



Individual Education Plans A Best Practice Process Madeline Pohlmann FNESC Special Education Support

The Intent of the IEP

The Individual Education Plan that accompanies this document is meant to support a positive process and a team approach. The IEP should be an enabling process outlining student strengths and student needs. The intent of a Best Practice IEP is to bring together a team of people who understand the student's needs, to develop a plan, and provide an appropriate and effective education for the student. The IEP is used as a working document, rather than a bureaucratic process that eliminates key players. This type of IEP does not include separate reports presented to key players, or forms filled out in isolation. Parents, or family members are vital participants, as well as the classroom teacher, teacher assistant, specialist teachers, outside service providers, the principal if possible, and the student in most cases.

Designing Realistic and Achievable Goals

Student goals are based on reliable information of the student's past performance, their baseline abilities, and an understanding of their strengths. When realistic and achievable goals are put in place the student is set up for success. The Russian psychologist, Vygotsky, called this "the zone of proximal development". Goals that are put in place for the student are not too difficult or too easy but are just at the right place for the student to learn and grow in his/her development.

When goals are well beyond what the student is capable of doing, the student becomes unable to realistically achieve the goal, which often results in frustration, failure, loss of confidence, self esteem, and frequently an escalation of inappropriate behaviour. How to find baseline ability and how to determine if the student has the required pre-requisite skills necessary to achieve the goals that the student support team put in place is critical.

The IEP Document

Cover Page

The front page of the IEP document is designed to have the school logo in the top left hand corner, along with key school and student information.

Student Profile

When all team members are present, the valuable information shared support a rich student profile.

- Assessment:** Documentation of both formal and informal assessment in this box is important. Informal assessment is classroom based and teacher based assessment. Dates of the assessment, the name of the assessment and a brief review of the strengths/needs are helpful, as well as pertinent recommendations. A review of the file is needed to do this initially. An outline of current skills is helpful, as well as being clear about which areas of the curriculum are “adapted” or “modified”. There is also a place to document which areas the student is participating in the “regular” program. (See demo IEP)

- Student strengths :** strengths in all areas of the student’s life are important here, not just academic strengths.

- Descriptors :** one word or short phrases that describe the student.

- Learns Best When:** for example-in a quiet environment, in a small group setting, etc.

- Medical History:** what the team needs to know to support the student in school

- School History:** grades skipped, retained, or home schooled etc.

Areas of Need

The team looks at the areas of need for the student. This is a **brief** look at areas of need to help with the four-column format on the goal-setting sheet. Only a few key words are needed in these boxes.

Examples :

Academic- Reading Readiness Skills- Letter sounds/letter names

Behaviour-anger triggers, impulsive

Social Emotional- self esteem, peer relationships

Physical- vision or hearing, fine motor, gross motor etc.

Language/Communication- auditory processing, stuttering, speaking in sentences

Life Skills – using zipper to zip jacket, using the phone, independence in toileting. For older students: career preparation, job skills, money and time concepts.



Identifying Dreams /Career Goals (Keep the End in Mind)

This section is used for helping students think about their dreams, and their long-term goals. The student is the key participant in this process. Examples: Graduate from grade 12, focus on woodwork projects, be an artist/carver.



Goals for the Year Brainstorm Activity

What do we want _____ to accomplish this year?

The whole team brainstorms what goals are a priority for the year. In this section, the facilitator writes down all ideas. All ideas are valued. This section allows team participants to have the opportunity to look at “the big idea” without having to break down the larger goals into realistic and achievable parts. Example: To learn to be a more independent worker, to be able to focus on task for longer periods of time, or to master reading readiness skills.

The Four Column Goal Format

At this point the team looks at the previous brainstorm activity and begins to prioritize what is most important. Which areas does the team want to begin to design realistic and achievable goals? It is important to try to come to a consensus. The facilitator helps the team come to a decision about which areas need to be addressed. (It is important to remember that the IEP does not encompass the entire student program, but priority goals that are broken down into achievable parts)

The focus is on the “team decision”. In this way the teacher is not the only person deciding on the student goals. The team begins to take ownership of the plan.

Area of Need

In this section, the team decides on a goal and then chooses the area of need in which the goal belongs: academic, behaviour, social emotional, physical, language/communication, or life skills.

Student Goal

A clear, realistic and achievable goal is identified and written down.
Example- John will:.....

Team Responsibility/Strategies

In this column responsibilities of each team member are outlined, as well as the strategies to support the student.

(It is helpful to hand out the 4 column format to team members with their responsibilities highlighted when the plan is completed and printed out.)

Measurement of Progress

Documentation of how the goal will be measured is written down.
Example: Graph of progress, examples of student work, unit test.

Student Support Team

This section provides a place to document the student support team: the roles of the participants, the name of the participants, and their contact information.

Signatures

Although signatures are not officially required some schools like to have signatures on the IEP's. When the parents and students are part of the process of designing the IEP the signatures become less important.

Review Date

The review date is important to determine before leaving the meeting. Eight to twelve weeks is a reasonable time period for most students. It is important not to leave it too long to review the goals. Students need an opportunity to be successful and to celebrate their success.

IEP Review

The IEP review is the time to celebrate the accomplishments of the student and document those accomplishments in the "Accomplishment Box". When the goal is accomplished the team determines a new goal.



Transition

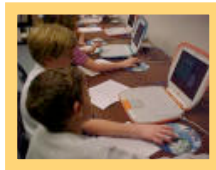
If the student is leaving the school or moving into the next grade in the near future, plans to involve new team members and dates are documented in this box.

Baseline Measures

This form has been added to encourage teachers to document baseline abilities and show progress at each review time.

Goal Accomplishment Sheet

This form helps to roll up the number of goals accomplished, the goal areas, and the tools used for measuring student progress.



Adaptations and Modifications

A checklist is provided for the team to outline all adaptations /accommodations that are provided for the student. This is another place to document if the program is “adapted” or ”modified”. Adapted programs meet grade level outcomes. Modified programs do not meet grade level outcomes. This sheet provides opportunities to add or delete items that fit your students.

How to Facilitate the IEP

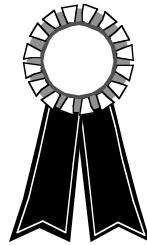
- Determine a facilitator
- Inform team members of the and time at least one week in advance
- Prepare the wall charts before the meeting. The wall charts outline each category on the IEP. The blank chart with the category headings is taped or attached to a wall or a board, where the facilitator can print with a felt pen directly onto the chart. This creates a visual support for the team participants. The facilitator prints the team members’ contributions. A blank chart supports the idea that the IEP is being developed with the team, and is not a document that has been previously written and then shared.
- Set up the room in a semi-circle facing the charts
- Introduce the team members
- Explain the process (go over the chart headings briefly)
- Encourage openness in information sharing, comments and questions
- Summarize the team decisions
- Establish the IEP review date
- Thank everyone in the end for participating
- This process takes approximately one hour

*The IEP should be written/typed up as soon as possible and shared with team members.



Research

Research is saying that the speed of our society is such that we are very much in need of formal times to question, discuss, and reflect on key learning issues. The collaborative IEP process allows us the time to bring together key players and to reflect and discuss key learning issues.



If you would like more information on this IEP process, the IEP format and how to facilitate a collaborative IEP please contact madelin@fnesc.ca

1-877-422-3672

Or call our Toll Free Resource Line

Lisa Ellis

lisae@fnesc.ca

