GENERAL

story grammar marker iep goals

Published: September 3, 2026 | Index ID: #-

Introduction

Storytelling is a universal human experience that transcends cultures, ages, and learning abilities. For students with learning differences, stories can be a powerful conduit for developing language skills, building confidence, and fostering a love of learning. Yet, the success of story-based instruction depends on more than just narrative content—it hinges on the **story grammar markers** that guide comprehension, organization, and expression. When educators design **IEP goals**(Individualized Education Program goals) that incorporate these markers, they create targeted, measurable objectives that support students' linguistic growth and academic achievement.

This article explores how story grammar markers intersect with IEP goals, offering a step-by-step guide to crafting effective objectives, selecting appropriate assessment tools, and implementing engaging strategies. Whether you are a special education teacher, a speech language pathologist, or a parent working with your child's IEP team, you'll find practical insights that can transform storytelling into a catalyst for success.

What Are Story Grammar Markers?

Story grammar markers are linguistic cues that signal the structure and meaning of a narrative. They help listeners and readers follow the flow of events, understand relationships, and anticipate what comes next. Classic story grammar models—such as the *Plot Diagram* and *Story Grammar* by Bruner—identify key elements: **setting, characters, problem, events, resolution, and moral.**These markers are not just academic concepts; they are the scaffolding that supports comprehension and expression for all learners, especially those with language processing challenges.

Key Story Grammar Markers

- Setting – Where and when the story takes place.
- Characters – The people, animals, or objects driving the narrative.
- Problem – The conflict or challenge that initiates the plot.
- Events – The sequence of actions that unfold the story.
- Resolution – How the problem is resolved or addressed.
- Moral or Theme – The underlying message or lesson.

These markers can be taught explicitly through graphic organizers, sentence frames, or visual cues, allowing students to decode stories and produce coherent narratives. When paired with IEP goals, they become the building blocks of measurable language outcomes.

Why Story Grammar Matters for Students with Disabilities

Students with speech, language, or learning disabilities often struggle with organizing ideas, maintaining focus, and using appropriate vocabulary. Story grammar markers provide a shared language and structure that can:

- Reduce cognitive load by breaking down complex narratives into manageable parts.
- Encourage metacognition as students monitor their own understanding and adjust strategies.
- Support expressive language by offering sentence starters and prompts.

- Promote receptive language through visual and auditory cues that reinforce comprehension.

By embedding these markers into IEP goals, educators can target specific language deficits while simultaneously advancing broader academic skills.

IEP Goals and Language Development

An IEP goal is a clear, measurable statement that outlines the desired progress for a student within a specific timeframe. When addressing language development, IEP goals typically follow the **SMART**framework—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time bound.

Examples of Language IEP Goals

1. "Within one year, the student will use at least three descriptive adjectives in spoken narratives to enhance detail."
2. "Within six months, the student will identify the main idea and supporting details in a 5 minute oral story."
3. "Within nine months, the student will write a paragraph containing a clear problem–resolution structure with proper transitions."

These goals illustrate how language objectives can be tailored to individual needs. By integrating story grammar markers, you can craft goals that are both precise and aligned with real-world communication demands.

Integrating Story Grammar Markers into IEP Goals

When you embed story grammar markers into IEP goals, you create a bridge between content knowledge and language skills. Below is a systematic approach to doing so.

Step 1: Identify the Student's Current Level

Conduct a baseline assessment using tools such as the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)* for younger students or the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)*for older learners. Analyze the results to pinpoint strengths and gaps in narrative structure, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Step 2: Select Relevant Story Grammar Elements

Choose the markers most pertinent to the student's needs. For example:

- Students struggling with sequencing may benefit from a goal focused on events.
- Those with limited descriptive language may target setting and character descriptions.

Step 3: Draft SMART Goals

Here's a template that incorporates story grammar markers:

"By the end of the academic year, the student will orally narrate a 5 sentence story that includes a clear setting, at least one character, a problem, a sequence of events, and a resolution, achieving at least 80% accuracy in a structured assessment."

Notice how each element is explicitly referenced, making the goal both specific and measurable.

Step 4: Define Success Criteria

Success criteria are the observable behaviors that demonstrate mastery. For the above goal, criteria might include:

- Correctly identifies the setting at the beginning.
- Introduces a protagonist and at least one supporting character.
- States the problem clearly.

