



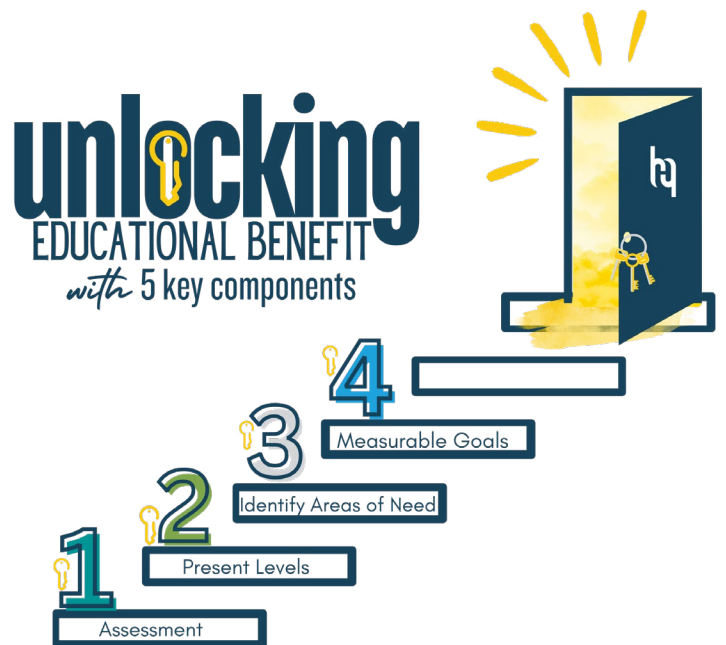
## Key Component 4: Measurable Annual Goals during the IEP

### Planning For Individualized Education Program (IEP) Goals That Lead To Success

Each area of need, documented in the present levels and related to the student's disability, must be addressed within the IEP document.

According to [California Education Code](#), each child's IEP must contain:

- A statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to do the following:
  - Meet the needs of the individual that result from the disability, enabling the pupil to be involved and make progress within the general education curriculum
  - Meet each of the other educational needs of the individual that result from the disability



Procedurally, goals identify areas of need and a path by which the needs may be addressed. Substantively, goals in an IEP are vital for providing direction, measuring progress, ensuring accountability, motivating the student, focusing instruction, allocating resources efficiently, and planning for future transitions. Goals are the foundation of a successful and individualized educational experience for students with disabilities.

#### This section will include:

- [Determining goal area\(s\)](#)
- [Establishing a baseline](#)
- [Connecting goals to state standards](#)
- [Linguistically appropriate goals](#)
- [Writing measurable annual goals](#)
- [Reporting on progress](#)



## Where to Start

Author and education consultant Katie Novak often refers to “**firm goals and flexible means**,” meaning that all goals should be grounded in a firm source (e.g., grade-level standards, etc.) and provide students with options and choices (i.e., flexible means).

By establishing clear goals for the student and allowing flexible means to achieve them, we provide direction while promoting adaptability, resilience, creativity, motivation, inclusivity, and essential skill development. This approach creates a more personalized, engaging, and effective learning experience for students.

**Reminder:** Numerous studies have shown that students perform significantly higher if educators hold high expectations and goals based on grade-level standards.

## How do I know which goal area(s) to address?

Goal Area:	Baseline - What can the student currently do?

When writing draft goals, the team will **consider the individual student's present levels of performance and learning rate**. Goals are written to help students meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. For a student who is struggling in many facets, goals may need to be prioritized. The safety of the student and others will likely be a high priority. Goals are written to help students access the general education curriculum; the student's general education teacher may help determine this.

The **High Quality Present Levels Packet** helps educators organize and document individual student's present levels of academic and functional performance in one location. This document can be shared between educators to coordinate date of present levels. If you used the High Quality Present Levels Packet, incorporate the data you and your team gathered to develop the student's goal(s).



## Establishing a Baseline For a Goal

Goal Area:	Baseline - What can the student currently do?

