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Student Involvement in IEPs:
A Look at Early Intervention

by

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Abstract
This study analyzes the impact of an increase in student participation in the IEP process on students’ success and self-determination in the classroom. An IEP, Individual Education Program, is, “a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised” (IDEA 2004). Students in high school are often expected to run their own IEP meetings, however, many have had little to no engagement in the IEP process up to this point. Earlier student inclusion in the IEP process, beginning in elementary school, can increase students’ self-advocacy skills, familiarity with the IEP process, increase student dominion of their own education and lead to greater success in the classroom. Full inclusion for elementary aged students is not recommended; however, there are ways to include young students into the IEP process while still maintaining confidentiality of certain aspects of the procedure and respecting the feelings and concerns of parents and the IEP team. Increased inclusion into the IEP process must be done on an individual basis and will not be the same for any two children, just as each student will have a unique IEP. Inclusion of the student in the IEP process is one of many considerations for the entire IEP team while crafting an educational plan for a student. The benefits and impacts of inclusion and a manual detailing strategies of inclusion will be set forth in this study as a guide for any team looking to increase student inclusion in the IEP process.

Keywords: elementary, IEP, inclusion, manual, middle school, self advocacy, self determination, strategies.
Chapter One

Introduction

Students with IEPs, especially in primary and middle grades, are rarely tapped as resources in creating and implementing their own IEPs. These students are rarely included in establishing goals, present levels, services and accommodations during IEP meetings or in the classroom. After a comprehensive review of the current literature, it becomes clear that there exists a strong correlation between implementing instructional strategies with students prior to involving them in the process and an increase in meaningful participation in the IEP meeting process by the students. In their 2010 study, Barnard-Brak and Letchenberger found that there is a, “significant, positive association between student IEP participation and academic achievement across time using a nationally representative sample of elementary school–aged children with disabilities” (p. 346). The results of this study are considered profound because they highlight that academic progress is related to IEP inclusion over time. This is significant because, in the current structure of the IEP process, students are not included in their IEP meetings or instructional plan creation until they are legally mandated to participate under IDEA 2004 at age 14 (Test & Neale, 2004, p. 135). In order for students to reap the full benefits of IEP participation, this inclusion needs to begin sooner.

In addition to a correlation with overall student success, one of the most critical areas of growth in students seen with implementation of an IEP inclusion curriculum is an increase in student self-determination and self-advocacy (Test et al., 2004, p. 392). Increasing self-advocacy and self-determination skills is a critical aspect of a student’s education. These skills are often particularly important for students in Special Education, who may struggle with social interaction and communication, due to their disability. “Self-determination is a process that
emerges across the lifespan as children and adolescents learn skills and develop attitudes that empower them to become causal agents in their own lives” (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998, as cited by Test & Neale, 2004, p. 136). Self-advocacy and self-determination are critical lifelong skills that need to be addressed in students as early as possible, rather than waiting until a child is 14 and, under IDEA 2004, legally responsible for attending, participating and even leading their IEP process and meeting. Unfortunately for many students, this process starts much too late.

**Statement of the Problem**

Students should be included in the creation and implementation processes of their IEPs at an early age to ensure they are competent and comfortable when they are, under IDEA 2004, legally mandated to contribute. Increased involvement of students in their own educational plans will increase student dominion over their educational plan and perseverance in achieving IEP goals, as well as increase self-advocacy, self-determination and overall student success. (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2010, p. 346 and Test et al., 2004, p. 392).

In a study by Mason, Field & Sawilowsky (2004), which will be discussed in further detail in the more comprehensive review of the outstanding academic literature contained in Chapter 2, the authors discussed data collected on the “instructional practices and attitudes of educators as they relate to self-determination and student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process” (p. 441). Using web based survey questions posed to teachers, administrators and related service professionals, they found that “Although respondents highly valued both student involvement in IEPs and self-determination skills, only 8% were satisfied with the approach they were using to teach self-determination. Only 34% were satisfied with the level of student involvement in IEP meetings” (p. 441). The study highlighted the commonly expressed theme in Special Education today that, although students are being more actively
included in their IEP at the high school level, their participation in the process and the meeting remains low (Mason, Field & Sawilowsky (2004), p. 442). This means that even when students are being invited to attend their IEP meetings, they have not received the proper training to feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough about the process to participate in an meaningful way (Mason, Field & Sawilowsky (2004), p. 442). This problem is exacerbated even more at the elementary and middle school levels where students are not required, under IDEA 2004, to be invited to attend, or even provide input into their IEP.

**Response to Problem**

Although there is sufficient evidence to prove the importance of increasing student including into the IEP process, it is still rarely seen implemented to its full potential. This study and manual was created to address the following questions:

1. What happens when Education Specialists increase early student involvement in the creation and implementation their IEP?
2. What are the impacts of including students in the IEP process?
3. What are best practices and strategies for involving students in the IEP process in positive ways?
4. What parts of the process should young students be a part of? What should they be omitted from?

