

The ULTIMATE Goal - Self-Determination

What is self-determination?



Self-determination is a person's ability to take actions toward self-chosen goals. It is about making things happen in your life. The components of self-determination¹ include:

- choice making
- decision making
- problem solving
- goal setting
- goal attainment
- self-monitoring
- self-advocacy
- internal locus of control
- self-awareness
- self-knowledge

Choice making comes before decision making and is the process of selecting from two or more alternatives. Decision making is choosing the best option to reach one's goals. Self-monitoring can include a student tracking or graphing their own progress while working toward goals. Shifting progress monitoring to the student can strengthen self-awareness, which is the ability to identify and understand one's own needs, interests, strengths, limitations, and values. Throughout goal setting and attainment, self-reflection can increase self-awareness and development of an internal locus of control, which is when a student understands their actions cause results rather than attributing results to external factors. For example, a student with an external locus of control might say, "I didn't do my homework because my brother was bothering me" while a student with an internal locus of control might say, "I didn't finish my homework because I was playing video games and started too late."



What is the difference between self-advocacy and self-determination?

Self-advocacy, or the ability to advocate for one's one needs and interests, is actually one component of self-determination. Think of self-determination as an umbrella term that includes all of the skills listed above; the individual takes actions or makes choices toward what they want.

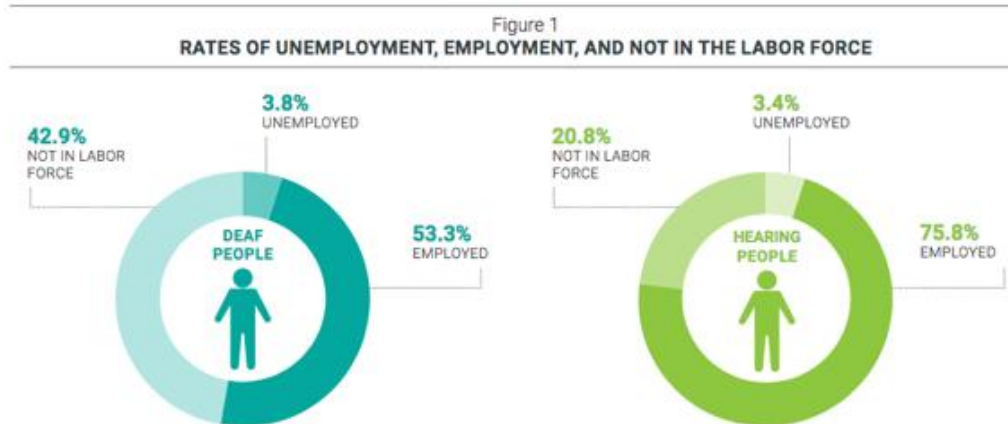
Why is self-determination important?

One disadvantage of the educational setting shift from center-based options to full mainstreaming is that DHH children are often the only students with hearing loss in their classes or in the entire school, underscoring the need for self-advocacy skills. In 2017, 88.3% of students with hearing loss were included in general education classrooms at least part of their school day²⁰ compared with 57.8% in 1998²¹. In terms of the percentage of time students who are DHH are included in general education settings, 61.1% of students who are DHH were included at least 80% of their time in school in 2015²⁰ compared with 38.8% in 1998²¹.

Self-advocacy is one component of self-determination and a facilitator of success in students who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH)². However, a five-year longitudinal study with 197 students who are DHH revealed that **41% of them received no training in self-advocacy from their teacher of the deaf**³.

Self-determination is a predictor of in-school and post-school success⁴.

National Employment Rates⁷



Self-determination is a predictor of in school and post school success⁴ and perceived quality of life for youth and young adults with disabilities⁵. Despite the benefits, students with disabilities typically have insufficient self-determination skills, demonstrating the need for interventions to support the development of self-determination⁶. However, there are significant educational attainment and employment gaps between individuals who are DHH and individuals who are typically hearing^{7,8}.

Working on developing self-determination skills with DHH students could address these academic and employment gaps and empower students to feel ownership of their own actions and lives. The national standards for preparing teachers of students who are DHH developed by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)⁹ now require teachers to know how to work on and assess self-determination skills with students. The National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes has also created a handout summarizing the significance of self-determination skills for deaf youth: [CLICK HERE FOR HANDOUT](#).

