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## Policy on Standards-Based IEP Goals

*“Being in special education does not mean that a student cannot learn and reach grade-level standards. In fact, the majority of students with disabilities should be able to meet those standards. Special education provides the additional help and support that these students need to learn. This means designing instruction to meet their specific needs and providing supports, such as physical therapy, counseling services, or interpreting services, to help students learn alongside their peers and reach the same high standards as all other students.” (Working Together for Students with Disabilities: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Frequently Asked Questions, December 2005).*

1. All Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals must be based on the student’s strengths, weaknesses and needs. Goals must also be based on the student’s present level of academic and functional performance (PLAFP). In reporting the student’s present level of academic performance, the PLAFP must also address the student’s academic achievement relative to the student’s grade level standards, given supplemental aids and services where appropriate. Where the student is not successfully meeting grade level standards, the PLAFP must identify the standards that the student has successfully met.
2. FAPE requires access to the general curriculum and to the LRE. We are not changing the FAPE standard to require maximization of learning/educational benefit. We are enforcing IDEA’s requirement that students with disabilities access the general education curriculum as appropriate based on their individualized needs. Therefore, for all students requiring specially designed instruction (SDI), goals must address:
  - Academic and/or functional, social, behavioral, physical and/or other educational needs resulting from the child’s disability, in a way that:
  - Allows the child to access and make progress in the general education curriculum (FAPE); and
  - Allows the child to access and make progress in the general education classroom (LRE), as appropriate.

A standards-based academic IEP goal is aligned with State standards and is chosen to facilitate the student’s progress toward the achievement of grade-level academic standards, whenever appropriate.

3. In developing academic goals for a student's IEP, the IEP Team should consider each grade level standard as to whether:
  - a) The student can reasonably be expected to meet that standard in the coming year without need of SDI or accommodation, in which case it should not be referenced in the IEP;
  - b) The student can reasonably be expected to meet that standard in the coming year with accommodations in the regular education setting, in which case the accommodations should be described with sufficient specificity in Section 5 of the IEP;
  - c) The student can reasonably be expected to meet that standard in the coming year with SDI (including consultation by a special education teacher in the regular education classroom), and possibly accommodations as well, in which case an IEP goal must be written for that standard which references the SDI and accommodations to be provided in connection with that goal (Example: By June 20, 2014, given a digital graphic organizer to record passage details, Charles will determine a theme of a story, drama or poem from details in the text with 100 percent independence on weekly assignments in ELA classes as measured by student work samples.) (MLR: ELA 4.RL.2) ; or
  - d) The student cannot reasonably be expected to meet that standard in the coming year even with the provision of SDI and accommodations, in which case the standard should be broken into its components in order to identify its critical elements and those subskills which represent weaknesses for the student. IEP goals must be written addressing those elements and sub-skills, referencing any non-grade level standard that addresses those sub-skills at that level of development, referencing the SDI and accommodations to be provided in connection with those goals, and targeting a reasonable expectation of progress in the development of those sub-skills.
4. "Accommodations mean changes in the manner in which instruction and assessment is delivered that does not alter the curriculum level expectation being measured or taught" (MUSER II.2). To access the general education curriculum, students requiring specially designed instruction may also need accommodations.
  - Section 4 of the IEP will state accommodations specific to stated goals needed to access the general education curriculum, if appropriate.
  - Section 5 of the IEP will include accommodations that are to be used in the general education setting, if appropriate
5. Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, the Maine Department of Education will expect to find standards-based academic goals in each IEP it reviews, wherever appropriate.