



## Promoting PROGRESS: The Role of the Goal

**[Slide 1 – Promoting PROGRESS: The Role of the Goal] Tessie Bailey:** So, I'd like to formally welcome you to *Promoting PROGRESS: The Role of The Goal*. Today's webinar is hosted by the PROGRESS Center, an Office of Special Education Programs-funded center, aimed at promoting progress for students with disabilities.

This webinar is intended to provide an introductory overview of measurable annual goals as part of the IEP. It's designed for educators, leaders, and other team members who are responsible for setting the measurable goals as well as those who do have experience but are just looking for a little bit more review.

**[Slide 2 – Did You Know?] Tessie Bailey:** Now, as a federal law, all states must ensure that their schools and districts meet the minimum criteria, or minimum requirements, outlined in IDEA. Many states do go above and beyond and they establish additional requirements for the IEP. They can add a shorter timeline or maybe they have additional components.

We'll be focusing on the minimum requirements outlined in IDEA and we really encourage you to check with your state department to see if there are some additional requirements and procedures you also must follow.

In the chat box, we will put a link to an [interactive map](#) that allows you to click and find your state's department to look for more information.

**[Slide 3 – Welcome to the PROGRESS Center!] Tessie Bailey:** I didn't introduce myself earlier, but my name is Tessie Rose Bailey and I'm the Director of the PROGRESS center.

The PROGRESS center provides information, resources, tools, and technical assistance to support local educators in developing and implementing high-quality educational programming.

To support educators, we share guidance, we have tools, we have resources, including learning modules and guides. We base our resources on existing research, state and federal law, as well as local experiences.

As part of our Year 2 work, which is why Donna is with us today, we have begun partnering with local districts and schools to develop knowledge and skills and infrastructure necessary to promote progress for students with disabilities.

**[Slide 4 – Why We Do What We Do] Tessie Bailey:** The center was developed in response to the *Endrew F.* Supreme court decision in 2017. That case stated an IEP must be reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress in light of the child's circumstances.



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Under IDEA, the Individual Education Program, which we will refer to as the IEP in this session, serves as the foundation for promoting progress for students with disabilities.

Today's webinar will provide an overview of just one of the IEP components that are required under IDEA. Specifically, Measurable Annual Goals, sometimes referred to as MAGs, depending on where you're at.

The PROGRESS center webinar is part of a robust series of trainings and resources that we developed and provide to support local educators in developing a comprehensive robust IEP that when implemented by well-qualified educators, will ultimately promote progress for students with disabilities.

**[Slide 5 – Promoting Progress for Students with Disabilities] Tessie Bailey:** As I mentioned, the PROGRESS center is focused on promoting progress, and we focus on it through the development and the implementation of high-quality educational programming. For most students, this really does begin with the IEP.

Today's webinar does focus primarily on the development of the IEP itself, but we wanted to ensure that we're also looking at the implementation of that in order for students to access and benefit from FAPE. So, please stay tuned for the release of our additional implementation resources at the end of the summer.

**[Slide 6 – Introductions] Tessie Bailey:** I'm pleased to welcome today's presenters. Alexandra Marken supports product development and serves as a technical assistance provider for local partnership sites at PROGRESS center.

We're also pleased to have Dr. Mitch Yell. He is a Fred and Francis Lester Palmetto Chair in Teacher Education and a Professor in Special Education at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Yell has published 134 journal articles, six textbooks, 36 book chapters and has conducted numerous workshops on various aspects of special education law and progress monitoring.

We're also pleased to have Chris Colosimo; he is a certified school psychologist with the Elkhorn School District in Wisconsin. He comes to us with more than 20 years of experience working in the field of education, serving in both urban and rural environments and a multitude of roles, including an elementary teacher, middle and high school special education teacher, adjunct professor, and more than 14 years as a full time school psychologist.

I'm going to pass this over to Alex and she's going to get us started.

**[Slide 7 – Poll] Alex Marken:** Thank you for those introductions, Tessie. Chris and Mitch will be joining us a little later in this webinar.

Now that we have introduced ourselves, we would like to give you a chance to introduce yourselves. Please take a moment to respond to the poll question and let us know your current role that has led you to learn more about the development of a high-quality measurable annual goal. Are you a special

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educator? A general educator? An administrator? We know many of you are joining from a variety of roles, so if you're not seeing your particular role you can go ahead and add that to the chat.

Okay. So, it looks like we have a variety of roles represented here today. About 20% are special educators, 23% are administrators, and then over half of you have other roles in your schools or districts. We're very excited that you're all here and able to join us today.

**[Slide 8 – Objectives] Alex Marken:** Our session today is going to focus on explaining the IDEA requirements for measurable annual goals and identifying the three essential elements of a measurable annual goal and reviewing several tips for developing goals to promote progress.