Using past research about this subject, a Manual for Education Specialists is created as a project resulting from this study, which aims to increase student involvement in the IEP process in a positive and age appropriate manner. The manual provides a gradual approach to increasing student involvement in the IEP process by beginning to introduce and familiarize students with the concepts, purpose, vocabulary and processes that are fundamental to the IEP process at a
relatively young age. By beginning to familiarize students with terminology, processes and roles in the IEP process at a young age and gradually building upon knowledge and experience, students will be able to more competently and confidently produce meaningful input into their IEP.

Additionally, an overview of the implications of increased participation based on interviews and past research is included in Chapter 2, Review of the Literature. The manual draws from previously conducted research on the topic, as set forth in Chapter 2, and provides an idea of proper implementation strategies and processes to judge the impact of student involvement in the IEP process, including when, with whom, where and how this process is most beneficial. The Manual proposed is a guide of gradual inclusion, which slowly introduces concepts, responsibilities and aspects of the IEP process to students in Special Education to familiarize students with the process, ensure competence with the procedure and increase confidence in their participation.

**Significance of Project**

Studies show that increased student involvement in the IEP leads to an increase in self-advocacy, self-determination and student success (Barnard-Brak & Lechtenberger, 2010, p. 346 and Test et al., 2004, p. 392). However, the resources and studies that are currently available for Education Specialists are, almost exclusively, aimed at students at the secondary level. Additionally, many are complex in nature and do not take into account any cognitive disabilities that many students may have. This manual is written to provide accessible strategies, interventions and activities to actively and successfully include students in the IEP process at all ages and ability levels.
IDEA requires that students in high school be a part of and even lead their own IEPs, which is a main reason so much focus has been placed on students at this level and age group. Unfortunately, up until this point, many students are completely excluded or unaware of the IEP process and what it entails. By beginning to familiarize students with the IEP process earlier, they will be much more equipped to completely participate in many facets of the IEP process, when the time comes.

Summary

There is extensive research on the benefits, strategies and methods of increasing student participation in the IEP process. However, studies show that in most situations students are still unable to provide meaningful contributions to the IEP creation process or meeting. One of the leading causes of this inability is the foreign and oftentimes confusing nature of the IEP process. With terminology, jargon, an abundance of acronyms and the pressure of working with educational professionals as a teenager, the process can prove to be daunting to a student who has not received direct instruction on the IEP process and how to participate in it effectively. Many times, students are completely excluded from their IEP meetings and creation until, under IDEA 2004, they are legally allowed to attend and contribute. Unfortunately, for most students, when this time comes, they are not equipped or trained to fully grasp the intricacies of the process in order to participate to the best of their ability. By beginning to familiarize students with their IEP and gradually increase their knowledge of the process, when the time comes for them to lead their own IEP meeting, they will be confident and knowledgeable, which will lead to a more accurate and relevant IEP while also increasing the students’ self-advocacy, self-determination and overall academic and social success.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

Introduction
The current literature regarding the involvement of students with special needs in their IEP planning and meeting process is sizeable. Of this, much is centered on methods of including students of all ages into their IEPs. The potential impacts of inclusion, like firsthand interviews and testimonials as well as best practices such as student age and levels of involvement, and the relationship between self-determination or self-advocacy and inclusion in the IEP process are explored. Overall, the current literature suggests that including students into the IEP process can be a beneficial process which can promote growth and success in a student’s education while also providing teachers, parents and administrators an opportunity to support students with disabilities in a manner that addresses real world aspects of a student’s life.

