

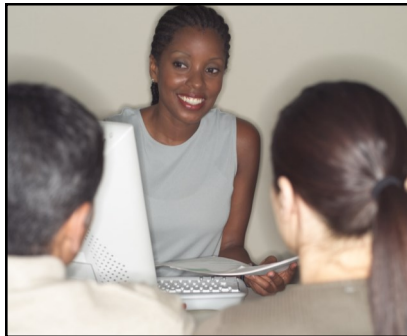
MOVING FORWARD

News and information about the education
of special needs students

Issue: Fall 2012

FYI ABOUT IEP'S (Individualized Education Program)

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a very important part of the special education process. It is a written contract that ensures that a disabled student receives a free and appropriate education. The IEP should improve teaching, learning, and student outcomes. Although an IEP cannot actually guarantee success, it outlines certain services and good faith efforts that will provide meaningful educational benefits. The IEP is always a work in progress. It is developed, revised and reviewed at least once a school year.



In developing an IEP, there are set procedures in the law that every school must follow. This ensures that the legal rights of the family have not been compromised. Everyone in the IEP conference should have an equal opportunity for input, especially the student, if appropriate. Students who are eighteen years or older have the right to make their own educational decisions.

Sitting in on an IEP meeting can be very overwhelming. There are legalities, procedures, vocabulary and a variety of abbreviations that are often inserted into the discussion without a great deal of explanation. Take time to review the information and don't hesitate to ask questions when you don't understand.

An IEP is a legally binding educational map that dictates what ongoing services, accommodations or technical assistance will be needed to increase the probability of future success. An IEP clarifies the following direction: "Here is where the student is, here is where he/she needs to be and here is how the student will get there."

The objective of this newsletter is to illustrate the process, the rules and roles that parents and educators play in the development of the IEP.

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IT'S ABOUT THE FREEDOM TO INTERACT, PARTICIPATE AND EXCEL IN SCHOOL

The law states that disabled students are to be educated in the least restrictive environment, alongside their nondisabled peers, as much as possible.

Special education students need to be as independent as possible to best prepare them for the challenges they will face outside of school. The bottom line is that life is not like special education. Each person will need to learn how to be self-sufficient.



The IEP at a Glance

An IEP is made up of several key parts:

- Present levels of academic and functional performance
- Annual (yearly) goals and objectives
- Educational concerns of the parent
- Specific amount of time in special education
- How performance will be measured and how often
- Any supplementary aides or related services
- Appropriate modifications and accommodations needed for the classroom and standardized testing
- Dates, places and who will be providing services
- Beginning at age fourteen, transition services will be needed to prepare the student for post graduation
- Provisions like transportation or a behavioral plan

Case Conference Committee

The Case Conference Committee (CCC) is a multi-disciplinary team who discuss, debate and decides what the best programming options are for a student.

The CCC meets at least yearly once a child has been declared eligible for special education services. Other reasons to meet are to review assessments, trouble-shoot problems, review outside agency information, address parent concerns, revise a behavioral plan or to discuss a change of placement.

The required participants in a CCC include:

- Administrator or designee
- Parent or guardian
- Teacher of Record (Special education teacher)
- At least one general education teacher
- An individual who can interpret test results
- When warranted...
 - Auxiliary staff such as a Nurse or a Guidance Counselor
 - Related service staff such as Therapist or Speech teacher
 - The student

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it.

~Mary Engelbreit

COMMON IEP MISTAKES

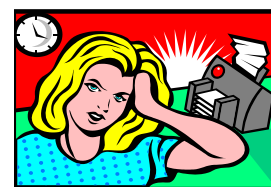


Failure to write **relevant, measurable goals**

What do we want to change?

How will we measure change?

How will we know if the goal has been achieved?



Failure to **collect data** to show progress

Failure to **convert the assessment data into goals** and suitable programming

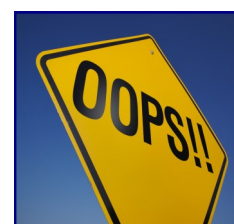
Failure to **focus on the skills** a student needs to access the general education curriculum

When warranted:

Failure to address **assistive technology**

Failure to address **behavioral issues**

Failure to address **English language proficiency**



DON'T MINIMIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENT INPUT

Parents play a major role in the IEP process so it is important that they receive written notice of a Case Conference in a timely manner. At the meeting, a parent will need to understand the results of the educational assessment and how that data will fuel the IEP for their child. More importantly, they need to have the opportunity to provide their perspective about the programming and placement options. Ultimately, the parent must consent to the educational plan in order for services to begin.