This webinar will focus on the role of the measurable annual goal in the IEP and considerations for setting goals - but it will not go into depth on how to set valid and reliable goals. If you're interested in learning more about that particular topic, there are two user guides and webinars provided by the PROGRESS center and the National Center on Intensive Intervention that we will highlight at the end of this session.

**[Slide 9 – What Does IDEA Say About Goals?] Alex Marken:** IDEA outlines the essential requirements of an IEP. The first requirement of an IEP is a quote, “statement of the child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance.” Many educators shorten this phrase and simply call it the PLAAFP statement.

The second requirement of an IEP statement of annual measurable goals, including both academic and functional goals. The goals must:

- a) meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability, to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, and,
- b) meet each of the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability.

This is the legal minimum requirement; however, check with your state's guidance to ensure you're meeting your state's specific requirements.

In this webinar, we will focus on annual goals for kindergarten through transition age students. Did you know that in the 2004 reauthorization, benchmarks or short-term objectives are required only for children with disabilities who take alternative assessments aligned to alternative achievement standards?

**[Slide 10 – IEP Tip Sheet: Measurable Annual Goals] Alex Marken:** The PROGRESS center has developed a series of tip sheets that align with requirements of an IEP according to IDEA. You'll see we have created one specifically around measurable annual goals, including a definition, descriptions of the three essential elements of a high quality annual goal, and resources for where you can learn more about writing annual goals with the ultimate goal of progress for students with disabilities in mind.

We recommend you open the [tip sheet](#) using the link in the chat box and follow along as we review some of this content today.

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**[Slide 11 – Why are Measurable Annual Goals Important?] Alex Marken:** Why are measurable annual goals important? The PLAAFP statement provides the foundation on which the IEP is built. The information in the PLAAFP is a starting point from which educators can specify appropriate goals, supports, services, and progress monitoring plans.

Annual goals should address the individual needs that are described in the PLAAFP statement. Developing challenging and ambitious measuring annual goals allows the IEP team to determine whether a student is making educational progress and whether the special education program is providing meaningful educational benefit.

**[Slide 12 – What Should Each Measurable Annual Goal Do?] Alex Marken:** Each measurable annual goal should accomplish the following:

- It should address academic and/or functional individual needs outlined in the PLAAFP statement.
- It should be guided by grade level content standards and, therefore, be tied to participation in the general education curriculum.
- It should include benchmarks or short-term objectives for students who are taking alternative assessments that are aligned to alternative achievement standards.
  - Although not required by IDEA, some states still require short-term objectives in the IEPs of all students who are eligible for special education services.
  - To learn more about your specific state requirement, visit your state department of education website.
- Annual goals should also help the IEP team determine whether a student is making educational progress and whether the special education program is providing meaningful educational benefit.
- And, it should lead to corresponding educational services.

**[Slide 13 – Considerations from *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*] Alex Marken:** In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “to meet a substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances.”

The court overturned the tenth circuit court's decision that Endrew, a child with autism, was entitled only to an educational program that was calculated to provide merely more than de minimis educational benefit.

Measurable annual goals define what's appropriate progress for an individual student and supports educators in monitoring whether the IEP is resulting in that progress. After all, the essential function of an IEP is to set out a plan for pursuing academic and functional advancement.

**[Slide 14 – What are the Three Essential Elements of Measurable Annual Goals?] Alex Marken:** What are the three essential elements of the measurable annual goal? Technically sound annual goals should address three things:

1. First, *target behavior* is the academic or functional skill to be changed,



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2. The *condition* is the context or environment in which the target behavior is exhibited to be measured.
  3. And the *level of proficiency and timeline* is the level of performance at which the IEP team can determine if the student has achieved the goal and the period within which the can be expected to meet the level of proficiency. Level of proficiency and timeline are considered one element because they vary in use by the target behavior of the goal.

These three essential elements are important for goals to be considered measurable. Your state may require a different format for writing goals, but these three elements should still be present. To learn more about your specific state requirements, visit your state department of education website. In addition, technically sound goals should be written to ensure the child or student can make progress in light of his or her circumstances. This is the essential function of the IEP and allows the student to make academic and functional advancement.

On the tip sheet, you'll notice the three essential elements are listed in the table with the associated icon as well as a description and associated guiding questions. IEP teams can utilize these questions to design annual goals that will help close the gap between the students' current skill levels and the expected academic and/or functional performance levels.

**[Slide 15 – Target Behavior] Alex Marken:** Now we're going to dive into each of these elements more deeply.

The target behavior is the academic or functional skill to be changed. When writing about the target behavior, use active terminology to ensure the description is measurable, verifiable, and repeatable. The target behavior should not be subjective or an invisible behavior that's open to many interpretations.

