

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)

Goal Planner for Children Aged 4–6 Years

Aligned with U.S. Foundational Skills (IDEA) & Pre-K / Kindergarten Readiness Standards

Prepared as a practical template for U.S. special educators, related service providers, and families

Based on developmental best practices for early childhood special education

Important: This IEP Goal Planner is to be used only after a comprehensive assessment has been completed by a qualified specialist (Special Education Teacher / School Psychologist / Developmental Pediatrician). Goals must be individualized on the basis of the child's actual present levels of performance. The examples below illustrate a developmentally appropriate pathway for many 4–6 year olds who need foundational support under IDEA.

1. Child Information (to be filled after assessment)

Child's Name	_____	Date of Birth / Age	_____
Gender	_____	Date of Assessment	_____
Grade / Placement	_____	IEP Period	From _____ to _____
Primary Language	English / Spanish / Other: _____	Eligibility / Diagnosis	_____
Parent / Guardian	_____	Contact	_____

2. Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFP)

This section summarizes what the child can already do and what support is still needed. It is written only after formal and informal assessment by the specialist. Below is a suggested framework for 4–6 year olds.

Domain	Current Strengths (examples)	Needs / Areas to Support
Sitting & Attention	Can sit for short periods with adult support; shows interest in preferred toys or activities.	Needs structured practice to build independent sitting of 5–10 minutes for learning tasks.
Pre-Literacy (English Letters & Sounds)	Recognizes a few familiar letters or pictures; enjoys looking at books with an adult.	Needs systematic introduction of letter shapes and sounds, one letter at a time with picture cards.
Early Numeracy	Can hold objects; may rote-count a few numbers with help.	Needs concrete 1-to-1 correspondence (1 bead = 1 object) using large counting beads or objects before abstract counting.
Social-Emotional & Communication	Makes eye contact at times; follows simple one-step directions in familiar settings.	May need visual supports, clear routines, and positive reinforcement for group participation.

Note: Replace the example statements with actual assessment findings for the individual child.

3. Foundational Prerequisite – Sitting Tolerance (5–10 minutes)

Before any formal letter or number learning can take root, the child must be able to sit with reasonable attention for at least 5–10 minutes. This is the doorway to all academic readiness. Without it, picture cards and counting activities will not stick.

Sitting Practice 5–10 min

Illustration idea: Child sitting comfortably on a learning mat or small chair, engaged with materials.
Goal: Build comfortable, independent sitting for learning.

Annual Goal – Sitting & Attention

By the end of the IEP period (approximately 6–12 months), when given a preferred or structured activity and clear visual/verbal cues, the child will sit in a designated place and remain engaged for at least 8–10 minutes with no more than 1–2 gentle prompts, in 4 out of 5 observed opportunities across three consecutive sessions.

Short-term Objectives (Benchmarks)

- Within 4–6 weeks: Sit for 2–3 minutes with adult co-sitting and preferred toy/object, 80% of trials.
- Within 8–10 weeks: Sit for 4–5 minutes with minimal physical prompt, looking at picture cards or counting objects, 4/5 trials.
- Within 3–4 months: Sit independently for 6–8 minutes during a short structured activity (one letter + counting 1–3), with only verbal/visual reminder.
- By end of period: Consistent 8–10 minute sitting for learning tasks as stated in the annual goal.

Teaching tips: Use a consistent “learning mat” or small chair. Start with highly preferred materials. Gradually fade physical prompts. Celebrate every successful minute with specific praise (“You sat so nicely and looked at the card!”).

4. Pre-Literacy Goals – English Letters & Sounds

For children aged 4–6 who are still at the very beginning, introduce one English letter (and its sound) per day using clear picture cards. This prevents overload and allows deep association between shape, sound, and meaning. Aligns with foundational phonics readiness skills commonly targeted in U.S. Pre-K and Kindergarten.

Sample Picture Cards

A — Apple (uppercase + lowercase + picture)
B — Ball
Introduce one letter + picture + sound per teaching day.

Annual Goal – Letter & Sound Recognition

By the end of the IEP period, when shown a set of previously taught picture cards (one letter at a time), the child will correctly point to or name the target letter and its associated picture/sound with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive probe sessions for at least 8–10 English letters (uppercase and/or lowercase as appropriate).

Short-term Objectives

- Week 1–2: Match identical picture cards of 2–3 letters with physical help fading to independent matching.
- Week 3–6: Point to the correct letter when named (receptive) for 4–5 targets, 4 out of 5 trials.
- Month 2–3: Name or approximate the sound of 5–6 letters when shown the card.
- Ongoing: Maintain previously learned letters while adding only one new letter each teaching day; review daily.

Daily Teaching Structure (suggested)

Step	Activity	Duration
1	Settle on learning mat / chair; greet and set expectation for sitting.	1–2 min
2	Show today's English letter picture card; name it, show picture, let child touch/trace, practice the sound.	4–5 min
3	Quick review of 1–2 previously learned cards (keep success high).	2–3 min
4	Praise, movement break or preferred activity.	1–2 min

Total focused learning time stays within the child's current sitting capacity and slowly expands with it.

