

# Writing Measurable Functional and Transition IEP Goals

Cynthia M. Herr, PhD

Barbara D. Bateman, PhD



# *Writing Measurable Functional and Transition IEP Goals*

Authors: Cynthia M. Herr, PhD, and Barbara D. Bateman, PhD

Editor: Tom Kinney

Graphic Design: Sherry Pribbenow

An Attainment Publication

©2012, Attainment Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.



**Attainment Company, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 930160**

**Verona, Wisconsin 53593-0160 USA**

**1-800-327-4269**

**[www.AttainmentCompany.com](http://www.AttainmentCompany.com)**

ISBN: 1-57861-811-8

# Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Functional Skills</b>	<b>9</b>
A Short History of Functional Skills Instruction . . . . .		11
IDEA and Functional Skills . . . . .		12
Functional vs. Academic Skills . . . . .		13
Functional Skills . . . . .		14
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Functional IEP Goals</b>	<b>17</b>
Determining Functional Skill Needs . . . . .		21
Measurable Goals and Objectives . . . . .		22
Observable Behavior . . . . .		23
Criterion . . . . .		24
Misuse of Accuracy as a Criterion . . . . .		26
Appropriate Use of Accuracy and Percentage . . . . .		28
Conditions. . . . .		29
To Test Measurability . . . . .		30
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Short-Term Objectives</b>	<b>33</b>
Questions and Answers and Measurable Functional Goals/Objectives . . . . .		37
Putting It All Together . . . . .		38
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Task Analysis and Measurable     Functional Goals</b>	<b>41</b>
Task Analysis. . . . .		42
Merely Related Activities . . . . .		46
Task Analysis and Reading . . . . .		49
In Closing . . . . .		51

<b>Sample Goals and Objectives</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Self-Care:</b>	<b>55</b>
1 Using a Toilet . . . . .	57
2 Using a Fork . . . . .	58
3 Choosing Outdoor Clothing . . . . .	59
4 Changing a Sanitary Pad . . . . .	60
5 Showering . . . . .	62
<b>Home Living:</b>	<b>63</b>
6 Doing Laundry . . . . .	64
7 Preparing a Simple Meal . . . . .	66
8 Dealing with Garbage and Recycling . . . . .	67
9 Using a Vacuum Cleaner . . . . .	68
10 Calling 911 . . . . .	69
<b>Community Interaction:</b>	<b>71</b>
11 Riding a School Bus . . . . .	72
12 Being Safe from Strangers . . . . .	73
13 Meal Planning and Grocery Shopping . . . . .	74
14 Ordering at a Fast Food Restaurant . . . . .	75
15 Losing Games Gracefully . . . . .	77
<b>Physical and Emotional Health:</b>	<b>79</b>
16 Making Complimentary Statements . . . . .	80
17 Conversing with Peers . . . . .	81
18 Initiating a Dating Relationship . . . . .	82
19 Dealing with Anxiety . . . . .	83
20 Eating Well-Balanced Meals and Exercising . . . . .	84

<b>Vocational:</b>	<b>85</b>
21 Completing Classroom Tasks . . . . .	86
22 Work Experience at School . . . . .	88
23 Career Exploration . . . . .	89
24 Working in an Office . . . . .	90
25 Appropriate Job Behaviors . . . . .	91
 <b>Social Skills:</b>	 <b>93</b>
26 Interpreting Body Language as Welcoming or Not Welcoming .	94
27 Taking Turns During Play . . . . .	96
28 Interrupting . . . . .	97
29 Dealing with Frustration . . . . .	98
30 Handling Peer Pressure . . . . .	99



## Cynthia Herr

Cynthia M. Herr is an assistant professor/research associate in Special Education at the University of Oregon. She has directed and taught in personnel preparation programs in special education for over 25 years. She currently directs a grant-funded personnel preparation program in autism. Dr. Herr has taught children and adults with a wide variety of disabilities in elementary school, community college, and the UO during her 37 years in special education.