Some guiding questions that can be helpful to reflect on include:

- “What do we want the student to be able to do?”
- “Is the behavior observable and measurable?”
- “Is it a functionally relevant replacement behavior?”
- Or, “is this a measure of student behavior, *not* adult behavior?”

Some examples of target behaviors are: “the student will read 60 words correctly,” or “student will use a learned strategy to de-escalate,” and “the student will appropriately ask for help.”

**[Slide 16 – Condition] Alex Marken:** The condition focuses on the context, materials, or environment in which the target behavior is exhibited and measured. When writing the condition, use clear, specific language to describe the environment under which the target behavior will be performed.

Some guiding questions that can be helpful to reflect on here include: “Under what context will the behavior or skill be expected to occur?” or “What level of independence is expected to complete the skill or demonstrate the behavior?”

Some examples of condition statements are: “when given 30 first-grade site words...,” or “when giving a third-grade reading passage...,” or “with no more than two reminders needed...”

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**[Slide 17 – Level of Proficiency/Timeline] Alex Marken:** The third essential element of a goal is the level of proficiency and timeline. This is the level of performance at which the IEP team can determine a student has achieved the goal and the period within which the student can be expected to meet the level of proficiency.

We include the level of proficiency and timeline as one element because they vary in use by the target behavior of the goal; however, you can also come across level of proficiency and timeline as two separate elements - for a total of four essential elements, instead of three. The essential elements themselves do not change.

Another way to think of this is the criterion for acceptable performance or, “how will I know the student has achieved the goal?” When writing the level of proficiency, establish specific, measurable, and realistic but challenging criteria. For the timeline, establish a specific and realistic timeline.

Some guiding questions that can be helpful to reflect on include:

- “When will mastery of skills be expected to occur?”
- “What is the level of accuracy?”
- And, “how many trials has the student need to demonstrate mastery of the skill?”

Some examples of the level of performance and timeline include: “...with 95% accuracy,” or “three consecutive probes,” and “...during eight of ten peer interactions.” This should be based on data and not subjective opinion like “by teacher observation” or “to be determined.”

**[Slide 18 – Academic Goal Example] Alex Marken:** Prior to writing annual goals, the IEP team will have already developed the student's PLAAFP statement. The PLAAFP needs to be comprehensive and detailed enough so the team can set appropriate and ambitious goals in light of child's circumstances and plan appropriate supports, instruction, and services.

Academic goals should help student access and benefit from instruction in general education that is aligned to state standards.

So, let's look at the following academic goal example. The first draft of this goal reads, “Jesse will read 65 words per minute.” Let's consider which of the elements this goal includes.

The condition is currently missing from this goal. It would describe the context under which the skill is expected to occur. The target behavior is present in the goal, and it is “Jesse will read 65 words per minute.” The level of proficiency and timeline is missing from the goal, and it would describe the level of accuracy or how many trials the student needs to demonstrate mastery.

Based on this feedback, the academic goal has been revised and it now reads, “Given a second-grade reading probe, Jesse will read 65 words correctly in one minute with 95% accuracy on three consecutive probes.”

Again, let's make sure all the elements are included in this goal. So, the condition has been added. And it's “given a second-grade reading probe.” The target behavior has been clarified and now is “will read



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65 words correctly in one minute.” And then the level of proficiency and timeline is also included, and it is “with 95% accuracy on three consecutive probes.”

Note that in this particular instance, the timeline is referenced rather than level of proficiency - but the revised example includes all three elements.

**[Slide 19 – Functional Goal Example] Alex Marken:** IEPs also require both academic and functional goals be included. When writing a functional goal, remember that:

- a) Functional skills and goals must be considered for *all* students.
- b) Functional goals should increase access, participation and/or independence in the general education curriculum or setting.
- c) If a student doesn't presently display a need for the functional goal the IEP team should still provide a statement in the PLAAFP explaining the current functional level of the student.

Let's look at the following functional goal example.

The first draft of the goal reads, “During each 40-minute class, Jose will pay attention and be engaged.” Let's consider which of the elements this goal includes.

So, the condition is present in this goal and it is “during each 40 minute class...” The target behavior is also present in the goal, but it's currently a little vague and could be further strengthened. It is “will pay attention and be engaged.” The level of proficiency and timeline is currently missing from the goal. Again, it should describe the level of accuracy or how many trials the student needs to demonstrate mastery.

Based on this feedback, the functional goal has been revised. It now reads “during each 40-minute class period Jose will remain academically engaged for five consecutive days as monitored by direct behavior reading.”

Let's make sure that this revised goal includes all of the elements. The condition has been clarified and it's “during each 40-minute class period,” the target behavior has also been clarified, and it is “will remain academically engaged,” and then the level of proficiency and timeline have been added and it is “at least 70 percent of the class for five consecutive days as monitored by direct behavior readings.”

