Including Families and Students as Partners in the IEP process

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Agenda

- IDEA: know the law
- What is ‘authentic inclusion’?
Agenda

- Inclusive education Indicators
- The nuts and bolts of family/student engagement: communication, IEP process

Agenda

- Student-led IEP example
- Person-centered planning example
- IEP Process – some ground rules
Questions & Discussion welcome at any time!

Know the law:
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that a school receiving ED funds “must place a person with a disability in the regular education environment, unless it is demonstrated by the recipient that the student’s needs cannot be met satisfactorily with the use of supplementary aids and services.”
“We tried inclusion and it didn’t work.”

The IEP = It’s about a collaborative, positive vision for authentic inclusion and transition
What is authentic inclusion?

“We believe ‘inclusion’ many families have experienced has not been genuinely inclusive and they are opting for separate programs that they believe will be more welcoming.”

– Beth Swedeen, Wisconsin DOE and parent

It’s about relationships

Swedeen: “Authentic inclusion requires as much focus on communication, interaction and relationship building as it does on curriculum modifications and accommodations.”
Peer Collaboration and interaction

“Most importantly, students with and without disabilities need opportunities to participate together, interact, and contribute across school environments.”

-Beth Swedeen

IOD’s definition of inclusive education

- Students with disabilities are educated full-time in age-appropriate general education classrooms with support provided to enable students, teachers and the entire school community to succeed.
Inclusive Education Indicators: School Environment

• The school is physically accessible.
• The school can accommodate student’s sensory needs.
• Students with disabilities are proportionally represented in classes, courses, clubs, and extracurricular activities.
• Related services are delivered in typical, inclusive environments.

Inclusive Education Indicators: School Environment

• The school has implemented a multi-tiered system of support.
• Teachers have the skills to effectively practice differentiated instruction.
• Students have multiple means of learning and expressing knowledge (Universal Design for Learning).
• Collaborative teaching (between regular and special educators, paraprofessionals and related service providers) is the norm, not the exception.
Inclusive Education Indicators: Student Experience

• The student is a member of an age-appropriate general education class.
• The student learns the same core content as students without disabilities, with supports (i.e., accommodations and adaptations) provided as necessary.
• There are no places or programs in the school just for students with disabilities.
• The student receives a regular diploma when he/she is discharged from special education.

Universal Design for Learning: Example from Samuel’s 10th grade US History Class
Some of the nuts and bolts of family partnership

It’s all about COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION, COMMUNICATION!!

Low tech:
• Notebook home
• Email/texts; sharing anecdotes, videos
• Welcoming parents into the classroom (at least in elementary school)
• Team planning time! Once a month check-in.

Some nuts and bolts of student engagement

Technology-- giving the student an active role in accommodations:
• Samuel has ‘self-advocacy’ buttons on his Dynavox so he can express where he thinks he can best get work done.
• Sharing photos with his classmates on his device.
• He has access to audio books to keep up with his classmates on reading assignments.
• Ipad mounted next to Dynavox pole for individualized instruction
• Teens only page.
IEP Process: student participation
Beth Swedeen:
• Participating in IEP meetings helps students understand that the process is really about them and the supports to help them learn—not about paperwork and meetings.
• It also gives students an opportunity to showcase interests and abilities and make choices that strengthen self-determination skills.
• Sets a positive tone for the meeting.

IEP Process: self-determination starts early
Swedeen:
• Even younger children (pre-school and on) can come to their IEP meeting for five minutes, say hi, introduce or acknowledge the people there, get an explanation about the meeting’s purpose (e.g., planning for next school year), and share some of their work (e.g., drawings, written work).
• Classmates/siblings also can come to the first part of the meeting to share ideas and information. Peers often have creative thoughts about useful supports and strategies.
IEP Process: building on strengths

Beth Swedeen:

- Do IEP meetings actively involve students and include time to reflect on student success while incorporating student interests and strengths?
- Students should share their interests, favorites (e.g., subjects, activities, friends at school), least favorites, and what would help them learn.
- Families can help staff by putting together a simple tip sheet of accommodations, modifications and other strategies that have worked in the past.

IEP Process: It’s about relationship building

PARENTS:

- Write a thank you note to an impressive teacher or paraprofessional. School staff, write a quick email to a parent after a particularly good meeting or volunteer initiative.
- Next time you go into an IEP meeting, remember to ask how the teacher or principal or OT or speech therapist is doing rather than focusing exclusively on how the child is doing.
- Be open-minded to the teams’ viewpoints and be diplomatic and knowledgeable when expressing opinions rather then confrontational and defensive. But don’t hesitate to stand your ground when you have a strong opinion or preference.
Student-led IEP and check-in meetings

My 9th grade team check-in meeting

Concord HS

April 9, 2015
for coming today

Introducing...

If there is anyone new at this meeting, let’s do a round of introductions:

- My Parents
- My Teachers
- My Para-Professionals
- My Special Education coordinator
- My Related Service Providers
- Other Important People
Updates for:

- Classes
- Communication device
- Homework
- OT, PT and Speech
- Transition planning
- Extra-curricular
- PH and other

Geography and Culture Updates

What’s going well?
What could be improved?
English Updates
What’s going well?
What could be improved?

Biology Updates
What’s going well?
What could be improved?
Homework Updates
What’s going well?
What could be improved?

Communication Device Updates
OT/PT/Speech Updates

What’s going well?
What could be improved?

Transition planning updates
Extra-curricular Updates
What’s going well?
What could be improved?

Inclusion in the IEP extending into the community, transition
- As he grows older—because he goes to a neighborhood school, easier to be involved with scouts, playing recreational sports, and going to camps with his peers
- Developing “Social Capital”
- Person centered planning with peers
Start by appreciating accomplishments

Create the ‘ground rules’
Brainstorm short and longer term goals

Expanding on one big goal: socializing with friends
IEP Process: Suggested Ground Rules

- “People First” language is used (e.g., a child with Down syndrome, not a Down syndrome child).

- Language regarding the student’s perceived functioning or developmental level is not used as the primary descriptor; rather, descriptions of the student focus on abilities, strengths and needs are used.

- Annual goals on the student’s individualized education program (IEP) reflect content standards from the general education curriculum.

- Predictions are not made that the student will “never” acquire certain knowledge or skills.

- People speak directly to the student rather than through a paraprofessional or other person (parents may need to redirect or ‘interpret’)

- People use age-appropriate vocabulary and inflection when talking to the student.

- In order to respect privacy, staff discuss the student’s personal care, medical needs, and other sensitive issues out of earshot of other students, and only with those who need to know.
Questions & Discussion

Stay in touch:
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Facebook: Including Samuel group
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