Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFPs)

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFPs) summarize all aspects of a child's present levels of performance and provide the foundation upon which all other decisions in the IEP will be made. PLAAFPs contain information that ranges from very broad to highly specific. Many kinds of information are required to develop a legal and meaningful plan.

It is through the PLAAFPs that you will:

a) Identify and prioritize the specific needs of the child.
b) Establish baseline level performance in relation to the general curriculum academic standards in order to develop an individualized and meaningful plan.
c) Identify the degree of match between skills of the child and the instructional environment for the purpose of guiding decision making.

From PLAAFP information the IEP team determines the supports that needs to be built into a student's plan to improve that student's academic achievement and functional performance.

PLAAFPs must include three parts:

1. Current performance.
2. The impact of the exceptionality.
3. Baseline data for identified needs.

These three parts of the PLAAFPs move from broad to very specific information about the student's academic achievement and functional performance. Information must be sufficient to enable the team to design good instruction and make appropriate service decisions.

1. Current Performance

Current Performance must include information about both academic achievement and functional performance. Academic achievement should be reported in relationship to the standards of the general curriculum. In early childhood the general curriculum is defined as appropriate activities, that is, the kinds of things that typically developing children at the same age will be doing. Current Performance in the general curriculum is the broadest information included in the PLAAFP. It includes anything that currently has an impact upon the student's performance. It is not limited to academic considerations but also includes functional issues related to behavior, motor, speech/language, or any other concern. Functional performance is defined as the ability to apply academic skills in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings. Functional performance is also observed in how the student engages in the routine activities of everyday life, including communication, mobility, behavior skills, social skills, and daily living skills.

It is important that IEP teams remember to take out past information that is no longer relevant. A team could include information about past performance – if it is currently relevant to the student. For example, information about ear infections when a child was 5 is probably not relevant for a child of

15. However, information about a traumatic brain injury at age 9 is undoubtedly still relevant for a 16-year-old student.

Some examples of the types of information that are considered "current performance" are:

- Learning strengths
- Parent concerns
- Standardized assessments like the state or district assessments
- Universal screening and progress monitoring data
- Instructional preferences
- Learning rate
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Social/emotional Issues
- Vocational/career interests and skills related to those interests

Include information about things that currently have an impact on student performance even if they are not directly tied to the curriculum. Information should focus on issues that address the unique needs of the child. This is the starting point for helping identify needs – it is at this level that you will highlight strengths and note broad concerns. As you progress through writing a present levels statement, you'll get more specific about concerns.

For students with behavior or emotional concerns, current performance in academic achievement would include a description of the student's current learning strengths and weaknesses. Some examples would include results of academic assessments, learning rate, and response to instructional interventions. Examples of current levels of functional performance would include results of social/emotional rating scales or other assessments, and observations of problems the students have with task refusal, test anxiety, inability to speak in front of a group, or lack of skills interacting with a group.

For students ages 14 and over, the PLAAFP should focus on the student's strengths, needs, interests and preferences in relationship to his/her postsecondary goals. The PLAAFPs should be framed around areas of transition services such as:

- Instruction
- Related services
- Community experiences
- Employment
- Adult living objectives
- Daily living skills
- Independent living skills
- Post-school training/education interests

Think about what the child's performance indicates about what needs the child has now and what next steps need to be taken so the child can be successful.

2. Impact of the Exceptionality

This part of PLAAFP describes how the child's exceptionality affects his/her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. This includes a description of the degree of match between the student's performance and the expectations of the standards. The impact of the child's exceptionality on any performance gap must be determined for each academic domain: Reading, Math, Written Language, Science and Social Studies. Part of describing a student's performance in the general curriculum involves providing information regarding how the student will be expected to meet the state standards: through work directly in the general standards or through linkages to the DLM Claims, Conceptual Areas, and Essential Elements.

Therefore, to effectively link the IEP to the state standards you will need to be familiar with the Kansas Curricular Standards and the skills required for attaining those standards. Remember that all local district curricula are required to align with the Kansas Curricular Standards.

For preschool children, describe how the child's disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities. This information includes the degree of match between the student's functioning and various aspects of typical development.

The description of the impact of exceptionality needs to clearly describe how the student's exceptionality manifests itself.

