Classworks®

Create High-Quality IEP Goals

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Table of Contents

Establishing a Baseline or Present Level of Performance 4

Determining a Relevant Standard or Statement of Annual Goal 6

Writing a Measurable Goal 7

Monitoring Progress Toward the Goal 9

Delivering Instruction to Achieve the Goal 11

Documenting Student Progress 14

Conclusion 17

About Classworks 18

Introduction

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) include a "statement of measurable annual goals," including academic and functional goals. Determining measurable and attainable goals and the corresponding short-term objectives can be challenging. However, with a clear process and high-quality data it can be done!

This guide focuses on creating, documenting, and achieving academic IEP goals that are measurable, sufficiently ambitious, and attainable.

There are six essential steps to creating and documenting quality IEP goals:

1. Establishing a baseline or present level of performance
2. Determining a relevant standard or statement of annual goal
3. Writing a measurable goal
4. Monitoring progress toward the goal
5. Delivering instruction to achieve the goal
6. Documenting student progress

Classworks, a Special Education solution endorsed by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), addresses each step of the process.

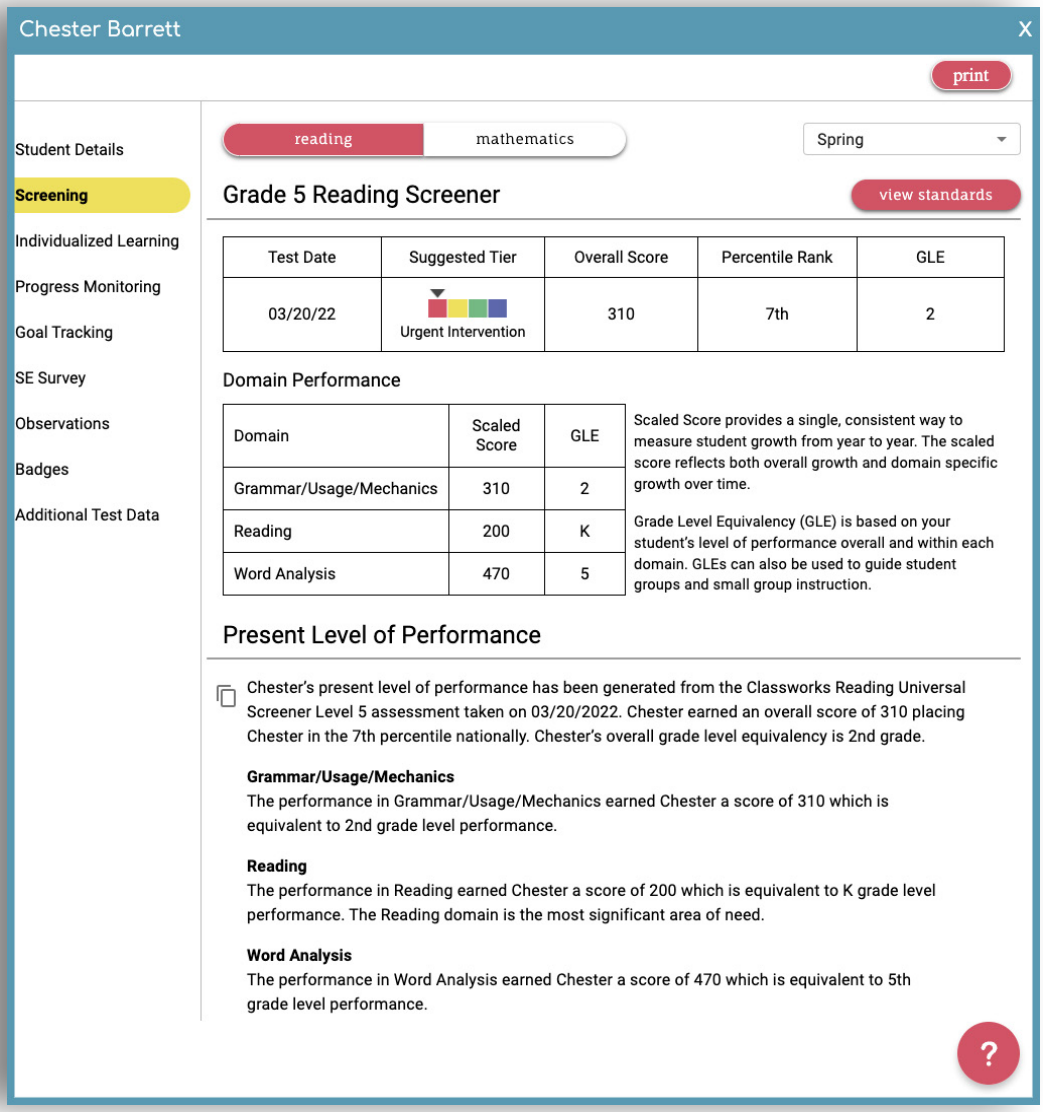
1. Establishing a Student's Baseline or Present Level of Performance

