



## **Process and Standards for Writing Behavioral IEP Goals**

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This article is written to present a process and standards for writing IEP goals related to behavior challenges. The attached forms provide two examples and a form that can be used in preparation for writing goals to be placed into Indiana's IEP format. The goals provided should be looked at as simply examples. In your real work and before writing behavior goals, staff will need to understand present levels of performance (PLOP) and have a deeper understanding of the behavior through the FBA process. The functional behavioral assessment process will inform staff where, when and with whom the behavior is most and least likely to occur. It should also highlight skill deficits, learning styles and point to the forms of systematically designed instruction that will be most helpful, including what reinforces the student. Present levels of performance should inform the metric used, baseline for the student, and skills that can be built upon. It is important to know all pieces before you begin writing a goal. Below are some other standards to follow.

### **Are the Behavior IEP Goals Written in Positive Terms?**

Educators writing Individualized Education Program (IEP) behavioral goals should be focused on teaching and building prosocial and positively stated replacement behaviors or alternative skills, and not on getting rid of negative/problematic behaviors. Goal should not be: "The child will stop hitting" (or whatever the negative behavior is). Instead, as part of the FBA process, skill deficits should be identified that contribute to the problem behavior (e.g., lack of self-management skills, communication challenges, emotional regulation skill deficits, etc.) and should be the focus of programming. In the FBA process, skill deficits are identified as a setting events or precipitating factor. The only true way to change behavior in the long term is to teach the student a different way of responding. While behavior reduction can be measured as part of your data collection process, it should not be an IEP goal.

### **Are the Goals Skill or Outcome Focused?**

IEP goals guide the specific behavior skills you will teach and are simply not based on hopeful outcomes. In other words, while the desired outcome may be that the child will play with others during recess, an IEP goal should target specific skills the student will need in order to play with other students (e.g., choice making, asking for help, turn taking). These skills must then be purposefully taught.

### **Do Data Collection Methods Facilitate Accuracy?**

When establishing criteria for mastery, state it in a manner that is reasonable to collect. Saying that a student will exhibit a new behavior 100% of the time means that you are taking data on this behavior across all settings throughout the day. This is simply impossible and unreasonable to do. Instead, define criteria that allows you to be accountable. Examples include in 7 out of 9 requests or during 30 minutes of lunch with 65% accuracy. Additionally, the data collection system should be identified by staff as part of IEP process.

### **Is IEP Goal Meaningful and Does it Promote Adult Success?**

The goals should be socially significant and prepare the child for real life. In other words, we should always question if the goal is age appropriate, and will move

the student toward meaningful post-school outcomes and a greater level of independence. In truth, we are preparing students to not be around us.

### **Are IEP Goals Measurable and Observable?**

The goal should be observable and measurable. For example, goals that focus on skills such as compliance are open to interpretation. Each person's perspective on what defines compliance may differ. Goals should be operationally defined, "student will ask for help during lunch." We all know what that looks like. Operationally defining goals makes it feasible to accurately collect collection.

### **Are IEP Goal Mastery Levels (Targets) Reasonably Reachable?**

The goal must be reasonable for the child to achieve. We want to push them a little, but taking small steps is often a more effective way to make change happen and for success to be acknowledged. While goals are often written to be achieved over the course of a year, recognize that each student learns at a different pace. The IEP should be more of a fluid document.

## **Is the Behavior Goal Linked to Information Collected through the Functional Behavior Assessment Process?**

The behavioral goal and process to teach should be linked to information gathered through the functional behavioral assessment process (FBA). What skill deficits are exhibited by the child? When is the behavior most and least likely to occur? What are setting events (precipitating factors)? What works with the child? What are their strengths and interests? How does the child best learn? These and many more questions help to guide the IEP process.

## **IEP Goals are Portable**

To ensure implementation of the goal across settings and schools, behavioral goals should not be about the adoption of a specific program or methodology (e.g., child will utilize Zones of Regulation, etc.). The goal should be about skill outcomes for the child (e.g., child will self-regulate).

Students do not automatically know “how to behave”. Most students use the skills they have learned through life experience..good or bad. If we expect positive behavior change, we need to be able to articulate desired skills and purposefully teach.

# Student Behavior Goal Process Examples

This form is not to take the place of conducting a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA). Rather it is to be used to determine individualized education program (IEP) goals based on information gathered through the FBA process. There is a common understanding and belief in the behavioral world that skill deficits are a key factor for all behavior challenges. As a result, the only effective way to ensure long term behavior change is to teach an alternative prosocial skill (e.g., communication, emotional regulation, social skills, etc.). The intent of this form is to help guide this process. A behavior plan may still need to be developed that articulates environmental and instructional supports, and other strategies to address behavior challenges.

