

Annual Goals, Short-Term Instructional Objectives and/or Benchmarks Requirements

Individual need determinations (i.e., present levels of performance and individual needs) must provide the basis for a student's written annual goals. The IEP must list measurable annual goals, consistent with the student's needs and abilities to be followed during the period in which the IEP will be in effect.

For each annual goal, the IEP must indicate the evaluative criteria (the measure used to determine if the goal has been achieved), evaluation procedures (how progress will be measured) and schedules (when progress will be measured) to be used to measure the student's progress toward meeting the annual goal.

For students who meet the eligibility criteria to take NYSAA and for preschool students with disabilities, the IEP must include a description of the short-term instructional objectives and/or benchmarks that are the measurable intermediate steps between the student's present level of performance and the measurable annual goal.

The measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, must be related to meeting:

- the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum (or for preschool students, in appropriate activities); and
- each of the student's other educational needs that result from the student's disability.

What are Annual Goals?

Annual goals are statements that identify what knowledge, skills and/or behaviors a student is expected to be able to demonstrate within the year during which the IEP will be in effect. The IEP must list measurable annual goals consistent with the student's needs and abilities, as identified in the present levels of performance.

How should annual goals be linked to the standards?

Annual goals should focus on the knowledge, skills, behaviors and strategies to address the student's needs. A student's needs generally relate to knowledge and skill domains such as, but not limited to, reading, writing, listening, organization, study skills, communication, physical development, motor skills, cognitive processing, problem-solving, social skills, play skills, memory, visual perception, auditory perception, attention, behavior, and career and community living skills. The goals in a student's IEP should relate to the student's need for specially designed instruction to address the student's disability needs and those needs that interfere with the student's ability to participate and progress in the general curriculum.

Goals should not be a restatement of the general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for students without disabilities), or a list of everything the student is expected to learn in every curricular content area during the course of the school year or other areas not affected by the student's disability. In developing the IEP goals, the Committee needs to select goals to answer the question: "What skills 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 very poorly on written tests in global 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 sentences in paragraphs) rather than the curriculum goal that the student will write an essay about the economy of a particular country. Generally, goals should address a student's unique needs across the content areas and should link to the standards so that a student has the foundation or precursor skills and strategies needed to access and progress in the general education curriculum.

How Far ... By When? One year from now, we expect the student to be able to....

From information in the present levels of performance, the Committee has identified which need areas must be addressed and where the student is currently functioning in each of those areas. The next step is to identify what the focus of special education instruction will be over the course of the upcoming year. The annual goals will guide instruction, serve as the basis to measure progress and report to parents and serve as the guideposts to determine if the supports and services being provided to the student are appropriate and effective.

An annual goal indicates what the student is expected to be able to achieve during the year in which the IEP will be in effect. The annual goal takes the student from his/her present level of performance to a level of performance expected by the end of the year.

To be measurable, an annual goal should, in language parents and educators can understand, describe the skill, behavior or knowledge the student will demonstrate and the extent to which it will be demonstrated.

Examples:

- Given a 4-function calculator, Sue will solve one-step word problems using addition and subtraction with 90% accuracy.
- Given 5th grade material, Mike will read orally at 80-100 words per minute.
- Given 15 minutes of free play time, Sam will engage in interactive play with peers for at least 10 minutes.

Terms such as "will improve...", "will increase..." and "will decrease..." are not specific enough to describe what it is the student is expected to be able to do. To be measurable, a behavior must be observable or able to be counted. In general, it is recommended that goals describe what the student will do, as opposed to what the student will not do.

Example:

"The student will ask for a break from work..." versus "The student will not walk out of the classroom without permission."

How does the IEP measure progress toward the annual goal?

For each annual goal, the IEP must indicate the evaluative criteria, evaluation procedures and schedules to be used to measure progress toward meeting the annual goal.

Evaluative criteria

Evaluative criteria identify how well and over what period of time the student must perform a behavior in order to consider it met.

