

Educational Assistance Class: MEASURABLE PROGRESS

QUESTION: Can you please define what “measurable progress” means, as it relates to DSPS students?

ANSWER: Title 5 Section 56010 describes responsibilities students must meet in order to be eligible to receive services from the DSPS program. Among these is the requirement in Section 56010(a)(3) that a student must “make measurable progress toward goals established in the student’s Academic Accommodations Plan or, when the student is enrolled in a regular college course, meet the academic standards established by the college.” A student who is enrolled in one or more regular courses is not subject to the measurable progress requirement and continues to be eligible for DSPS services (assuming all other requirements are met) so long as he or she has not been dismissed from the college for failure to meet academic standards pursuant to section 55756. However, a student who is enrolled in an Educational Assistance Class must make measurable progress toward the goals spelled out in the Academic Accommodations Plan.

For those students only enrolled in an Educational Assistance Class there is no single definition of measurable progress. Rather, the individualized AAP for each student must identify the criteria that the student and the DSPS staff have agreed will be used to evaluate the student’s progress. When the DSPS staff review the student’s progress, the question will be whether the student has moved toward the specified goal to an extent that can be measured in terms of the criteria set forth in the AAP.

It is worth noting that the regulation does not require the student to achieve his or her goals nor does it say that the student needs to make “significant” or “satisfactory” progress; the progress just needs to be measurable. If, for example, the AAP indicated that a student’s goal was to master ten specified skills, then it might be argued that the student continues to make measurable progress so long as he or she masters at least one additional skill each year. Therefore, if a college wishes to prevent a student from taking an excessive period of time to achieve a goal, the best solution is to make the evaluation criteria as specific as possible and spell out in the AAP exactly how quickly the student is supposed to move toward the goal. However, it must be remembered that the goals are individual, and one set of goals for one student are not necessarily the appropriate goals for another student.

For example, one student who is only enrolled only in an Adapted Physical Education course that is a DSPS Educational Assistance Class may list as their goals that they want to have a 10% increase in upper body strength by the end of the semester, because they use a manual wheelchair and want to increase speed and endurance related to that activity. However, another student who also uses a wheelchair may have as their goal the slowing of the degradation of their upper body strength to a 5% loss within a year so that they may lengthen the period of time before they must use a powered wheelchair. So, while they are both students in the same course, their goals, and therefore their achievement of "measurable progress", are different.