- What does one see about this student that is different from typical peers that is a result of the exceptionality?
- How is the student's exceptionality getting in the way of being involved in or having access to the general curriculum? Or, for gifted students, how is the exceptionality impacting the student's ability to access a more advanced curriculum that is at their level of functioning/skills?
- How is the student's exceptionality getting in the way of progressing in the general curriculum? Or for gifted students, how is the exceptionality impacting progress at an advanced level in the scope and sequence of the curriculum?

The impact of the exceptionality is not limited to academic considerations but also includes functional issues related to behavior, motor, speech/language or any other concern. It should include a description of how the child's exceptionality manifests itself. For example, the results of career exploration activities and formal and informal assessments can assist students and parents in identifying the young adult's strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and interests related to their post-secondary goals. This information is important to help get away from the special education teacher as tutor or homework helper. We need to dig deep enough to understand where the specialized instruction will make a difference for each student. IEP teams need to drill down regarding the impact of the student's exceptionality to be able to prioritize and focus on the areas of highest student need.

<u>General Academics:</u>

How does the child's exceptionality impact his/her access to or progress in the general curriculum?

- Provide measures of skills from universal screening and progress monitoring probes that compare the student's skills to the skills of typical peers.
    - Description of level of skills for reading, math, and written language and how that level compares to performance of typical peers.
    - Measures of skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, or comprehension compared to grade-level expectations based on national norms.
- How does the student perform on state assessments, district assessments, or classroom assessments?
- How does the student's disability impact the student's involvement in the general education curriculum? What and where are the gaps between the student's skills and the skills of his/her peers?
- What academic areas are impacted due to the student's disability?

Behavior:

For behavior, include information about how the behavior affects the child's ability to progress or access the general curriculum. If the student is spending time in the hallway or in the principal's office due to behavior, this prevents the child from accessing instruction. Remember, behavior is a result of not only the student's skills, but also the student's environment. Descriptive statements such as "given a large group instructional environment", or "in activities that encourage movement" provide an understanding of a child's behavior within context.

Severe Disabilities:

For students with severe disabilities consider using Kansas Curricular Standards or Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Essential Elements which are linked to the Kansas Curricular Standards at a reduced depth, breadth, and complexity in describing the student's performance in the general curriculum. For those students with significant disabilities, we may need to include pre-reading strengths, such as the ability to orient to a book, engage in joint attention and so forth.

It is also appropriate to discuss the student's current performance compared to his/her past performance. Do not underestimate students with significant needs. Always consider using the general standards first and then look at available extensions or links to the standards. Tying instruction to standards ensures that the program developed is directed at the same end goal as programs developed for non-disabled learners.

Early Childhood:

For early childhood students, the focus is participation in developmentally appropriate activities. The term "appropriate activities" includes activities that children of the same chronological age engage in as part of a preschool program or in informal activities. Examples include social activities, pre-reading and math activities, sharing time, independent play, listening skills., etc. Look at the Kansas Early Learning Standards and consider standards for kindergarten. Consider Birth to 6 curriculum measures or routines-based assessments, as well as an analysis of how the child participates in daily routines.

Transition Related Issues:

Current skills related to post-school employment, independent living, post-secondary training/education should be addressed by IEP team and included in the PLAAFP. A description of the degree of match between the student's current skills and the student's post-school outcomes in each of these areas describes the impact of the exceptionality and provides information regarding comprehensive transition planning.

3. Baseline Data

Baseline Data are the most specific information included in the PLAAFPs. Baseline data are typically collected for needs that are seen as the most significant. These data provide the starting point for measurable goals to be written for the student. Examples of baseline data would include words read correctly, percent of problems solved correctly, number of times behavior occurs, and mean length of utterances.

For information to be considered baseline data, it must meet these four criteria:

1) Specific – must be clear what is being measured.
2) Objective – you and a colleague should both be able to score/rate/measure it and come up with the same information.
3) Measurable – something that can be measured and be able to show small increments of growth, not broad concepts.
4) Able to be given frequently – you need to be able to collect the information in the same way at least as often as you send out progress reports and able to show progress over those short periods of time.

Anything that is specific, measurable, objective, and able to be given frequently to show growth can be used as baseline data. This is important when deciding whether something can be used as baseline data. Academic baseline data should relate to the skills found in the Kansas Curricular Standards. If you are having difficulty identifying measures that are specific, measurable, and able to be given frequently, you may be looking at broad concepts or combinations of skills that need to be identified more narrowly. For example, reading is a broad concept that is made up of many skills. For baseline data for a measurable goal, a specific sub-skill (such as phonics, fluency, or comprehension) should be identified and measured.