Interventions

Aim to use Evidence-Based Practices as these practices are based on rigorous criteria. If you see the terms *best*, *recommended*, or *research-based practices*, be wary as there are no established standards for these terms. To read about the quality of research for particular practices and interventions, visit the *What Works Clearinghouse* website, developed by the U.S. Department of Education Institute for Educational Sciences (IES)¹¹. **The challenge within the field of Deaf Education is that there are few EBP's developed for or tested with students who are DHH** due to the low incidence of hearing loss in children. Although most EBP's may have been designed for students with disabilities or all students generally, the evidence is stronger than using strategies that are simply suggested to you by another teacher.

Self-Determination Interventions

The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI)

The *SDLMI*¹² is an evidence-based intervention (EBP) that was designed for students with and without disabilities. It is an iterative goal setting process through which students can set goals in any context (e.g., math, self-advocacy) and allows for development of self-determination skills. The *SDLMI Teacher's Guide*¹² is a resource that includes materials for teachers to use the *SDLMI* with students. It is geared toward middle and high school students, but you can adapt the language to the needs of

The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction

Essential Characteristics of Self-Determined Actions

Volitional Action

- Autonomy
- Self-Initiation

Agentic Action

- Self-Regulation
- Self-Direction
- Pathways Thinking

Action-Control Beliefs

- Psychological Empowerment
- Self-Realization
- Control Expectancy

The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction

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your students. The *SDLMI* focuses on students setting their own goals, and creates opportunities for students to revise goals, as they learn what is and might not be achievable. The process is used repeatedly so students can then set goals more aligned with their strengths and needs when they have increased self-awareness. [Find the *SDLMI* and other great resources here.](#) [Reflection form](#) [Team Questionnaire](#) [Elem Student Eval Tool](#)

Student Involvement in the IEP Process

When students increase involvement in their Individual Education Program (IEP) process, and even lead it, this is an excellent opportunity to practice self-determination skills. You can utilize [these resources](#) for increasing student involvement. There are also great resources on student-led IEPs from [imdetermined.org](#). Students who direct their own IEP process talked more and increased their leadership activities, positive perceptions about the meeting, and memory of their goals¹³.



The Self-Advocacy Strategy

*The Self-Advocacy Strategy*¹⁵ (available on Amazon) is an evidence-based practice (EBP) that was developed for students with disabilities to work on self-advocacy skills. Students who used the Self-Advocacy Strategy had 86% of goals they most valued in their IEPs compared with 13% of self-chosen goals in IEPs of students who did not use the *Self-Advocacy Strategy*¹⁶.

Other Resources

Here are organizations that have also created useful self-determination resources:

- [The National Technical Assistance Center on Transition](#)
- The Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment at the University of Oklahoma provides the *ME! Lessons for Teaching Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy Curriculum* [here](#).

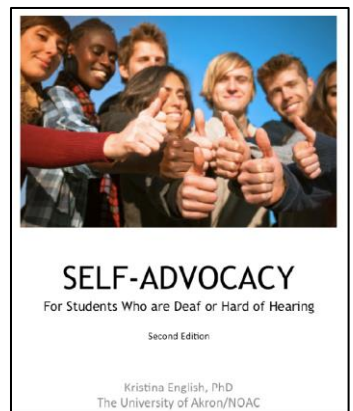
Self-Determination Interventions for Students who are DHH

Map It Transition Curriculum- Specific to DHH Students!



educators.

The [Map It Curriculum](#) is available through the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) website (dcmp.org). There is a *Map It: What Comes Next?* Module with video vignettes in American Sign Language (ASL) and spoken English with transcripts. You can also access the *Map It Teacher Curriculum* that provides lesson plans and materials for



Self-Advocacy For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Developed by Dr. Kristina English, the [Self-Advocacy Strategy for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)¹⁷ is a resource that teachers can use to differentiate between passive, active, and aggressive self-advocacy, helping students understand and practice appropriate self-advocacy skills. The chapters in their entirety can be found on the Supporting Success website, [Self-Advocacy page](#).

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<http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com> Author: Kaitlyn Millen, M.Ed., DHHT. Contact: Kaitlyn.millen@gmail.com

Guide to Access Planning

The [Guide to Access Planning \(GAP\)](#) was developed by Drs. Carrie Spangler and Cheryl DeConde Johnson and is available through the Phonak website. You can access the Personalized Transition Notebook including the [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) and the [Audiology I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) for teachers to complete.