Component	Examples	Explanation
<b>Operational Definition of Behaviors of Concern</b>	Hitting staff, saying “No” to work, throwing items, tearing materials off the wall.	Every behavior should be operationally defined and listed. In other words, we should know the behavior when we see it.
<b>Primary Skill Deficit Identified through FBA</b>	Student is not able to regulate emotions when presented with certain tasks/demands.	Through the FBA process, skill deficits should always be identified as part of setting events/precipitating factors.
<b>Alternative Skills to Teach</b>	Student will identify how he is feeling or his emotional level in various settings.	Based on the skill deficit, staff must identify what specific skill the student will learn to do instead. In other words, a replacement behavior/skill must be positively stated.
<b>State Standard(s)</b>	The grade level State Standard for which the student is enrolled.	Look at DOE’s SEL competencies to identify a corresponding State Standard.
<b>Present Level of Performance</b> <b>A. Strengths/Skills</b> <b>B. Behavior Data</b>	<p>A. Strengths/Skills: rote memorization, can follow directions, is verbal, prefers the use of visual supports.</p> <p>B. Behavior data trend shows that problematic behavior does not happen in the morning between 9 and 10:30.</p> <p>Current state based on behavior data: When asked in a calm, nonthreatening situation and shown a visual support depicting 5 different emotional levels (incredible 5 point scale: 1. calm and relaxed, 2. feeling ok, 3. a little nervous, 4. getting angry, 5. going to explode) that reflect behavioral escalation, Student can identify the correct emotional level an average of 10% in 3 weekly trials.</p>	<p>A. Alternative skills can be more easily identified and taught when a student’s strengths and interests are known.</p> <p>B. All decisions should be data-driven. This data provides a baseline and tells staff the potential optimal time to teach the alternative skill.</p>
<b>Specially Designed Instruction</b>	A. Recognizing emotional responses.	A. For this IEP goal, the focus will simply be on recognizing emotions.

<p><b>A. Skills Taught (verbs)</b> <b>B. Amount of Time</b></p>	<p>B. Intentionally and proactively taught 10 minutes daily during morning work. Teacher will randomly refer to the emotion chart 2 times daily when Student is calm to ensure generalization.</p>	<p>B. Morning time is chosen because data confirms that is when the student is calmest. Students learn best when behavior is not happening. A strategy to ensure generalization should always be programmed for in the beginning.</p>
<p><b>Annual Goals</b> <b>A. Skill (verb)</b> <b>B. Level</b></p>	<p>A. When shown the incredible 5-point scale or some other self-rating scale that depicts different levels of feelings/emotions, Student will identify the correct feeling/emotion on an average of 80% of 3 weekly trials. B. Correct 80%</p>	<p>A. Rationale for this goal: Understanding how a Student feels at various moments throughout the day can help staff better respond to and address behaviors. And helping the Student understand their own emotions/feelings, can lead to self-regulation. In the future, coping strategies can be paired with and taught for each emotional level. B. Percentage is set to both maximize potential for growth and for success.</p>
<p><b>Chart Metric</b></p>	<p>Percentage of correct trials.</p>	<p>Single point standard metric.</p>
<p><b>Progress Monitoring Tool</b></p>	<p>Teacher Generated Data Collection Form</p>	<p>Data collection form developed/adopted by staff. Data must be collected on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p><b>Provision</b> <b>A. Where will instruction be provided?</b> <b>B. For how long?</b></p>	<p>A. Special Education Room, where all staff are involved in prompting to ensure generalization. Focus on positive behaviors. B. 10 minutes daily with visual supports developed with student</p>	<p>A. A schedule should be developed so each staff member knows when during the day they will directly teach this skill and when they will work on generalization B. An incredible 5-point scale or some other self-rating scale is developed and readily available for the student throughout the day.</p>
<p><b>Accommodations</b></p>	<p>Breaks during testing.</p>	<p>For this Student and based on their FBA, behavior is often used to escape a task. Having students ask for a break and providing that break, can minimize potential for escalation.</p>
<p><b>How will Student be reinforced?</b></p>	<p>FBA shows Student is motivated by attention. Student wants his parents to hear about his successes. Notes will be sent home when student correctly identifies his emotional levels.</p>	<p>FBA shows Student is motivated and reinforced by attention from parents. Reinforcement should be tied back to FBA or prior assessments of student's preferences.</p>
<p><b>Who teaches and practices these skills?</b></p>	<p>All staff. Consistency is important.</p>	<p>List staff who will be teaching this skill and ensuring generalization. Staff will need direct instruction on how and when to teach this skill.</p>
<p><b>Where will you teach these skills?</b></p>	<p>Practice in special education. Work on generalization across settings.</p>	<p>Teaching behavior skills should be built into the schedule as purposefully as academic skills.</p>

*Collaboratively developed by Pam Bell, Director, Exceptional Children's Cooperative and Dr. Cathy Pratt, Director, Indiana Resource Center for Autism, Indiana School Mental Health Initiative.*