When determining the annual goal, the team must also document how the student is currently performing in relation to that goal area. This is called the baseline and should provide data specifically related to the annual goal area. The baseline in an IEP goal describes the student's current performance level, providing a starting point for setting measurable and achievable goals. It includes specific, objective data on the student's abilities and challenges, gathered from assessments, observations, and work samples (including present levels). This baseline helps in creating tailored goals, monitoring progress, and adjusting the IEP as needed. A well-defined baseline is essential for tracking progress and fostering the student's academic and functional development.

### Tips for Writing Baselines for IEP Goals

- 1. Use specific, measurable data:** Include precise, quantifiable information from assessments and observations
- 2. Describe current performance:** Clearly detail what the student can currently do, highlighting strengths and preferences and areas of difficulty
- 3. Include multiple data sources:** Gather information from various assessments, observations, and professional inputs
- 4. Be objective and factual:** Establish baselines according to observable and measurable behavior, avoiding subjective language
- 5. Align with assessments:** Ensure baseline data matches recent assessment results
- 6. Detail specific skills:** When appropriate, break down complex skills into smaller, specific skills
- 7. Use clear language:** Write in an easy-to-understand manner, avoiding jargon
- 8. Connect to goals:** Ensure baselines logically lead to and support IEP goals

By following these tips, educators can create effective baselines that set the stage for meaningful and achievable IEP goals.



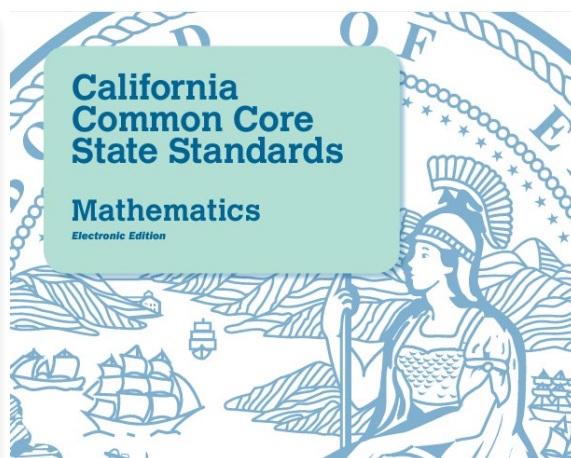
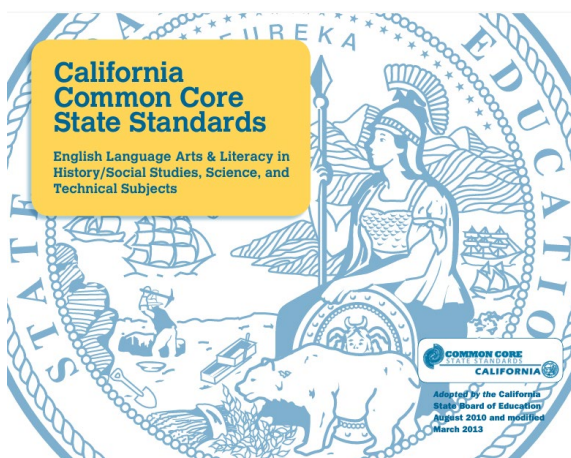
## Which goals need to be connected to grade-level state standards?

Academic goals need to be connected to grade-level standards or [Preschool Learning Foundations](#) which defines what students should learn in each grade.

### Connecting academic goals to standards accomplishes the following:

- Allows students with disabilities to receive grade-level curriculum and instruction, increasing expectations and improving outcomes for students with IEPs
- Supports the student in progressing toward standards with a grade-level goal

Goals that focus on behavior, social-emotional challenges, and functional skills do not need to be aligned with grade-level standards.