It is helpful if teachers try to use natural data collection methods for baseline data. There is no requirement that data be collected using a formal test. Try to use a method of data collection that accurately measures the skill being taught, but which does not require significant time commitment. Consider how frequent progress monitoring of the student will be completed and use the same measurement for the baseline.

Examples of Impact of Exceptionality

- Ann's disability in the area of auditory processing and auditory memory causes her to have difficulty processing problems and remembering information presented orally. This impacts her comprehension and her ability to follow multi-step directions and recall complex concepts. This also impacts her academic success in all instructional settings with oral presentations, including reading, written language, and math, and to a lesser degree, science and social studies.
- Kevin has a disability in the area of math that limits his ability to participate in grade-level instruction. Kevin can add and subtract single digit numbers with 90% accuracy. He can add double-digit numbers with 50% accuracy, but he is unable to subtract double-digit numbers that require regrouping. The fourth-grade standard for math requires the following computation: Add, subtract, multiply three-digit by two-digit factors, and divide two-digit dividends by one-digit divisors to solve problems.
- Marco knows all the addition and subtraction facts, but he has memorized the multiplication and division facts only through fives. However, he has good calculator skills and is able to correctly solve two-step word problems using a calculator. He is currently working on addition and subtraction of fractions. He has begun to compute addition and subtraction of negative and positive whole numbers using a number line that extends both above and below zero. Marco's current performance in math indicates the need for access to the accommodations of using a calculator and a positive and negative number line for all classroom instruction, assignments, and tests.
- Sally has a disability in the area of reading comprehension that limits her ability to participate in grade-level instruction. Sally can identify the main idea and one to two details when reading content area passages. She can verbally explain events in chronological order. She can compare and contrast events from text using a Venn diagram. However, Sally is unable to perform many skills expected of typical peers. She is unable to provide a complete summary of a passage or story. She has difficulty identifying the author's purpose or evidence in text; she only states why she likes the text. In addition, she cannot determine cause/effect relationships in text.
- As a result of her gifted ability, Jamie needs specially designed instruction in the area of reading that is beyond the general education curriculum at her grade-level.
  Based on the building's universal reading screening assessment, Jamie (a 2nd grade student) is at mastery on reading recognition skills at the 4th grade level and at mastery on comprehension skills at a third-grade level. During core reading, she participates in a literature circle with other students reading books at a 3rd grade level to help her work on

improving skills with summarization and knowledge of plot structure. While this is meeting her needs for improving content skills related to reading comprehension, she also needs individualized instruction to continue to improve her reading recognition skills at her 5th grade instructional level.

Example of PLAAFPs for a student with social/behavioral issues:

Jonah is a 9-year-old fourth grade student with average ability, whose achievement testing shows relative strength in reading and weakness in math. Jonah reads at grade level and has good comprehension. He likes to read, and he also enjoys science activities. His most recent CBM testing showed that he read 111 words per minute, which is at the 65th percentile on local norms. Math CBM testing showed that he scored 9 digits correct in a two-minute timing, which is at the 17th percentile on district fourth grade norms. Mom reports that he brings home assignments requiring reading, but he "forgets" his math homework.

Jonah has difficulty paying attention during class time. His inability to stay on task and follow directions is negatively affecting his classroom performance. When asked to begin work, he often looks around as if he does not know what to do. Observations indicate he often looks to peers for directions, rather than attending to the teacher. This occurs in both classes that he likes and in those he does not like. When the teacher goes to him to provide individual help, he refuses help and insists he understands what to do, but then he often completes the assignment incorrectly.

Jonah also needs to work on staying in his personal space and not invading others' personal space. This is exhibited when he swings a backpack or his arms around in a crowded room or while walking down the hall. Observations of Jonah show this is also an issue during games in PE class and in unstructured activities during recess, such as playing tag. He is unable to appropriately interact with others. He sometimes stands very close to other students, squaring up to them, in a posture that is intimidating to younger students and challenging to those his own age. He has also been observed to inappropriately touch other students. These behaviors have been especially problematic during special out-of-school activities, and Jonah has not been allowed to attend the last two class field trips because of the severity of problems on earlier field trips. Teachers estimate that he inappropriately invades others' space at least 50% of the time during unstructured activities. Observations using interval recording indicate that during recess he invaded others' space during 70% of the observation intervals. During classroom time, he was out of his seat and inappropriately close to another student during 35% of the observation intervals. Total off-task behavior during classroom observation was 60% of observed intervals.

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