Methods of Inclusion
A common thread throughout much of the present literature on this topic is the discussion of the strategies, practices and methods for increasing student involvement in IEPs. Many researchers proposed strategies and discussed the positive implications of increased student involvement with support from observations, feedback from parents, teachers and students, and scores on measures of self-determination (Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale & Wood, 2004) and self-advocacy. Sources which provide these curriculum frameworks include Student-Led IEPs: A Guide for Student Involvement by McGahee, Mason, Wallace & Jones. “How to Help Students Lead Their IEP Meetings,” by Mason, McGahee-Kovac and Johnson and “Involve Students in the IEP Process” by Moira Konrad.
One of the most prominent texts in the IEP inclusion field of research is a paper by Test, Mason, Hughes, Konrad, Neale & Wood (2004) entitled, “Student Involvement in Individual Education Program Meetings.” In this article the authors present a comprehensive overview of different methods and strategies for inclusion of students into the IEP process. The authors draw significant conclusions from their research and state that their “findings suggest that students with widely varying disabilities can be actively involved in the IEP process” and that, “results also indicate that both published curricula designed to teach students skills to enhance their participation prior to IEP meetings and person-centered planning strategies are effective in increasing students’ involvement in their IEP meetings” (p. 391). Results from this study are noteworthy in that researchers found that every strategy or manual tested had some form of positive impact upon student learning, self-determination or successful involvement in the IEP process. Further, this study demonstrates the necessary and often lacking instruction in these areas of student development. The authors describe student characteristics and target skills of these successful implementation strategies stating that: “Skills that can be taught through involvement in IEP meetings relate directly to the components of the IEP and include (a) describing one’s disability, strengths, needs, legal rights, and present level of performance; (b) evaluating one’s progress, weighing alternative goals, and engaging in goal-setting and goal-attainment activities; (c) preparing for a formal presentation and advocating for oneself in a formal setting; (d) communicating one’s preferences and interests; (e) accepting responsibility for areas where improvement is needed; (f) participating in discussions regarding one’s post school plans and needs (for youth ages 14 and older); and (g) determining one’s accommodation needs and securing appropriate accommodations.”
While this study focused upon older students, the results have proven equally successful for younger students through the use of this researcher’s manual. In another text on the subject, *Student Led IEPs: A Guide for Student Involvement* by McGahee, Mason, Wallace & Jones (2001) provides an overview of how to structure implementation of strategies for increasing student involvement in their own IEPs. The authors state that this guide is designed to help individual teachers as they plan for and implement student-led Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities. It presents activities for helping secondary students develop and participate in their IEPs (p. 1). They created this guide to include five stages of involvement, including: “(1) starting a student-led IEP program, ensuring confidentiality, involving parents, and determining instructional goals; (2) helping students understand their IEPs; (3) engaging students in developing an IEP, helping students assess their IEPs, and helping students write sections of their IEPs; (4) preparing students to participate in and/or lead their IEP meetings and providing support during the meeting; and (5) monitoring ongoing self-advocacy” (p. 1). The text provides in depth strategies of varying complexity that can be implemented to increase a student’s ability to participate successfully in the entire IEP process. This guide is structured and focused on student involvement at the secondary school level, and thus strategies are written based upon expected competencies of students at that level. The authors also posit that these strategies are aimed at students with Mild to Moderate disabilities, however, they can be differentiated and modified to include students with Moderate to Severe disabilities. The difficulty in writing comprehensive manuals for Special Education lies in the large spectrum of ability of students in Special Education. This guide is to be used as just
that - a guide. It is more effective when adapted to fit the individual needs of each student for whom it is being used.

In “How to Help Students Lead their IEP Meetings,” by Mason, McGahee-Kovac, and Johnson, the authors describe their manual as an instrument to prepare students to become more involved in the IEP meeting. They outline three levels of involvement at an IEP meeting, including: “(1) Student presents information about or reads from his or her transition plan for the future; (2) Student explains his or her disability, shares information on individual strengths and weaknesses (present levels of performance), and explains the accommodations needed. Students present Level 1 information and may suggest new IEP goals; (3) Student leads the IEP conference, including Level 1 and Level 2 responsibilities, introductions, and closing” (p. 19). These leveled approaches are helpful in guiding Education Specialists in the degree to which each student could be involved and provides a safe starting point. However, suggested age groups are provided as this text is again directed toward secondary school level students. The author’s plan includes a six session manual intended to prepare students to participate in their IEP meeting. During each session the student and teacher focus on different aspects of the meeting and conduct “dress rehearsals” to prepare the student. “During these preparation sessions, students help determine their needs, goals, transition preferences, present levels of performance, and accommodation needs” (p. 20). Conclusions following a test of their proposed procedures included: “Students were involved and did contribute to meetings; Students knew about their disability rights and their accommodations; Students gained increased self-confidence and were able to advocate for themselves; Parental participation increased” (p. 20).
In “Involve Students in the IEP Process,” by Moira Konrad, the author outlines twenty methods of varying intensity for inclusion of students in the IEP process. Konrad describes the IEP process as typically being composed of “four stages: planning, drafting, meeting to revise and finalize the draft, and implementing the program (Konrad & Test, 2004). However, when involving students, an additional stage must be added at the beginning of the process to provide students with the necessary background knowledge and a rationale to facilitate their active and meaningful participation. Therefore, the following twenty simple ways to involve students in the IEP process is divided into five stages” (p. 236). She goes on to describe strategies like “IEP Scavenger Hunt,” as well as activities to increase the student’s familiarity with the document and its components including vocabulary. Again, this document does not specifically cite a suggested age for each strategy. It seems, due to the difficulty and skill level required to fulfill many of the strategies, the manual is written for older students. Again, as with all of Special Education, strategies and activities need to be adapted, modified and differentiated in order to accommodate younger students or those with more severe disabilities to utilize these strategies.

**Impacts of including students in the IEP process**

Another common theme in the present literature is what the impact of student inclusion in IEPs will have on students, parents and teachers. These texts discuss the current landscape of student IEP inclusion and the benefits and consequences of inclusion. The views represented in Mason, Field, & Sawilowsky’s “Implementation of Self-Determination Activities and Student Participation in IEPs,” “Student and Parent IEP Collaboration: A Comparison Across School Settings,” by Williams-Diehm, Brandes, Chesnut & Haring and “Asking student input: Students’ opinion regarding their individualized education program involvement,” by Agran and Hughes, all discuss whether inclusion in the IEP process may or may not be tied to increased student
success and why. They explore the varied impacts of increased inclusion in the IEP process and implications of these impacts.

