

# Goals: The Heart of the IEP

Ensuring Every Plan Leads to Real Progress

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 **Autism Society**  
Maryland | Howard | Montgomery | Anne Arundel



# About Beth Ann



*Charting the Course*  
EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY AND PARENT NAVIGATION



# Objectives

- Understand Components of the IEP Document
- Identify Areas of Educational Strength and Need
- Develop Appropriate IEP Goals and Track Progress

# Why Goals Matter Most

IEP goals are the driver of instruction, services, and accountability

Weak goals undermine otherwise clear IEPs

Goals outline the path to achieving grade level standards



**Share in  
the Chat!**

Do you read and understand your child's IEP Goals and Quarterly Progress Notes?

# The Anatomy of an IEP

**Eligibility:** How your student qualifies for specialized instruction

**Present Levels of Performance:** What areas are affected by the disability and how they currently perform

**Special Considerations and Accommodations:**  
Adjustments to the delivery of instruction, environment, and personnel necessary to support progress

(continued)

# The Anatomy of an IEP (cont.)

**Goals:** Plan for targeting specific skills to make educational progress toward grade level standards over one year

**Services:** Direct specialized instruction and related services necessary to achieve stated goals

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** Amount of time the student will be removed from their non-disabled peers during the school day and the location of program where services will be provided

# Data Sources for PLOP (PLAAFP)

- Formal Assessments (Psychological, Academic, Speech, OT, etc.)
- Benchmark (Classroom and Curriculum) Assessments (ex. iReady, QRI, DIBELS, KRA)
- Progress Data from Previous IEP Goals
- Classroom Observations, Work Samples, and Teacher Input

# Parent Input (part of PLOP!)

Your vision and concerns regarding:

- IEP Implementation
- Academic Progress
- Social Challenges
- Behavior
- Communication with School
- Transition

Prepare your Parent Input Statement to share either prior to the meeting or to email immediately after the meeting



**Share in  
the Chat!**

Do you write and send a Parent Input Statement for your child's Annual IEP?



# Goal Alignment

Present Levels ---> Needs ---> Grade Level Standards



# Maryland Standards (MCCRS)

Maryland College and Career Ready Standards can be found on the MSDE Website (for academic goals)

## **English/Language Arts:**

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/documents/ela/standards/grades-1-2-mccr-rela-standards-a.pdf>

## **Math:**

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/pages/dcaa/math/mccrsm.aspx>

# Sample Standard: Gr. 1 ELA

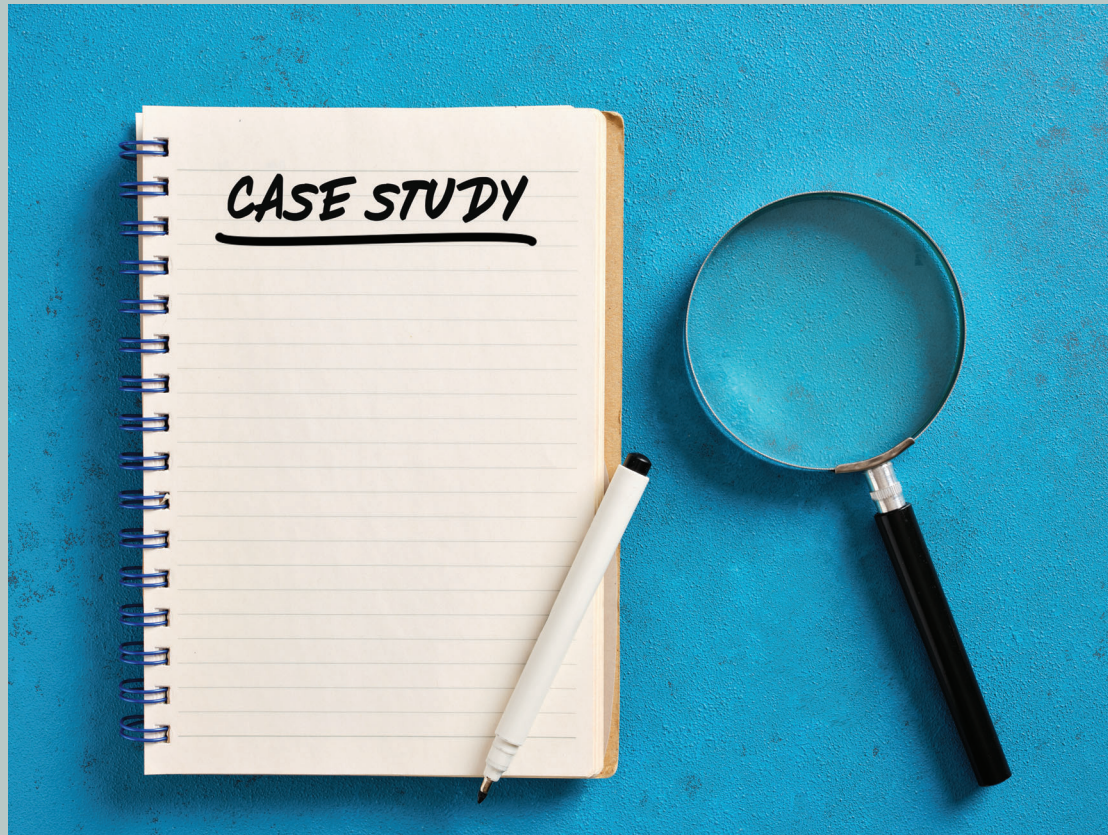
RF.1.2 Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).

