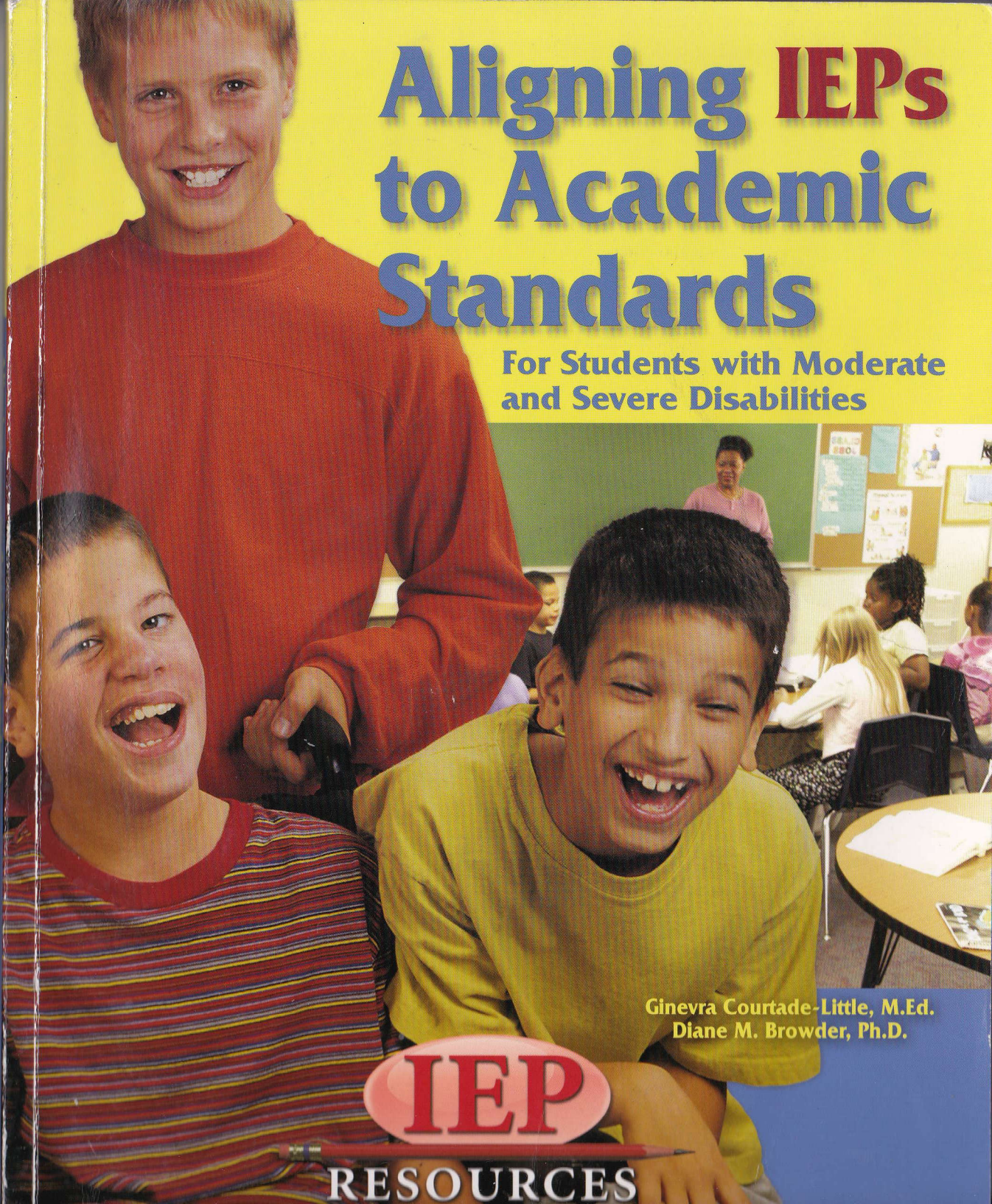
Aligning IEPs to Academic Standards

For Students with Moderate and Severe Disabilities



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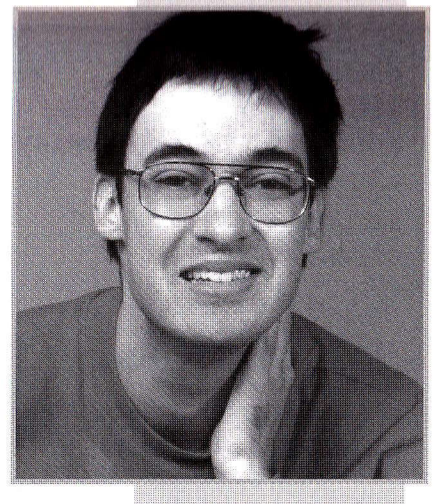
IEP RESOURCES



Chapter 1
Introduction

What Does Alignment to Academic Standards Mean?