### When writing goals connected to state standards, follow these steps:

1. Know the grade-level standards corresponding to your particular student's content area and grade level
2. Examine data for your particular student (e.g., use the [RIOT](#) protocol to ensure a comprehensive data collection) and determine where they are functioning in relation to the grade-level standards
3. Based on your student's strengths, preferences, and rate of learning, determine the goal for where the student will be in a year; this may require unpacking the standard
4. Determine what scaffolds the student requires to progress toward the standard
5. Remember that some students will work toward the standard by working on a skill related to the standard. It may be necessary to reference previous grade-level standards in order to build on the foundational skills needed




## Bridging the Content of the State Standards to Write IEP Goals

Unpacking a standard helps us determine precisely what the standard states, what it means for student learning, and what it requires teachers to teach. The following resources will help in unpacking the standards. In turn, educators can determine which elements of the standard to prioritize in supporting the student's progress towards mastery.

■ **Core Content Connectors (CCCs):** The most important skills from the Common Core State Standards. This resource breaks each standard into smaller, more accessible parts.

■ **Essential understandings:** The most critical skills students must know in each grade before moving on to the next grade level. The intent of the following resources, created by The National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), are to ensure that students with significant cognitive disabilities achieve higher academic outcomes and leave high school ready for post-secondary options.

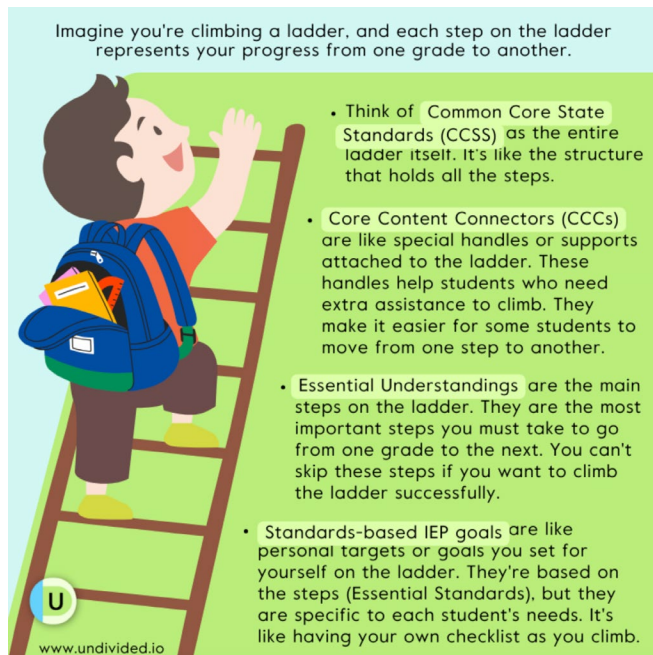
- [Prioritized ELA Connectors and Essential Understandings, reading](#)
- [Prioritized ELA Connectors and Essential Understandings, writing](#)
- [Prioritized Math Connectors and Essential Understandings](#)



**Why use Core Content Connectors?**

- ✓ CCCs break down the academic standards so that children who need more support can learn the same content as their peers.
- ✓ CCCs can be taught with the same or similar materials other children are using.
- ✓ CCCs help promote inclusion because children can learn alongside their peers and be a part of their school community.

www.undivided.io



Imagine you're climbing a ladder, and each step on the ladder represents your progress from one grade to another.

- Think of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the entire ladder itself. It's like the structure that holds all the steps.
- Core Content Connectors (CCCs) are like special handles or supports attached to the ladder. These handles help students who need extra assistance to climb. They make it easier for some students to move from one step to another.
- Essential Understandings are the main steps on the ladder. They are the most important steps you must take to go from one grade to the next. You can't skip these steps if you want to climb the ladder successfully.
- Standards-based IEP goals are like personal targets or goals you set for yourself on the ladder. They're based on the steps (Essential Standards), but they are specific to each student's needs. It's like having your own checklist as you climb.

www.undivided.io

### Remember:

- Do not write a goal that simply restates the standard.
- Write goals in all identified areas of need.
- Presume competence with achievable yet challenging goals for the student.





## What resources can I refer to for writing goals for preschool and transitional kindergarten (TK) students?

The California Preschool/Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations (PTKLF) describe the learning and development of most students ages three to five-and-a-half-years-old in high-quality early education programs. Use PTKLF to develop goals for three to five-and-a-half year-old students in center-based, home-based, and TK settings.

