



Guide to Writing Benchmarked Goals
(Student Need, Goals, and Assessment)



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Acknowledgements

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Shari Lidgard-Pullins, Berrien RESA
Jamison Bennett, Berrien RESA
Beth Helm, Berrien RESA
Eric Hoppstock, Berrien RESA

Introduction

The main motivation for this guide is to simplify the goal writing process to increase the likelihood that intensive instruction is matched to student need(s), learning targets are tied to high leverage skills, and student skills are assessed in a meaningful, yet straight-forward manner. It is hoped that by keeping all interested parties focused on meaningful academic, behavioral, and life skills, student-based decision-making will result in greater student gains. An unintended consequence of elaborate systems is increased, but unfocused documentation of random skills resulting in competition for instructional time. This guide is an attempt to streamline the process, provide high-quality student data that is useful for decision-making, yet reduce documentation practices that do not provide helpful information toward improving student outcomes.

This document is not intended to be a review of the entire Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. It is assumed that all data needed to analyze and develop the components within this guide have been collected with fidelity and completeness. If this fundamental assumption has not been fulfilled the resulting quality of all elements of this guide will be compromised.

Three elements will be discussed in this guide:

1. Analysis of student need.
2. Writing a benchmarked goal.
3. Assessment of a benchmarked goal.

While discussed separately they are interconnected and the quality of each is essential to meeting the expectation of substantial student growth. Substantial growth will mean different things for different students, but the focus is maximizing each student's outcome.

Element 1: Analysis of Student Need

In providing special education programs and services a wide range of information is collected on students. This data paints a picture of the skills that a student with disabilities possesses. Often the need statement developed on a student covers a wide range of skills or behaviors. This requires a sophisticated management of needs, particularly as the list becomes lengthy. In an effort to improve the efficiency of learning and teaching, service providers with the contribution of the IEP team, parents, and others should prioritize which needs may be expected to develop as a result of maturation, environmental factors, peer mediation, and which needs require more intense instruction. Once an analysis of needs is complete a more focused IEP can be developed. The MEPI Model is intended to provide a rationale for review of needs and determination of the type of services and intensity of instruction (see appendix I).

The **MEPI** Model assists the IEP Team decision-making process by guiding the team through a series of questions to consider the needs of a student and make decisions on the best course of action to address those needs in the IEP planning process. The key questions are:

Maturation

1. Is this skill a need or skill that will be influenced by biological maturation and 'natural' opportunities for practice?
2. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of development and experience without significant teacher or peer involvement?

Environmental Mediation

1. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of the child having access to learning materials or intentional arrangement or altered expectations of the learning (or home) environment?
2. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of changes to the environment?
3. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve with increased distributed learning opportunities?

Peer Mediation

1. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of predictable or planned interactions with competent peers?
2. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of increased reinforcement from peers?

Intensive Intervention

1. Will target behavior/skill require immediate intervention?
2. With direct and consistent intervention, student would make substantial progress?

Element 2: Goals and Benchmarking

Following an analysis of student need, goals with supporting benchmarks are written to target a broad category in which the student is demonstrating a weakness or need that the IEP team has determined requires a learning target (goal) in order for the student to receive educational benefit. Before a goal can be written the baseline of the target skill must have been established.

Why Write Clear and Precise Goals and Benchmarks?

1. Precise learning goals and benchmarks provide a clear focus for instruction, which, in turn, promotes positive outcomes for students with disabilities.
2. Precise benchmarks provide a clear basis for monitoring student progress or lack of progress and making individualized curriculum decisions.
3. Precise benchmarks communicate expectations to others, such as therapists, teachers, and parents, in terms of what knowledge and skills a student should acquire.

Annual Goals

Simply put, annual goals are statements designating the knowledge, skills and/or behaviors a student with a disability is expected to be able to demonstrate with a given year for the time of the IEP development. Annual goals are based on the student's needs as indicated in the present level of performance (PLAAPF).