This revised example now includes all three elements. With that, I'm going to turn it over to Chris to describe goal setting and practice.

**[Slide 20 – Goal Setting in Practice] Chris Colosimo:** Thanks, Alex! All right, so I come from the Wisconsin/Illinois border and I'm coming from a broad spectrum of things and I want to just give some examples of what's happening in some of the school districts that I've been involved with over the last 15 years.

**[Slide 21 Boots on the Ground] Chris Colosimo:** I won't say starting off with these last 15 years, we have a lot of really great research right now on the quality of IEP goals. A lot of it is done by Dr. Yell, so thank you so much Dr. Yell for your research and work in this area. One of the things that I continue to

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see and continues to be stressed in our research is we can continue to do a lot better than we're currently doing.

A lot of the time, what I'm seeing with our goals is they're very ambiguous - and these goals can lead to very difficult, and even maybe even sometimes impossible ways to determine the effectiveness of the services that we're providing for our students. Unfortunately, that can lead to a larger achievement gap because we're not necessarily targeting the needs of our students.

So, our goals really start to drive our services. Recently, we've been using a lot more curriculum-based measures in our goals, which are great because they are helping to target some of the basic needs that our students have.

And we're seeing that those are providing a more high-quality and efficient way to be able to monitor instructional practices and be able to make adjustments as needed. However, they're not consistently utilized, and when they are these don't necessarily represent the needs of all of our students unfortunately.

Continuing to work on targeting basic skill levels within our present levels is 100 percent needed. Making sure that they match and align - I'm looking forward to Dr. Yell's presentation here as he talks about how to make those align.

So, right now one of the things I've seen in our practices is we might have a student that has basic decoding skill needs or reading fluency needs but their goal is based off a reading comprehension need. Ultimately that might be the goal, but it's not the current need the student has. So, making sure that we are making our IEPs very individualized is a continued need.

I also see teachers struggling to collect data and relying on qualitative data instead of quantitative data at times when we don't have a good high-quality goal that addresses the three things Alex just talked about; making sure that we have that condition, that target, and the proficiency in there.

When we do have really good high quality goals though, I've seen students make some really great progress. I've seen our teachers be able to align their instructional practices with the students' needs and being able to change the instructional practices for whatever they need. So, being able to change the frequency, intensity, time or even targeting what the student needs has been extremely useful.

Go ahead and jump to the next slide.

**[Slide 22 – Academic/Functional Goal: FAQs] Chris Colosimo:** Sometimes we've been seeing the use of content or curriculum-related goals. Unfortunately, what we're seeing on our side is that these can be inadequate. They don't help to remediate or provide the skills our students need to make progress in special education or even in general education classes. A lot of times they don't match what is happening in the present levels of academic and functional performance.

While sometimes that can be easier to say, "okay, here are the content-related goals that a student needs." Being able to make a solid goal that fits the student's needs, it's not always there. And, it can make it extremely difficult for our teachers to track that.

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But, what also happens and has been happening in the school districts is we've been struggling with questions on what do we do with those goals? Do we make them really broad or very specific? I've heard questions like, "do we name the measures that we're using within the goals?" Those questions continually come up.

I've seen IEPs written both ways. Sometimes they have the measures written in them and sometimes they don't. The ones that do have the measures and have come into our districts at different points in time; I've always said that's why we do a review/revise - we can always change our IEPs and modify what the student needs. It doesn't mean that's the exact measure that we need to use when they come in, it just means that's what they were using at the time and maybe we need to look at that or maybe we need to revise it a little bit.

That's the same thing with "what if a student goes to a different district or state?" We do this to make sure we're making an individualized plan for that particular student.

With our functional goals - that also often lacks the cohesiveness. We see those typically fall into three areas: work completion, time on task, and emotional regulation. Goals on work completion and time on task do provide a very good quantitative data tool for our teachers...but often provide us with some additional questions: "How are we gathering that data on emotional regulation?" "What exactly in that emotional regulation are we looking for?"

We want to make sure we continue to align our goals with what students need. What we've been doing in Elkhorn, is we're moving more towards state SEL standards but we are struggling with how that currently is going to look. That's something that's on our docket with what we want to see happen. It's something we're working towards and trying towards but not quite there yet.

Let's go to the next slide.

**[Slide 23 – Continual Pivots: (Elkhorn, WI)] Chris Colosimo:** Most recently at our elementary schools we moved from grades-based to standards-based report cards.

That's provided us an opportunity to move towards pivoting our IEP goals to align them with what's happening in the classrooms. We've seen a combination of curriculum-based norms, with end of the year norms, along with different trials of standards-based needs.

Within the last few years at our high school, we've really tried to pivot our goals from the curriculum-covered standards to more of a criterion standards-based; meaning we're moving away from goals containing content area curriculum to covering basic skills students need to really try to remediate some of their instruction to close the gaps and to help them have progress within those general education classrooms.