In “Implementation of Self-Determination Activities and Student Participation in IEPs,” Mason, Field & Sawilowsky address their findings about data collected on the “instructional practices and attitudes of educators as they relate to self-determination and student involvement in the individualized education program (IEP) process” (p. 441). Through web-based survey questions, they found that, “Although respondents highly valued both student involvement in IEPs and self-determination skills, only 8% were satisfied with the approach they were using to teach self-determination. Only 34% were satisfied with the level of student involvement in IEP meetings” (p. 441). Their study highlighted the frequent opinion held by Special Education professionals that although students are being more actively included in their IEP at the high school level, their participation in the process and the meeting remains low. A crucial section of their study as it pertains to this study is the comparison of inclusion with regard to age and school. They found that, “secondary teachers were consistently more likely to respond positively to questions related to student involvement in the IEP and self determination” (p. 445).

Additionally, “Secondary teachers reported higher levels of student involvement in the IEP, rated the importance of student involvement in the IEP more highly than elementary-level teachers, were more likely to state that they were prepared to teach self-determination skills than were elementary teachers, and were also more likely than elementary teachers to state that they provide (a) self-determination instruction through the use of a formal curriculum (b)
systematic instruction in self-determination (c) informal self-determination instruction and (d) instruction to help students learn to set and manage goals” (p. 445).

These findings highlight the absence of student-centered IEP inclusion strategies, plans and implementation at the elementary level. This study is essential because of the landscape of the IEP process in terms of inclusion as it is currently shaped in order to identify areas of need and to understand how to improve them.

“Student and Parent IEP Collaboration: A Comparison Across School Settings” by Williams-Diehm, Brandes, Chesnut, and Haring, describes a study conducted to “determine if differences existed across rural, urban, and suburban environments when special education teachers reported perceived levels of student and parent involvement and participation during IEP meetings” (p. 3). Although this study was heavily based upon educational setting, rural versus urban environments, the conclusive findings regarding the effects of community values and communication reflected in perceived student inclusion are relevant. The study found that, “Overall, educators from rural school districts reported higher levels of student involvement” (p. 7). They found that, “the variable of student collaboration appears to have the dominant effect on overall student involvement. When the variable of student collaboration and student participation were controlled and examined independently, student collaboration produced the greatest difference” (p. 7). The relevancy of these findings, with regard to this study, are that increased student collaboration has a direct correlation to increased overall student involvement in the process in a rural setting. This means that collaboration strategies can potentially serve to have the greatest impact on overall student inclusion or feelings of inclusion in the
process. Furthermore, “Overall, responding participants believed collaboration in IEP meetings was positive,” and that, “Special education teachers reported at high rates that collaboration was beneficial to the student and allowed for multiple voices to participate in the process, which resulted in a more complete and beneficial student-centered IEP” (p. 8). This also speaks to the current sentiments in the field that the majority of teachers, students and parents are ready and interested in increasing student involvement in the IEP process and that they are aware of the potential benefits. One of the most cited benefits seen by parents, students and teachers across settings was an increase in self-determination and self-advocacy, which is discussed further in this study.

“Similar Author: Similar Title,” by Agran and Hughes (2008), provides yet another look into the current practice of IEP inclusion and potential impacts from student perspectives. The authors state that, “Despite national interest in promoting self-determination and active involvement in individualized education program (IEP) planning, available data suggest that many students have little involvement in these activities,” and that, “Findings reveal that although the majority of students reported receiving some instruction on one or more self-determination strategies, few students were provided instruction in having an active role in the IEP process,” (p. 1). This is of central importance because, although we have seen the correlation between studies of the understanding of the potential impact and importance of student inclusion in the IEP process, many students are still not receiving the support and coaching they need in order to be successfully included in their IEPs. “Although data suggest that students are increasingly being involved in the IEP process (Test et al., 2004 from Agran & Hughes 2008), the available
reported data suggest that many students with disabilities receive little or no self-determination instruction, nor any instruction on how to have an active role in the IEP process,” (p. 2). Students are being included, but not participating competently because of a lack of training about how to participate. This lack of instruction makes student inclusion in the IEP process far less effective in producing desired results, such as increase in self advocacy, self determination, confidence and success in school.

**Best practices for involving students in the IEP process**

Further exploration in the current literature provides best practices for methods of inclusion into the IEP process, including how to prepare students for inclusion, areas of possible exclusion, and age differences in potential inclusion. In the articles by Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, Greene, Gardner and Lovett, entitled “Increasing student participation in IEP meetings: Establishing the self-directed IEP as an evidenced-based practice,” “The risks and opportunities of the IEP requirements under IDEA ‘97” by Huefner, and Van Dycke, Martin and Lovett’s, “Why is this cake on fire? Inviting students into the IEP process,” authors shed light into the process and argue for methods to streamline inclusion.