Deafverse

Deafverse is an online game accessible in ASL available here through the [National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes](#). The Deafverse Teacher Strategy Guide is described it as an interactive game inspired by the choose-your-own-adventure genre of storytelling. This game supports the development of self-advocacy skills as players respond to challenges and conflicts that are part of the deaf experience. These challenges and conflicts are often encountered throughout life, not just in the school environment, thus the need for strong self-advocacy skills. The game is free and can be played on computers or mobile devices used at home, in the school environment, in transition programs, or even vocational rehabilitation settings. The [Deafverse Teacher Strategy Guide](#) includes learning objectives on page 6.



Self-Determination as a Daily Practice

Skills such as writing, playing an instrument, or participating in a sport, are strengthened through practice. The more time spent practicing, the more opportunities there are to develop skills. Self-determination skills are also fostered through practice.

In addition to utilizing evidence-based interventions, adults can informally create opportunities for students to work on self-determination throughout the day, every day. This list of ideas can help infuse practice into typical daily activities in school and at home. Some parents shared they would never make it out the door in the morning if they had their child make choices or problem-solve for everything. We need to find the balance between providing some opportunities and maintaining an appropriate schedule.

Ages 3-5/Preschool

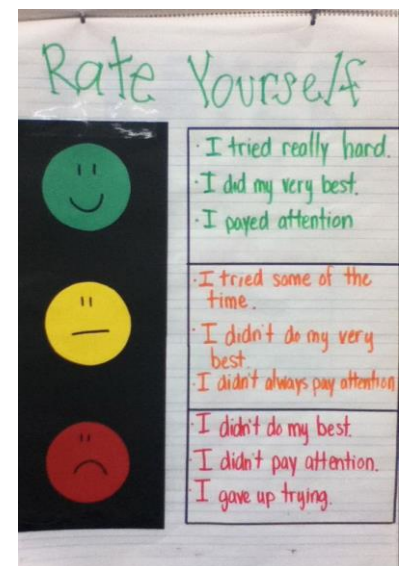
There are four areas of focus that are recommended in the early childhood ages for practicing self-determination¹⁸. Areas of focus:

- Choice making (e.g., clothing, choosing an activity or item)
- Problem solving (e.g., searching for a lost hearing aid, “You spilled your milk, what could you do to clean it up?”)
- Goal setting (e.g., potty training, self-feeding)
- Self-monitoring (e.g., rate yourself...)
- Self-awareness (e.g., discussing differences when using hearing equipment vs. not wearing it, discussing ASL signs they learned/which signs they know)

Elementary and Middle School

Some ideas for daily or weekly practice of self-determination during the elementary school ages include:

- Choice making (e.g., choosing to wear FM/DMs by having the student collect data on their communication or academic performance when using the FM/DM compared with not wearing it, choosing extra-curricular activities such as sports)



- Problem solving (e.g., responding to negative peer behavior, time management, troubleshooting hearing equipment, resolving communication challenges)
- Goal setting using the student/child’s goals (e.g., academic subjects, practicing positive self-talk, self-advocacy, extra-curricular activities)
- Self-monitoring (e.g., students can use teacher-created assessment forms like in the figure to track their own progress, students graph their own progress then reflect on changes to increase self-awareness, monitoring when to change hearing equipment batteries)
- Self-advocacy (e.g., asking for repetition or clarification, asking for captioned media)
- External versus internal locus of control (e.g., “My dog ate my hearing aid!” vs. “I should have put my hearing aid in a safer place.”)
- Self-awareness (e.g., students reflect on their strengths and needs, write about interests and likes, discuss when they need help, learn about their hearing loss, communication implications, and hearing equipment)

Name: _____ Date: _____

SDLMI Reflection Form

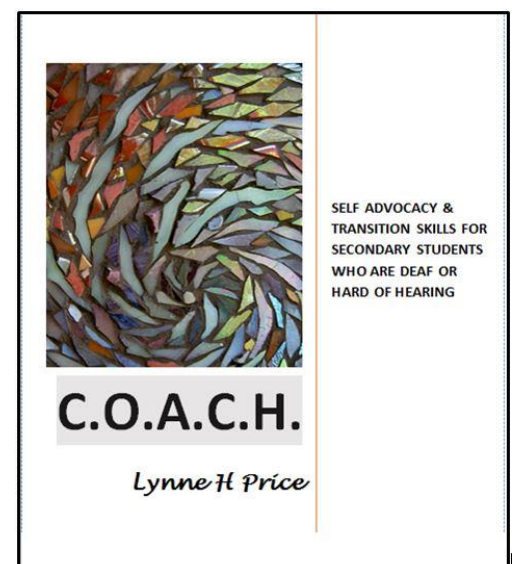
● G = I can do it!
● Y = I am working on it.
● R = I need more help.