Suzanne is in 5th grade and her IEP will be different this year. While she will continue to have goals related to her expanded use of an augmentative communication system, Suzanne will now also pursue goals that focus on her acquisition of daily living skills, like putting on her coat and personal grooming. In addition she will learn to participate in her IEP meeting by helping to choose her own goals and signing her name. What also will be different is that for the first time Suzanne will have some academic goals that promote her participation in the 5th grade curriculum. While Suzanne has had academic goals before – she learned to select a dollar for a purchase she wanted to make and was able to read pictures/ sight words on her schedule – now she will have academic goals that focus on her state's standards for 5th graders. For example, her new goals will help her gain meaning from chapter books read by peers and find solutions for everyday math problems. These changes will prepare Suzanne to participate in her state's alternate assessment and will promote skills that can provide her with a lifelong benefit (for example, sharing literature.) This year Suzanne will have the benefit of a **standards-based IEP** with goals that are **aligned** with the state's academic content standards for her assigned grade level.

To develop a standards-based IEP you must first understand the concept of alignment.

Alignment is . . . a matching of two educational components which strengthens the purpose and goals of both . . .

. . . For example, instruction can be aligned with assessment; assessment can be aligned with state standards; IEPs can be aligned with state standards to help align instruction with the general curriculum.

Developing standards-based IEPs for students with moderate and severe disabilities is a developing educational trend. In the late 1990s, educators began to respond to the requirements of IDEA 1997 to promote access to the general curriculum and to include all students in state and district assessments. Some students with significant cognitive disabilities needed alternate assessments because they could not participate in large scale assessments with accommodations. As educators began to develop and administer alternate assessments, it soon became clear that for students to demonstrate the state standards targeted by these assessments, they needed instruction that was "aligned" to these standards. However, to develop a standards-based IEP you must first understand the concept of alignment.

Alignment is a matching of two educational components which strengthens the purpose and goals of both. For example, instruction can be aligned with assessment; assessment can be aligned with state standards; and IEPs can be aligned with state standards to help align instruction with the general curriculum. Before considering alignment in more detail, it's helpful to consider three reasons why alignment is important.

1. IEPs aligned with state standards can prepare students for state assessments.

Many students with moderate and severe disabilities participate in alternate assessments because they are not able to participate in large scale assessments with accommodations. No Child Left Behind requires reporting adequate yearly progress for all students in reading, math, and science. Some students who participate in alternate assessments can be reported as achieving adequate yearly progress if they meet a state's alternate achievement standards. The application of alternate achievement standards is only appropriate for students with significant cognitive disabilities and must be limited to no more than 1% of the student population.[1] Alternate achievement standards specify performance levels that are aligned with grade level content standards but set different performance levels. To meet these

[1]For more information on the use of alternate achievement standards for reporting adequate yearly progress, see the Federal Register December 9, 2003.

alternate achievement standards, students need instruction that is aligned with the academic content standards for their grade. The IEP is not meant to restate all of these content standards, but should specify skills for the student to acquire that will promote access to this curriculum and help the student meet the alternate achievement standards.

2. For students to show progress in academic content, they need academic instruction.

Sometimes educators have taught functional curriculum as a replacement for the general curriculum. Functional skills are important for increased independence and transition to adult living, but students also need the opportunity to participate in the general curriculum for their grade level. Young students especially need the opportunity to gain skills in literacy and math. Sometimes in the past students with moderate and severe disabilities received little or no academic instruction. Because students with moderate and severe disabilities need direct and systematic instruction, they are not likely to learn academic skills unless they receive this instruction. The IEP is not intended to define all of this instruction nor does it function as the student's curriculum. Instead, it points the way for you to set priorities for what the student will master and how he will access the broader content.

Functional skills are important for increased independence and transition to adult living, but students also need the opportunity to participate in the general curriculum for their grade level.

Young students especially need the opportunity to gain skills in literacy and math.

3. Well aligned IEPs can promote meaningful academic instruction.

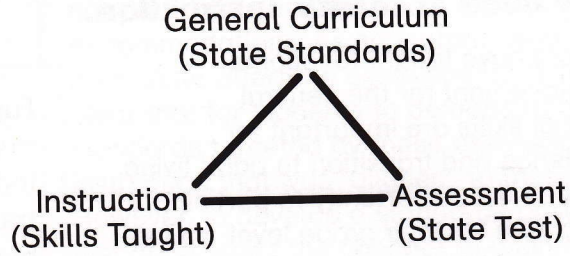
Deciding what academic skills to teach students with moderate and severe disabilities can be difficult. Sometimes the goal that is chosen does not appear to be "really reading" or "really math" when presented to general educators. Sometimes it is clearly academic, but with little real life use or meaning for the student. Sometimes it is academic, but not relevant to the student's current grade level content. Knowing how to align an IEP to state standards can help planning teams select academic goals that are meaningful for the student and promote access to the general curriculum.

Further Understanding Alignment

Notice that the instruction addresses content to be covered by the state test and links to the state standards.