However, we really do continue to ask ourselves, "Are the goals that we write adequate and appropriate to determine the effectiveness of our special education services? What else can we do to help our students continue to close the gaps and have access to, or appropriate access to, educational services?" That's really where we're currently at, and I want to back up and say this is more right now in the Elkhorn School District. But, I've also seen this in the school district I was in over in Illinois

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recently in the last ten years. This continues to be a cyclical question we continue to come into and ask ourselves and as the research continues to grow, we continue to get better with this and I will say we've made a lot of strides, but continue to look for additional support and direction in this area.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Yell as he talks about how about maybe how to close some of those gaps.

**[Slide 24 – Review: Key Goal Setting Considerations & Causations] Mitch Yell:** Thank you, Chris. So, what I'm going to do is review some key goal setting considerations and provide some cautions from experiences in various situations, due process hearings and things.

First off, what I'd like to talk about, or remind you about, are the four questions answered in the student's IEP. Now, although we do a lot of things in the IEP, essentially we're looking at answering these four questions:

1. First, "What are the student's unique educational needs that must be considered in developing his or her individualized education program?" Now, the PROGRESS Center put on the webinar [Using the PLAAFP as a Foundation](#), back on April 12<sup>th</sup> and that one did a very nice job.
2. Second, we have to ask, "What goals and objectives will enable the student to achieve meaningful educational benefit?" Or, in the words of *Andrew*, "make progress appropriate in light of his or her circumstances." And that is the subject of the webinar today.
3. Third, "What services are we going to provide to the student to address each of his or her educational needs?" And that will be services, issues - will be addressed in upcoming webinars.
4. Finally, "How are we going to monitor the student's progress to determine if the instructional program is effective? In fact, is the child making progress based on his or her circumstances?" That will actually be covered in upcoming webinar put on by the PROGRESS center - [Considerations and Resources for Developing the Monitoring Plan](#) on June 29<sup>th</sup>.

Next slide, please.

**[Slide 25 – Components of the Special Education Process] Mitch Yell:** So, what we've been talking about, we'll be addressing are the components of the special education process. And, of course, the special ed process begins with assessment. All the child's unique needs are addressed in the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statements. And, of course, in the previous webinar, this was covered.

Now, what we're covering today is our annual goal projection or one year's projection of where the child will be in one year's time. In future webinars, as I said, we will be covering special education services and the means that we will use to monitor student progress toward meeting their goals.

As you see in this illustration, we have the assessment, we have the goal projection - but we're also having to measure or collect data on student's performance toward meeting this annual goal on a formative, or regular, basis.

**[Slide 26 – Appendix A IDEA Regulations (1997)] Mitch Yell:** Now, one of the very important things - and both Alex and Chris mentioned this, the U.S. Department of Education in 1997 stressed this - and that was the relationship between these different components of the IEP.

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In Appendix A back in 1997 officials at OSEP wrote “There should be a direct relationship between the present levels of performance and the other components of the IEP. Thus, if the statement describes a problem with the child's reading level and points to a deficiency in reading skills (PLAAFP), the problem should be addressed under both (1) goals and (2) specific special education and related services provided to the child.”

That was Question 36. And not all needs will be addressed by a goal, but all needs will be addressed by a special education service.

**[Slide 27 – The Measurable Annual Goals Tell Us] Mitch Yell:** Now, the measurable annual goals essentially tell us what we expect the student to learn or be able to do in one year's time and, very importantly, how are we going to know if they've learned or can do it?

So, the graphic illustration shows just an example, actually, from a curriculum-based measurement of our baseline, our goal, and our goal line - we have to be monitoring our students' performance toward meeting this annual goal.

So how do we do this? This has been the subject of this webinar.

**[Slide 28 – A Method for Crafting Measurable Annual Goals] Mitch Yell:** So, I wanted to tell you a little bit about a book that I had as an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota in education - not in special education - and we were required to buy this book called *Preparing Structural Objectives*. It was developed by a man named Roger Mager actually in the 1950s, and he was a very interesting fellow. He was an efficiency expert in the air force in the late 1950s, and he developed a system called Criterion Reference Instruction for his work as an efficiency expert.

When he got out of the air force, he later adapted and refined this method for educators to use in writing goals. His book in fact was published in 1960 and became a very popular textbook. Which, in fact, I had used in one of my undergraduate classes. The book was called *Preparing Instructional Objectives*.

Now, this eventually kind of waned, the interest in this. But, it represented, what I believed at the time - and still do - a very important way to write measurable annual goals. I would also emphasize that it represents *a* way, not *the* way - because many states have their own requirements for writing goals - but these three elements, as Alex said, are going to be present in all goals.