1. I talk about what I am good at.	<input type="radio"/>
2. I talk about what I need to work on.	<input type="radio"/>
3. I chart my progress.	<input type="radio"/>
4. I talk about my interests and likes.	<input type="radio"/>
5. I ask for help when I need it.	<input type="radio"/>

High School

Self-determination should be practiced during all ages, but in middle and high school, you can start to discuss the future and transition out of high school with students. Here are some examples:

- Choice making (e.g., choosing classes, choosing accommodations, choosing summer jobs or activities)
- Decision making (e.g., using transition resources to think about the future, making decisions about life after high school)
- Problem solving (e.g., addressing social challenges at school or home, working with teachers who have misperceptions about accommodations)
- Goal setting (e.g., planning for the future and using interventions like the SDLMI to actively take steps toward goals, self-advocacy or other skill goals, grades, extra-curriculars, planning activities with friends)
- Self-monitoring (e.g., tracking progress in school and at home toward their own goals)
- Self-advocacy (e.g., asking for repetition with friends or social settings, contacting the disability resource center at a future college to inquire about and plan accommodations)
- Internal locus of control (e.g., connecting academic performance with daily habits/growth mindset rather than thinking they are not intelligent or something else is preventing success, accepting responsibility for actions outside of school)
- Self-awareness (e.g., understanding hearing loss, equipment/troubleshooting, and communication needs, understanding their strengths, needs, and interests)



[COACH Self-Advocacy & Transition Skills for Secondary Students with Hearing Loss who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#) is a guide to discussing and practicing critical problem-solving skills for middle and high school students.

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What if my student/child does not respond when I provide opportunities?

With any self-determination skill, consider using an “I do, we do, you do” format. First, model the skill, then practice the skill together, and finally, the child or student tries the skill independently. For example, if you have a pre-school student who will not make a choice between two or three activities when you provide the chance to work on choice-making skills, start by modeling. It could look like this:

Modeling Choice-Making (“I do”):

- Teacher: “Which center activity would you like to try first?”
- (Student shrugs shoulders or doesn’t respond after providing wait time.)
- Teacher: “Hmm, we have the sand and water center, or the music center over here, or you could choose the block center.”
- (Student still does not indicate a choice when provided with time to think.)
- Teacher: Model choice-making by saying, “Let’s see, if I feel like getting wet and messy, I might choose the sand and water center. Or, if I want to explore sounds, I might try the music center. Or, if I love to build things, I would try the block center.”
- (Student is still not making a choice.)
- Teacher: “Well, I like to see what happens when I stack blocks. There are so many cool things we can do with them. Let’s try that together to start!”



Scaffolding Choice-Making (“We do”)

- Teacher: “Good morning! Which center would you like to try?”
- (Student does not make a choice.)
- Teacher: “Do you feel like getting wet and messy, playing with sound and instruments, or building things?”
- Student: “Play in the water.”
- Teacher: “Okay, great! It sounds like you want to start with the water and sand center. Let’s check it out.”
- (Student and teacher go to center together.)

Practicing Choice-Making (“You do”)

- Teacher: “Which center would you like to try?”
- (Student walks over to a center and begins exploring).
- If the student/child can easily make a choice in one context, provide opportunities for choice-making in different contexts (e.g., choosing a book, choosing a color, choosing whether to sit on a pillow or the floor).

Friendships and Social Opportunities

Self-determination and friendships are positively correlated in teens who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH)¹⁹. Although we don’t know if one increases the other, we know that students with more friendships and higher quality friendships have higher self-determination scores. Consider how you can encourage and get students and children involved with extra-curricular activities, social opportunities, and summer camps where they can develop friendships. Specifically, seek opportunities where students can meet other kids who are deaf or hard of hearing.



