

Examples of Functional Articulation IEP Goals

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Background

In 2012, NECTAC & ECO (now the ECTA Center) and WRRRC staff published *Developing High-Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes and IEP Goals: A Training Package*. Shortly after the introduction of the training package, a request was received to apply the criteria for high-quality, functional IEP goals to goals that would address a child's needs in the area of articulation (making speech sounds). Specific examples were requested from speech-language pathologists to support writing functional IEP goals for children receiving services for articulation only.

Response

Although the request asked for sample IEP goals for children for whom social skills and behaviors to get needs met were "age appropriate" and not in need of therapy, we wish to suggest that problems with articulation can in fact impact any or all three global child outcome areas.

Preschoolers functioning at age level:

- use clear speech to effectively socialize (**Outcome 1: Positive Social Relationships**),
- participate in learning activities, (**Outcome 2: Acquire and Use Knowledge and Skills**) and;
- communicate their needs and wishes (**Outcome 3: Using Appropriate Behavior to Meet Needs**).

It is critical to use appropriate functional assessment techniques, such as observation and parent and teacher report, to view the child holistically and thereby render the full picture of exactly how a child's articulation issues are impacting the child across settings and situations, both with peers and adults.

Given that, we have developed sample IEP goals that address each of the three global outcome areas and include some child context, such as potential functional and academic areas that might be affected by difficulties with articulation.

The criteria for a high-quality, participation-based IEP goal¹ are:

1. The goal is written in plain language and is jargon-free.
2. The goal emphasizes the positive.
3. The goal describes the child's involvement in age-appropriate activities to address academic and functional areas.
4. The goal is measurable and observable.
5. The goal describes how the child will demonstrate what they know or can do.
6. The goal describes the situations in which the child will demonstrate the goal, and does not name a placement or educational environment.

¹ See more detail on the Criteria Defining High Quality, Participation-Based IEP Goals in *Enhancing Recognition of High Quality, Functional IEP Goals* at: <http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-iep.pdf>

Therefore, the sample IEP goals provided in this document do not center around making sounds correctly or in a limited number of situations. Instead, the goals reflect the child's successful participation in everyday routines and activities using skills that are typical of preschool children developing according to age expectations. The main message to take away is that the functional IEP goal should reflect the child's needs for functional participation in typical preschool routines and activities, and that the detail that would otherwise give the perception of non-functionality can still be captured and used to support speech and language therapy for articulation. Specific information about the child's ability to make speech sounds as well as other abilities might be captured in the present levels of performance section of the IEP, or with the short term objectives connected with the child's annual goals.

Several resources from the ECTA Center and ASHA were used to develop the sample IEP goals provided below (see the list of resources at the end of this document). **Please note that these goal statements are written to focus on functionality; they do not include measurability criteria. Use your state or local procedures for including measurability when putting this information into practice.**

Outcome 1: Positive social relationships

Some children have difficulty speaking clearly with other children during center or other play activities. If they are not easily understood, other children may not interact or answer, or may walk away from the child. Even if the child continues to try to communicate, and is having fun, the ability to communicate effectively and participate successfully in conversations has an impact on social situations. The child's communication with adults (family members and those within routines) may also be impacted.

Sample IEP goal 1:

Robin will talk and be understood by other children during play activities and social exchanges.

Sample IEP goal 2:

Sharon will communicate clearly, taking turns in conversation during play activities.

Outcome 2: Acquire and use knowledge and skills

In this area, speech language pathologists must consider the impact of articulation problems on the child's ability to acquire and use the knowledge and skills that are typically mastered between the ages of 3-5. In other words, speech language pathologists should frame articulation goals in terms of the child's ability to learn. Pre- literacy, pre-math and pre-writing skills may all fall in this area depending upon the extent to which articulation problems interfere with successful participation in learning activities, as well as whether or not the child communicates in such a way that the adults in the child's life (i.e. teachers, child care providers, therapists) can accurately assess whether the child is learning and using age-expected preschool skills.

In the first sample IEP goal below, the child must use needed sounds and sound patterns in ways that help him successfully participate in verbal learning activities that may be rote or repetitive. The second sample addresses a child's ability to express herself clearly enough in spontaneous verbal learning activities, so that her teacher can tell whether or not she's grasping and using preschool concepts.

Sample IEP goal 1:

Mateo will say words clearly during daily routines and activities that require communication (e.g., story time, music).

Sample IEP goal 2:

Shayla will say words and sentences clearly in response to questions from adults during discussions among children and adults, play activities, transitions, conversations, etc., to show that she understands what they have asked.

Outcome 3: Using appropriate behavior to meet needs

In outcome area 3, clear articulation helps children use words to get their needs met. Physical communication (e.g. hitting, biting, or scratching) may arise out of frustration when a child is not consistently understood. Less social behavior patterns (e.g. reluctance to communicate, aggression or physical demonstrations) may also result when children cannot communicate choices or preferences.

When assessing the child's functioning through observation and report, speech language pathologists need to be mindful of how a child meets his needs in situations where his verbal communication is not effective.

Sample IEP goal 1:

Kathi will speak clearly to ask for help during every day routines, such as meal time, playing or going to the bathroom.

Sample IEP goal 2:

Stuart will share his preferences by talking and making choices, such as choosing an activity, a snack, a toy.

Resources:

ECTA Center resources

- **Developing High-Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes and IEP Goals Training Package:**
<http://ectacenter.org/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals.asp>
- **Enhancing Recognition of High-Quality, Functional IEP Goals: A training activity for Early Childhood Special Education staff:**
<http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/pubs/rating-iep.pdf>

These two resources provide information about the requirements and markers of high-quality, functional IEP goal statements. There are additional resources within the training package about writing IEP goals.

- **Outcomes 101: ECO Center Q & A:**
http://ectacenter.org/eco/assets/pdfs/ECO_Outcomes101_print_version.pdf

This document includes some information about the impact of speech (and language) on all three outcome areas (see page 3).

- **The Child Outcomes:**
http://ectacenter.org/eco/assets/pdfs/Child_Outcomes_handout.pdf

This document describes the content of the three outcome areas.

Resources from the ASHA Website

- **Using The Curriculum to Formulate IEP Goals for Communication Through a Developmental Continuum** (Speech and Language Services for Montgomery County Public Schools, MD):
<http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/Using-Curriculum-to-Formulate-IEP-Goals.pdf>

In particular, we found goal example #15 on page 6 to be a helpful example. The “B” under either #15 or #16 could also be reworded to actually be a goal statement, based on a child’s needs.

- **Speech Sound Disorders: Articulation and Phonological Processes:**
<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/speechsounddisorders.htm>

State Resources

- **Vermont Early Learning Standards:**
http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/2006-03-29-VELS_booklet.pdf

Pages 10 and 11 on Language, Literacy and Communication offer many connections to the goal statements developed for this document. In particular, examples under #3, Speaking and Communicating and #4, Vocabulary, may be applied to help support the functionality of IEP goals.

This document is available online at:

<http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/QuestionsEverydayActivities.pdf>

It also appears as a part of the ECTA Center’s *Developing High-Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes and IEP Goals Training Package* at:

<http://ectacenter.org/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals.asp>