Alignment occurs when there is a match between the written, taught and tested curriculum. The alignment of these educational components can be illustrated as follows:

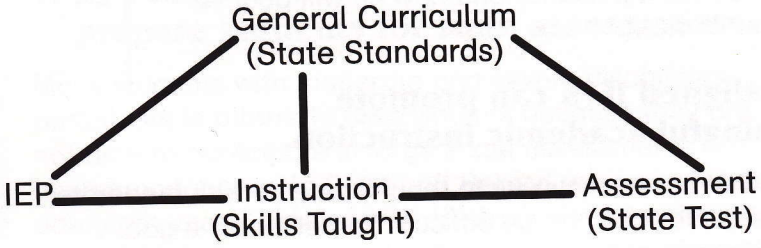
When Educational Components Align



The IEP can help define priorities for student mastery within this curriculum and skills students can use to access grade level content. When a student has an IEP, well aligned educational components can be illustrated in this way:

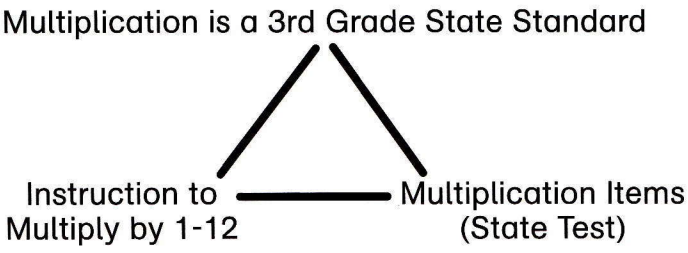
Note that the IEP helps focus the instruction.

When IEPs Promote Alignment



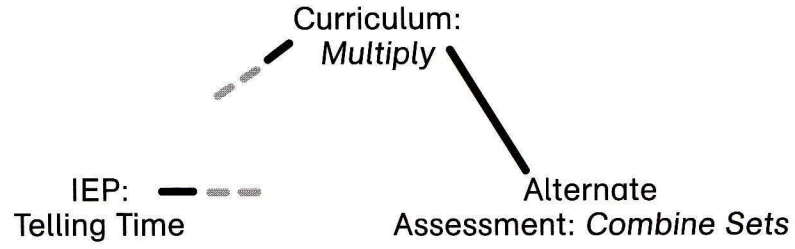
To consider what the pattern looks like when IEPs don't align, consider a hypothetical general education context in which educational components are aligned. For example, Ms. Jones is teaching her third grade class to multiply using numbers 1-12. Her state's 3rd grade mathematics standards include beginning multiplication. The state's 3rd grade math assessment will measure how well her students multiply. In this example, the taught curriculum aligns well with both the written curriculum (state standards) and tested curriculum (state test). The alignment can be diagrammed like this:

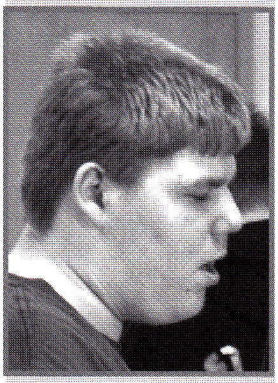
Alignment for 3rd Grade Math Standard



Ms. Smith is the special educator for 3rd grade students with significant cognitive disabilities. Her students participate in the state's alternate assessment. One portion of the assessment determines if students can group items and count the sets (concrete form of multiplication). The only math skill Ms. Smith has targeted for student IEPs is telling time. In the following example, students do not have instruction aligned to states standards:

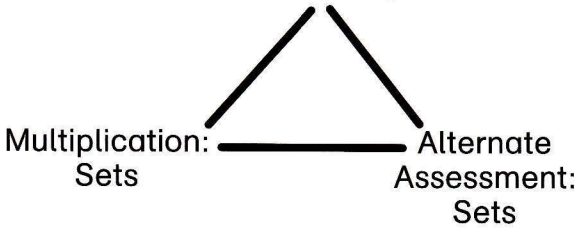
Instruction Not Aligned to State Standards





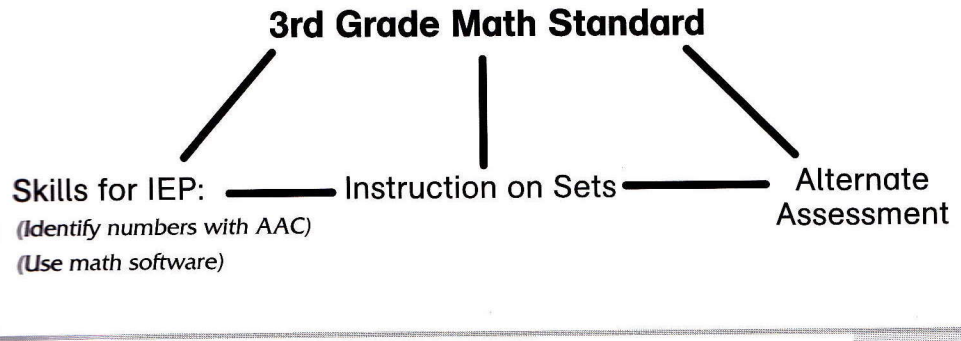
To her credit, after learning more about alignment to state standards and considering her students' skills, Ms. Smith decides to add instruction on combining sets for her 3rd grade class. They practice this skill as an early vocational task in creating supplies packets at a job site. For example, the teacher has them make three sets of art supplies with two pens in each set. They then find out how many pens they have used in all. To further help her students understand, Ms. Smith uses pictures of the task with numbers and the mathematical signs "x" and "=". And she helps select materials for Ms. Jones' mainstream 3rd grade class to practice multiplication with concrete objects. She works with Ms. Jones so her students can participate more fully in the multiplication lessons by working with peers who check their multiplication worksheets by creating sets of items. Ms. Smith now has instruction that aligns as follows:

3rd Grade-Multiplication



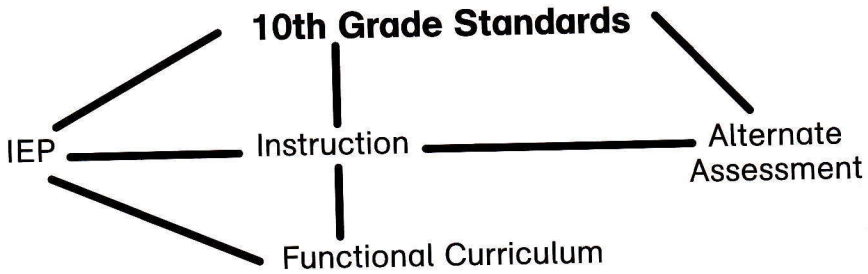
The IEP team can become aware of the importance of multiplication in 3rd grade math by reviewing the state standards and having the general education teacher, Ms. Jones, share how they focus on these standards. When planning for John's 3rd grade year, Ms. Smith is aware that he's challenged in learning to combine sets because he has only limited use of one hand. He makes most of his responses through the use of his voice output picture communication AAC device or through using a switch that

functions as a mouse for the computer. Currently, he only uses the switch to activate cause and effect software games. To master the concept of combining sets, first John needs to learn how to create and then count sets. So the team decides that one IEP goal will be for John to learn to use the first portion of a math software program that introduces multiplication by showing pictures of arrays of items. John also needs to learn to identify numbers with his AAC. This goal will provide broader access to numerous math activities in 3rd grade. Here is how his IEP promotes alignment of his instruction to the 3rd grade math standards:



Alignment with high school curriculum can be especially challenging when the gap between the general curriculum and students' current academic skills is large. For example, state standards for 10th grade English target understanding symbolism in poetry and other literature. Here the IEP team is planning for Ramona, a student with significant cognitive disabilities who currently has no reading skills, but enjoys the social context of being with typical peers in English class. The IEP team wants to build on Ramona's social success by promoting some literacy skills that link to the poetry focus of 10th grade. Since Ramona has used picture symbols for basic needs and social communication, the IEP team considers how

she might learn the more abstract symbols of poetry. Similarly, the team considers the state standards in other academic areas like math and science. Because of Ramona's age, the team also wants to target functional skills like learning to follow picture/ word directions to complete a vocational task. The following diagram shows how the team uses the IEP to focus on both functional and general curriculum. While this state's alternate assessment only targets academic skills, Ramona's progress in learning functional skills is also important for her transition planning.



Selecting IEP Goals to Promote Alignment

Once the concept of alignment is clear, it's helpful to consider guidelines for developing an IEP that includes goals that align to state standards. The product that results from this process is a **standards-based IEP**. These guidelines require learning more about the general curriculum as outlined in the state standards and determining how to create access to it for your students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Guideline One: Become Familiar with State Standards

The IEP team first needs to become familiar with state standards for the student's assigned grade level. The "assigned" grade level, usually based on chronological age, typically differs from the instructional grade level for students with significant cognitive disabilities. For example, a student who is 7 years old will probably be assigned to 2nd grade. In contrast, her "instructional" grade level may be at a beginning point of academic learning and may not correspond to a specific grade level designation. In focusing on alignment, the educational team considers how to create access to the student's assigned grade level (e.g., 2nd grade) while also using information on present level of performance (instructional level), to pinpoint objectives for academic learning. The following figure illustrates this concept.

The "assigned" grade level is usually based on chronological age, which for students with significant cognitive disabilities typically differs from the instructional grade level.

Develop Alignment Based on Assigned Grade Level for General Curriculum Access

Assigned Grade Level:
2nd Grade → 2nd Grade State Standards

Instructional Level: Entry Level Academic Skills (below K-1)

Align to 2nd Grade, not Kindergarten for age-appropriate general curriculum access for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

chronilogical age?

How is this determined?

Information on state standards is typically available on each state's education agency website. In finding the content standards for the student's grade level, it is important to remember that states vary widely in the specificity of standards. Some states have general standards that cross grade levels; others specify standards by grade level. When the state only has general standards, there may be additional educational outcomes (not called standards per se) for the grade levels. Some states provide additional resources for students with significant cognitive disabilities that either

Content standards for student grade level vary widely by state in the specificity of standards. Some have standards that cross grade levels; others specify standards by grade level.

illustrate how to extend state standards or offer instructional ideas. It's always vital know what your state standards require. Table 1.1 provides an example from the Massachusetts Department of Education that includes the state standard, the essence of the standard, and instructional ideas.