A student's needs generally relate to primary content areas and essential process skills for succeeding in the general curriculum such as reading, writing, listening, organization, study skills, communication, physical development, motor skills, problem-solving, social skills, play skills, memory, attention, behavior, and career and community living skills. The intent of the annual goals is to highlight the elements of instruction that need to be specifically designed to address the student's disability and to increase the child's ability to participate in the general education curriculum.

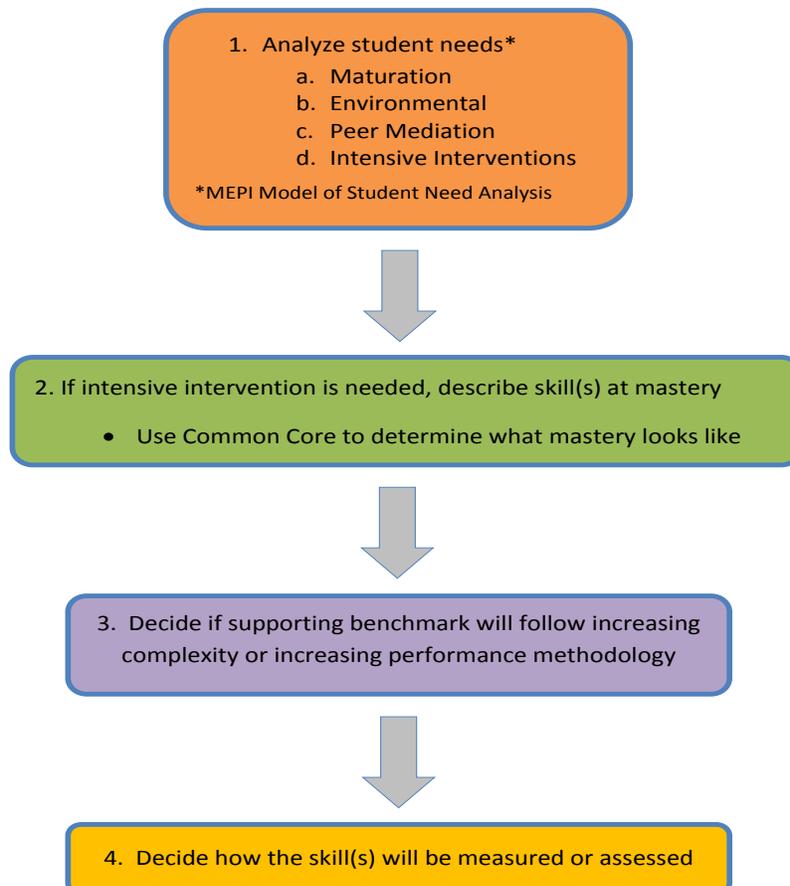
Most importantly annual goals reflect the selection of a high leverage skill (key skill for success of other skills) described at mastery. What does the chosen skill/behavior look like when performed to mastery level.

Annual goals establish the instructional framework and while some will be written to address particular content areas, most are best arrived at by the IEP team answering the question: "What skill(s) does the student require to master the content of the curriculum?" rather than "What curriculum content does the student need to master?" For example, a student may be performing poorly on written tests in social studies that require written expression. The IEP goal for this student should focus on developing written expressive skills (e.g. using outlines or other strategies to organize sentence in paragraphs) rather than the curriculum goal that student will write an essay about an economic recession. Looking across the curriculum, the IEP team develops annual goals to address a student's unique need linking the student instructional

program to the school's instructional learning targets. As a result, the student can develop the foundational skills and strategies to access the general curriculum.

Broad Steps to Establish Goals and Benchmarks

- Following an analysis of student need(s), identify skill(s) requiring a goal and benchmark.
 - Critical:**
 - a. Understanding of quality instruction (what skills are important and how they should be taught).
 - b. Understanding what learning target result in maximum student outcomes
- Describe skill(s) at mastery.
- Decide how the skill will be measured or assessed. Whenever possible aligned measurement strategies with progress monitoring strategies already utilized within the building and/or district.
- Decide if supporting benchmark will follow increasing complexity or increasing performance methodology.