Dr. Herr is a nationally recognized author and expert in special education law. She has consulted with school districts and has also served as an advocate for parents of children with disabilities. She has conducted workshops on IEP development as well as social skills training for community agencies. Dr. Herr has published in the areas of special education law, autism, and secondary transition.

In her free time Dr. Herr enjoys reading mysteries and relaxing with her Bernese Mountain Dog, Hershey, and her African Grey Parrot, Akilah.



## Barbara Bateman

Barbara Bateman, PhD, JD is a nationally recognized expert in special education and in special education law. She has taught special education students in public schools and institutions, conducted research in learning disabilities, assessment, visual impairments, mental retardation, attitudes toward people with disabilities, and effective instruction for children with disabilities. She joined the faculty of the special education department at the University of Oregon in 1966 and while there also held visiting or summer appointments at several universities, including the University of Virginia, the University of Maine and the University of Wisconsin.

Dr. Bateman has authored over 100 professional articles, monographs, chapters and books. She graduated from the University of Oregon School of Law in 1976, the year before the federal special education law (then called P.L. 94-142 and now known as IDEA) went into effect, and since then has worked in all 50 states, serving as a hearing officer, an expert witness, a consultant to attorneys and agencies, a speaker and a teacher of special education law. Presently, Dr. Bateman is a special education consultant in private practice.

When not writing, conducting in-service education for school districts, providing assistance to parents of children with disabilities, consulting with attorneys involved in IDEA legal actions, Dr. Bateman can be found traveling the world with binoculars and snorkel in search of birds, fish, and shells.

# Chapter ONE

## Functional Skills



## Functional Skills

Functional skills are used in our daily activities, such as showering, dressing, eating, getting from home to work, greeting others, and so on throughout the day. Direct and systematic teaching of basic functional skills is essential for many students with disabilities but rarely needed for those who do not have disabilities.

This book charts a course for teachers and parents engaged in selecting the functional skills a student needs to be taught, writing measurable goals and objectives for those skills, and determining the steps in teaching the skills. For thirty-five years, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has provided support and direction for functional skills instruction. We advocate writing functional skills goals and objectives that comply with IDEA's requirements. This book provides a path to writing such goals and objectives.

*Janice is a second grader with an intellectual disability and autism. In her life skills classroom, the teacher has been working with her on basic academic skills, including reading sentences made up of phonetically regular words that can be sounded out, adding and subtracting single-digit numbers, and printing her name and address. Janice is making progress in each of these goals, but her mother, Mrs. Jenkins, also has concerns about her lack of interaction with children on the playground. Janice wants to play games during recess with the other children but does not know how. Mrs. Jenkins requested an IEP meeting to discuss adding a functional goal to Janice's IEP regarding learning to play the recess games popular at Janice's elementary school. The IEP team met and agreed that teaching Janice how to play recess games such as Foursquare and Red Rover could increase her level of peer interaction. Together the team members developed a functional goal with short-term objectives related to teaching Janice how to participate in playground games.*

Janice is a second grader with an intellectual disability and autism. In her life skills classroom, the teacher has been working with her on basic academic skills, including reading sentences made up of phonetically regular words that can be sounded out, adding and subtracting single-

digit numbers, and printing her name and address. Janice is making progress in each of these goals, but her mother, Mrs. Jenkins, also has concerns about her lack of interaction with children on the playground. Janice wants to play games during recess with the other children but does not know how. Mrs. Jenkins requested an IEP meeting to discuss adding a functional goal to Janice's IEP regarding learning to play the recess games popular at Janice's elementary school. The IEP team met and agreed that teaching Janice how to play recess games such as Foursquare and Red Rover could increase her level of peer interaction. Together the team members developed a functional goal with short-term objectives related to teaching Janice how to participate in playground games.

Since the passage of IDEA in 1975, public school personnel and parents, working cooperatively, have been required to develop written Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for eligible children with disabilities. In order to develop an IEP, the IEP team (which includes parents) must develop "measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals" [emphasis added] (34 CFR §300.320(a)(2)(i)).<sup>1</sup> Such academic and functional goals must be derived from an evaluation of "relevant functional, developmental, and academic information about the child" (34 CFR § 300.304(b)(1)), and the IEP team must consider "... the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child" (34 CFR § 300.324(a)(1)(ii)).