# Example of Student Behavior: Asking for Help

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Component	Examples	Explanation
<b>Operational Definition of Behaviors of Concern</b>	Putting head down on desk during work time, not starting work when asked, "zoning out," texting in class	Every behavior should be operationally defined and listed. In other words, we should know the behavior when we see it.
<b>Primary Skill Deficit Identified through FBA</b>	Student cannot visualize a final product and is unable to start work.	Through the FBA process, skill deficits should always be identified as part of setting events/precipitating factors.
<b>Alternative Skills to Teach</b>	Student will ask for help when he does not know where to start on an assignment.	Based on the skill deficit, staff must identify what specific skill the child will learn to do instead. In other words, a replacement behavior must be positively stated.
<b>State Standard(s)</b>	The grade level State Standard for which the student is enrolled.	Look at DOE's SEL competencies to identify a corresponding State Standard.
<b>Present Level of Performance</b> <b>A. Strengths/Skills</b> <b>B. Behavior Data</b>	<p>A. Strengths/Skills: Reading skills, math, is highly verbal, is reinforced by negative and positive attention from staff and classmates.</p> <p>B. Behavior data trend shows that problematic behavior does not happen in PE or cooking class.</p> <p>When asked to start an assignment in class, Student can either identify the first step or will ask for help an average of 10% in 3 weekly trials.</p>	<p>A. Alternative skills can be more easily identified and taught when a student's strengths and interests are known.</p> <p>B. All decisions should be data-driven. This data provides a baseline and tells staff the potential optimal time to teach the alternative skill (away from other students.).</p>
<b>Specially Designed Instruction</b> <b>A. Skills Taught (verbs)</b> <b>B. Amount of Time</b>	<p>A. Recognize the need to ask for help</p> <p>B. Intentionally and proactively taught 10 minutes daily during study hall. All teachers are aware of this goal and will reinforce him to identify when he does not know where to start or to ask for help.</p>	<p>A. For this IEP goal, the focus will simply be on recognizing the need to ask for help when visualizing the finished product.</p> <p>B. Student performs best when he can visualize the final product. Asking for help should be encouraged and never criticized.</p>

<b>Annual Goals</b> <b>A. Skill (verb)</b> <b>B. Level</b>	<p>A. When asked to start on an assignment in class, Student will either identify the first step or will ask for help an average of 70% in 3 weekly trials.</p> <p>B. Correct 70%</p>	<p>A. Rationale for this goal: Understanding that a Student shuts down easily if he feels the slightest bit frustrated. It is best if the Student asks for help in the beginning of the task so he can work through the problem. Visualizing the finished product starts with a single step.</p> <p>B. Percentage is set to both maximize potential for growth and for success.</p>
<b>Chart Metric</b>	<p>Percentage of correct trials.</p>	<p>Single point standard metric.</p>
<b>Progress Monitoring Tool</b>	<p>Teacher Generated Data Collection Form</p>	<p>Data collection form developed/adopted by staff. Data must be collected on an ongoing basis to determine trends in performance.</p>
<b>Provision</b> <b>A. Where will instruction be provided?</b> <b>B. For how long?</b>	<p>A. Resource Room, where all staff are involved in prompting to ensure generalization. Focus on positive behaviors.</p> <p>B. 10 minutes daily with visual supports developed with student.</p>	<p>A. A schedule should be developed so each staff member knows when during the day they will directly teach this skill and when they will work on generalization. Generalization should be addressed in general education setting also.</p> <p>B. How much time is needed for the student to develop from the Present Level to the Goal Level. This may vary.</p>
<b>Accommodations</b>	<p>Testing in small groups to encourage asking for help or to identify when help is needed.</p>	<p>For this Student and based on his FBA, we want his grades to be reflective of his course skills, not his ability to ask for help.</p>
<b>How will Student be reinforced?</b>	<p>FBA shows Student is motivated by other student and staff attention. Student will not be singled out in front of the class for positive behaviors. However, all Student should be part of class-wide reinforcement program. Student will be taught these skills in a non-threatening environment. Parents will receive positive notes from staff.</p>	<p>FBA also shows Student is motivated and reinforced by attention from parent.</p>
<b>Who teaches and practices these skills?</b>	<p>All staff will know his goal. However, the skill will be taught in the resource room with a small group of students.</p>	<p>List staff who will be teaching this skill and ensuring generalization. Staff will need direct instruction on how and when to teach this skill.</p>
<b>Where will you teach these skills?</b>	<p>Practice in special education. Work on generalization across settings.</p>	<p>Teaching behavior skills should be built into the schedule as purposefully as academic skills.</p>

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# Student Behavior Goal Process

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<b>Component</b>	<b>Student Specific Information</b>
<b>Operational Definition of Behaviors of Concern</b>	
<b>Primary Skill Deficit Identified through FBA</b>	
<b>Alternative Skills to Teach</b>	
<b>State Standard(s)</b>	
<b>Present Level of Performance</b> A. Strengths/Skills B. Behavior Data	
<b>Specially Designed Instruction</b> A. Skills Taught (verbs) B. Amount of Time	



Component	Student Specific Information
<b>Annual Goals</b> A. Skill (verb) B. Level	
<b>Chart Metric</b>	
<b>Progress Monitoring Tool</b>	
<b>Provision</b> A. Where will instruction be provided? B. For how long?	
<b>Accommodations</b>	
<b>How will student be reinforced?</b>	
<b>Who teaches and practices these skills?</b>	
<b>Where will you teach these skills?</b>	

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