

Who are we?

We are a group of Midwestern parents, teachers, and community members brought together by the desire to support efforts that more fully include children with disabilities in our local schools. This quarterly newsletter is dedicated to enhancing the education of all our children by providing a place to celebrate successes and offering a forum to discuss the challenges associated with moving towards full inclusion.

IN

Inclusion News

Fall 2007

Call to Action

The mission of *IN* is to provide a forum for sharing ideas and resources related to inclusive education in Illinois and Iowa. To help us fulfill our mission, we welcome the following from you:

- ✓ Resources you've found helpful for parents and teachers.
- ✓ Success stories of inclusive experiences.
- ✓ Things you wish someone had told you sooner!
- ✓ Questions you'd like answered.

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We also are accepting donations to help fund future issues of *IN*. Checks can be made out to *IN* and sent to the above address. Thank you!

Stacey Skoning, Ph.D.
Editor

Individual Education Plans : Creating a Plan for Student's Needs

Ashley Faulstich & Leah Panther

Created in 1975 as Public Law 94-142, the Education for all Handicapped Children Act (now referred to as IDEA - the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), requires that children with disabilities needing special education services be provided with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). An IEP is a customized plan for students aged 3-21 and is designed to meet the unique needs of the child (Gollnick & Chinn, 2006).

Once a student's eligibility is determined, a meeting is attended by parents or guardians of the student, teachers, staff and other professionals (speech therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, bi-lingual interpreters, or others as needed), and the student when possible. This group formulates a plan for the student and writes the IEP.

The IEP contains several sections. The first section is the present level of educational performance (PLOP). The PLOP contains examples and documentation of the student's current performance and how the student is functioning in the classroom and other settings. The present level of performance is followed by annual goals that the student is expected to reach. These goals should grow out of the needs identified in the PLOP. Short term objectives also must be included for students who will take an alternate assessment (Peterson & Hittie, 2003).

The next section lists what special education and related services the student will need to reach their annual goals. Also included are opportunities for the student to participate with non-disabled peers. Following this section, participation in statewide and district assessments is addressed. Also in this section are any accommodations the student may need to succeed on these types of assessments, or an alternative assessment plan. A statement of how the child's progress will be measured and how the guardians will be informed must be present too (Peterson & Hittie, 2003).

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Writing Inclusive IEPs

Stacey Skoning

The cover article explains the legally required components of an IEP. The focus of this article is those items that must be incorporated to make IEPs more consistent with the inclusive education of students with disabilities. Careful thought and attention must go into every IEP that is written to ensure that the needs of individual students are met. This is especially true when the IEP is implemented in the general education setting.

Present Level of Performance

This section of the IEP is written with an eye toward both the past and the future. It addresses the skills students now possess and the strategies that have helped them gain those skills. PLOPs also should describe the students' and families' plans for the future. The remainder of the IEP then can address how to get students from where they are now to where they want to be. Many topics can be included and this section should not be limited to one paragraph or a list of test scores. Some of the things that are important to include follow:

- Methods of interaction with other children
- Most successful communication strategies
- Examples of effective partial participation strategies if appropriate
- Academic skills
- Interests and hobbies (especially if these may be able to be incorporated in the curriculum)
- Modifications and adaptations that have (or have not) been successful in the past both at home and at school

Including all of these provide a starting place for writing goals and developing appropriate accommodations for the general classroom in later sections of the IEP.

Goals/Testing

The goals in a child's IEP should grow out of the statements of need in the PLOP and build on students' strengths. These goals also should be

tied to state academic standards. This helps to ensure access to the general education curriculum that is provided by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Generally, state standards are available on the website of each state's department of education. Also, there should be two sets of standards. One set is for students who will take the regular statewide standardized assessments. The other set of standards is for students who will take the states' alternative assessments (this should be approximately 1% of all students).

Familiarizing yourself with the academic goals that should be accomplished will help to focus the discussion and ensure that students' goals are consistent with expected curricular outcomes. This does not prevent the addition of other goals that may be needed for a child to function more independently in the larger community; it just ensures that at least some of the goals in the IEP are related to the general curriculum and expectations. How progress on goals will be measured also needs to be determined by the IEP team at this point. From here it is easy to see that the kind of assessment in which students will participate must be decided. The goals that they have in their IEPs will help dictate their ability to perform on standardized state-wide testing or whether the student will need to participate in an alternate assessment process. Participation in alternate assessment does not mean that students do not participate in general education curriculum or classrooms.

Accommodations, Supports, and Services

Once goals are established that coincide with expectations in the general education classroom, it is easier to address the kinds of modifications and accommodations needed to successfully attain those goals. The kinds of services that will be needed to attain these goals and the necessity for related services (S/L,

OT, PT) also can be determined at this point. This also is a good time to ask how much of this could be expected of a general education teacher. Consider modifications as supports too. It may be possible to arrange some lessons in ways that require less support from adults, or to implement assistive technology, or peer-supports in place of adults. This helps increase the independence of students with more significant disabilities.

The accommodations that are used throughout the learning process also should be available during testing. Whether the student is participating in state-wide testing, or the alternative assessment process, be sure that accommodations for testing are clearly defined in the IEP.

Placement

Placement must be saved until the very end of the IEP process. Placement cannot be determined any sooner because all of the above information is needed in order to make the decision. If the location of service delivery is determined by the label given to students, there is a clear violation of the Least Restrictive Environment clause of IDEA since it is unlikely that the individual and unique needs of children are being considered. If, given all of the above information, there are still some goals (usually these are community or vocational related) that cannot be met in the general education environment, then you can justify pull-out for these reasons more easily, but even they often can be provided in a manner that is more inclusive and less segregated. Students can bring friends with them. Also, the times when students with disabilities are not in the regular classroom don't have to be times when they are only with other students that have disabilities. These learning opportunities can occur in the community in ways that encourage interaction with a wide range of other individuals.