- Uses transitional words (e.g., “first,” “then,” “finally”) to sequence events.
- Concludes with a resolution that resolves the problem.

Step 5: Plan Instructional Strategies

Choose evidence based techniques that align with the goal. Examples include:

- Graphic Organizers – Story maps or plot diagrams to visualize structure.
- Sentence Frames – “In the setting of ___, character ___ experienced ___.”
- Modeling and Rehearsal – Teacher-led storytelling with prompts for key markers.
- Peer Collaboration – Pair work where students build a story together, taking turns adding elements.

Step 6: Assess and Adjust

Use formative assessments (e.g., oral storytelling rubrics) and summative assessments (e.g., narrative writing samples) to gauge progress. Adjust the goal or strategies as needed to keep the student on track.

Sample IEP Goals Using Story Grammar Markers

Below are four sample IEP goals that illustrate how to embed story grammar markers across different age groups and skill levels.

Goal 1: Elementary Level – Oral Narrative Sequencing

Goal: Within one school year, the student will orally narrate a 4 sentence story that includes a setting, a problem, at least two events, and a resolution, with 85% accuracy on a teacher administered rubric.

Success Criteria:

- Mentions the setting at the story’s start.
- States the problem clearly.
- Describes at least two events in chronological order.
- Concludes with a resolution that addresses the problem.

Goal 2: Middle School – Written Narrative Structure

Goal: By the end of the semester, the student will write a 200 word paragraph that incorporates a clear setting, character development, a problem, a sequence of events, and a resolution, achieving at least 80% structural accuracy on a narrative rubric.

Goal 3: High School – Complex Narrative Elements

Goal: Within one academic year, the student will produce a 500 word short story that includes multiple settings, multiple characters, a central conflict, a series of escalating events, a climax, and a resolution, demonstrating advanced use of narrative devices with at least 90% accuracy on a peer reviewed rubric.

Goal 4: Special Education – Story Comprehension

Goal: Over six months, the student will answer comprehension questions about a read-aloud story, correctly identifying the setting, main character, problem, events, and resolution 4 out of 5 times.

Assessment Tools and Data Collection

Reliable assessment data are the backbone of effective IEP goals. Below are tools that align with story grammar markers.

Oral Narrative Assessment Rubric

This rubric evaluates the presence and accuracy of story elements. Each criterion is scored on a 0–4 scale, with descriptors for each level.

Writing Sample Checklist

Use a checklist that mirrors the oral rubric but focuses on written text. Include items such as:

- Clear opening with setting.
- Logical sequence of events.
- Use of transition words.
- Concluding resolution.

Dynamic Assessment Software

Tools like *Storyline* or *ReadTheory*provide interactive storytelling tasks that automatically record narrative structure and language use. These platforms generate detailed reports for data analysis.

Progress Monitoring Sheets

Maintain a spreadsheet with monthly entries for each student's performance on the oral and written assessments. Use color coding to flag areas needing intervention.

Teacher and Parent Collaboration

Successful IEP implementation relies on a partnership between educators and families. Here are strategies to foster collaboration.

Regular Communication

Set up monthly check ins via email, phone, or a shared online platform (e.g., Google Classroom). Share assessment results, upcoming objectives, and ways parents can reinforce story grammar at home.

Home Based Story Activities

Provide parents with simple activities such as:

- Reading a short story together and filling out a story map.
- Recording a family member's anecdote and identifying key narrative elements.
- Using a set of picture cards to create a mini story.

Parent Workshops

Organize workshops that demonstrate how to use story grammar markers and IEP goals in everyday conversations. Offer printable handouts and video tutorials.

Technology and Resources

Modern technology can enhance the teaching of story grammar markers and the tracking of IEP goals.

Digital Storytelling Platforms

- Storybird – Allows students to create visual stories with guided prompts.
- Book Creator – Enables students to combine text, images, and audio to produce digital books.
- Canva for Education – Offers templates for story maps and graphic organizers.

Speech Language Pathology Software

Tools like *Fluency Tutor* and *Therapist's Toolkit*provide structured exercises targeting narrative cohesion and

grammar usage.

Assessment Apps

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