In general education settings, students who are DHH are often the only students with hearing loss in their class or school. Thus, they face challenges related to their hearing loss every day. **Connecting with peers who understand these experiences is crucial for reducing feelings of isolation and increasing social support.**

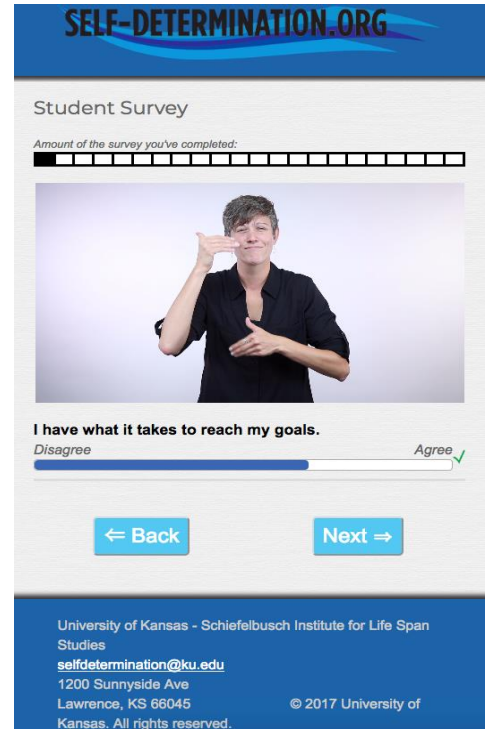
Self-Determination Assessment and IEP Goals

Formal Assessment

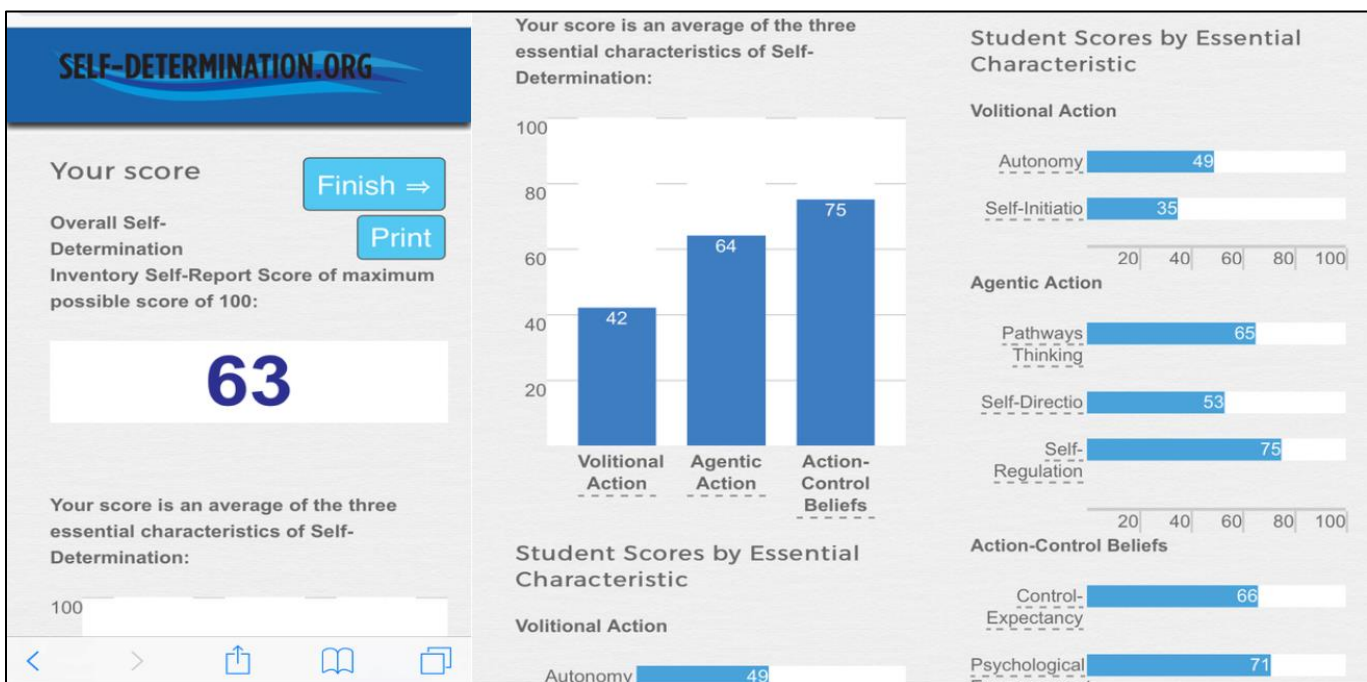
The Self-Determination Inventory (SDI)

The [Self-Determination Inventory](#) is an online assessment that was developed by a team at the University of Kansas (KU). If you visit the website, you may use the assessment with individual students and view their scores at the end, along with a report explaining the scores. If you'd like to use it for many students and for progress to be tracked online, you can contact KU to set up an account to manage your student data. The SDI allows for progress monitoring. You can use it as an assessment at the beginning of the school year to write IEP goals, multiple times during the year to track progress, then determine if annual IEP goals were met. There is a student-report version (SDI:SR) where students rate their own skills as well as a parent/teacher report (SDI:PTR) where parents and teachers can rate student skills and compare to their self-ratings. The SDI is available in American Sign Language, written English, and Spanish and includes accessibility features and in-text definitions for vocabulary terms.