Table 1.1 Example Abstracted from the Resource Guide to the MA Curriculum Framework for Students with Significant Disabilities published by Massachusetts Department of Education.[2]

Table 1.1	**Grade Level 6-8**
Learning Standard as Written	Recognize that gravity is a force that pulls all things on and near the earth toward the center of the earth. Gravity plays a major role in the formation of the planets, stars, and solar system and in determining their motions. (Standard 8)
Essence of the Standard	Gravity is a force. The effects of the earth's gravitational pull and the motion of objects in the solar system.
Instructional Idea	At grades 6-8 (or an equivalent age), students observe the speed at which objects of various mass fall from the same height. Using a chronometer to accurately measure time, they plot the data as "mass versus time."
How All Students Can Participate in this Activity: Addressing Learning Standards at Lower Levels of Complexity	**Entry Point** Milos uses a spring balance to weigh each object chosen by his lab group. After participating in the experiment with his peers, Milos records the data on a spreadsheet and generates a graph of the results. **Access Skills** Lester helps select the objects for experimentation. He follows directions to drop and test each object with his lab group.

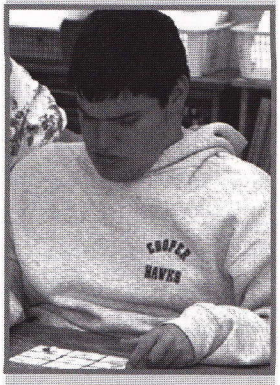
[2] Resource Guide to the MA Curriculum Frameworks for Students with Significant Disabilities. http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/alt/rg/sci.pdf (p. 26.) Accessed September 13, 2004.

Not all members of the IEP team may have seen these standards or curricular resources. One or more members of the team may want to share copies of key resources related to this student's grade level. The general education teacher who is a member of the IEP team also can serve as a resource person to the team in understanding the focus of the academic content for this grade level. In high school, it may be important to have general education teachers from each major content area.

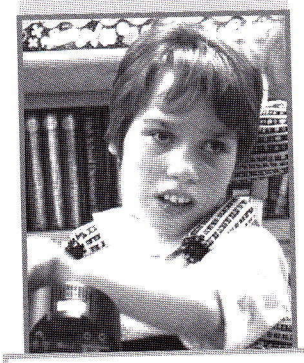
Camilla's Scenario

Camilla is a 12 year old 7th grader with significant cognitive disabilities. Her IEP team includes Camilla, her parents, the special education teacher, the speech therapist, physical therapist, occupational therapist, and the general education teachers from the 7th grade team to which Camilla is assigned. Mr. Hargrove, a 7th grade teacher, gave Camilla's parents and therapists copies of the state standards and 7th grade learning goals prior to the IEP meeting. He also read them with Camilla prior to the meeting. At the meeting he had each 7th grade teacher describe their curricular priorities for the year.

Camilla's IEP team includes her parents, the special education teacher, speech, physical and occupational therapists, and the general education teachers from the 7th grade team to which Camilla is assigned.



Guideline Two: Become Familiar with the State's Approach to Alternate Achievement Standards



States can use alternate achievement standards in considering Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for up to 1% of students with significant cognitive disabilities.

As described earlier, states can use alternate achievement standards in considering Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for up to 1% of students with significant cognitive disabilities. The IEP team needs to know if their state uses alternate achievement standards and if so, which specific standards are used. These standards don't replace the academic content standards that apply to all students, but instead define a different level of achievement needed to be considered proficient. Typically, this proficiency will be determined through the use of the state's alternate assessment. The team will consider what expectations come from these standards and which types of skills their students need to perform to show proficiency in the state's alternate assessment. For example, in the Massachusetts system shown in Table 1.1, (Pg. 16) students may address a learning standard at three achievement levels: 1. As written for the grade level (on grade level), 2. At an "entry point", or 3. As an "access skill". Examples of the types of performance for the entry point and access skill are shown in Table 1.1 for this standard. If the student is not currently in a grade for which AYP is applied, consideration of alternate achievement standards may not be relevant for that year's planning.

Camilla's state does permit the use of alternate achievement standards in computing AYP for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Camilla's Scenario, continued . . .

Camilla's state does permit the use of alternate achievement standards in computing AYP for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Her state also provides a curriculum resource with examples of tasks that link to state standards at each grade level. The special education teacher makes a copy of the state's policy on alternate achievement standards for the IEP committee and reviews the curriculum resource guide. She decides to bring a copy of the guide as a resource for the IEP meeting.

Guideline Three: Keep the Planning Student-Focused

Sometimes the state standards and requirements for assessment may seem to overwhelm the IEP process. To keep the planning focused on this student's individual needs, begin with an overview of recent progress and strengths. The student might begin the meeting by reviewing recent achievements. Members of the team who have conducted recent assessments and worked with the student can present their findings to begin building a consensus of the student's educational needs. The student's preferences and individual goals can then provide a starting point for planning. The team should consider the student's current academic, communication, and other skills to identify skills that can be used to promote access to the grade level content and accommodations and supports that will be needed.

Sometimes state standards and assessment requirements may seem to overwhelm the IEP process. To keep the planning focused on the student's individual needs, begin with an overview of recent progress and strengths.

Camilla's Scenario, continued . . .