- RF.1.2.a Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single syllable words.
- RF.1.2.b Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends.
- RF.1.2.c Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes), in spoken single-syllable words.
- RF.1.2.d Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).

# SMART Goals

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**mbitious  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime-limited





# Case Study Overview

Joe is an 8th Grade student with an IEP.

His Primary Disability Code is Multiple Disabilities:  
Specific Learning Disorder (SLD)-Dyslexia and  
Other Health Impairment (OHI)-ADHD

We will examine his Present Levels in Reading  
Comprehension and analyze the associated goal proposed  
by the school team

Joe currently comprehends text at the 5th grade level

# Sample Present Level (PLOP)

## Strengths:

9/12/25 Joe was given the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI) to measure his reading comprehension. Joe was given a 5th grade short informational text. He answered the explicit questions with 100% accuracy in 4 out of 4 questions with one look back.

Language Arts exit tickets and quizzes from first marking period, 9/1/25 - 10/23/25 demonstrate when Joe works one on one and has text read aloud to him and/or positive prompting to stay focused, he is able to demonstrate reading comprehension for explicit questions.

When a quiz was given one on one, with teacher guided annotations and read aloud, he scored an 80% on a reading comprehension quiz.

10/17/25 ELA quarterly demonstrates Joe is able to infer author's purpose through a character's dialogue, infer how dialogue can have similar meaning to the author's purpose R.L.8.2.

# Sample PLOP Analysis

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When a quiz was given **one on one, with teacher guided annotations and read aloud**, he scored an 80% on a reading comprehension quiz.

10/17/25 **ELA quarterly demonstrates** Joe is able to infer author's purpose through a character's dialogue, infer how dialogue can have similar meaning to the author's purpose **R.L.8.2**.

# Sample Present Level (cont)

Needs:

9/12/25 When participating in the QRI, Joe was given a 5th grade short informational text. Although he only had 10 errors, he struggled to keep his place while reading and read at a slow rate. He needed to look back into the text to answer one explicit question and was prompted to look back into the text to make an accurate inference. His answers to two of the inferential questions were not accurate. He answered them with 50% accuracy in 2 out of 4 questions. His reading comprehension is measured to be instructional at 5th grade.

9/29/25 ELA district SCLT was read to Joe in a small group. He was unable to identify the central idea, or determine a character trait based on a character's actions (R.L.8.2)

# Sample Present Level (cont)

10/17/25 ELA quarterly Joe was provided with head phones for text-to-speech in a small group. Joe was unable to infer a character's trait by their actions (R.L.8.1). He was unable to identify the central idea of the story. (R.L.8.1)

Classwork from the first marking period demonstrates Joe has difficulty with answering inference questions accurately. Even when given small group or one on one support and having the text read to him, his accuracy is below 50%.