5. Early Numeracy – Counting with 1-to-1 Correspondence using Beads / Objects

Many young children can recite numbers ("1, 2, 3...") without understanding that each number stands for a real quantity. We therefore begin with large, colorful counting beads (or objects) and teach that 1 bead = 1 object, 2 beads = two objects, and so on. This concrete "valuation" is the foundation of true number sense and aligns with Kindergarten counting and cardinality standards (e.g., CCSS.K.CC).

Beads / Counting Objects – 1 bead = 1 object

Illustration: Colorful beads on a string or individual objects labeled 1–5.
Each bead or object represents one real item. Touch and count aloud.

Annual Goal – Number Sense & 1-to-1 Correspondence

By the end of the IEP period, when given a set of up to 5–10 large beads (or objects) and asked to "give me ____" or "count how many," the child will correctly demonstrate 1-to-1 correspondence and state the total quantity with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions for quantities 1 through 5 (and progressively up to 10 as mastery allows).

Short-term Objectives

- Phase 1: Match one bead to one real object (ball, block, spoon) with adult modeling; then independent matching for "1."
- Phase 2: Give "1" and "2" beads/objects on request; count aloud while touching each bead (1-to-1).
- Phase 3: Extend to 3, 4 and 5 with the same concrete method; introduce the written numeral only after solid quantity understanding.
- Ongoing: Always pair the spoken number with the actual set of beads/objects before moving to abstract worksheets.

Materials: Large wooden or plastic beads on a sturdy string (or individual beads in a bowl), real objects of the same type (balls, blocks, fruits), number cards introduced later. Keep sessions short and success-oriented.

6. Special Education Services, Accommodations & Supports

These are examples; the actual frequency and intensity must be decided by the IEP team after assessment, consistent with IDEA requirements.

Service / Support	Suggested Frequency	Provider / Setting
Special Education sessions (direct instruction on sitting, letters, numbers)	3–5 sessions per week, 20–30 minutes each (or as tolerated)	Special Education Teacher – resource room / inclusive classroom / home-based
Occupational Therapy (if fine-motor or sensory needs identified)	As recommended in assessment / evaluation report	Qualified Occupational Therapist
Speech-Language support (if communication needs identified)	As recommended in assessment / evaluation report	Speech-Language Pathologist
Parent / Caregiver training & home program	Fortnightly guidance + daily short practice at home	Special Education Teacher + Family

Classroom / Learning Accommodations

- Preferential seating near the teacher / low-distraction area.
- Use of visual schedule and “first–then” boards.
- Picture cards and concrete objects instead of only verbal or worksheet tasks.
- Break tasks into very small steps; allow movement breaks after successful sitting periods.
- Extra processing time; reduced length of tasks while maintaining quality of understanding.
- Positive behavior support – specific praise, token or sticker for sitting and trying.

7. Progress Monitoring & Review

Progress is measured through simple data collection so that the team knows whether the child is moving toward the annual goals. Under IDEA, progress must be reported to parents regularly.

What is measured	How	How often
Sitting duration & prompts needed	Timer + tally of prompts on a simple data sheet	Every teaching session; summarize weekly
Letter / sound recognition accuracy	Probe with known cards (point or name); record % correct	Twice a week formal probe; daily informal
1-to-1 correspondence & counting	Ask child to give / count beads or objects; record accuracy	Twice a week formal; daily practice notes

- Progress reports to parents: at least as often as report cards are issued for nondisabled peers (or more frequently if intensive support).
- Full IEP review: at least once a year, or earlier if the child masters goals or needs significant change (per IDEA).
- Data should guide decisions – if progress is slow, adjust materials, intensity or supports rather than simply repeating the same plan.

8. IEP Team & Signatures

An IEP is a collaborative document under IDEA. The following members typically participate:

- Parent(s) / Guardian(s)
- Special Education Teacher
- General Education / Classroom Teacher (if applicable)
- Related service providers (OT, Speech-Language Pathologist, etc.) as relevant
- Local Education Agency (LEA) representative / Administrator
- Others with knowledge or special expertise (at parent or school request)

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Parent / Guardian			
Special Education Teacher			
General Education Teacher			
LEA Representative			
Other (specify)			

A gentle reminder

Every child learns at their own pace. The goals in this planner are starting points, not rigid targets. When we honor the child's present level, protect their sitting capacity, introduce only one new letter a day, and build number sense with real beads and real objects, we give the child the dignity of true understanding. Celebrate small steps. Keep sessions warm, short and successful. The rest will follow.

— Adapted for U.S. educators and families
Aligned with IDEA and foundational early childhood special education practices

This document is a planning template only. Final IEP goals, services, and supports must be determined by the full IEP team based on individual evaluation data and in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and applicable state regulations.