



Progress Reports: What Parents Need to Know

By Pam Cotrell

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that school districts provide information to parents of children receiving special education and related services about how their child is progressing toward meeting their annual Individualized Education Program [IEP] goals. If your child is on an IEP, you have been the recipient of progress reports. You are not alone, if when you get the progress reports, you do a quick review and file them away. The problem with dealing with the progress records in this way can result in greatly underestimating what a valuable tool they can be in helping you to advocate for the special education services your child needs.

If you feel like you don't understand progress reports, be encouraged because OCECD IS HERE TO HELP. Let's get started by answering a few basic questions about IEP Progress Reports.

What is the foundation for meaningful measureable progress reports?

When you attend your child's IEP meeting, the IEP team (of which you are a member) develops goals and objectives to address your child's individual educational needs. One of the first steps in developing a measureable goal is to collect data which tells the team where your child is currently performing. If you look at one of the goals in Section 6 of your child's current IEP, you should find this

information in the sub-section "Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance" of each goal. It is this information that provides the team with a baseline or starting point for writing a new measureable IEP goal.

If there is not enough data or information available to identify your child's present level of performance, the team may find that additional assessments are needed. For example, in very simplistic terms, if your child has difficulty with being a fluent reader, the IEP team needs to know *the current level of your child's reading fluency* before writing a goal to *improve* reading fluency. Once the current level of reading fluency is identified, the team can then decide the level of fluency that your child can reasonably achieve by the end of the IEP.

Although there will be additional information in your child's present level statement, the team must know the fluency level of the child before setting a fluency goal. If you don't see the link or the apples-to-apples comparison between the present level and the goal, this is definitely something that should be clarified with the IEP team.



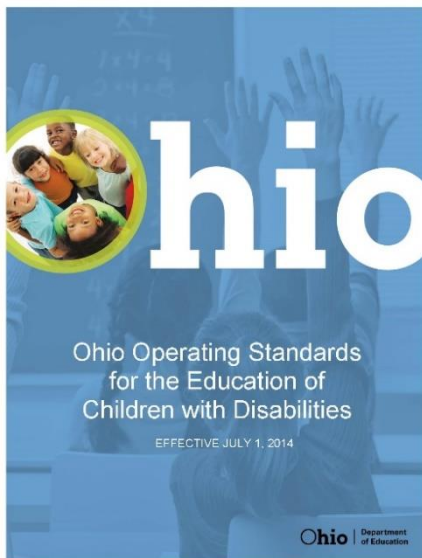


Let's take it one step farther. It is the data in the present level and the measureable IEP goals that make it possible for your child's special education provider(s) to write meaningful progress reports that show if your child is making progress.

If you don't have a measureable present level and the IEP goal is not written in measureable terms, you are not going to be able to tell if your child is making progress. Now that is important!

How frequently is the school district required to provide a written progress report?

As it states on the current Ohio IEP form and in the Ohio Operating Standards for the Education of Children with Disabilities, progress reports to the parent of a child with a disability are required *at least as often* as report cards are issued to all children.



If the school district provides interim reports to all children, IEP progress reports must be provided to all parents of a child with a disability. Of note, the IEP team may determine that a student's individual needs require more frequent progress reports than when all children receive report cards. An example may be that all students get report cards every 9 weeks, but your child's individual needs require progress reports on a particular goal every 4.5 weeks. If you feel you need more frequent progress reports, this is something you can discuss with the IEP team.

In addition to deciding the frequency of progress reports, what other decisions are IEP teams required to make about progress reports?

The IEP team is also required to document on each individual goal the *method* that will be used to measure your child's progress.

Below each of your child's measureable annual goals, there are checkboxes lettered A – K. The options on the current IEP form are: Curriculum-Based Assessment, Portfolio, Observations, Anecdotal Records, Short-Cycle Assessments, Performance Assessments, Checklists, Running Records, Work Samples, Inventories, and Rubrics. Click on the link below to view a description of A – K.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/17UYrz52yldOeyyHEiiaVUqDG0HKi21ukZgf22SxRJdA/edit?usp=sharing>



It is up to the IEP team to determine the best way to monitor progress on each of the goals in the IEP. Remember that if “observations” is selected as a methodology, there should also be at least one written methodology to support the observations.

What should I do with my child’s progress reports when I get them?

The first thing you can do is have a copy of your child’s current IEP in front of you as you are reviewing the progress report, since you might not have looked at the IEP goals recently.