How well a student does could be measured in terms such as:

- frequency (e.g., 9 out of 10 trials)
- duration (e.g., for 20 minutes)
- distance (e.g., 20 feet)
- accuracy (90% accuracy)

The period of time a skill or behavior must occur could be measured in terms such as:

- number of days (e.g., over three consecutive days)
- number of weeks (e.g., over a four week period)
- occasions (e.g., during Math and English classes, on six consecutive occasions)

Examples:

- 85% accuracy over 5 consecutive trials
- 50 words/minute, with 3 or fewer errors, for 2 consecutive trials
- 3 out of 5 trials per week

Evaluation procedures

Evaluation procedures identify the method that will be used to measure progress and determine if the student has met the objective or benchmark. An evaluation procedure must provide an objective method in which the student's behavior will be measured or observed.

Examples:

- structured observations of targeted behavior in class
- student self-monitoring checklist
- written tests
- audio-visual recordings
- behavior charting
- work samples

Evaluation schedules

Evaluation schedules state the date or intervals of time by which evaluation procedures will be used to measure the student's progress toward the objective or benchmark. It is not a date by which the student must demonstrate mastery of the objective.

Examples:

- Each class period
- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- On January 5, March 15 and June 3

The following template may assist in the writing of annual goals: Given (conditions, accommodations), student name will (do what – observable skill/behavior in functional term) (to what extent) (over what period of time) or (by when) as evaluated by _____. For example:

Measurable Goals			
Annual Goal	Criteria	Method	Schedule
Given 5th grade material, Mike will read orally at 80-100 words per minute with 95% accuracy	for 3 consecutive trials	1 minute oral reading probe with charting of words per minute and error count	weekly

Short-term instructional objectives and/or benchmarks

Short-term instructional objectives and/or benchmarks are required for students who take NYSAA and for all preschool students with disabilities. Short-term instructional objectives and/or benchmarks are the intermediate steps between the student's present level of performance and the measurable annual goal. Short-term instructional objectives and benchmarks should be general indicators of progress, not detailed instructional plans, that provide the basis to determine how well the student is progressing toward his or her annual goal and which serve as the basis for reporting to parents.

Generally, one annual goal would not include both short-term objectives and benchmarks. Whether short-term instructional objectives or benchmarks are used for a particular annual goal is at the discretion of the Committee.

Short-term instructional objectives

Short-term instructional objectives are the intermediate knowledge and skills that must be learned in order for the student to reach the annual goal. Short-term instructional objectives break down the skills or steps necessary to accomplish an annual goal into discrete components.

For example, the sequential steps that one student must demonstrate in order for him to reach the annual goal to “read orally at 80-100 words per minute with 95% accuracy” are as follows:

- Mike will identify and record unfamiliar words prior to engaging in oral reading.
- Mike will make a prediction about the topic of the passage(s) he will read.
- Mike will self-monitor his reading fluency and accuracy on a daily basis.

Benchmarks

Benchmarks are the major milestones that the student will demonstrate that will lead to the annual goal. Benchmarks usually designate a target time period for a behavior to occur (i.e., the amount of progress the student is expected to make within specified segments of the year). Generally, benchmarks establish expected performance levels that allow for regular checks of progress that coincide with the reporting periods for informing parents of their child’s progress toward the annual goals. For example:

- By November, Mike will orally read 70 – 80 words per minute
- By February, Mike will orally read 80 – 90 words per minute
- By April, Mike will orally read 90 – 100 words per minute

Quality Indicators

Annual goals, including short-term instructional objectives or benchmarks:

- are directly related to the student’s present levels of performance statements.
- are written in observable and measurable terms.
- identify an ending level of performance that is achievable within one year.
- identify objective procedures to evaluate a student’s progress.
- incrementally provide knowledge and skills towards achieving the student’s projected measurable postsecondary goals.
- are achievable in relation to the student’s current level of educational performance, expected rate of progress, strengths and needs.
- are instructionally relevant.
- are written in terms that parents and educators can understand.
- support participation and progress in the general education curriculum and for preschool students, participation in age-appropriate activities.

