

PRESENT LEVELS WRITING KIT

Sentence frames by domain, the data-to-statement worksheet, the impact statement frame and a complete worked example. Fillable PDF.

TOOL Data-to-Statement Worksheet

One row per piece of evidence. The last column is the sentence that goes in the draft. Fill the left three columns first and the sentence writes itself.

STUDENT	DOMAIN	DATE	
DATA SOURCE AND DATE	WHAT THE DATA SAYS (THE NUMBER)	WHAT IT MEANS FOR ACCESS TO THE CURRICULUM	THE SENTENCE FOR THE DRAFT

How to fill the last column

Take column one and column two and put them in the sentence frame. The sentence writes itself. Marcus read level F at 88% accuracy.

FRAME Reading

Decoding, fluency and comprehension. Fill the blanks with the number, the source and the date; delete the frames you do not use.

STUDENT	SOURCES AND DATES USED
DECODING On _____ (date), on _____ (assessment), read _____ of _____ single-syllable words with _____ sounds correctly. Errors were mostly _____. Place at this grade typically read _____.	
FLUENCY On a _____ grade passage on _____ read _____ words correct per minute with _____ errors; the _____ benchmark is _____. Reading sounded _____.	
COMPREHENSION After reading _____ independently _____ answered _____ of _____ literal questions and _____ of _____ inferential questions correctly. When the text was read about _____.	
STRENGTH _____ can _____ (skill, with evidence), and does best when _____.	
IN CLASS During _____ (activity), this looks like _____. The adult usually has to _____.	

TOOL How the Disability Affects Involvement and Progress

The sentence everybody drafts, it is not about the disability, it is about what the disability does, in this student's class, this year.

The requirement is to say how the disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. The mistake is to describe the disability. The fix is to describe the collision: what the class requires, what the student can currently do, and what happens in the gap.

The frame
 The class requires _____ (the actual task: reading a level-K textbook, writing a five-sentence paragraph, sitting through a 40-minute lesson, following three-step directions).
 Right now _____ (the student) can _____ (the data).
 So without support _____ (what happens: misses the content, cannot show what he knows, leaves the room, falls behind by _____.)
 With _____ (the accommodation or service) _____ (what changes, with data if you have it).

Worked
 Second-grade science and social studies use texts at level K and above, read independently. Marcus reads level F at 88% accuracy (May running record). Without support he cannot read the textbook, so he misses the content and cannot show what he knows on the written check-ins — his science grade is 61% while his oral responses in class are consistently correct. With the text read aloud and oral responses accepted, his check-in scores rise to 85-90%. His reading disability therefore affects his access to grade-level content in every subject that depends on independent reading, not only in reading class.

Yours
 One paragraph, four moves. If it does not name a class, a task and a number, it is describing the disability, not the impact.

TOOL Needs-to-Goals Bridge

Every need named in the present levels lands here. Each one becomes a goal, an accommodation, a service, or a written reason it is not being addressed.

STUDENT	DATE			
NEED (FROM THE PRESENT LEVELS)	BASELINE (THE NUMBER)	BECOMES: GOAL / ACCOMMODATION / SERVICE	GOAL AREA OR WORDING	IF NOT ADDRESSED, WHY

The rule
 Every need in the left column must land somewhere in the middle. A need that is named and then ignored is the first thing a parent, advocate or a reviewer looks for, and this best practice means you have to be better addressed by you.

DRAFT Self-Check Before It Goes in the Draft

Twelve questions. A "no" on any of the first six means the section is not finished.

STUDENT	CHECKED BY / DATE	
YES	CHECK	FIX NEEDED
	Every claim about performance has a source and a date	
	Every claim about performance has a number, or something an adult could watch happen	
	Strengths come first and are specific to this student	
	The impact paragraph names a class, a task and what happens in the gap	
	Every need named has a goal, an accommodation, a service, or a written reason	
	The family's input is in the section, in their words	
	A stranger could read it and know what to expect on Monday	
	Nothing is copied forward from last year without a new date	
	No jargon that a parent would have to ask about (see page 19)	
	Nothing describes the student as a diagnosis rather than a person	
	Someone else could write a measurable goal from the baseline here	
	It says what the student can do at least as often as what they cannot	

EXAMPLE A Complete Present Levels, Annotated

An invented second grade. Every number, name and date is made up. The notes in the margin say why each sentence is there.

Strengths. Marcus retells a story read aloud to him in correct sequence with character names and detail. (Teacher observation, four of four checks, April). He will work for twenty minutes on a task that ends with a chance to share a fact about sharks. He is kind to younger students and is the first to help a kindergarten peer at line-up.

Family input. His grandmother says he "comes home saying he is stupid" and wants him reading well enough to read to his cousin by summer. Marcus says reading out loud in front of the class is the worst part of his day.

Reading. On the May running record Marcus read a level F text at 88% accuracy, the end-of-second-grade benchmark is level M. He read 42 words correct per minute on a second-grade passage (benchmark 90), sounding out most CVC words and guessing at longer ones from the first letter. Listening comprehension is at grade level: 8 of 10 questions correct when the text is read to him, 3 of 10 when he reads it himself.

Writing. Given ten minutes and a prompt, he writes two to three sentences with correct capitals and periods, spelling is phonetic (WIL2, FRIENDS). He dictates five to six sentences on the same prompt.

Behavior. When asked to read aloud in a group he puts his head down and does not respond, on 6 of 8 observed occasions in April, the episode lasts about four minutes. He has never done this during math or when reading one-to-one with an adult.

