

## **How Short Term Objectives or Benchmarks May Help Achieve Annual Goals**

Annual goals target areas of need identified in the present level of performance of a student's IEP. Benchmarks or short term objectives provide interim steps a student will take to reach the annual goal. They may also serve as a measurement to gauge a student's progress to determine if the student is making sufficient progress towards attaining an annual goal. To use a roadmap analogy, benchmarks and short-term objectives divide a road trip into concrete, smaller checkpoints along the way to the final destination. There is a small difference between short term objectives and benchmarks you should note:

### **Short-term instructional objectives**

Short-term instructional objectives are the bits of intermediate knowledge and skills a student must learn to reach the annual goal. Short-term instructional objectives break down the skills or steps necessary to accomplish an annual goal into discrete components.

### **Benchmarks**

Benchmarks set the major milestones a student should demonstrate to lead to mastery of the annual goal. Benchmarks usually designate a target time period for a behavior to occur (i.e., the amount of progress a student is expected to make within specified segments of the school year). Generally, benchmarks set expected performance levels that allow for regular measurement of progress. The measurements will coincide with the reporting periods for informing parents of their student's progress toward the annual goals.

In other words, short term objectives break goals down into incremental learning steps, all of which are necessary to achieve the goal but not necessarily sequentially. Benchmarks measure how far along the sequential path towards mastering a goal the student has come.

School divisions are only required to use short term objectives or benchmarks in IEPs for students who take alternative assessments. But parents have the right to ask that short term objectives or benchmarks be used to make large goals more manageable and to make progress more easily measurable.