Components of an Annual Goal and Benchmarks

A well-written annual goal, benchmark will communicate the same intended outcome to everyone who reads it. A method to check the quality of an annual goal is the “Stranger Test.” This test involves evaluation of the goal to determine if it is written so that a teacher who does not know the student could use it to develop appropriate instructional plans and assess the student’s progress. To assure that same intended outcome is communicated, the annual goal and benchmark must include the 3 essential parts (which can be in any order) along with the student’s name.

The Condition	The condition helps specify the circumstance or level in which a student will demonstrate a certain skill or behavior. They help create IEPs that are specific and measurable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Within 5 minutes...■ When reading 3rd gr. level text...■ During transition periods...■ When prompted...■ During structured conversation...
Clearly Defined Behavior	Clearly defined behaviors detail what the student must do under the conditions. Behaviors or skills that are observable and clearly defined will allow the IEP goal to be measured in a meaningful and reliable manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Write■ Summarize■ Solve■ Demonstrate■ Solve■ Compare and Contrast
Performance Criterion	The performance criterion defines the level and/or the rate at which the student should perform successfully. It also includes how long [s]he has to maintain that performance level in order to reach his or her goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ___ out of ___ trials■ within ___ minutes■ ___ times each day■ at the ___ grade level■ with ___% accuracy■ ___ words per minute

*Johnny will **independently solve double digit addition problems with regrouping with 80% accuracy on 4 out of 5 trials.***

*When arriving to the classroom in the morning, Susie will **greet 1 peer and ask them at least 1 question 4 mornings a week for 3 consecutive weeks.***

Benchmarks

Benchmarks are the interim steps (components) necessary to reach the annual goal. The intent of providing benchmarks is to assist in planning and progress monitoring toward the goal. They allow teachers to know if a student is progressing at a rate or pace to reach his or her end of year goal. Is the child progressing in a way that will allow him/her to reach the goal? One way to think of a benchmark is as stops along a road map toward an education destination.

Benchmarking = milestones (where the student is expected to be relative to achieving the annual goal that has been written)

1. Increasing complexity benchmarks (each benchmark increases the skill level toward the end goal)
2. Increasing performance benchmarks (performance expectation increases toward the end goal)

How Do Benchmarks and Short-term Objectives Differ?

Both benchmarks and short-term objectives are ways to subdivide annual goals in order to create a sequence of measureable tasks. The intent is to facilitate the monitoring of a student's progress as the year unfolds. Benchmarks and objectives also make communication among IEP team members more specific and accurate.

So how do they differ? Benchmarks are precise achievements that are established with a specific time interval. For example, a target that is to be reached within a 6-week marking period or by November 1. On-the-other-hand, short-term objectives break the goal into sequential components without any specified time frame. Short-term objectives are based on a task analysis of the sequential sub skills needed to reach the annual goal.

Element 3: Measuring and Reporting Progress on Annual Goals

Measurable annual goals and supporting benchmarks will only assist student involvement and progress in the general curriculum if appropriate assessment strategies have been built into the expectations for the student. Clearly defined assessment of student skill development is beneficial in several ways:

- It gives the teacher time to implement interventions and new strategies if student progress is inadequate toward reaching the benchmark,
- It maximizes the child's time and opportunity to learn and ensures effective instructional practices,
- It prevents unpleasant surprises for parents when progress reports go home or at parent-teacher conferences, and
- It documents "good faith" on the part of the teacher implementing the IEP.

If data collection over time indicates inadequate student progress despite implementation of multiple interventions and strategies, this should trigger a time for the IEP Team to meet and reevaluate the appropriateness of one or more of the annual goals. The IEP must be revised, as appropriate, to address any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals.

Assessment of goals is the process by which teachers examine data and make meaningful decisions about the overall effectiveness of instruction. High quality instruction is the most powerful influence on improved student outcomes. Therefore, data that can inform progress or lack of progress toward meeting major learning milestones is critical in the goal writing process. Essentially, quality goal assessment answers the question: What are the norms, expectations, and/or rate of acquisition of the skill(s) described at mastery in your goal statement?