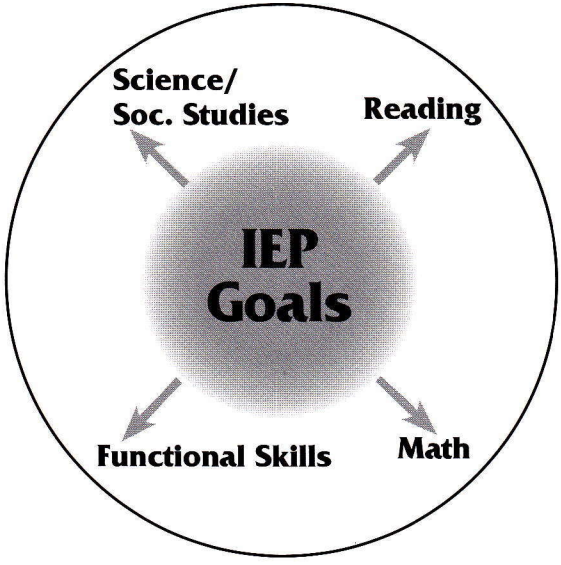
Camilla is learning to direct her own IEP meetings. She begins the meeting by using her AAC device to give a greeting and to ask participants to introduce themselves. After the introductions, she presents a power point presentation of her recent achievements. Next, team members summarize her present level of performance. Camilla then continues her power point presentation showing pictures of her preferences and goals. Both Camilla's goals and the various team members' reports produce draft goals for the IEP that focus on Camilla's need to expand her communication skills, improve range of motion, and participate more in her personal care. She asks for goals related to her love of swimming, to have more time with friends, and to use the computer. Her parents affirm these goals and note their priority that the team "not give up" on teaching reading to Camilla.

Camilla is learning to direct her own IEP meetings. She begins the meeting by using her AAC device to give a greeting and to ask participants to introduce themselves.

Guideline Four: Consider Both Specific Academic Goals and Broad Access Goals

With student individual needs and preferences articulated, the team can consider ways to access the grade level content that will be meaningful for this student and address the state's standards. At this point in the meeting it may be helpful for the general education teachers to discuss the highlights of the curriculum for that grade level and for the team to have the state standards in front of them. In selecting goals, the team should consider each academic content area. The team should not try to recreate this entire curriculum on the IEP, for example, by writing a goal for every science unit.
Instead, the team should focus on priorities for academic learning and skills to access the broader curriculum. The following figure illustrates how the IEP creates access to the curriculum. Note that the IEP is not meant to be a curriculum.

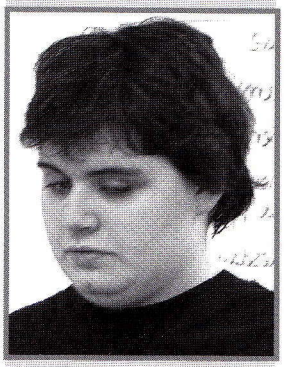
IEP Creates Access to the Curriculum—



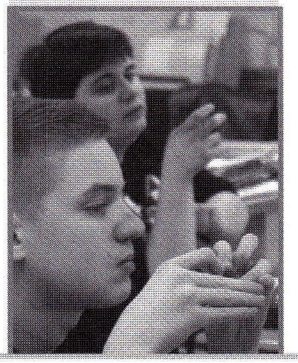
—but Is Not Itself a Curriculum

Camilla's Scenario, continued . . .

In reviewing both the science and math standards, the team realized that Camilla did not have the symbols in her AAC system to be able to communicate math and science concepts. They developed an IEP that focused on increasing her use and comprehension of 20 key words and symbols that she would frequently encounter in these subjects. For both social studies and science, Camilla would need an alternative to the paper and pencil activities that were frequently used by the class. The team determined that another access goal, one that would also relate to her preference for computers, would be to learn to select a picture from an array scanned from pictures in the textbook and related resources to express key concepts. One of the specific math skills for her to master this year, as the 7th graders focused on data compilation and analysis, was the preparation of graph using spreadsheet software. They talked with Camilla about making some graphs related to her swimming activities. To participate more fully in 7th grade English, they targeted having Camilla select pictures to identify the main idea or character of a story read by one of her friends. To keep working towards reading, they decided to also have her participate in a remedial reading class that used systematic phonics instruction. They also decided to use short summaries of stories from English or information from Social Studies written using a software program that generates picture-word symbols. The teacher would begin with single words and short phrases and build towards passage reading.



In social studies and science, Camilla needs an alternative to the paper and pencil activities frequently used by the class. So the IEP team determined that an access goal, that would fit her preference for computers, would be learning to select one picture from an array of scanned pictures in the textbook as well as other related resources to express key concepts.



Guideline Five: Ask the Question, "Is it Really Reading and Really Math?"

After choosing some academic content and access skills, it is important for the team to take a second look at the goals and consider the question, "is this really reading?" (or math, or science, etc.). Sometimes in extending the state standard, the essence of the academic component is lost. The general education teachers can be especially helpful as resource people in making sure that the final goals have clear links to academic content. Consider the following examples to see how some align more closely to the original content.

Sometimes in extending the state standard, the essence of the academic component is lost. General education teachers can insure that IEP goals have clear links to academic content.

The State Standard

Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

7th Grade

Locate and analyze elements of setting, characterization, and plot.