The first step in creating an IEP for a student is to learn what skills will most benefit them and the appropriate level for those skills. This is often determined with a valid and reliable screening tool. High-quality screeners have undergone rigorous scientific testing and are used to identify students who are at risk. The resulting data shows student strengths and weaknesses above and below grade level and have the sensitivity to identify a student's present level of performance.

Teachers then use these results to write a summary of the Present Level of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) that includes the student's baseline performance. A PLAAFP typically includes the comparison between a student's score to grade-level target scores. The academic information is the anchor to the present level data, but it should be accompanied by a short narrative describing classroom observations about the student's strengths and weaknesses. Once the baseline PLAAFP is established, the IEP team uses this information to write an attainable and measurable goal.

Classworks Academic Screener, an NCII-validated screener, provides key data to create the PLAAFP statement. The screeeners are available in Reading and Mathematics for grades K-10. Data reported includes the test name and level, the date completed, the student's score, national percentile rank, and grade level equivalency. This same information is also displayed by domain. Classworks includes copy/paste functionality for easy IEP goal creation.

Here is an example of the text that is copied directly from Classworks into the IEP:

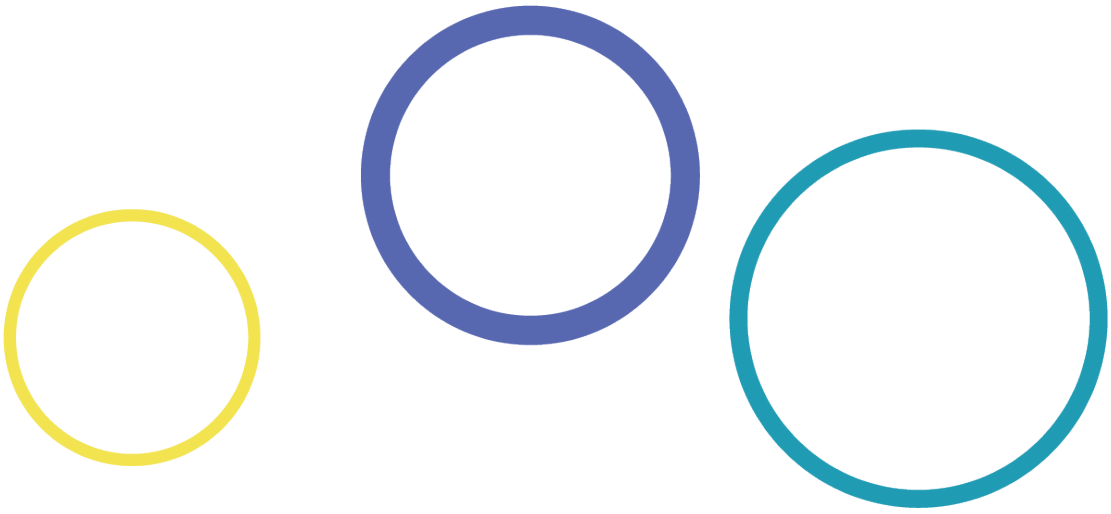


2. Determining a Relevant Standard or Statement of Annual Goal

Once the student's PLAAFP is established, writing the IEP begins. The first step is to determine a standard or statement of the annual goal. This standard gives the academic IEP an overall focus. It typically corresponds to the student's enrolled or chronological grade, regardless of the student's present level of performance. Determining the standard can be challenging without the right data.

