

Understanding Goal Setting in Education

What Is an Educational Goal?

An educational goal is a clear, measurable statement about what a student is working toward. Goals help teachers, students, and families focus on specific skills and track progress.

In both general education and special education, goals should be **linked directly to a targeted skill deficit** — meaning the area where a student needs the most support to grow.

Why Goal Setting Matters

- Keeps instruction focused on what the student needs most
 - Makes progress easier to measure and understand
 - Helps build confidence and motivation
 - Creates a shared vision between the student, family, and school team
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What Makes a Good Goal?

A good goal is:

- **Specific** – Focused on one clear area (for example, decoding unfamiliar words)
 - **Measurable** – You can track progress using data (for example, percent correct)
 - **Achievable** – Challenging but realistic for the student
 - **Relevant** – Tied to the student’s actual learning needs
 - **Time-bound** – Includes a timeline for review (for example, within 9 weeks)
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Example Goals



Reading Goal:

Alex will improve decoding skills by reading 30 unfamiliar words per minute with 90% accuracy on weekly probes.

Behavior Goal:

Jordan will use a break card to manage frustration in class, reducing outbursts from 5 times to 2 times per week, measured over a 4-week period.

Writing Goal:

Sam will complete a 3-paragraph essay with correct punctuation and topic sentences in 4 out of 5 attempts.

 **What Parents Can Ask**

- What specific skill is this goal addressing?
- How will you measure progress toward the goal?
- What happens if my child isn't making progress?
- How often will the goal be reviewed or adjusted?

You can also ask to help set goals that match your child's needs at home and school.

 **Important Reminder**

Goals are not just academic checkboxes. They are personalized targets designed to help your child succeed. The best goals are those that directly address **what's holding a student back** and provide a way forward.

To learn more, visit www.ksde.org or speak with your child's teacher or IEP team.

If you would like additional guidance navigating school supports, Bison Bridge Behavioral Insights offers resources, consultation, and advocacy for families across Kansas. Visit bisonbridgebi.com to learn more.