Curriculum-based measurement (CBM) or progress monitoring is a reliable and valid assessment system for monitoring student progress over time to assist in instructional decision-making. The CBM or progress monitoring procedures (administration, scoring, and interpretation) are standardized: that is, tests are given and scored in the same way each time. The content of these assessments may be taken from a specific curriculum or represent generalized outcomes for a student at a given grade level. By giving these short assessments every once or twice each week across the year and plotting the results data is available in a formative way to gauge student progress over time.

This type of assessment strategy is utilized to develop current level of performance statements and set goal expectations for the upcoming year. Normative information from CBM or progress monitoring strategies provides assistance in establishing ambitious, yet realistic goals for a student. By subtracting the average current performance in a skill area from the long-term goal and dividing the difference by the number of weeks of instruction (weeks between baseline and goal), the expected rate of acquisition or rate of improvement is established. This sets the expectation of what a student needs to achieve to stay on track to meet learning milestones.

Appendix I

Analysis of Need Documents

MEPI Model of Student Need Analysis

Key questions related to each area of the model. The key is to target as many learning situations as possible.

Maturation			
1. Is this a need or skill that will be influenced by biological maturation and 'natural' opportunities to practice?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of development and experience without significant teacher or peer involvement?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Environmental Mediation (Include technology)			
1. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of the child having access to learning materials or intentional arrangement or expectations of the learning (or home) environment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of changes to the environment?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
3. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve with increased distributed learning opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Peer Mediation			
1. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of predictable or planned interactions with competent peers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. Is the target behavior/skill likely to improve as a result of increased reinforcement from peers?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
Intensive Intervention (Immediate, intentional, intensive)			
1. Will target behavior/skill require immediate intervention?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. With direct and consistent intervention student would make substantial progress?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

Analysis of Student Need

Name: _____

Date: _____

Based upon data review list student needs:	Analysis of Needs	How will need be addressed: (Check all that apply)						
		Monitor	Goal	Supp. Aids	Program	Related Services	Transition	BIP
1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	<input type="checkbox"/> Maturation <input type="checkbox"/> Environment Med. <input type="checkbox"/> Peer Mediation <input type="checkbox"/> Intensive Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Maturation: Is this need or skill that will be influenced by biological maturation and "natural" opportunities to practice? (Consider monitoring)

Environmental Mediation: Is the target skill likely to improve as a result of the child having access to learning materials or intentional arrangement or expectations of the learning environment? (Consider Supplemental Aides, Related Services, Intervention Plans)

Peer Mediation: Is the target skill likely to improve as a result of predictable or planned interactions with competent peers? (Consider Supplemental Aides, Related Services, Intervention Plans)

Intensive Intervention (Critical Skills): Will target skill require immediate intervention? (Consider ALL options)

Appendix II

Goals and Benchmarks

Examples

Examples of Benchmarked Goals – Increasing Complexity

Goal: By the end of the 4th quarter, student will use the public transportation system to get to and from her job, independently arriving at work on time, for any five consecutive Monday through Fridays.

Benchmarks:

1. By the end of the 1st quarter, accompanied by an adult, student will walk to the bus stop, ride the bus to work, and get off at the correct work bus stop.
2. By the end of the 2nd quarter, student will be able to identify the steps to follow to independently travel to work.
3. By the end of the 3rd quarter, student will independently walk to the bus stop, ride the bus to work and get off at the correct bus stop.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: By the end of the fourth quarter, when provided with an agenda book, student will independently record homework assignments in English, Math, Social Studies, and Science.

Benchmarks:

1. By the end of the first quarter, student will enter complete math, science, and social studies homework assignments into daily agenda book at the end of each class, with teacher support.
2. By the end of the second quarter, student will independently enter his complete math, science, and social studies homework assignments into daily agenda book and ask teacher to initial book after each class.
3. By the end of the third quarter, student will independently enter his complete math, science, and social studies homework assignments into his daily agenda book and ask HR teacher to initial the book at the end of each day.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: In 36 instructional weeks, student will write a 5-sentence paragraph consisting of a topic sentence, 3 supporting detail sentences, and a concluding sentence, maintaining a single topic, with 85% mechanical accuracy on ending punctuation, commas, quotation marks, and capitalization.