One feature of the initial IEP meeting that often gets minimized or neglected is the concept of “**harmful effects.**” By law, participants in a Case Conference need to discuss all of the benefits AND the potential negative consequences of a formal special education placement.



For example, an older student may find it “humiliating” to be placed in a program for “slow” children. They may vow to sabotage efforts of assistance and do not want to be singled out in front of their peers.

What are the chances of success without the commitment of the student? In this case, the adults at the conference may have to look for other ways to assist the child **outside** the realm of special education. This is why all programming options, from most to least restrictive, are discussed when considering the appropriate programming for a special needs student.

Given the complexity of the IEP process, and the fact that there are many educators whose opinion may differ, it is no wonder why parents are easily overwhelmed. Be empathic, compassionate and listen to their concerns.



Silly, Non-Measurable IEP Goals

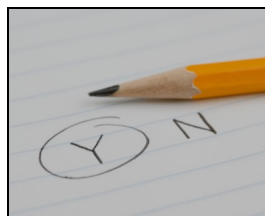
- Johnny will cross the street safely 80% of the time.
- Bob will complete 90% of his assignments when he is motivated.
- Jill will not hurt others in 8 out of 10 trials.
- With 1:1 assistance, Mary will not look solemn when chastised.

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The role of the educational assessment in the IEP process is essential. Assessments target the suspected disability and gauge the student’s present performance levels. This involves measuring the specific academic, emotional, or behavioral factors that may obstruct growth in the classroom.

The main purpose of the assessment is to determine whether or not a student has a disability under the Indiana Department of Education’s special education law known as Article 7. There is set criteria for each disability that the assessment data has to support in order for a child to be eligible for services.

The second purpose of testing is to drive the IEP once eligibility has been established. The IEP goals should be



a direct reflection of the results of the assessment. The current data serves as a starting point from which all future progress is to be measured.

Assessments don’t **just generate a label, they should generate a plan to remedy specific skill deficits.** Too many times special education staff tell parents and teachers that a child has a specific learning disability, (SLD) but there are at least a dozen processing issues that fall under that category. Just saying a child is “SLD” tells us nothing about what the child actually needs. Does the skill deficit affect visual skills, memory, organization, listening comprehension or other factors?

The real question that the assessment needs to address is: **“What specific impact does the processing problem have on the student’s classroom performance?”**

Looking at the “The Big Picture”

THE STUDENT ASSESSMENT DRIVES THE IEP GOALS



WHICH DRIVES THE PROGRAMMING DISCUSSION



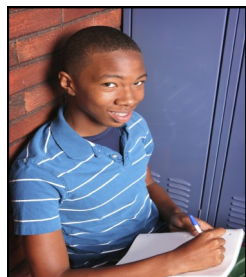
WHICH DRIVES THE ACTUAL PLACEMENT



WHICH DRIVES THE PROGRESS MONITORING PROCESS



WHICH DRIVES THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF GOALS AND SERVICES



CASE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE “No-No’s”

PREDETERMINATION

When a student is deemed eligible for services, it is very important to weigh all of the scenarios before making a final placement decision. Educators should never give the appearance that placement decisions have been made without parent input.

“BLANKET” DECISIONS

A Case Conference Committees should make student program and placement decisions on a case-by-case basis. A team should not look at the label and blindly match it up with a program. Words like:

EVERYONE * ALWAYS * TRADITIONALLY * ALL STUDENTS

are typical culprits of blanket decisions. They suggest a status quo type of pattern that neglects to reflect the unique, individual needs of the student.

NEGLECTING SECONDARY TRANSITION PLANS

In Indiana, a Case Conference Committee must develop a transition IEP when the student enters grade nine or becomes fourteen years of age, whichever occurs first. The transition IEP identifies the student's postsecondary goals as related to training, education, employment and, when warranted, independent living skills. Transition services help the student meet those goals, often with the help of other agencies and community resources. Remember that a special education student can attend school until he/she is twenty-two years old, if appropriate.

“The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a person's determination.”

Tommy Lasorda

Moving Forward

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