A high-quality screener should provide on grade-level standards to use as the annual goal for the IEP. Even if the student's PLAAFP is far below grade level, the screener data should indicate standards at the student's enrolled or chronological grade to provide options for an overarching focus for the IEP.

Classworks Screener results include a list of the grade level standards measured on the test. Teachers select a standard from this list to serve as the focus for the IEP. Typically this will relate to the area of greatest need for the student as reported by domain.



3. Writing a Measurable Goal

A quality IEP goal has two components:

1. A long-term annual goal
2. Interim short-term discrete objectives.

Annual IEP goals typically include a standard or expectation based on the student's enrolled grade level. The associated short-term objectives should be at the student's current instructional or performance level and vertically align to the grade level standard.

A quality IEP goal has four specific elements. It addresses the:

1. Condition
2. Target behavior
3. Level of Proficiency
4. Time frame for meeting the goal

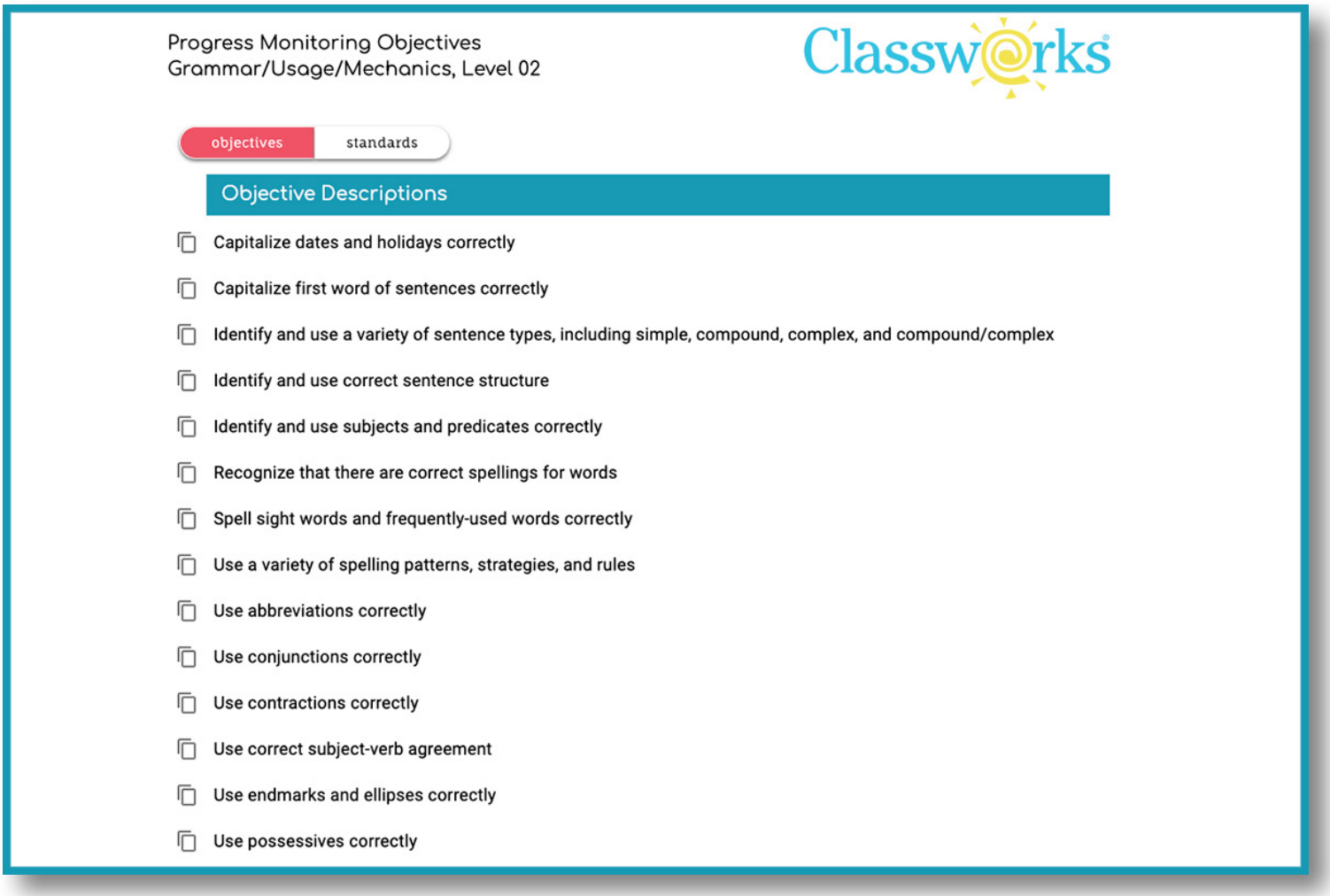
The sample below illustrates how these can be organized into a meaningful IEP goal:

When given [*grade level and tool*], the student will [*observable behavior and goal*] [*level of proficiency and time frame*].

Sample Classworks IEP Goal: "When given a level one reading probe, Chester will attain 80% on all objectives by spring benchmarking."

IEP goals are sometimes described as the framework while IEP objectives are the interim steps to reach the annual goal. Objectives break down the steps of the goal so students have an organized path to make clear progress. Objectives should not match the main goal, instead, they provide students with the opportunities to master prerequisite skills to achieve the main goal.

Educators determining objectives with Classworks, select from a bank of academic objectives at the student's present level while clearly seeing the alignment to the grade level standard. These objectives are easily copied and pasted into the IEP. With Classworks, the bank of objectives are already incorporated into the progress monitoring tool used to track progress.



4. Monitoring Progress Toward the Goal

Once an IEP's objectives are established, it's time to document progress. Progress monitoring probes are validated parallel-form assessments that test students on a variety of general outcome measures each week. They should take the student no longer than 10 minutes to complete and be administered in the same way and at roughly the same time each week.

Teacher created progress monitoring resources, while widely used, are cause for concern when trying to measure growth on an IEP.

NCII explains more about this in their guide, "*Strategies for Setting High-Quality Academic Individualized Education Program Goals*", updated in December of 2022.[1]

> *"NCII recommends the use of valid and reliable assessment measures when setting and monitoring progress toward IEP goals. Many teacher-developed measures, such as spelling tests or other common formative assessments, have not been validated for individual progress monitoring. In addition, measures used as part of a specific intervention typically measure progress within the intervention, not on a broader measure of performance in the relevant domain. Using within-intervention progress monitoring tools may result in the IEP team making incorrect conclusions about a student's progress toward grade-level standards or expectations. For this reason, NCII recommends using progress monitoring tools that are curriculum independent."*

Choose a progress monitoring tool validated by NCII, that measures the objectives established in the IEP and is independent of any intervention or instruction the student is receiving.

To easily measure and track progress towards goals, rate of improvement graphing and cumulative averages should be available after each probe is completed. The automatically-generated trend line provides a clear picture of student progress toward their goals. Additional data points include transparent access to each specific question and student responses.

Classworks has very high NCII ratings for validity and reliability. The probes are available for grades 1-8 in reading and mathematics. Teachers select the level and domain for progress monitoring based on the objectives of the probes. Then, once students start their progress monitoring, they automatically receive a new probe each week for 12 weeks. The specific objectives teachers chose for the IEP are the same ones measured and graphed in the weekly skill-based Progress Monitoring probes.

5. Delivering Instruction to Achieve the Goal

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) is defined by IDEA as "adapting, as appropriate, to the needs of an eligible child under this part, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to:

- Address the unique needs of the child that result from the child's disability
- Ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children."

SDI is a complex undertaking that includes many stakeholders, but it is spearheaded by the Special Education team. In its simplest form, SDI has two different areas.

1. Students complete instruction and learn skills directly related to the IEP objectives. This is content at the student's present level of performance and is often unrelated to the general curriculum. This is typically instruction below grade level, or deficit-based SDI, and it is designed to support growth and progress on the IEP objectives.