Example 1

Camilla will use her AAC to greet peers in English class.

Is this really reading?

No. Although this is an important social skill the team will probably want to keep on the IEP, it is not a reading skill. Camilla needs additional language arts objectives that focus on reading.

No.

Example 2

Camilla will acquire 20 sight words that relate to activities in her community and home.

Is this really reading?

Yes, it's reading, but it does not link to the specific state standard that other 7th graders will be learning. Again, the IEP team may keep this objective, but more work is needed to access the general curriculum.

Yes, but it doesn't align.

Example 3

Camilla will select pictures to represent the main ideas, setting, or characters of a story.

Is this really reading?

Yes, it is listening comprehension. Camilla cannot read 7th grade passages, but she can access age appropriate literature by listening to stories or story summaries read to her by peers. This task also links to the 7th grade focus on characterization, plot, and setting.

Yes, this is a well-aligned objective!

Camilla cannot read 7th grade passages, but she can access age appropriate literature by listening to stories or story summaries read to her by peers.

Example 4

Camilla will identify initial consonant and vowel sounds and use this skill in writing words with software that anticipates the spelling from the first letters.

Is this really reading?

Yes, phonemic awareness is a critical step towards reading. Because of Camilla's age she will also be learning to apply emerging phonics skills to writing. In contrast, this goal does not directly align with the 7th grade focus on the elements of fiction. Camilla will be developing basic skills while being exposed to grade level curriculum. This is a goal that broadly accesses the curriculum, (overall alignment) that supplements well the specifically aligned objective shown in Example Three.

Yes, this is a goal that broadly accesses the curriculum!

Because of Camilla's age, she will also be learning to apply emerging phonics skills to writing.

Guideline Six: Do Not "Force Fit" All IEP Objectives into Alignment with Academic Standards

Students with significant disabilities may require therapy and functional goals that will be part of the IEP but do not have any clear links to state standards. A standards-based IEP may have some goals that do not align with state standards. However, an IEP team can get off track if it begins with the therapy and functional goals and tries to back map them to academic standards. For example, a student may need to continue learning toileting skills. Trying to determine a reading or math standard that links to toileting can be either a waste of time or promotes instruction that infringes on the person's privacy and dignity. Toileting is a legitimate goal in itself that need not link to an academic content standard. A better approach is to develop academic goals by *beginning* with the academic content standards rather than trying to back map functional goals into the grade level standards.

> Standards-based IEPs may have some goals that don't align with state standards . . .
>
> . . . For example, for some students, toileting is a legitimate goal in itself that need not link to an academic content standard.

Camilla's Scenario, continued . . .

Camilla's team was pleased with the goals they selected for the IEP. Several of these goals had direct alignment to reading, math, science, and social studies standards for 7th graders. Some, like learning to select pictures related to concepts, provided broad access for participation in the general curriculum. In contrast, Camilla also had goals for daily living skills and therapy goals that were important individual priorities, but were not aligned to academic content standards. She also had goals related to her interest in swimming (participation with a swim team) and her friends (making social plans). The result was that Camilla had an IEP that was both standards-based and student-focused.

Writing Measurable IEP Objectives[3]

In developing the IEP, it is important to write objectives that have several qualities. First, short term objectives should provide a progression towards achievement of the annual goal. Second, the objectives should target skills that are clearly measurable. These objectives should also target active student participation.

Once the IEP team has identified general goals for the student, it's important to translate them into specific, measurable short term objectives.

Developing Short Term Objectives

Once the IEP team has identified general goals for the student, it's important to translate them into specific, measurable short term objectives. To define these objectives, consider the student's present level of performance related to the annual goal. For example, one of Camilla's goals was to select pictures to represent concepts in her academic studies. Currently, Camilla can select some picture symbols on her AAC. She also will point to pictures in a magazine when asked questions like, "Where is the dog?" In contrast, she has not yet learned to use pictures to represent broader concepts (e.g., map of the United States to represent that country). The team can build from this present level to an annual goal, by writing objectives that fill in the levels between the two points. Transforming Camilla's present level of performance to an annual goal may look like this:

	Camilla's Objectives
Present Level of Performance	Camilla uses her AAC device to ask for basic needs and greet friends using pictures. She also will point to pictures of familiar objects or people. She does not yet use pictures to represent a concept.
Objective 1	Given familiar pictures and symbols presented on the computer, Camilla will select the picture or symbol named.
Objective 2	Given a three choice array of pictures that relate to the lesson and asked show me ____ (e.g., "tornado"), Camilla will select the picture that shows the concept (e.g., "tornado").
Objective 3	When asked, "What was the lesson about today?" Camilla will select a picture from a three choice array.
Annual Goal	Given a variety of academic topics, Camilla will select pictures to represent major concepts described in class.

[3] This information on writing IEP objectives is adapted from Bateman and Herr, *Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives*, Attainment Company/IEP Resources Publication. (2003).