## A Short History of Functional Skill Instruction

Prior to 1980, curricula for students with severe disabilities, especially intellectual disabilities, were primarily developmental, i.e., matched to a student's cognitive level. This developmental approach was tied to the sequence of development of nondisabled students but on a delayed schedule. For example, if a 15 year old student's cognitive level (mental age equivalent) was that of a five-year old, the teaching goals and activities were typical of those for nondisabled five-year olds.

The developmental approach to teaching functional skills has changed over the last 30 years with the growing acceptance of the alternate strategy of developing chronologically age-appropriate and functional curriculum content. The four major functional skill areas needed in adult life were categorized as domestic, leisure-recreation, community, and

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to the 2006 regulations for IDEA. The symbol § refers to a specific section of the regulations.

vocational. The environments in which nondisabled adults employed these skills were to be the settings in which the skills should be taught to those who needed to learn them. For example, if the skill being taught was morning self-dressing, then that skill should be taught in a bedroom setting. These functional skills are now commonly called life skills or independent living skills.

The key feature of functional skills instruction is that the choice of skills is driven primarily by a student's chronological age rather than by his or her developmental level. One important exception to this is those skills closely related to physical "readiness," such as toileting and eating. Many basic academic skills are also appropriately taught at a level related to developmental age.

## IDEA and Functional Skills

A major purpose of IDEA is "To ensure that all children have available a free appropriate public education . . . To prepare them for **further education, employment, and independent living**" [emphasis added] (34 CFR § 300.1(a)). The first Congressional finding in IDEA 2004 is that "Disability . . . in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society . . . [Our] national policy [is to ensure] equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities (20 USC § 1400(c)(1)).

The emphasis on employment and independent living, i.e., on functional life skills, is pervasive and fundamental in IDEA. Evaluations must include functional, developmental, and academic information (34 CFR § 300.4(v)(1). A reevaluation must occur when academic and functional performances warrant it (34 CFR § 300.303(a)(1)). The IEP's present levels of performance and the measurable goals must address both academic achievement and functional performance ((34 CFR § 300.320(a)(1) & (2)(i)). The IEP must also include a statement of any accommodations a student needs in order to demonstrate performance on state and districtwide assessments ((34 CFR § 300.320(a)(6)(i)).

## Functional vs. Academic Goals

In an earlier book, *Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives* (Bateman & Herr, 2006), we addressed the development of measurable IEP goals from a primarily academic viewpoint. Although all academic goals may be viewed as “functional” in that they are designed to allow a student to function more successfully in an academic setting, in this book we will focus on those goals that address a student’s progress in areas other than the typical academics (e.g., literacy, math, science, social studies). We call these nonacademic goals **functional**. Wolfe and Harriott (1997) defined functional as “. . . those skills that can be used in natural environments and focus on concepts and skills needed in areas such as employment/education, home and family, leisure pursuits, community involvement, physical/emotional health, and personal responsibility/relationships” (p. 71).

Although any student with a disability may need instruction in a particular functional skill, students with moderate or severe disabilities may require individualized instruction in many functional areas in order to prepare them for adult roles and to allow them the greatest quality of life. “Most children with severe and multiple disabilities require direct and individually planned instruction in areas that are not traditionally part of the general curriculum, such as communication, social skills, leisure-recreation, travel training (or orientation and mobility), self-care and domestic skills” (Bruce, 2011, p. 296). For example, most children learn to dress themselves independently before they are old enough to attend kindergarten. As a result, a typical kindergarten curriculum does not focus on dressing skills. A child with a severe disability, however, may not have mastered the skills of putting on a shirt and pants independently before entering kindergarten. Such a child may require months of very specific, carefully scaffolded instruction before he is able to master the skills. Because self-dressing is an important functional skill that allows a child to be more independent, an IEP team may decide that teaching self-dressing skills needs to be part of that child’s school curriculum, and the team would include a self-dressing goal as an annual goal in the child’s IEP.