This instruction is:

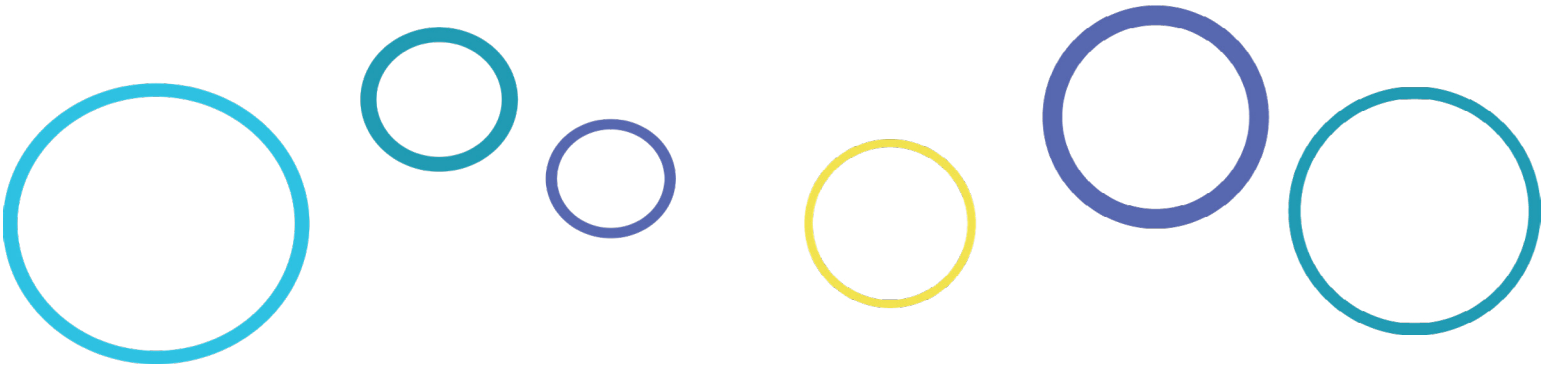
- Completed IN ADDITION TO not instead of the general, on grade-level curriculum
- Distinct from any intervention instruction being utilized as part of a school or district intervention (RTI/MTSS) process
- Aligned tightly with the student's IEP goal - both the related standard and short-term objectives
- Evidence-based and research-proven for use with students with IEPs

Classworks learning paths for Language Arts and Mathematics grades K-10 are a research-proven resource. They support student growth to meet IEP goals and objectives, especially as part of deficit-based SDI.

Classworks uses both Universal Screener and weekly Progress Monitoring data to customize instruction for each student at their present level of performance. The teacher also has full autonomy to modify the student's learning experience.

Learning paths are initially generated based on a student's domain-specific Universal Screener results. Progress monitoring data then refines the learning path each week. This ensures the instruction is always relevant.

A student's learning path consists of standards-aligned computer-based instruction. The instruction follows an evidence-based design that includes direct instruction, activities and games to practice the skill, and a formative assessment. Feedback and instructional support including read-aloud, scaffolded lessons, and instructional videos ensure every student is engaged with their learning.



2. Teachers make adjustments in the classroom to help a student access the on-grade-level content.

This example below shows how the SDI helps Maria access classroom science instruction despite a reading disability.

The SDI in this case is not related to the overarching IEP goal, it is a separate requirement from IDEA. Remembering that first and foremost every student is a general education student, making access to grade-level instruction paramount.

Maria is a student with a learning disability that impacts the area of reading		
Adaptations to Content	**Research-Based Methodology**	**Delivery of Instruction**
• None	• Reads materials aloud to self • Visuals • Repeated practice	• Science reading materials are presented at instructional level • Peers read material aloud to student • Student utilizes flashcards for frequently used words with pictures
While the teacher may read directions to all students on a regular basis, allow students to read items aloud during class, and utilize graphics and vocabulary posted around the classroom and in the textbook, the IEP team has identified specific strategies and instruction that eliminate or mitigate the impact of Maria's reading disability on her science instruction.		