And those elements, if you look back at slide 17 or the PROGRESS center tip sheet, are: target behavior, which is visible, that we can see, that's measurable; it includes a condition, how we're going to measure, the context by which we're going to measure, how we're going to collect that information. Actually, [regarding “how you'll measure”] Barbara Bateman, back in the early '90s, called this “the given;” you'll notice that both Chris and Alex and I believe used the term “given such and such...” “given an oral reading fluency test...” or, “given a story starter in three minutes to write.” So that represents how we're going to measure the goal.



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The third thing that Mager said was absolutely essential was what he called the “criterion for acceptable performance.” So, somewhere in that goal, we have to have all three of these things: target behavior, the condition, and the criterion for acceptable performance.

Now, we at the PROGRESS center refer to this as the “level of proficiency, or timeline.” It represents when we will know that the child has achieved their goal. As I said, we're taking constant measures, or data collection, called “formative evaluation” to determine if a child is on track to meet their goal. If they're not, we can make instructional changes.

**[Slide 29 – Annual Goal Checklist] Mitch Yell:** On the next slide you'll see an annual goal checklist, the important elements that we need to adhere to in writing our goals.

Number one, our goals have to be linked to the assessment and the present levels of academic achievement and functional performance statements, including academic and functional areas if needed.

If we think back to appendix a in the 1997 regulations of the IDEA, it really talks about the importance - and Chris mentioned this - the importance of linking all these elements (these four important elements) of the IEP together. In other words, the IEP has to be internally consistent. If there is a need, we have to address it in the service statements or the goals, or both the goals and service statements.

Secondly, are goals specific, clear, and measurable? Oftentimes, you'll hear people using an old acronym from business called SMART goals – “are your goals SMART?” - I would add to that. Besides specific, measurable, they need to be ambitious also. You want to have reasonable goals, but they should be ambitious.

Third, are goals directed at meeting a student’s needs related to the disability so he or she may be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum? Fourth, does the IEP contain information on how the student's progress will be measured? And was said earlier, this really needs to be quantitative data that we can actually use to show progress.

Fifth, does the IEP contain information on how progress will be communicated to the student's parents? At one time, IDEA required – it no longer requires, but many states do - that the progress toward each goal be monitored and reported to students' parents as often as they receive a report card from general education.

The next, is a student’s progress toward achieving goals actually measured? I know we probably have seen - Chris and Alex have seen - goals that are written in measurable ways but then are not actually measurable. That defeats the purpose of the goal. We have to record and maintain data and we have to provide that information to the students' parents.

**[Slide 30 – Cautions] Mitch Yell:** What I’d like to move on to in the next slide is a few cautions I have in writing annual goals. I'd like to go through these one at a time.

**[Slide 31 – Caution: Unambitious Goals] Mitch Yell:** In the next slide, we have a caution regarding unambitious goals. So, if we remember that SMART acronym - specific, measurable, ambitious (but reasonable), and a timeline - we should always err on the side of ambition in writing our goals. We



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want to make them reasonable, but we want them to be ambitious. Remember, as *Andrew* said, the IEP is calculated to provide progress, to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of his or her circumstances.

In fact, the *Andrew* decision said Special Ed Directors may be called upon by hearing officers to give a cogent and responsive explanation for why you believed - or why they believed - the child was going to make progress toward these goals.

Just wanted to show you really quickly a quotation from a case called *Carter v Florence* which eventually went to the Supreme Court. At the original federal district court level, it actually was a case about the child's free appropriate public education. The judge found that because the child, Shannon Carter, was provided with goals that would not meet her needs, or would not allow her to make progress, the judge wrote that "even if the goals had been met, Shannon would continue to fall behind her classmates at an alarming rate. The stated progress of only four months in her reading and math skills over an entire school year ensured the program's inadequacy from its inception."

And as *Andrew F* said, the essential function of an IEP is to set out a plan for pursuing academic and functional advancement. We want our goals to be ambitious, we want them to be challenging, but also reasonable.

**[Slide 32 – Caution: Goals that are Not Measurable] Mitch Yell:** Now, in the next slide, we see another caution. That caution is we have to ensure that our goals are measurable.

We want to carefully consider the words that we use in our goals and make sure we can actually measure them. A good rule of thumb is if you can't graph a goal, it's not measurable. Too many goals include things like teacher observation that really aren't measurable unless there's more specific information added.

**[Slide 33 – Caution: Goals that are Not Measurable] Mitch Yell:** in the next slide, I just included a quotation from a court - actually a state educational agency decision - in which the IEP goals and objectives in the IEP did not contain objective criteria. As the hearing officers wrote, "a goal of 'increasing' reading comprehension skills or 'improving decoding skills' is not a measurable goal." Even if these were clearly stated and open in the statement, that a student will improve, it does not meet the requirement for a *measurable* goal.