The following pdfs offer targeted resources:

- [PTKLF Introduction](#)
- [PTKLF At a Glance](#)
- [Approaches to Learning](#)
- [Health](#)
- [History-Social Science](#)
- [Language and Literacy](#)
- [Mathematics](#)
- [Physical Development](#)
- [Science](#)
- [Social-Emotional Development](#)
- [Visual Performing Arts](#)

## What do I need to keep in mind when my student is also a dual-language learner or an English learner (EL)?

For [students whose native language is not English](#), linguistically appropriate goals, objectives, programs, and services need to be included in the IEP. For complete information about requirements related to the evaluation of English learners for special education consideration in California, review the [California Practitioner's Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities](#).

In addition to knowledge about the student's present level of functioning in reading, writing, and math, knowledge of the student's language proficiency and progress with the [English Language Proficiency Assessments for California \(ELPAC\)](#) will be needed.

- The ELPAC is used for students in kindergarten through grade 12.
- The IEP team may determine that the alternative ELPAC may be used to assess the student's English language proficiency.

The person writing the goal will want to know the progress in reading, writing, listening, and speaking on the ELPAC. In addition to present levels and the student's language proficiency, the team should also consider the student's disability. Consulting with your Local Education Agency (LEA) or site EL specialist may be useful when writing linguistically appropriate goals.



**Linguistically appropriate goals are:**

- Aligned to the student's current language proficiency level
- Aligned to California English Language Development (ELD) standards in listening, speaking, reading, or writing
- Account for the student's language ability
- Typically set in the areas of literacy or communication

Remember to include the language of instruction for these goals.

**Additional information:**

- [California English Language Development Standards](#)
- [Linguistically Appropriate Goals and Objectives](#): Improving Outcomes for Multilingual Students with Exceptional Needs

**Measurable Annual Goals**

When drafting the goal portion of the IEP, be sure to address all components referenced.

ANNUAL GOAL - What skill(s) will the student be expected to attain by the end of this IEP's timeframe?	CRITERIA - What measurement will be used to determine whether the goal has been achieved?	METHOD - How will progress be measured?	SCHEDULE - How frequently will progress be measured?	PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE - Who will monitor progress?

**✓ ANNUAL GOAL**

**What skill(s) will the student be expected to attain by the end of this IEP time frame?**

- A measurable annual goal is a specific outcome that the student is expected to achieve within a year. It focuses on an area of need identified through assessment and other data. The goal should be **specific, measurable, and relevant**. Be sure to lean into the student's strengths and preferences when considering the goal.

**✓ CRITERIA**

**What measurement will be used to determine whether the goal has been achieved?**

- The criteria for success specify the expected level of achievement or proficiency the student must reach to demonstrate that they have met their goal. These criteria establish clear targets to evaluate progress and can be defined in terms of specific performance levels, percentages, scores, or other measurable indicators.



## ✓ METHOD

### How will progress be measured?

- The method of measurement outlines how progress toward the goal will be assessed and documented. Assessment tools, tests, observations, work samples, and other data collection methods can provide reliable and valid information measuring the student's progress.

## ✓ SCHEDULE

### How frequently will progress be measured?

- The schedule for measuring progress determines how frequently progress will be assessed. It identifies specific checkpoints throughout the year when data will be collected and analyzed to determine the student's progress toward the annual goal.

## ✓ PERSON(S) RESPONSIBLE

### Who will monitor progress?

- The person responsible for monitoring and reporting progress toward the annual goal is identified in the goal section. This may be a special or general education teacher, a related service provider, or another designated professional. The person responsible verifies that data is collected, progress is tracked, and reports are shared with the IEP team, including the parent(s). Names of specific staff members should not be included in this section as they may change during the IEP period; however, IEP teams should identify the person responsible by title or role.

## Is it ok to bring a draft of IEP goals to the IEP meeting?

Draft IEP goals are starting points and can be changed. We encourage you to discuss and improve these goals with the whole IEP team, including educators, service providers, parent(s), and, when appropriate, the student. The goals are not finalized until the IEP meeting and all team members have had the opportunity to provide input and come to agreement on them. Refer to your LEA's procedures regarding drafting goals prior to the IEP meeting.