6. Documenting Student Progress

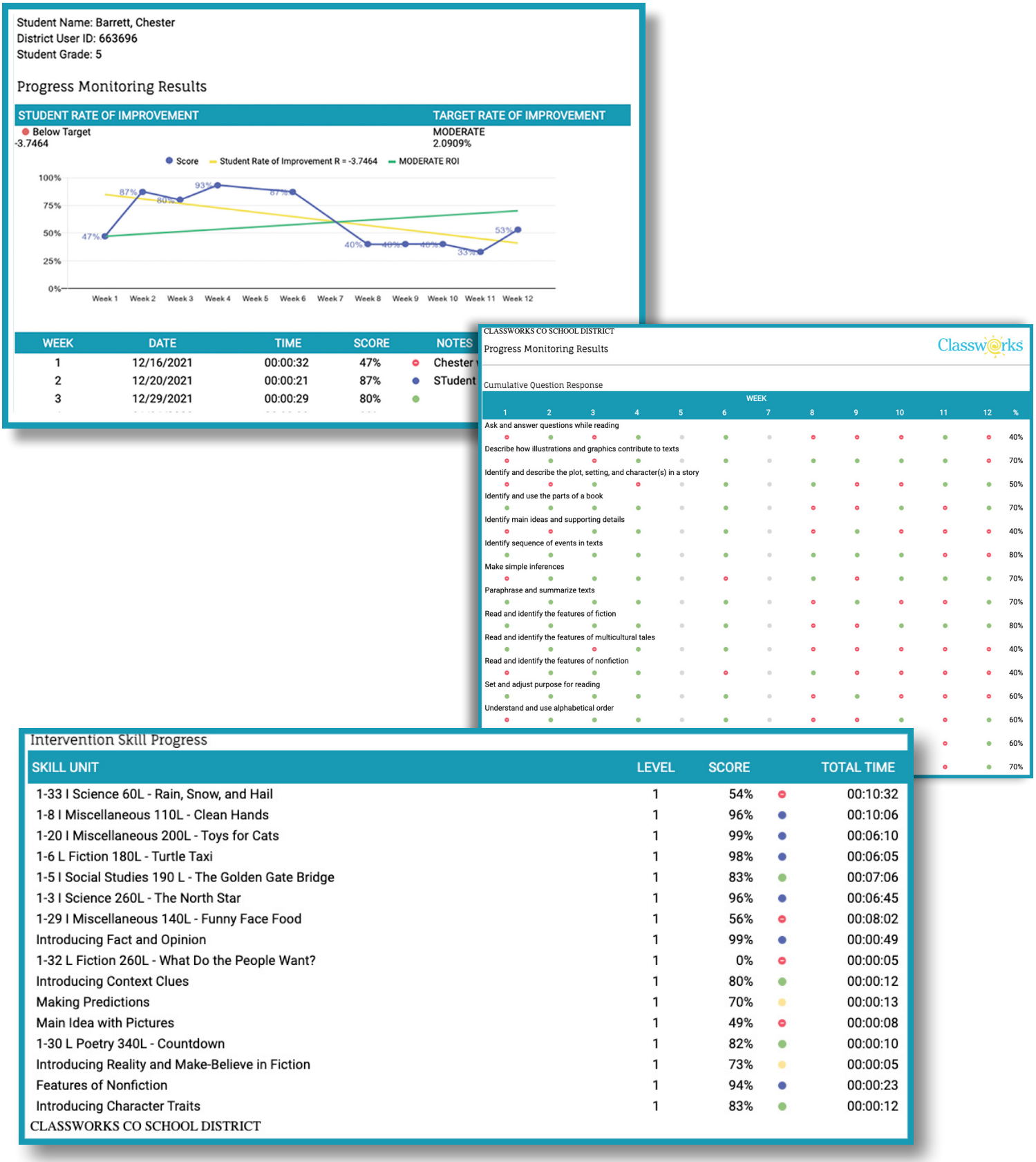
Finally, all information about a student's IEP must be documented and shared with stakeholders regularly. IDEA emphasizes consistent and meticulous data collection to meet federal and state requirements. An IEP should clearly state how a student's growth or progress toward goals is measured and when periodic progress reports are shared with parents.

Objective data showing student progress is an essential element of this documentation stream. This includes progress monitoring graphs or charts that clearly illustrate the learner's performance trend over a short period of time.

Maintaining open communication with parents is another important best practice. While parent meetings are often incorporated in IEPs, updated reporting requirements have reinforced the need for increased parent involvement. Many IEP teams set a common schedule for sharing reports with parents. Often, these are scheduled to align with progress reports sent home in general education classes.