Writing... continued on p.3

IN RESOURCES

The First Midwest Regional Conference on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Inclusion

This conference is being sponsored by the Autism Society of the Quad Cities and will be held on the campus of Augustana College, Rock Island, IL – April 19-20, 2008. We look forward to a full slate of nationally recognized speakers including Temple Grandin, Tom Wassink, Paula Kluth, Dennis Debbaudt, Kate McGinnity, Nan Negri, and Andy Paulson.

Information regarding the conference will be posted on www.autismqc.org within the next month.

Better IEPs: How to Develop Legally Correct and Educationally Useful Programs

by Barbara D. Bateman & Mary Anne Linden

The two books listed above do not specifically relate to inclusive IEPs, but are helpful in understanding the process of creating the document and the procedures that need to be followed. Both are very easy to read and understand and would help parents and teachers better understand their rights and responsibilities.

State Standards:

- Wisconsin Model Academic Standards <http://dpi.wi.gov/standards>
- Wisconsin Extended Grade-Band Standards <http://dpi.wi.gov/sped/assmt-extstd.html>
- Illinois Learner Standards <http://www.isbe.net/ils/default.htm>
- Illinois Alternative Assessment Frameworks and Priorities <http://www.isbe.net/assessment/iaa.htm>
- Iowa State Standards and Benchmarks <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/780/791>
- Iowa Alternate Assessment Rating Scales <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/461/926/1/5>

Guide to Writing Quality Individualized Education Programs

by Gordon S. Gibb & Tina Taylor Dyches

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Training

If, in the end, the real issue becomes one of the current faculty/staff not knowing how to implement a fully inclusive IEP once it has been written, remember that IDEA allows for the provision of support and training for any or all of the professionals involved. Get the support that is needed for effective IEP implementation by writing it into the IEP.



IEPs continued from p. 1

Beginning at the age of 16, each student's IEPs must include a transition section which recognizes the different services that will be required for the student to move successfully out of the school system into society. Additionally, behavior intervention plans may need to be a part of the IEP if the child demonstrates behaviors that interfere with his/her learning or the learning of others (Peterson & Hittie, 2003).

The IEP of each student must be reviewed annually (although the latest revisions of IDEA now allow states participating in a pilot project to review IEPs every three years) with testing done to re-evaluate the student done every three years (Bateman & Linden, 2006). A teacher can use the IEP as a window into the larger picture of their student's educational careers. Since the document contains vital

information about the learning process and abilities of each student, it is important to check each individual's IEP at the beginning of each school year, add any helping documents or comments when necessary, and fully participate in the IEP meeting each year.

References:

Bateman, B. D. & Linden, M. A. (2006). *Better IEPs: How to develop legally correct and educationally useful programs* (4th ed.). Verona, WI: Attainment Company.

Gollnick, D. M. & Chinn, P. C. (2006). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson – Merrill Prentice Hall.

Peterson, J. M. & Hittie, M. M. (2003). *Inclusive teaching: Creating effective schools for all learners*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Learning by Example

Laura Oelke shared the following story about her daughter, Jessica, and the positive outcomes associated with her inclusive IEP.

Jessica has Cerebral Palsy, is nonverbal, and communicates through the use of an augmentative communication device (Dynavox DV4). Because of her limited motor abilities she is dependent upon others for daily care needs. She maneuvers a power wheelchair at school, home and throughout the neighborhood. She also enjoys reading chapter books, writing fairy tale stories, controlling the TV with her Dynavox and accessing software programs through the use of a headrest-mounted switch.

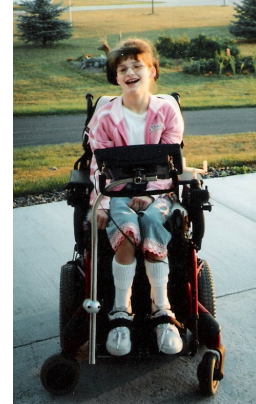
Jessica is a 7th grader, attending Sabish Middle School in Fond du Lac, WI. She is included in general education classrooms for Language Arts, Spanish, Math, Science and Social Studies. The remainder of Jessica's day allows her time out of her wheel chair and to work with

various therapists.

In the general classroom Jessica has an aide to assist with class notes, classroom prep items, personal needs, busing and transfers to and from her wheel chair. Some of the specific assistive devices used throughout her day include a slant board for textbook/notebook placement for better viewing, adjustable tables, adapted computer access through the use of an onscreen keyboard, modified assignments, and her augmentative communication device using single head switch to activate her choices.

Jessica has proven through the use of assistive devices that she can learn along side her peers. She enjoys being around people and sharing funny stories. In 5th grade she participated in the school spelling bee which was one of her proudest accomplishments.

Because of her inclusive



Jessica Oelke
Fond du Lac, WI

placement, Jessica has developed many essential skills to express her thoughts, dreams and desires. With dedicated educators, open lines of communication between home and school, assistive technology, adaptive materials, classroom modifications, assistance from peers and teachers and a strong desire to learn, Jessica has proven that she is capable of achieving the same things that everyone else wants. Inclusive education has given Jessica the same opportunities and challenges that her peers experience every day.

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IN would like to thank the following:

Steering Committee Members – Ashley Faulstich, Mary Johnson, Betty Long, Teri Miller, Roxanne Nowinski, Leah Panther, Rick Ramirez, and Stacey Skoning

The University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, College of Education and Human Services for the printing and mailing of this issue of *IN*.

Safe Family Home Inspection Services, LLC, for sponsoring our website. They can be found at <http://www.safe-family-home-inspection.com>

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