### Additional resource:

- [Measurable Annual Goals IEP Tip Sheet](#)





## When do I write goals with short-term objectives?

**According to law**, students with disabilities “who take alternate assessments, a description of benchmarks or short-term objectives should be included in the IEP.” For all other students, writing short-term objectives is best practice to monitor and document progress on goals, but is not mandated by law. Consult your LEA procedures when determining if your goals should include short-term objectives.

Short-term objectives and/or benchmarks (intermediate steps between the baseline and the measurable goal. Note: Short-term objectives to meet each goal are required for students who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate academic standards and optional for others):



### For additional learning:

■ [Developing IEPs that Support Inclusive Education for Students with the Most Significant Cognitive Disabilities \(TIES Center Brief #3\)](#)

**Remember:** If the current performance levels and baseline information are the starting points and the goals are the endpoints, then the objectives and benchmarks may be considered the steps between the two. Objectives break skills into discrete components, and benchmarks describe the amount of progress a student is expected to make within a specified segment of the IEP period. They establish expected performance levels, allowing for regular checks of progress that coincide with progress-reporting periods. Both objectives and benchmarks lay out sequential, logical steps towards reaching the annual measurable goal. Depending upon the needs of the student and the makeup of the goal, the IEP team may break each goal into objectives, benchmarks, or a combination of the two.



## Schedule of Progress Reporting:

SCHEDULE OF PROGRESS REPORTING
Explain how and when parent(s)/guardian(s)/families will be periodically informed of student's progress toward meeting annual goal(s)

The IEP must indicate how frequently progress on goals will be reported to parent(s) and in what manner. Written progress reports are a component of ongoing communication between educators, service providers, and parents, and must be provided to parent(s) of eligible students at least as often as report cards or progress reports are issued for students without disabilities.

### Progress reports must answer the following two questions for each goal:

1. What is the student's progress toward the annual goal?
2. Is the progress sufficient to enable the student to achieve the annual goal by the end of the IEP period?

Monitoring IEP goals can be part of your regular routine by consistently tracking progress through observations, work samples, or data collection. Regularly reviewing this information helps ensure the student stays on track and allows for timely adjustments if needed.

Here are some characteristics of effective IEP progress monitoring procedures and tools to include:

- **Accurate:** Consistently measures target target outlined in the goal
- **Sensitive:** Tools used are sensitive to growth, measuring small changes in performance
- **Frequent:** Regular and frequent data collection
- **Simple:** Easy to implement, quick to administer, easy to "score"
- **Brief:** Takes only a short amount of time or embedded in instruction

When writing these reports, school personnel should use language that is generally understandable and avoid using jargon. If the student is at risk for not meeting their annual goal(s), IEP team members must consider why progress is not being made, and, if appropriate, reconvene an IEP team meeting. The IEP team will then discuss the lack of expected progress and responsively revise the IEP.



**For additional learning:**

- [Measuring Progress Toward Annual Goals IEP Tip Sheet](#)

## EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT CONSIDERATIONS

- Are there goals and objectives for each area of need, if appropriate?
- Are the goals based on the student's grade level standards?
- Does the baseline directly correlate with the goal?
- Are the goals and objectives/benchmarks measurable?
- Do the goals and objectives/benchmarks enable the student to be involved and progress within the curriculum?
- Are all other educational needs resulting from the disability addressed?
- If the student is an English learner, are the goals and objectives/benchmarks linguistically appropriate?
- Is the person(s) primarily responsible for implementing the goals and objectives/benchmarks and monitoring progress clearly identified?
- In non-assessment years, are present levels of academic and functional performance extensive enough to confirm areas of need and the student's current levels/baselines?
- Are goals written to enable the student to participate and make progress in the general education curriculum?
- Are goals updated from year to year based on student progress?
- Did the student make progress towards the prior year goals, and is progress documented?

**Your feedback is vital as the user of this handout.  
Please share your feedback on this [survey](#).**