Classworks' robust library of reports and live data ensure that all stakeholders have easy access to students' IEP progress and achievements. Detailed growth and progress data is available for Screening, Progress Monitoring, and Specially Designed Instruction.

For example, this report shows specific progress on each short-term objective as well as mastery of the skills students are working on as part of their SDI.



Student Name: Barrett, Chester
District User ID: 663696
Student Grade: 5

Progress Monitoring Results

STUDENT RATE OF IMPROVEMENT	TARGET RATE OF IMPROVEMENT
Below Target -3.7464	MODERATE 2.0909%

Score — Student Rate of Improvement R = -3.7464 — MODERATE ROI

WEEK	DATE	TIME	SCORE	NOTES
1	12/16/2021	00:00:32	47%	Chester
2	12/20/2021	00:00:21	87%	STudent
3	12/29/2021	00:00:29	80%	

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Progress Monitoring Results

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Cumulative Question Response

	WEEK 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	%
Ask and answer questions while reading													40%
Describe how illustrations and graphics contribute to texts													70%
Identify and describe the plot, setting, and character(s) in a story													50%
Identify and use the parts of a book													70%
Identify main ideas and supporting details													40%
Identify sequence of events in texts													80%
Make simple inferences													70%
Paraphrase and summarize texts													70%
Read and identify the features of fiction													80%
Read and identify the features of multicultural tales													40%
Read and identify the features of nonfiction													40%
Set and adjust purpose for reading													60%
Understand and use alphabetical order													60%
													60%
													70%

Intervention Skill Progress

SKILL UNIT	LEVEL	SCORE	TOTAL TIME
1-33 I Science 60L - Rain, Snow, and Hail	1	54%	00:10:32
1-8 I Miscellaneous 110L - Clean Hands	1	96%	00:10:06
1-20 I Miscellaneous 200L - Toys for Cats	1	99%	00:06:10
1-6 L Fiction 180L - Turtle Taxi	1	98%	00:06:05
1-5 I Social Studies 190 L - The Golden Gate Bridge	1	83%	00:07:06
1-3 I Science 260L - The North Star	1	96%	00:06:45
1-29 I Miscellaneous 140L - Funny Face Food	1	56%	00:08:02
Introducing Fact and Opinion	1	99%	00:00:49
1-32 L Fiction 260L - What Do the People Want?	1	0%	00:00:05
Introducing Context Clues	1	80%	00:00:12
Making Predictions	1	70%	00:00:13
Main Idea with Pictures	1	49%	00:00:08
1-30 L Poetry 340L - Countdown	1	82%	00:00:10
Introducing Reality and Make-Believe in Fiction	1	73%	00:00:05
Features of Nonfiction	1	94%	00:00:23
Introducing Character Traits	1	83%	00:00:12