The importance of preparing students to succeed in their own meetings by providing direct instruction targeting specific skills that are essential to competently lead a meeting is discussed by Martin, Van Dycke, Christensen, Greene, Gardner and Lovett in detail. The authors tested their method, “The Self-Directed IEP,” which is a collection of strategies designed to increase students’ IEP meeting skills, to also determine its impact on student proficiency while leading their own IEP meeting, and noted that, “The Self-Directed IEP had a strong effect on increasing the percentage of time students talked, started, and led the meetings” (p. 299). The
Self Directed IEP manual is a group of sixteen instructional lessons aimed at increasing students’ meeting skills and “uses video modeling, student assignments, and role-playing to teach students IEP leadership skills” (p. 300). The authors found that “by learning to actively participate in and lead their own IEP meetings, students demonstrate goal setting, planning, self-evaluation, mediation, public speaking, and self-advocacy skills” (p. 300). Their study demonstrates the importance of intentional and focused preparation of students to have an increased role in the IEP meeting process.

In “Why is this cake on fire? Inviting Students into the IEP Process,” by Van Dyke, Martin and Lovett (2006), the authors examine the common theme seen in Special Education of excluding students almost entirely from their own IEP meetings until they are in high school, and then expecting them to be able to make a meaningful contribution or even facilitate the entire meeting on their own. Often, this occurs after years of either not being invited or consulted to contribute to their own IEP process. The authors note that best practices by education specialists are to ensure that, “students [are] involved in the IEP process and their IEP meetings as soon as transition topics surface” and that, “Students need to learn about their IEPs and what to do at their IEP meetings well before they enter their secondary school years” (p. 46). The steps used to increase competent participation in the IEP process in this case was to “incorporate student self-directed IEP instruction into the student’s curriculum according to the needs of the student and the structure of the school day” (p. 44). In order to provide this needed instruction and coaching, “Teachers in the Martin et al. (in press) study taught the 12 self-directed IEP lessons in a variety of ways. Teaching each lesson took approximately 45 minutes. Students received instruction over a 6-day period (two lessons per day), an 11-day period (one or two
lessons per day), or in 1 day at a student leadership retreat. Teachers infused the self-directed IEP instruction into before-school or after-school student meetings, resource or study periods, and into the English, social studies, or social skills curriculum” (p.44)

This process resulted in an increased ability by students to be able to participate in a confident and meaningful manner in their IEP meetings. The authors also cite strategies and best practices for parents to increase their child’s ability to be a contributing member of the IEP team. They discussed that parents need to, “take many of these steps early in the child’s life, such as learning early, along with the child, about his or her disability; learning how to talk comfortably about challenges in terms that the child can easily understand; and learning, along with the child, about the child’s strengths, preferences, gifts, and needs” (Bateman, Bright, & Boldin, 2003). These steps, as outlined in the article increase a student’s ability to succeed in meetings down the road later in life because they are building confidence and familiarity with similar concepts and ideas. “Additionally, parents need to frequently remind their child of the importance of his or her strengths and gifts and how they contribute to the family, the classroom, and the IEP process. Beginning with the first IEP meeting, parents should expect their child to become an IEP team member, and they should talk to the child about his or her role in the IEP meeting” (p. 45). It is also noted that discussing IEP goals and progress towards those goals is of vital importance because then the student is aware of what s/he is working toward and of what is expected of them.
Relationship between self-determination skills and inclusion in IEP process

Much of the current literature points to a direct correlation between students’ self-determination skills and their inclusion in the IEP process. Authors Wood et al and Test and Neale in “Promoting student self-determination skills in IEP planning” and “Using the self-advocacy strategy to increase middle graders' IEP participation,” respectively, along with many others, discuss the impacts of inclusion on students and offer reasoning behind the tested and proven correlation.

Approximately 90% of the literature that speaks of student inclusion in the IEP process also speaks of its effect on self determination. Self Determination is described as “The combination of skills, knowledge, and beliefs that enable a person to engage in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behavior” (p. 220). “The value of self-determination is confirmed by research studies that have demonstrated that students with a wide range of levels and types of disabilities can be taught an array of self-determination and self-advocacy skills” (Algozzine, Browder, Karvonen, Test, & Wood, 2001 from Test, et al. 2004). “Among these skills are choice making, goal setting/attainment, problem-solving, self-regulation, participation in the IEP process, and self awareness” (Agran, Blanchard, Wehmeyer, & Hughes, 2001; Allen, Smith, Test, Flowers, & Wood, 2001; Hughes, 1996; Kennedy & Haring, 1993; Snyder & Shapiro, 1997; Van Reusen & Bos, 1990 from Test, et al. 2004). Acquiring the skills of self-determination, along with self-advocacy, are essential parts of all students’ education as they increase their ability to maintain behaviors and activities that lead to success in the classroom and in the outside world. Some authors argue that self-determination and self-advocacy are at the heart of a comprehensive education, especially for students with disabilities who may struggle with social interaction due to their disability. If the point of education is to prepare students to
succeed on the world outside of school, then self-determination and self-advocacy are the bedrock of success, and the cornerstone of a pragmatic education. “Theoretically, self-determination and self-advocacy skills enhance the capability of students with disabilities to assume responsibility for their own lives and transition effectively from the structure of the school environment to the larger community environment” (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1997, 1998 from Test et al. 2004).

