year?

Step 4: Develop measurable annual goals aligned with grade-level academic content standards.

Ask:
- What are the student's needs as identified in the present level of performance?
- Does the goal have a specific timeframe?
- What can the student reasonably be expected to accomplish in one school year?
- Are the conditions for meeting the goal addressed?
- How will the outcome of the goal be measured?

Step 5: Assess and report the student's progress throughout the year.

Ask:
- How does the student demonstrate what he/she knows on classroom, district and state assessments?
- Are a variety of assessments used to measure progress?
- How will progress be reported to parents?

Step 6: Identify specially designed instruction including accommodations and/or modifications needed to access and progress in the general education curriculum.

Ask:
- What accommodations are needed to enable the student to access the knowledge in the general education curriculum?
- What accommodations have been used with the student and were they effective?
- Has the complexity of the material been changed in such a way that the content has been modified?

Step 7: Determine the most appropriate assessment option.

Ask:
- What types of assessments are offered in my state?
- What types of responses do different state assessments require?
- What are the administrative conditions of the assessment? (i.e., setting, delivery of instructions, time allotted, etc.)
- What accommodations are allowed on the assessment(s)?
- Are the accommodations approved for the assessment also used in the classroom?
- Has the student received standards-based, grade-level instruction?
- Was the instruction evidence based?
- What is the student's instructional level?
- How different is the student's instructional level from the level of typical peers?
- Can the student make progress toward grade-level standards in the same timeframe as typical peers?
- What can be learned from the student's previous state assessment results?
- Can the student demonstrate what he/she knows on the assessment option under consideration?