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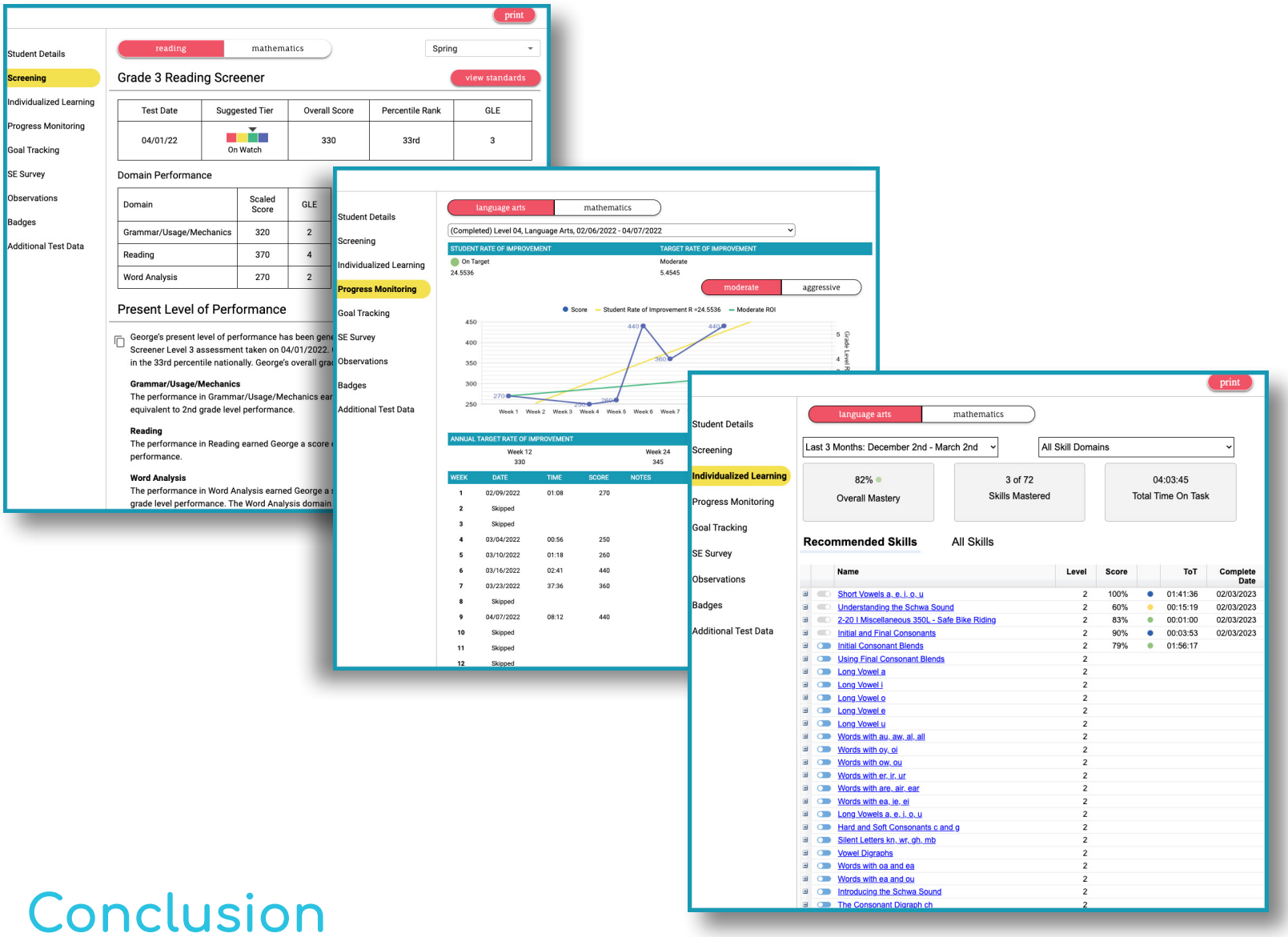
Within Classworks, IEP teams can view real-time screening data, progress monitoring, and skill-specific results from the instruction. Having this data in one location is a proven timesaver.



Conclusion

While Special Education, by definition, will always be the most personalized and complex process in public schools, following these six steps for IEP writing streamlines teacher processes and improves student outcomes.

1. Start with valid and reliable data that identifies students' present levels of performance
2. Relate the IEP to an on-grade level standard
3. Choose short-term objectives at the present level that are vertically aligned to the standard
4. Determine how progress toward the goal will be measured
5. Ensure students have Specially Designed Instruction to achieve the goal
6. Establish a plan for documenting and communicating progress with all stakeholders

With Classworks, a CASE-endorsed solution, Special educators easily align all of the key elements for successful academic IEP writing. You have:

- Domain-specific Present Levels of Performance data for each student
- Suggested standards for IEP Goals based on assessment data
- Suggested standards and skill-based short-term objectives to support the IEP
- Skill-based Progress Monitoring to track progress on the exact objectives chosen for the IEP
- The ability to copy and paste PLAAFP goal and objectives into any IEP tool
- Deficit-based SDI assigned to students based on screening and progress monitoring results
- Reports and live data for documentation and parent communication

About Classworks

Classworks leverages technology and evidence-based learning practices to transform how school districts support students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. Our comprehensive MTSS and Special Education solution includes academic screeners, math and reading individualized interventions, progress monitoring, social-emotional and behavioral resources, and powerful data visualizations.

Classworks is endorsed by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE). Classworks assessments and progress monitoring probes are validated by the National Center of Intensive Intervention (NCII).

1. National Center for Intensive Intervention, December 2022. https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/NCII-SetAcademicIEPGoals508.pdf

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