The following screen shot shows what the score report looks like:



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Other Self-Determination Assessments

The Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment at the University of Oklahoma provides a [useful list of other self-determination assessments here](#).

Self-Advocacy Assessments

These assessments were developed specifically for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Many items are geared toward students who use hearing technology, but you can adapt the assessments to the needs of the students with whom you work. Examples include: [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) and the [Audiology I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) for teachers to complete.

Informal Assessments

Links to other self-determination assessments [can be found here](#).

If you can't find a resource that fits the needs of the students with whom you work, you can make adaptations or create your own. [Example](#)

Sample IEP Goals

You can find [excellent examples](#) of self-determination IEP goals and objectives for students with disabilities in online. Here are some sample self-determination goals that are geared more toward students who are DHH.

IEP Annual Goal Example 1 (self-awareness and self-advocacy):

I will be able to explain my hearing loss, communication needs, and hearing equipment by the May 2021 IEP meeting.

IEP Objectives

- 1.1 I will demonstrate my understanding of hearing and my hearing loss by being able to describe all components in the "Understanding hearing and hearing loss" section of the [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#).
- 1.2 I will describe my communication needs including what I need from other people in writing, speaking/signing, and in 8/10 self-advocacy opportunities when meeting new people at the beginning of the spring semester.
- 1.3 I will be able to describe my hearing equipment including every component of the "Use of individual amplification devices" and "Use of assistive technologies" sections of the [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#).

IEP Annual Goal Example 2 (goal setting):

I will increase my self-determination skills 10% by the May 2021 IEP meeting as determined by the *Self-Determination Inventory*.

IEP Objectives

- 2.1 I will use the *Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction* (SDLMI) on a weekly basis to identify and work toward my own goals throughout the school year.
- 2.2 I will increase my *Self-Determination Inventory* Score by an average of 2.5% per quarter by the end of the school year as measured by assessments at the beginning of each quarter and end of the school year.
- 2.3 At the end of the school year, I will be able to identify ten goals I set for myself during the school year including a reflection on my goal attainment, what I learned using the SDLMI, my strengths and goals for the next school year.

Sample Data Collection and Progress Monitoring

IEP Goal Example 1:

- Initial Assessment to Determine Baseline
 - 1.1 and 1.3 Use the [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) to determine skills at the start of the school year.
 - 1.2 Ask the student to write and/or speak or sign their communication needs to determine baseline skills.
- Progress Monitoring Assessment (Determine the frequency)
 - 1.1 and 1.3 Re-visit the [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) once every quarter with the student to help them identify their progress.
 - 1.2 Create an observation checklist and observe the student during 10 meetings with new teachers, coaches, and/or peers and determine if the student can describe their communication needs to each person.
- Final Assessment to Determine if IEP Goal was Met
 - 1.1 and 1.3 Use the [I CAN Self-Advocacy Checklist](#) at the end of the school year with the student to help them identify if they met their goal.
 - 1.2 Using the same observation checklist, repeat the observation of the student during 10 meetings with new teachers, coaches, and/or peers and determine if the student can describe their communication needs to each person.

IEP Goal Example 2:

- Initial Assessment to Determine Baseline
 - 2.1 N/A
 - 2.2 Use the *Self-Determination Inventory* at the beginning of the school year to determine baseline self-determination skills.
 - 2.3 Use a written (or spoken or signed) student reflection to assess self-awareness of strengths and needs at the beginning of the school year.
- Progress Monitoring Assessment (Determine the frequency)
 - 2.1 Create a weekly checklist to determine if the student worked through the three phases of the SDLMI every week of the school year. If there are some weeks when phase three was not reached and carried to the following week, but progress was met, this is okay.
 - 2.2 Use the *Self-Determination Inventory* once each quarter to measure progress.
 - 2.3 Use a mid-year assessment, asking the student to reflect about five goals.
- Final Assessment to Determine if IEP Goal was Met
 - 2.1 Use the weekly checklist to determine if the SDLMI was used each week.
 - 2.2 Use the *Self-Determination Inventory* at the end of the school year to measure growth from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.
 - 2.3 Ask the student to write a self-reflection about ten goals from the school year including strengths, lessons learned, and goals for next year.

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