

## Goal Writing Grade-Level Standards Transcript

### Slide 1: Goal Writing: Grade-Level Standards

Welcome to the Goal Writing Webinar related to grade-level standards. Today we will be discussing the importance of writing Individualized Education Program goals on grade-level standards, what the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the US Department of Education says related to grade-level standards, and how to write goals on a student grade level and finding access points to those standards.

### Slide 2: Grade-Level Standards

Let's review the importance of setting goals on grade-level standards. There is a vast range of student needs including students whose present levels are one to two grades from grade-level standards and could quickly catch up. Along with students who 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 and the process of aligning goals is the same for all students.

### Slide 3: Goals at the Student's Grade Level

In the legal definition for IDEA, it talks about the general education curriculum so when we think about setting goals, we really need to keep in mind some of the considerations there for whether or not we always set a goal at the student's grade level. So, I will be referencing a letter from the Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, that came out in 2015 that really targets the question "Should I always set goals at the students grade level?"

### Slide 4: Should I Always Set Goals at the Student's Grade Level?

And you can see some key points from the OSER's letter.

"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."

### Slide 5: Should I Always Set Goals at the Student's Grade Level?

Here are some of the key features that we know is the importance of high expectations, and research shows that if we hold students to high expectations, they are much more likely to meet those expectations and if we set expectations low for students, it can be a detriment for that child

### Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:

Ana Kolbach, Student Support Services, at [ana.kolbach@vermot.gov](mailto:ana.kolbach@vermot.gov)

because it is not helping them to move forward, succeed, make progress and access that general education curriculum.

### **Slide 6: Attainable and Realistic Goals**

As we think about in light of the child's circumstance, when we are thinking about Individualized Education Programs and the goals we are setting, it is very individualized to the context of the individual student. The letter states "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." What they are saying here is, that we don't automatically say so the student is in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, so we set a 5<sup>th</sup> grade goal, we are going to think about the individual student in light of the goal setting context.

### **Slide 7: Attainable and Realistic Goals**

They further talk about a "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." We are really focusing here on those ambitious goals, so we may not be catching a student up three or four grade levels in one year, that may be completely unrealistic for us to do, or if we just set a goal and keep moving that goal on year to year without making any changes, that's not doing any service for that student. But at the same time, we really want to focus on that progress piece by closing the gap and really ensuring that we are moving forward and setting ambitious goals.

### **Slide 8: Setting Goals**

We really need to start with our grade level expectations. Starting first with where we should be and what do we know of the grade level expectations for this student.

Screening and benchmarking students on their grade level is important to us because it helps us know where the student is in connection with the grade-level expectations. And it helps us understand where the student is compared to their peers. And both of those pieces of information can be important to us when we are thinking about establishing those Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance statements. The next component is what are the skills that are necessary to get to the grade level expectations. We need to know deeply what the content looks like, key components and the steppingstones to get to the grade level expectations. So, then we can start thinking for students that may not be at the grade level expectations currently, what are the access points for those students. We may use a tool such as a survey level assessment to start identifying a starting place. We may use additional data and information that we may have about the student and their past performance to start thinking about where they are in relation to an

access point. As a team, start thinking about and keeping in mind the question, where do we want the student to be at the end of the year and what would it take to get them there? Really thinking about starting with the grade-level expectations, where the student is and what their access point is and keeping in mind the long-term outlook and how do we close the gap for this student.

### **Slide 9: Process**

The process in which we can write student's IEP goals on grade level standards begins with analysis. Where is the student? We choose standards, and consider where is the student going? And then write those goals. How will the student get there?

### **Slide 10: Analysis**

This first step begins with analysis. We must consider where the student is. We can use data from student's standardized test results and other data available. We also use a student's current classroom level of educational and functional performance. It is also very important to gain input from the student's family and fellow educators.

### **Slide 11: Choose Standards**

Our next step is choosing the standards, which is our foundation for our goal. What is the student's enrolled grade level? We must use a student's grade-level standard for our goals, even if the student whose present levels are far below grade-level standards and need intensive services and supports. Within that standard, what are the skills and concepts? Using the verbs and nouns in that standard, what is the student expected to do and what is the student is expected to know? Using that standard, what skills are required for every student to master in that selected grade-level standard?

Using these reflective questions, we begin considering the grade-level standard for our student and break down what the necessary skills and concepts of that standard.

### **Slide 12: Write Goals**

Now we begin to write goals. We will be considering how the student will get to mastery of the standard. Consider what skills in that standard may be a barrier for that student to access and progress toward the grade-level standard.

Let's break down those skills. What can the student currently do? What is mastery of that standard? And what would be the benchmarks from where the student currently is to mastery of that standard.

We can use Vermont Alternate Assessment Achievement Level Descriptors to build access points, benchmarks, and goals for the student.

The Vermont Alternate Assessment Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) for English Language Arts, Math, and Next Generation Science Standards define content area knowledge, skills, and processes that students at a particular performance level are expected to know and be able to do. ALDs provide descriptions of each performance level and are used to establish performance standards.

### **Slide 13: Vermont ALD**

Here we can see an example of a Vermont ALD. The Common Core Standard is listed on the far left, in this example it shows the standard for grade five reading literacy. To the right of the standard, we can see the essence statement for that standard. Then in the following boxes, we can see the beginning, approaching, meets and exceeds for mastery of that essence statement. When considering students whose present levels are far below grade-level standards and need intensive services and supports, we can use these beginning, approaching, meets or exceeds for access points to that grade level standard.

### **Slide 14: Example**

Here we can see an example of breaking down that standard and finding the access point. For this grade five English language arts literacy standard, the student will quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. Using the ALD we can find our access point; the student will match a picture to a detail in the text. From there you will build up to your goals using benchmarks or objectives to help close that gap for that student.

### **Slide 15: Aligning Goals to Standards**

For our students whose present levels are one to two grades from grade-level standards and could quickly catch up, focus on grade level standards or they will continue to fall behind.

And Students whose present levels are far below grade-level standards and need intensive services and supports, break down skills to what the student is working on. The focus may be on minimizing that gap for the student, rather than making up many grade levels in on year.

### **Slide 16: Review**

Let's review goal writing on grade level standards. IDEA talks about the general education curriculum and that 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. This alignment must guide but not replace the IEP decision making process. We must think about the individual student considering the context. If a student is much 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? I will also mention that even our alternate assessment is based on grade level standards. Let's set students up for success by aligning their goals and objectives to those same standards.

### **Slide 17: Contact Information**

Thank you for joining this recorded webinar. For any further information on this, please reach out to Ana Kolbach and [Ana.Kolbach@vermont.gov](mailto:Ana.Kolbach@vermont.gov).