Van Dycke, Martin, and Lovett state that, “During the past 10 years, self-determination has become such a central topic in special education literature that ‘promoting self-determination (SD) or teaching students to take control of their life, is becoming a hallmark of providing full and complete special education services” (Karvonen, Test, Wood, Browder, & Algozzine, 2004, p. 23 from Van Dycke et al., 2006). Studies show that although teachers, parents and students understand the impact and importance of increasing students’ self-determination, current efforts and practices have been ineffective to a large extent.

The results that Van Dycke, Martin and Lovett cite:

“Agran, Snow, & Swaner (1999) found that although 75% of middle and high school teachers rated SD [Self-Determination] skills as a high priority, 55% failed to include goals related to SD skills in any of their students’ IEPs. Wehmeyer, Agran, and Hughes (2000) found that only 22% of secondary teachers reported writing SD goals for all their students. Mason, et al. (2002) found that students and teachers highly value student involvement in the IEP planning process, but that (same) study identified several logistical challenges that educators must resolve before they can implement SD practices: ‘Chief among these is finding the time necessary for adequate student preparation. With the trend
away from pull-out resource rooms toward inclusion in the general classrooms, teachers are finding it difficult to schedule time to prepare students for IEP meetings’ (p. 188). The question quickly becomes, ‘If teachers cannot find time to prepare students to self-direct their IEPs, how are they going to prepare students to self-direct their lives?’” (Van Dycke, Martin, and Lovett, 2006)

Much has been written about approaches for increasing self-determination in students including “Promoting Self-Determination: Using Take Action to Teach Goal Attainment,” by Germain, Martin, Marshall and Sale (2000) and “Successful Strategies for Promoting Self-Advocacy Among Students with LD: The LEAD Group” by Pocock, Lambros, Karvonen, Test, Algozzine, Wood and Martin (2004). These texts offer many proven methods to increase student self-advocacy, self-determination and success in school, however, the majority are centered on secondary school students and the transitions these students face following high school. There are numerous strategies posed by many authors regarding implementation strategies at this level, which are addressed in the manual as part of this study.

One text entitled “Using The Self-Advocacy Strategy to Increase Middle Graders’ IEP Participation,” by Test and Neale (2004), stands out because of its approach of starting to IEP inclusion strategies earlier than secondary school. Test and Neale quote Wehmeyer and Schwartz when they state, “Self-determination is a process that emerges across the lifespan as children and adolescents learn skills and develop attitudes that empower them to become causal agents in their own lives” (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998). Students are required to have the option to attend according to Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) 2004
when they are 14 years old, however, for many students, stepping into a central or even minor role in the IEP process without training, support or instruction, following years of exclusion is a daunting task. This new role or task can become unmanageable for students whose disability affects their social skills or communication. Test and Neale reiterate that, “Teaching self-determination needs to begin in the early years of adolescence in order to ensure students with disabilities have established the necessary skills to make their own decisions about their lives and their futures. Providing opportunities for younger students with disabilities to practice and demonstrate self-determination skills may guarantee greater levels of success as they grow and meet the challenges of adulthood” (p. 136). Their study assesses the efficacy of The Self-Advocacy Strategy on student participation in the IEP process. “The Self-Advocacy Strategy (Van Reusen, Bos, Schumaker, & Deshler, 1994) is an empirically-based method to help students become more included in the IEP process” (p. 136). Results from their study showed that students who had been instructed following the use of The Self-Advocacy Strategy curriculum demonstrated an increase in quality contributions during the process and were able to “provide more specific information related to their IEPs after the intervention was introduced” (p. 143).

These results establish that “Involving students with disabilities in the process of planning their Individualized Education Plans (IEP’s) allows them the opportunity to utilize the important skills related to self-determination such as self-awareness, self-advocacy, and goal setting (Test et al., in press from Test & Neale, 2004). The middle grade years provide an excellent opportunity to begin the process of teaching self-determination skills through the IEP process.”
Early Implementation

Research regarding the use of IEP inclusion strategies and methodologies and their impact upon students is sparse compared to the abundant research available for students in secondary education. This is true in part because of the language found in IDEIA 2004, which legally ensures that students with special needs are included in some manner or even lead their own IEP team meeting by the time they reach high school. Understandably, the majority of the discourse and conversation is based upon this time frame. There are, however, a few studies which delve into a deeper examination into the importance of and impact of younger IEP inclusion. In a study by Danneker and Bottge titled, “Benefits of and Barriers to Elementary Student-Led Individualized Education Programs,” the authors explore and describe the impact that early inclusion into the IEP can have on student self-efficacy skills.