Impact. Second-grade science and social studies use level-K texts read independently. Without the text read aloud he cannot access the content and cannot show what he knows on written check-ins (science grade 61% written, 85-90% when answered orally). His reading disability affects every subject that depends on independent reading.

Needs. Decodes CVC and CVCa words in connected text. Ask for help in a full sentence instead of shutting down. Access grade-level content through read-aloud and oral response.

Strengths are specific, dated and usable. Listening comprehension becomes a note to content, sharks becomes a reinforcement; twenty minutes is a timeline timeline.

The family's words are quoted, not translated. The student's own statement explains the behavior (date three paragraphs down).

Every reading claim has a source, a date, a number and the benchmark. The listening- versus-reading contrast is the single most useful sentence; it separates decoding from understanding.

Writing separates mechanics from composition, and the dictation number shows the ceiling.

Behavior is described as what it looks like, how often, how long, and where it never happens. No vague is inserted.

The impact paragraph names the class, the task, the number and the gap.

Three needs, each traceable: the first two become goals, the third an accommodation. Nothing is named and dropped.

Fillable PDF

20 Pages

Six Domains

IEP Ready

Four jobs, plus the family's voice. If the section does all five, it is finished. If it does four, it is not.

Present levels are the foundation every other section stands on: the goals come from the needs, the services come from the goals, and the accommodations come from how the disability shows up in the room. When the present levels are a paragraph of adjectives, everything downstream is guesswork. This kit is built around one rule: every sentence about the student either cites data or describes something an adult could watch happen.

- 1 Say what the student CAN do, first and specifically.** Strengths are not a courtesy paragraph; they are the starting point the goals are written from.
- 2 Say where the student is now, with the number and the source.** The assessment, the date, the score, and what a same-age peer would score. "Below grade level" is a category. "42 words per minute on a second-grade passage in May; the benchmark is 90" is a present level.
- 3 Say how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum.** Not what the disability is — what it does, in this student's classes, this year. Page 13 is the frame for that sentence.
- 4 Say what the student needs, so that each need becomes a goal.** If a need is named and no goal addresses it, the section has to say why. Page 14 is the bridge.
- 5 Include what the family and the student said.** In their words where you can. If the parent input form came back, it goes here, not in a drawer.

What this kit is not

It is not a legal template and it does not say what your state requires the section to contain. Your district's IEP form decides the headings; this kit decides what goes under them. The worked example on page 18 is an invented student. Names, scores and dates in it are made up.

The two tests for every sentence

The stranger test. Could a teacher who has never met the student read this sentence and know what to expect on Monday? "Struggles with attention" fails. "Stays with independent seat work for about six minutes before leaving his seat; with a visual timer and a two-minute break at the ten-minute mark, twenty" passes.

The baseline test. Could you write a measurable goal from this sentence alone, and could somebody else tell in June whether it was met? If the sentence has no number, no date and no source, the answer is no.

Where each job lives in this kit

JOB	THE SENTENCE HAS TO	USE
1	What the student can do	Page 6, the strengths organizer
2	Where the student is now, with data	Page 5, then the frames on pages 7–12
3	How the disability affects progress	Page 13, the impact statement
4	What the student needs	Page 14, the needs-to-goals bridge
+	What the family and student said	Page 15, the input paragraph

TOOL

Data-to-Statement Worksheet

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STUDENT

DOMAIN

DATE

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How to fill the last column

Take column one and column two and put them in one sentence: *On the May running record, Marcus read a level-F text at 88% accuracy.* Then take column three and make it the next sentence: *Second-grade science and social studies texts are level K and above, so he cannot read the textbook independently and needs the content read aloud.* Two sentences, one row. That is a present level.

Decoding, fluency and comprehension. Fill the blanks with the number, the source and the date; delete the frames you do not use.

STUDENT

SOURCES AND DATES USED

DECODING

On _____ (date), on _____ (assessment), _____ read _____ of _____ single-syllable words with _____ sounds correctly. Errors were mostly _____. Peers at this grade typically read _____.

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FLUENCY

On a _____-grade passage on _____, _____ read _____ words correct per minute with _____ errors; the _____ benchmark is _____. Reading sounded _____.

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COMPREHENSION

After reading _____ independently, _____ answered _____ of _____ literal questions and _____ of _____ inferential questions correctly. When the text was read aloud, _____.

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STRENGTH

_____ can _____ (skill, with evidence), and does best when _____.

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IN CLASS

During _____ (activity), this looks like _____. The adult usually has to _____.

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NEED

_____ needs to _____ in order to _____ (access to what, in the general curriculum).

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Strengths are specific, dated and usable: listening comprehension becomes a route to content; sharks become a reinforcer; twenty minutes is a stamina baseline.

Family input. His grandmother says he “comes home saying he is stupid” and wants him reading well enough to read to his cousin by summer. Marcus says reading out loud in front of the class is the worst part of his day.

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Behavior is described as what it looks like, how often, how long, and where it never happens. No cause is asserted.

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The impact paragraph names the class, the task, the number and the gap.

Needs. Decode CVC and CVCe words in connected text. Ask for help in a full sentence instead of shutting down. Access grade-level content through read-aloud and oral response.

Three needs, each traceable: the first two become goals, the third an accommodation. Nothing is named and dropped.

What is missing on purpose

No diagnosis is named, because the eligibility category is on another page and does not tell a teacher what to do. No cause is asserted for the head-down behavior. No sentence says “struggles,” “below grade level” or “low motivation.” Nothing was copied from last year. Every number has a month next to it.