## Functional Skills

We develop functional **goals** by focusing on the functional **skills** a student needs to learn. Functional skills range from teeth brushing to money management, from showering to completing job applications. Some IEPs contain only functional goals, while others may have only a few functional goals interspersed with primarily academic goals. Our concern is with the functional skills involved in everyday activities.

Functional daily living skills can be categorized in different ways. For example, we could begin with what we do to care for our own bodies, to clothe them, to prepare food for them, what we do to care for our immediate living quarters, and how we interact with the larger community, including employment and transportation. Social skills cut across all areas of life, e.g., personal hygiene can affect relationships with others, one may need to cooperate with others in sharing or maintaining living quarters, and social interactions are central to community life. Each of these areas can be specified in more detail.

Caring for one's own body can be further broken down into such tasks as toileting, undressing, dressing, self-feeding, hand washing, showering, bathing, teeth brushing and flossing, hair care, using deodorant, shaving, nail clipping, and more. Many of these skills are taught, practiced, and mastered at home. School personnel may play no role, a minor supporting role, or a major role in teaching students these functional skills.

Selecting appropriate clothing to wear requires a student to attend to cleanliness, modesty, the weather, the activity, the setting, neatness, and sometimes style. Again, school personnel's role in teaching these skills may be large or small.

The maintenance of living quarters may involve simple meal preparation, operating kitchen appliances, washing and putting away dishes, recycling, garbage disposal, sorting, washing, drying, folding and putting away laundry, simple mending, replacing buttons, dusting, mopping, window washing, vacuuming, cleaning a bathroom sink, mirror, toilet, floor, and shower.

Community interactions rely heavily on one's ability to get from place to place. Travel skills include being a safe pedestrian, using public transportation and perhaps taxis, and having all necessary mobility within school, job site, and the community. Leisure activities are increasingly important in daily life. Students must select an activity,

be able to participate in that activity, use social skills to interact appropriately with others engaged in the same activity, and perhaps use public transportation to get to the activity.

Other important functional skills include telling time, communicating one's name and address to others when appropriate, using a phone, making change, and perhaps bill paying. Sex education related to hygiene, disease, birth control, privacy, and sexual safety is also important for older students. Personal safety skills are critical for students of all ages.

Every functional skill can be broken down into small steps. For example, simple meal preparation could include shopping for the meal ingredients, following a simple recipe or just following the instructions on the food package, and serving the food. Breaking down a functional skill into its component steps is called **task analysis**, a topic we will deal with later.

**Functional** goals are also a major focus in the transition component of IEP development. Beginning no later than when the student turns 16 (and earlier, if appropriate), IEP transition goals must be based on age-appropriate assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills. The services necessary to help the student reach these goals must be designated on the IEP and provided to him or her.

In the past, public secondary schools did not assume responsibility for postsecondary services for students with or without disabilities. The reality of now having to provide them has not been an easy transition (no pun intended) for public secondary schools to make. Consequently, many IEPs do not contain the necessary measurable transition goals or the mandated services. Nevertheless, it is important for compliance with federal law, and even more so for the welfare of students, that we provide meaningful transition goals and the services to match them.

The majority of transition goals for students with moderate and severe disabilities are functional and primarily deal with employment and independent daily living skills. Any functional goal that is appropriate for a given 16-year-old can also be a transition goal. With the exception of possible academic goals, transition goals are functional. Therefore, we have no real need to distinguish transition goals from other functional goals.

The transition component of an IEP requires the team to focus squarely on a student's departure from school and entrance into the post-high school world. This focus underlines the importance of transition goals being highly functional.

## References

- Bateman, B. D., & Herr, C. M. (2006). *Writing measurable IEP goals and objectives*. Verona, WI: Attainment.
- Bruce, S. M. (2011). Severe and multiple disabilities. In J. M. Kauffman, & D. P. Hallahan (Eds.), *Handbook of special education* (pp. 291-303). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.* (2006).
- Wolfe, P. S., & Harriott, W. A. (1997). Functional academics. In P. Wehman, & J. Kregel (Eds.), *Functional curriculum for elementary, middle, and secondary age students with special needs* (pp. 69-103). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.