Meeting the Needs of Students With Disabilities

The expectation is that the child will participate in all survey objectives, since there are varying degrees the child can participate with/without accommodations, modifications, supports, and/or services. If a child is demonstrating survey objectives at their level with/without any accommodations that their IEP requires, then the child is engaging in the activity appropriately.

The survey process should be the same for all children. Using the same widely held developmental and learning expectations for all children helps teachers encourage every child to reach his or her full potential. In addition, such a survey process enables teachers to identify learning and developmental needs in order to provide appropriate interventions and learning experiences.

When determining how to observe your child on the objectives, follow guidance that is offered when making Least Restrictive Environment decisions for student participation. Can the student participate as is? What supports and accommodations in their IEP would allow them to participate? Are there additional supports and accommodations that are needed to allow them to participate? Observation of survey objectives may also help inform writing IEP.

Using Teaching Strategies GOLD® to Survey Students With Disabilities

Teaching Strategies GOLD® progressions illustrate the predictable sequence of development and learning of most young children. To ensure that all children—including those with disabilities— are making progress, teachers recognize the many emergent skills that precede the development of typical skills from birth through the end of kindergarten. *Objectives for Development & Learning* shows wide ranges of progressive skills and behaviors for the objectives*.* The progressions serve as a guide to determine how all children are progressing in nine areas of development and learning, while acknowledging that children show what they know in different ways. The progressions emphasize to teachers that all children have knowledge, skills, and behaviors upon which to build.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® helps you identify children who may be struggling in some areas of development and learning. In general, the developmental rates of children with disabilities tend to be more unpredictable than the rates of children without disabilities. Children demonstrate their abilities in various ways as well. You can identify supportive strategies, such as offering small-group work or other materials, to make it easier for children to participate and make progress through daily experiences.

Using *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* to survey children with disabilities provides significant benefits for a number of reasons:
- It includes the important indicators for appropriate assessment as recommended by the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). It has all of the attributes of high-quality assessment described by DEC, i.e., it is used for specified purposes, is authentic; and has good psychometric qualities.
- It is comprehensive. For the purpose of planning instruction, information is gathered across all areas of development and learning.
- It involves families in the survey process.
- It identifies a child's skills and abilities and minimizes the impact of the disability on the results.

- It emphasizes what a child can do. Because incremental rates of progress are documented within a broad range of development and learning tasks, it guides teachers to understand next steps in development.
- It is a strengths-based tool. A child can demonstrate skills and behaviors within the various levels of each objective and its dimensions. It provides an ongoing record of what a child can do at every checkpoint.
- It uses universal language that reflects an understanding that children show what they know in various ways. Discrete skills are replaced by functional objectives.

Because *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* progressions provide a picture of predictable development over more than 6 years, children whose skills and abilities are emerging and developing at an uneven or less-predictable rate are able to show progress. When using the *Objectives for Development & Learning* to survey children with disabilities, consider the intent of each objective as it applies to individual children. Observe how each child progresses toward meeting the objective while using individualized modifications, assistive devices, or adult supports as necessary. For example, a child with a physical impairment might use a walker or a wheelchair to move around the classroom. The intent of Objective 4, "Demonstrates traveling skills," is that the child is able to move or propel him- or herself to get where he or she wants to go. Any means that a child uses (e.g., adaptive equipment, scooting, or crawling) meets the intent of the objective. Children with significant disabilities may appear to stay on a single level for a long time. The use of a supplemental instrument may help the child's team identify incremental changes that are taking place. For example, a child with a physical disability may need a more specific checklist for gross-motor development so you are better able to intervene and show progress. On all of the other objectives, the child may be developing typically, so collecting the same documentation as you would for other children may be fine. The use of supplemental tools to address specific questions and concerns can provide additional information for planning instruction and monitoring progress. Gathering data from multiple sources at different points in time gives a better picture of each child's development and learning.

Teaching Strategies GOLD® can be used to support tiered models of supportive instruction and individualize intervention by identifying a child's strengths in relation to classmates. You can design learning experiences and group children in ways that support skill building and practice. For some children, *Teaching Strategies GOLD®* can help identify areas of strength and need so that collaborative teams of educators, professionals, and family members can design more explicit interventions to assist with skill attainment and expansion.

The IEP Team can use *Objectives for Development & Learning* as a data source to identify strengths and needs when developing a child's Individual Education Program (IEP). Each need will be addressed within the IEP through accommodations, modifications, supports, and/or services. Multiple data sources will be considered when determining a child's Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP) in an area of need. The Annual Goal is then developed to align with Common Core State Standards and to represent the level of performance expected by the IEP end date. Benchmarks are then established to measure growth across time toward the annual goal.