3/10/26: Current reading comprehension assessments show Joe is able to answer inference questions about the characters actions and thoughts with 50% accuracy. He was able to identify the Central Idea of a passage or text with 50% accuracy.

# Remember: SMART Goals



# SMART Goals

**S**pecific  
**M**easurable  
**A**mbitious  
**R**ealistic  
**T**ime-limited



# Proposed Goal

Goal: Given a grade level text provided with teacher led annotation notes, prompting to mark the text and limited required reading, Joe will be able to determine central ideas or themes of a text and their development over the course of the text, including its relationship the characters, setting, and plot. (RL 8.2)

Timeframe: by 11/13/2026

Method of Measurement: Classroom Assessment: Quizzes Informal  
Procedures: Classwork Classroom Assessment: Quarterly

Criteria (Mastery): With 75% accuracy

Criteria (Retention): 3 out of 4 opportunities

# Proposed Goal Analysis

**S** Goal: Given a grade level text provided with teacher led annotation notes, prompting to mark the text and limited required reading, Joe will be able to determine central ideas or themes of a text and their development over the course of the text, including its relationship the characters, setting, and plot. (RL 8.2)

**M**

**A**

**R** Timeframe: by 11/13/2026

**T** Method of Measurement: Classroom Assessment: Quizzes Informal  
Procedures: Classwork Classroom Assessment: Quarterly  
Criteria (Mastery): With 75% accuracy  
Criteria (Retention): 3 out of 4 opportunities

# Proposed Objectives

## Objective 1:

Given a grade level text provided with teacher led annotation notes, prompting to mark the text and limited required reading, Joe will answer main/central idea or theme questions with accuracy.

Timeframe: by 11/13/2026

Criteria: 75% accuracy on 3 out of 4 opportunities

Method of measurement: Classroom Assessment: Quizzes Informal

Procedures: classwork Informal Procedures: Quarterly

# Proposed Objectives

Objective 2: Given a grade level text provided with teacher led annotation notes, prompting to mark the text and limited required reading, Joe will be able to answer questions requiring the analyzing of the elements of a fictional plot, setting, turning of events, climax and resolution.

Timeframe: by 11/13/2026

Criteria: 75% accuracy on 3 out of 4 opportunities

Method of measurement: Classroom Assessment: Quizzes Informal

Procedures: Classwork Classroom Assessment: Quarterly

# Proposed Objectives

Objective 3: Given a grade level text provided with teacher led annotation notes, prompting to mark the text and limited required reading, Joe will answer questions requiring analyzing the relationship between the characters through character dialogue, actions and events.

Timeframe: by 11/13/2026

Criteria: 75% accuracy on 3 out of 4 opportunities

Method of measurement: Classroom Assessment: Quizzes Informal

# Progress Notes

IEP Goal Progress Notes should be received quarterly with every report card

Review the notes to assess if progress is being made quarter to quarter

Progress notes should provide **MEASURABLE DATA** on overall goal and/or objectives



**Share in  
the Chat!**

Do you receive and review your child's IEP Goal Progress Notes every quarter?

# Sample Progress Notes-Qtr. 2

Progress Report 1

Date 01/15/2026

Progress Code: Not making sufficient progress to meet the goal

Description of Progress: Data was collected for the goal: Joe will be able to determine central ideas or themes of a text and their development over the course of the text, including its relationship the characters, setting, and plot. (RL 8.2)

# Sample Progress Notes (cont.)

Trial 1: 12/5/25 District SCLT ELA, on AT in small group, Joe was able to answer inference questions with 50% accuracy in 1 out of 2 questions. He was able to identify the character's internal conflict, but not the theme of the story.

Trial 2: 12/10/25 Reading Comprehension exit ticket on paper in whole class, Joe was unable to answer 3 out of 3 inferential questions with 0% accuracy.

