

Present Levels that Drive the IEP

A Practical Guide to Writing High-Quality PLAAFP Statements

Purpose and Legal Requirement

The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) is a legally required section of every IEP. It provides a data-based summary of the student's current skills, strengths, needs, and the impact of their disability on participation in the general curriculum. A high-quality PLAAFP sets the foundation for measurable annual goals, services, and accommodations. Poorly written PLAAFP statements can result in vague goals, unclear service delivery, and reduced student progress.

What Belongs in a PLAAFP

- Specific, current data from valid sources (evaluations, progress monitoring, classroom performance).
- Description of the student's academic achievement and functional performance.
- Strengths, interests, and preferences of the student.
- Impact of the disability on involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.
- Baseline information that directly connects to measurable annual goals.

What Does Not Belong in a PLAAFP

- Vague statements without data (e.g., 'Student is doing well in reading').
- General descriptions of the disability without educational impact.
- Services, accommodations, or goals (these belong in other sections of the IEP).
- Information unrelated to the student's educational performance.



Sources of Evidence for PLAAFP

- Formal evaluations (initial, triennial, independent).
- Curriculum-based measurements and benchmark assessments.
- State and district assessments.
- Teacher-created assessments and classroom work samples.
- Observational data from teachers, related service providers, and families.
- Student interviews and self-reflections.

Step-by-Step Structure for Writing PLAAFP Statements

1. Start with a data-based description of current performance in the relevant area.
2. Describe strengths, interests, and preferences as they relate to learning.
3. Identify the impact of the disability on involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
4. Provide baseline data to inform measurable annual goals.
5. Use clear, concise, and jargon-free language that all IEP team members can understand.

High-Quality PLAAFP Exemplars

Academic Example – Reading:

Current Performance: On the fall benchmark assessment, Student read 52 correct words per minute (CWPM) with 85% accuracy.

Strengths: Student enjoys reading graphic novels and participates willingly in small group instruction.

Impact: Due to deficits in decoding multisyllabic words, Student struggles to comprehend grade-level informational texts.



Baseline: In three consecutive curriculum-based measures, Student scored between 80–85% on comprehension questions.

Functional Example – Organization:

Current Performance: student often forgets to bring required materials to class 3–4 times per week.

Strengths: student responds well to visual checklists and verbal reminders.

Impact: Organizational difficulties result in missed assignments and reduced participation in group projects.

Baseline: With prompts, student brings all required materials 60% of the time over two weeks of data collection.

Communication Example – Expressive Language:

Current Performance: On the Expressive Vocabulary Test, student scored at the 10th percentile.

Strengths: student uses a rich vocabulary when discussing personal interests.

Impact: Difficulty with word retrieval affects oral presentations and classroom discussions.

Baseline: During structured oral language tasks, student used target vocabulary in 3 out of 10 opportunities.

Social-Emotional Example – Self-Regulation:

Current Performance: student uses a taught coping strategy (deep breathing) in 2 out of 5 opportunities when frustrated.

Strengths: student can identify feelings using a visual emotions chart.

Impact: Limited use of coping strategies leads to escalation and time out of class.

Baseline: student independently uses coping strategies in 40% of observed opportunities.

PLAAFP Quality Check

- Does it include current, specific data from multiple sources?
- Are strengths, interests, and preferences clearly stated?

- Is the impact of the disability explicitly linked to access and progress in the general curriculum?
 - Is baseline data included that will connect directly to measurable annual goals?
 - Is the language clear and jargon-free for all IEP team members?
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Action Starter: Try One of These Tomorrow

- Review one student's PLAAFP and highlight vague statements. Replace them with specific data-based descriptions.
- Add a strengths and interests section for each PLAAFP area to ensure a balanced, student-centered view.
- Check that each PLAAFP has baseline data that links directly to the student's measurable annual goals.