Writing Measurable Goals

All goals that are written should be measurable. A measurable goal is one that when written, the entire IEP team or anyone else working with the student, can agree that its objectives have been met. The following are examples of non-measurable and measurable goals:

Non-Measurable Goal	Measurable Goal
Jenny will increase her sight word vocabulary. **(Increase to what?)**	**Jenny will read 10 new sight words.**
Jackie will improve her measurement skills. **(Improve to what level?)**	**When shown measuring devices, Jackie will identify a 1 cup measure, a ½ cup measure, a teaspoon, and a tablespoon.**
Mike will identify his personal information. **(What information should he identify?)**	**When shown his telephone number and two distractors, Mike will correctly identify his telephone number by pointing to it.**

A measurable goal . . . a goal where the entire IEP team, or anyone else working with the student, agrees that its objectives have been met.

Writing Goals for Active Participation

As the IEP team is developing measurable goals, it's important to consider how the student can be an active learner. Active participation occurs in the general curriculum when the student acquires independent responses that demonstrate understanding of the academic content standard. In contrast, a "passive" skill is one in which the student simply has to cooperate with or tolerate physical or other guidance. For some students with severe cognitive and physical disabilities, it may be difficult to target an independent response, but active participation is possible if the student has at least one voluntary movement.

Active participation in the general curriculum occurs when the student acquires independent responses that demonstrate understanding of the academic content standard.

For example, a student who has physical disabilities may not have the fine motor skills to point to a book that he would like read to him. A passive approach to this goal would be to use hand over hand assistance to help him choose a book. In this example, the teacher is actually making a choice for the student, leaving him with no independent response.

The student's preference of book to be used for the literacy activity is not acknowledged. An **active** alternative would be to have the student use eye gaze (independent, voluntary response) to indicate which of book he would like. Or, the student might use a switch connected to a computer that is scanning through book selections (independent, voluntary response). The following table provides several examples of how to modify objectives to promote active academic learning.

Table 1.2

Active Objectives for Academic Learning

Passive Responses (that don't require independent responses)	**Active Responses** (that simplify physical demands and focus on independence)
Brittany will circle the correct answer with physical guidance to answer comprehension questions. **Problem with this approach:** *Brittany's physical disabilities do not permit her to use a pencil without help. This assistance can not be faded. There also is no way to determine if Brittany has any understanding of the task.*	Brittany will use a laser head pointer (or small flashlight) to select between two pictures projected on a screen to answer comprehension questions. **Advantage of this approach:** Brittany has the head control to move the light to her selection. Words can be presented with the pictures with the long term goal of fading the use of pictures.
Kevin will listen to a story the teacher is reading. **Problem with this approach:** *"Listening" is not an observable, measurable response. Students who are quiet and looking at the reader may not be attending. Kevin could be daydreaming.*	Kevin will touch the page to indicate it is time to turn it after the teacher has read each page. **Advantage of this approach:** Kevin is now actively engaged with the reader. Kevin might also have a goal like Brittany's to show comprehension. The teacher might also ask him to touch pictures on the page as they are named in the story.
Kirsten will accompany her peer to buy lunch. **Problem with this approach:** *Kirsten is not performing any part of the academics of paying for her lunch; she is merely accompanying someone else.*	Kirsten will ask a peer to help her purchase lunch by finding the symbol $ on her AAC, to communicate "help me pay." **Advantage of this approach:** Kirsten is now actively engaged in paying for her lunch. As she learns more about money she may indicate how much her peer should give the cashier.

Strategies for Alignment to State Standards

One of the most difficult challenges educators face is determining ways to make state standards accessible to students who currently have few academic skills. For example, how can a student with limited use of symbols access general curriculum that focuses on literary concepts in high school? Or, how can a student who is only beginning to recognize numbers access mathematics content that is introducing concepts like fractions? These are not easy questions to answer, but we would like to offer four ways to generate ideas for creating access to state standards. Each of these ideas will be described in the chapters to come.

One of the most difficult challenges educators face is determining ways to make state standards accessible to students who currently have few academic skills.

- Select skills that promote overall literacy and numeracy
- Focus on self-determination skills
- Using assistive technology to increase active, independent responding
- Use functional activities to give meaning to the academic concept

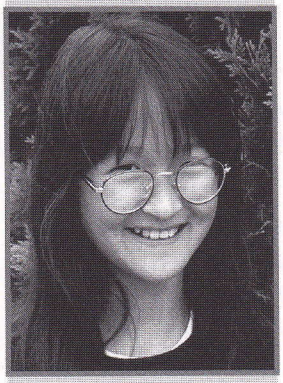
Chapter 2

Presents the components of literacy and numeracy, giving an explanation and examples of each component. Chapter 2 also includes ideas on how to consider different levels of symbols students may use.

Chapter 3

Describes how to focus components of self-determination. Ideas will be given about ways to incorporate self-determination skills into academic objectives.

Setting academic goals when you cannot measure present performance in that area??



Chapter 4

Explains how to create access to the general curriculum with the use of switches and augmentative communication devices. Chapter 4 will also give examples of software that may make access to the general curriculum possible. Examples of objectives that are made possible by the use of assistive technology will also be given.

Chapter 5

Reviews the concepts of functional and age appropriate activities. Chapter 5 will also review functional life domains and demonstrate how teachers can cross reference literacy and numeracy components and functional activities to create meaningful objectives.