Trial 3: 1/6/26 District Quarterly, Joe unable to answer inference questions (theme, conflict and author's purpose) with 0% accuracy in 0 out of 3 questions. He spent less than 5 minutes on the quarterly.

# Sample Progress Notes (cont.)

Trial 4: 1/13/25 Reading comprehension Quiz. Joe was unable to answer inference questions with 33% accuracy in 2 out of 6 questions from the novel read aloud in class.

Next steps: Reading comprehension data is skewed by Joe's learning behavior difficulties with academic tasks. When given assessments, he often rushes through them without trying. Focus will continue with supporting Joe to participate in reading comprehension strategies in small group.

# Sample Progress Notes Qtr. 3

Progress Report 2

Date 03/23/2026

Progress Code: Not making sufficient progress to meet the goal

Description of Progress: Data was collected for the goal: Joe will be able to determine central ideas or themes of a text and their development over the course of the text, including its relationship the characters, setting, and plot. (RL 8.2) 75% accuracy in 3 out of 4 opportunities.

# Sample Progress Notes (cont.)

Trial: 1: 2/5/26 SCLT Review Joe was able to identify the central idea of a passage and cite the correct evidence. His overall score on his goal objectives is 100% accuracy

Trial 2: 2/13/26 Denee Benton Quiz Joe was able to answer 1 out of 2 explicit questions, 3 out of 3 inference questions about the characters and setting. He was unable to identify the central idea of the passage. His overall score on his goal objectives is 66% accuracy.

Trial 3: 3/6/26 SCLT Joe was unable to identify the author's purpose of a passage but was able to identify the central idea of the text. His overall score on his goal objectives is 50%.

# Sample Progress Notes (cont.)

Trial 4: 3/12/26 ELA Quarterly Joe was able to identify the authors purpose of a passage with 50% accuracy in 1 out of 3 questions. He was unable to identify the central idea of the whole text. Given the questions about a speech he was able to answer an inference question about the speaker and the central idea of the speech but unable to identify the author's purpose for the speech. Overall accuracy of the objectives 50%. He rushed through the assessment.

# Sample Progress Notes (cont.)

Next steps: It is hard to measure Joe's reading comprehension ability because he does not take his assessments with fidelity.

He rushes and is more concerned with being done than taking his time. He refuses to use teacher's notes, annotations, small group instruction or one on one specialized instruction. Reading comprehension strategies and learning behavior strategies will be used to improve reading comprehension. The IEP Team will convene to discuss lack of progress on this goal and revise the IEP to support Joe's progress.



**Share in  
the Chat!**

Has your child ever been identified as not making sufficient progress on an IEP Goal?

# Insufficient Progress

If your student is not making sufficient progress (appears to not be on track to meet the overall goal by the end of the IEP year):

- The IEP Team should meet to discuss what may be hindering progress
- Updates to supports should be considered, including foundational skills, interventions, and other instructional supports; environmental supports; and personnel support
- If behaviors are impeding progress, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) should be requested, or an existing Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) reviewed
- Lowering the goal target should NOT be the only solution offered

# Narrowing the Gap Goals

New for IEPs in Maryland this school year (SY2025-2026)

- For academic areas (reading, writing, and math) where the student is performing 2 or more years below grade level
- Does NOT replace need for grade level standards-aligned goal
- Targets foundational skills still needed in order to access grade level standards

ex. An 8th grade dyslexic student like Joe with a reading comprehension level of 5th grade may need an additional goal in decoding to improve reading skills

# Final Notes

- YOU are your child's most important advocate
- Ask for clarification on any language in the IEP you do not understand
- Draft IEPs with PLOPs, Accommodations, and Goals should be shared with you 5 SCHOOL DAYS before the annual IEP meeting
- Ensure goals address areas of need in PLOP, align with a grade level standard, and are ambitious yet realistic for one year of progress
- If you ever have concerns about your child's IEP or progress, you are entitled to request an IEP meeting, which must be held within 30 days of your request