Think of this: a measurable goal should pass the "stranger test;" that is, different evaluators can agree if a goal has been measured.

**[Slide 34 – Caution: Misuse of Percentages] Mitch Yell:** Now, in the next slide, one of the things that I'm sure Chris has seen quite often - and I have - is the misuse of percentages.

Annual goals that contain just a percentage is not helpful if the IEP fails to define a starting point and an ending point. Or, the curriculum or test in which a student will achieve that degree of accuracy. So, percentages by themselves are meaningless. They need to be tied to something; they need to be tied to the baseline in the present levels of performance or some other measure.



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**[Slide 35 (Quote)] Mitch Yell:** In the next slide, I wanted to point out that - a number of years ago, I was at a conference, a law conference, in Omaha, Nebraska.

I was listening to an attorney named Kathleen Mehfoud, now retired, with Reed & Smith and a Consultant to LRP. [She] exclusively represented school districts. She said something during her presentation that struck me and I asked her about it and she made the following statement, which I asked her if I could quote her on this. She said “When I have a school district with a FAPE case, the first thing do I is go to the teacher and say, ‘Give me information on your student's progress.’ If the teacher doesn’t have data, I consider advising the school district to settle.”

So that just really points out the absolutely critical nature of tying your IEP together, having the present levels as a baseline, writing truly measurable annual goals, and then measuring them. Collecting data and reporting them to students' parents.

I’d also say the upcoming webinar on the monitoring plan is very important. By the way, this quotation by Kathleen was two years before the *Endrew* decision, which makes this even more important. So, now I’d like to turn it over to Tessie. Tessie?

**[Slide 36 – Resources] Tessie Bailey:** Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Alex. I just want to give a special thanks to Mitch. For those who don't know, Mitch is serving as a Center Advisor. I also want to give a special thanks to Chris, who is serving in our first educator in residence program. We're really pleased for you to share your experiences today.

We did receive a couple of questions, so I wanted to share. One of the questions was around what tools are available to ensure if you can go back one slide, to ensure that baseline data and goals target align properly. On the previous slide, you'll see there are two resources and Mitch mentioned these as well. You'll see them in the chat box. Both of these are guides to selecting an appropriate baseline measure to make sure that it aligns with your goals. So, what's realistic or appropriately ambitious, as Mitch mentioned.

Along with these two guides are supporting webinars or recordings to help you interpret and model what it looks like within the guide itself. There are also practice opportunities for setting baseline and goals for both math and literacy in the academic version and then behavior in the behavior one.

**[Slide 37 – Questions] Tessie Bailey:** So, I want to move us to the next part. We have a little bit of time for questions.

One of the questions we received was really around “how do you progress monitor goals?” So Mitch, I’m curious if you can share a little bit about your experience in terms of how do we do this.

**Mitch Yell:** That's such an important question. I think we have so many excellent resources through the National Center on Intensive Instruction and Intervention and through the PROGRESS center. It's very important when we monitor our goals, that we choose a method that is quantitative, I believe.

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I think at some point qualitative is useful, but we need to have check sheets and things like that to emphasize that we're really systematically monitoring goals. I would say, the data we collect and goals should be numbers and not words.

The things that you've been pointing out I think are so important, that we have actual ways to collect data and monitor and measure student progress and it's reported to parents. And, make changes when the data says a child is not learning or are not going to meet their goal.

**Tessie Baiely:** Thanks. I want to bring Chris on because Chris, you mentioned something around how we make sure the goal is feasible. We want to make sure it's not impossible. There was a question about "how do we know if it's feasible?" I think Mitch talked about it being measurable, but how do we know if it's something we can feasibly monitor?

**Chris Colosimo:** That's a really great question. Feasibly monitoring is going to start with your present levels and looking back to see "what is the student able to currently do?" With that, we're able to find what may be feasible or the rate of improvement to be able to make it to the next level.

We need to look in short chunks of time. I know we look at typically a year in advance. We can look out and say, "hey, here is the typical rate of improvement for a student in one year's time," and from there we can then make a feasible goal for the student. But, it really comes down to making sure we have good baseline measures and then from there looking at the rate of improvements for students.

**Tessie Bailey:** Thanks. I want to also say in terms of that feasibility, I think sometimes as teachers, we have our day-to-day work that's happening, and we want to make sure that we have a monitoring approach that we can do within our day-to-day work. If we have to stop everything we're doing, collect some data - what we're doing is pulling away from instruction.

I'm curious if you have any tips or strategies for how we make it fit within our day-to-day work based on what you've seen.

**Chris Colosimo:** Yeah. So, to be honest, I think that this is our day-to-day work. This is what we do. When we are working on trying to close gaps for students, we're utilizing that information; whether it's reading, math, writing, or functional performance, we're taking those formative assessments the entire time and that's helping us drive our instructional decisions.