“A multiple-case design was used in this study to describe the experiences of four elementary students with disabilities who were taught how to communicate their goals and identify appropriate accommodations at their individualized education program (IEP) meeting” (p. 1). After preparing students to be included and even partially lead their own IEP meetings, the researchers determined, through interview and observations that, “elementary students were capable of contributing important information about their disabilities and suggestions for accommodating them” (p. 1). The authors affirm the assertions in their article when they discuss the extreme inequity of attention that is placed upon high school students as opposed to elementary or middle school students with regard to IEP involvement and preparation. They state that, “most self-determination curricula focus on secondary students as they prepare for the transition to adult life as required by law (i.e., Individuals With Disabilities Education Act
Amendments of 1997, PL 105-17, 20 U.S.C. § 1414 [d][1][B][vii]) rather than on elementary-age students, who likely will need these skills as they progress through school” (p.1). Danneker and Bottge expand by maintaining that, “Waiting until students get to middle school to teach self-determination skills could reduce the time needed for them to sufficiently learn and practice these skills” (Sands & Doll, 1996 from Danneker & Bottge, 2008). They go on to explain the lack of research with younger students: “few studies have explored how to increase younger students’ participation in IEP planning. Accounts of elementary-aged students becoming more involved in their IEP meetings have generally reported positive outcomes (e.g., Hackman, Kenworthy, & Nibbelink, 1998; Kroeger, Leibold, & Ryan, 1999; Zickel & Arnold, 2001), but relatively little information is known about the procedures used to facilitate their participation in IEP meetings” (p. 2). This hole in the current literature and research was the basis for the creation of the manual created from this study and presented in this paper.

Danneker and Bottge created a multiple case research design method in which they used multiple sources to triangulate data reliability and to increase data integrity. They began by developing and introducing a six-week curriculum which included: “(a) introducing the purpose, content, and format of the IEP and creating invitations to the meetings; (b) identifying student’s strengths, needs, and interests; (c) examining current IEPs to evaluate progress on current goals; and (d) modifying or developing goals and identification of helpful accommodations and modifications” (p. 3). Upon completion of the six-week program with four students, they established that “(a) Meetings were student-centered, (b) student leadership fostered self-determination skills, and (c) collaborative problem solving was evident during the meetings” (p. 4). Furthermore, “the student became central to the process and gained a sense of ownership of
the IEP goals. Throughout the meetings, all four students answered questions and appropriately added information that was not part of the script” (p. 4) that they had created.

Upon completion of their study, the authors concluded that, “students who received instruction could be prepared to lead their IEP meeting in a relatively short amount of time—as little as 120 minutes. As reported for secondary students who worked through training sessions, these elementary students honed their self-determination skills of self-awareness, self-evaluation, and goal setting and practiced those skills as they each led an IEP meeting” (Hughes, Wood, Konrad, & Test, 2006; Test et al., 2004; Wood et al., 2005 from Danneker & Bottge, 2008, p. 7). Although these results must be viewed through a critical lens due to the varying abilities and situations of students qualifying for Special Education services, they provide evidence to suggest that early IEP inclusion can be a powerful tool in increasing students ability to become “agents of change” (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998 from Test & Neale, 2004) in their own lives (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998 from Test & Neale, 2004).

In “Promoting Self-Determination: A Model for Training Elementary Students to Self-Advocate for IEP Accommodations,” by Hart and Brehm (2013), the authors reiterate the lack of early IEP inclusion methodologies. They state, “Promoting self-determination among students with disabilities has been a principal focus of policy, research, and practice related to special education transition planning for nearly two decades (Ward, 2006), but how this occurs prior to the age required by law is not something that has received ongoing attention. Current research emphasizes the advantages of promoting self-determination in securing positive in-school and post-school outcomes for adolescents with disabilities (Cho, Wehmeyer, & Kingston, 2012), but how this occurs at the elementary level is limited.” The outcomes of research do show though
that youth and young adults with disabilities who have acquired self-determination skills have enhanced academic performance and more active class participation (Gilberts, Agran, Hughes, & Wehmeyer, 2001), improved employment and independent living opportunities (Wehmeyer & Palmer, 2003), and more positive quality of life and reported life satisfaction (McDougall, Evans, & Baldwin, 2010). All these outcomes provide great reasons to teach self-advocacy skills as early as possible to empower students to have the strongest future outcomes” (Hart & Brehm, 2013, p. 40)

Hart and Brehm (2013) utilized a 10 Step Implementation process which included (p.42):

1. Obtain parental consent.
2. Assist students with academic goal setting.
3. Introduce accommodations and IEP concepts
4. Investigate and model accommodations.
5. Help students determine where and when they receive accommodations.
6. Help students understand the importance of their accommodations.
7. Help students determine how to ask for their accommodations.
8. Introduce the cue card and engage in role-play of the process.
9. Describe and practice action steps if student is not given accommodations.
10. Monitor student progress and troubleshoot areas of difficulty.