Benchmarks:

1. In 9 instructional weeks, upon request, student will write a single complete sentence, beginning with a capital letter and ending with correct punctuation.
2. In 18 instructional weeks, upon request, student will write 3 complete sentences maintaining a single topic, beginning with a capital letter, ending with correct punctuation, and using comma where appropriate.

3. In 27 instructional weeks, upon request, student will write a 4-sentence paragraph including a topic sentence and 3 supporting detail sequences, beginning each with a capital letter, ending with correct punctuation, using commas and quotation marks where appropriate.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: Given a three-step direction, student will promptly follow all three steps in the correct order, 9 out of 10 times.

Benchmarks:

1. Given a one-step direction, student will promptly follow the direction 9 out of 10 times.
2. Given a two-step direction, student will promptly follow at least the first of the two steps 9 out of 10 times.
3. Given a two-direction, student will promptly follow both directions 9 out of 10 times.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: Student will achieve a reading score at the 5th grade level or above, as measured by the Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI).

Benchmarks:

1. By October, when given a list of 20 unfamiliar words that contain short-vowel sounds, student will decode them with 90% accuracy on each of 5 trials.
2. By January, when given 20 unfamiliar words that contain long-vowel sounds, student will decode them with 90% accuracy on each of 5 trials.
3. By March, student will correctly pronounce 20 words with 90% accuracy on each of 5 trials to demonstrate understanding of the rule that where one vowel follows another, the first vowel is pronounced with a long sound and the second vowel is silent.
4. By March, student will correctly separate 20 words by syllables with 90% accuracy on each of 5 trials to demonstrate understanding of the rule that each syllable in a word must contain a vowel.

Examples of Benchmarked Goals – Increasing Performance

Goal: In 36 instructional weeks, student will write a 5-sentence paragraph consisting of a topic sentence, 3 supporting detail sentences, and a concluding sentence, maintaining a single topic with 85% mechanical accuracy on ending punctuation, commas, quotation marks, and capitalization.

Benchmarks:

1. In 9 instructional weeks, student will complete goal with 1-sentence and 75% accuracy.
2. In 18 instructional weeks, student will complete goal with 3-sentences and 75% accuracy.
3. In 27 instructional weeks, student will write a 4-sentence paragraph and 80% accuracy.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: By next IEP, student will be able to solve algebraic and trigonometric problems with 75% accuracy utilizing visual and graphic depiction strategies to aid understanding.

Benchmarks:

1. By 1st marking period, student will be able to solve algebraic and trigonometric problems with 30% accuracy.
2. By 2nd marking period, student will be able to solve algebraic and trigonometric problems with 45 % accuracy.
3. By 3rd marking period, student will be able to solve algebraic and trigonometric problems with 60% accuracy.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: Student will write grammatically correct sentences (at least 405 sentences in a paragraph focused on a given topic with 80% success in 36 instructional weeks.

Benchmarks:

1. Student will score 61.25 by the end of reporting period 1 based on district grade level scoring rubric.
2. Student will score 67.5 by the end of reporting period 1 based on district grade level scoring rubric.
3. Student will score 73.75 by the end of reporting period 1 based on district grade level scoring rubric.

∞ ∞ ∞

Goal: Student will be able to respond appropriately to a teacher redirection and complete his in-class assignments/tasks with 70% success in 36 instructional weeks.

Benchmarks:

1. Student will score 47.5 by the end of reporting period 1 based on documented behavior interventions.
2. Student will score 55 by the end of reporting period 1 based on documented behavior interventions.
3. Student will score 62.5 by the end of reporting period 1 based on documented behavior interventions.

Appendix III

**Assessment
Progress Monitoring**

Helpful resources:

The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring is a site developed as a result of a five-year contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Even though the grant is completed the website is being maintained with all of the resource that were developed. A wide range of information is available to assist your search for student progress monitoring resources.

www.studentprogress.org

The Orleans/Niagara BOCES has created a Regional Special Education Technical Assistance Support Center. Click on the Progress Monitoring Toolbox which will take you to further resources to assist in student progress monitoring. This site is full on MS Word and MS Excel documents created by teachers for teachers. They can be downloaded and customized to your own needs.

www.onsetasc.org/index.cfm