I mean, to be honest, I have to say I think that that's where our skill set lies and where we in the special education realm need to be. We need to be understanding where those goals are, because the goals drive the services.

So, if we have good, solid goals in place that are measurable, feasible (like you mentioned), then we're able to deliver our practices to meet the needs of our students.

**Tessie Bailey:** Right. I want to share a comment that was entered into the question box from one of our participants. Making sure that the goal that you use to establish - or the tool you use to establish baseline - is also what you're using to monitor progress?

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In the two resources I shared on the previous slide, that's definitely what we would recommend. It makes it very clear, as Mitch mentioned, with the percentages - we have to understand what it is at the beginning so we can monitor where we're going towards the end. Thank you for sharing that.

We have time for just a couple more questions. Alex, I know you had something to share about the monitoring of the goals. Can you hear me?

**Alex Marken:** I can hear you. Sorry for the delay. Is there something specific about monitoring the goals?

**Tessie Bailey:** Just about our upcoming webinar in terms of -

**Alex Marken:** Of course. Yes. So, if you have questions about how you go about actually monitoring the goals you've created, we do have a webinar that's coming up on June 29th at 3:30 p.m. You can go ahead and register for that right now, it's on our website, [www.promotingprogress.org](http://www.promotingprogress.org). You can go to "News and Events" and it's right there as a save the date. I believe that will be added into the chat as well, so you'll be able to register for that. We would absolutely love to see you all there.

**Tessie Bailey:** I'm sorry, I didn't mean to put you on the spot there. I know it's a great resource that's coming up. We just had one last question and it's - Alex, you mentioned something in your example about - in the goal example - about two reminders, or prompts. So, can you all address what are some considerations about using prompts in a student's goal? Mitch, I don't know if you want to start first?

**Mitch Yell:** I think it's very important that if you're going to be using prompts, that it be very explicit what exactly you're doing. My preference is probably not to use prompts as part of the actual goal itself, unless it's necessary. Unless you need to have - especially, for example, with students who have more severe needs.

If you have need to put a prompt in the goal, that may be necessary, but you need to be very specific. Generally speaking, a goal should be something the student can do on their own without any added - and sometimes that's not possible. If not, very specific.

**Tessie Bailey:** Yeah, I think that's really critical. Instead of saying "two reminders" or "two prompts," what you're saying, whether it's a visual reminder or a verbal reminder, what's the sequencing between those? And, being very clear what the level of proficiency is that we expect the student to achieve the target behavior.

So, I want to thank you all for answering questions and let folks know if we didn't get your question answered today - I think we saw everything here - or you have a question that comes up later, you can email us at [progresscenter@air.org](mailto:progresscenter@air.org).

**[Slide 38 – Promoting Progress: Considerations & Resources for Developing the Monitoring Plan for IEP Goals]** **Tessie Bailey:** I want to share a little bit more information about what Alex mentioned. We do have some upcoming webinars that are coming in June around writing your monitoring plan. So, that webinar will be around promoting progress, consideration for resources, and developing the monitoring plan for IEP goals.



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Back to what Chris was talking about with feasibility, we want to make sure that plan fits within our day-to-day work, helping us promote our day-to-day instruction, and is not misaligned with what we're doing.

That session is on June 29<sup>th</sup>. You can find a link in the chat box. We'll be doing that in the afternoon.

**[Slide 39 – Staying Connected with the PROGRESS Center] Tessie Bailey:** If you would like to follow us, I highly recommend to check out our website. You can sign up for our newsletter and learn all about the great resources we have and upcoming webinars.

We do have a learning management system and will be adding new resources and modules over time. They do follow along with all the essential components for developing the IEP and as Mitch mentioned, we will have a series of modules that will support the implementation of the IEP.

We also recommend you follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @k12progress.

Mitch, before we go, I do have a one last thing. You also mentioned a webinar and information about determining services.

**Mitch Yell:** That was - I had asked Lauren about that, and she said that would be an upcoming webinar the PROGRESS Center -

**Tessie Bailey:** Right. Yes. And that will actually occur more in the September/October range, or maybe August/September/October. Be looking for that. We'll not be doing a webinar in the month of July because we think people need a nice break from the IEP.

So, please make sure you complete our evaluation for today.

We love to hear your feedback. If you have ideas about what we should be promoting in terms of our resources, or you have a question that would be great for our thought leader forum, please submit that on the evaluation that's linked in our chat box.

Thank you again, Chris, Mitch, and Alex. We look forward to seeing the rest of you at future webinars!



1400 Crystal Drive, 10<sup>th</sup> Floor | Arlington, VA 22202  
202-403-5000 | [www.air.org](http://www.air.org)

[www.promotingprogress.org](http://www.promotingprogress.org)



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