Review the present level, the IEP goal itself, and any objectives or benchmarks. Ask, what is my child expected to do, at what level, by when? Once you have refreshed your memory about the details of the IEP goals and objectives, it will be much easier to correlate the progress report. Consider one goal at a time and then the progress report on that goal, before you move to subsequent goals.

What kind of information may I expect to be included in the progress report?

You can expect concrete information or data that lines up with the goal, that very specifically tells you where your child is performing at the time of the reporting period. If your child’s measurable goal states that he/she will perform a task with 80% accuracy or get 8 out of 10 words correct in each of 4 trials, you can expect to see those measures reported in the progress report.

A progress report that does not provide data, but rather states “Adequate Progress” or “Making Progress” is not an appropriate progress report. Although there may be a component of your child’s progress monitoring that includes observations, there should be data to back up the observations.

If the progress report indicates that work has not begun on a goal in the IEP, it is fair to ask your child’s special education provider to explain why your child has not started working on the goal.

Of note, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) has made available to school district’s a form for reporting progress. However, it is an optional form. Your school district is permitted to use their own form, as long as it includes the necessary information to allow you to know if your child is making progress.

Form OP-6A Progress Report

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yocnec-YleVnzXdumoHYJzRTi1zvF_u/view?usp=sharing



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What options do I have if my child is not making progress?

You may want to begin with a discussion with the intervention specialist, therapists, or other school personnel that are working with your child on this particular goal. Do they have ideas about why the expected progress is not occurring? Utilize their expertise to enhance your understanding.

Other questions you may want to ask:

1. Are there proper supports in place that should allow your child to progress?
2. Does the IEP team need to be reconvened, or at least the IEP team members who play a role with the goal in question?
3. What corrective action needs to be taken?
4. Does the goal need to be modified? Is a change needed in the methodology of the specially designed instruction? (An example may be that a particular reading program is not working for your child.)

If your child is not making progress, the team must find out why and make the needed adjustments.

PACER Center suggests that when your child is not making progress that your child may need changes in special education or related services, assistive technology, curriculum, method of instruction, or in the educational setting where the IEP goal is being implemented.

See: <https://www.pacer.org/parent/>

What if my child masters a goal much quicker than anticipated?

Progress reports may show that a child has met the goal much quicker than the IEP team had anticipated. Depending on how far away the end date on the IEP is, you may consider requesting that the IEP team reconvene to consider if an additional goal(s) needs to be written. There is no need to wait until the annual IEP review to add additional goals.



Are Progress Reports required only on my child's IEP goals?

For transition-aged students (beginning at age 14 or younger, if determined necessary by the IEP team), the school district also is required to report on the progress that your child is making in meeting the postsecondary goals in the IEP.

Per the Ohio Department of Education, "the postsecondary progress report is to be completed and distributed as frequently as the IEP goal progress report. The postsecondary transition progress report must summarize the outcome of transition services at the time of the reporting period.



The postsecondary transition progress report must summarize the outcome of transition services at the time of the reporting period. It must indicate the status of the student toward completion of the transitional service and activities. Have they started? Are they in progress? Has it been completed?"

Form OP-6B Transition Progress Report

https://drive.google.com/file/d/148UVAVx_8iaU14NmSjC0cNQ2A1prHggk/view?usp=sharing

From the Ohio Department of Education

What can I do if I don't understand my child's progress report?

If you still have questions after reviewing the progress report and correlating it with the current IEP, you may consider contacting the special education provider that is responsible for collecting the data and reporting progress on the given goal.

Possibly a more detailed explanation about how the data was collected or even viewing the actual data will help. Your child's intervention specialist or therapist may be able to assist you by creating a graph or chart to allow you "to see" your child's progress.

In summary, progress reports are an invaluable tool to you as a parent of a child on an IEP. These reports allow you to monitor your child's progress on their IEP goals throughout the year and to know if your child has mastered a goal by the end of the annual IEP.

Progress reports can be used to help demonstrate if your child is receiving a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) as they are entitled to receive. They can help you to know when adjustments need to be considered and when to request that the IEP team be reconvened.

Progress reports may even be helpful in advocating for Extended School Year services (ESY). As a parent of a child with a disability, you may frequently advocate for your child from your heart. However, you can be much more effective in advocating for your child if you have the data in your hands.

Your child's progress reports can be a tremendous tool for obtaining the appropriate special education and related services that your child needs to ensure a successful transition from school to postsecondary life.





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