Their work provides examples and ideas to assist teachers, administrators and parents to support students to comprehend the process and to participate in identifying and understanding the accommodations they receive and their purpose. Although accommodations are just one
piece of the large puzzle that is IEP inclusion, this article provides numerous strategies and methodologies to consider when creating a model for IEP inclusion.

To close, the authors identify a critical part of the entire process: ensuring that students feel supported throughout the process. They complete the curriculum with a simple yet significant point: “Remind students there is a team of people working together to ensure their success, but that they are a member of the team and should take the lead in learning how to help themselves to be successful in school and life” (Hart and Brehm, 2013, p. 48).

Finally, in a study mentioned previously entitled, “Student IEP Participation and Academic Achievement Across Time,” Barnard-Brak and Lechtenberger found that there is a “significant, positive association between student IEP participation and academic achievement across time using a nationally representative sample of elementary school–aged children with disabilities” (p. 346). These authors were able to tie the benefits of early IEP inclusion, not only to qualitative measures like self-determination, but to overall academic success. They stress that this inclusion is most beneficial when implemented over time, so that students have ample time to become familiar with the process.

Conclusion

Ample research is being conducted in the field of student inclusion in the IEP process. It is interesting to note that many articles and texts have been written on the topic, yet the majority of IEPs continue to proceed without student involvement. This work matters in the larger context of education because it allows students with disabilities to see IEP teams and instructional plans as support to promote success, as opposed to embarrassing reminders of personal deficiencies.
Chapter Three

Methodology

This project was developed to be a manual for teachers, administrators and parents who have decided to increase student inclusion into the IEP process in the elementary school setting. The purpose of the project was to detail; (a) the methods and strategies for inclusion, (b) situational and personal characteristics to consider with regards to level of student involvement, (c) prevalence of inclusion in current educational settings, and (d) potential impacts resulting from increased inclusion on student academic success, self-determination and self-advocacy instruction through the use of this manual.

Information, resources and activities used to create the manual were obtained from scholarly studies and research. The appropriate contexts for the proposed interventions found in this manual included any Special Education setting or any setting in which a student had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and displayed behavior justifying specific intervention. The strategies presented herein were meant to provide a gradual transition into the IEP inclusion process. Currently, the majority of strategies found in academic research focus on student inclusion into the IEP process at the secondary level (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). This manual adopted strategies and activities from successful secondary level inclusion models and modified them to increase accessibility for younger students. As seen in the Literature Review, research suggested that increased student inclusion in the IEP process at an earlier age led to higher levels of functioning in the classroom and an increased ability to meaningfully contribute in the IEP process (Danneker & Bottge, 2008; Barnard-Brak & Letchenberger, 2010). By creating and implementing a manual composed of differing levels of strategies for inclusion, Education
Specialists were able to choose the most appropriate implementation strategies based upon their knowledge and understanding of their student’s abilities, maturity, and initial understanding of the IEP process. Additionally, many of the inclusion strategies written for students at the secondary level were academically and cognitively demanding, requiring levels of cognitive functioning that were not attainable for some students with more severe cognitive or intellectual disabilities. The strategies included in this manual provided a more foundational approach to student inclusion in the IEP process to be used when working with students with whom current inclusion approaches would be ineffective.

The strategies piloted in this manual increased the ability of Education Specialists to implement a smooth instructional transition for students beginning to step into the practice of IEP inclusion. When slowly introduced to the process, students became more comfortable and competent in their ability to participate (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). This skill is vital when students become legally obligated to participate in or even lead their IEP at the high school level under IDEIA 2004 (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). The manual from this study is distributed via Scholarworks.

**Setting**

This manual was designed to be used in a variety of environments: Special Education setting, including a Special Day Class, Resource or Learning Center, possibly integrated into the General Education classroom, or one-on-one with a student. The majority of the strategies addressed in the manual were developed to be implemented by the Education Specialist prior to a formal IEP meeting or creation. Students received individual or small group coaching, focused
on development or improvement of self-advocacy and self-determination skills through the implementation of the strategies provided in the manual.

Participants
This manual provided the training for Education Specialists to increase student participation in the IEP process through the use of activities, practice assignments and specific strategies. The strategies were designed for elementary and middle school students with IEPs, however, participants included any student whose IEP team determined that he or she would benefit from implementation. Strategies within the manual were broken into groups based upon grade and/or developmental age, with both Elementary and Middle School levels. The grade levels attached to each strategy were recommendations based upon the Education Specialist’s knowledge and understanding of the student’s ability, maturity, and initial understanding of the IEP process. These strategies were not to be considered a leveled delivery framework, rather, they were designed to be used as was developmentally, cognitively and socially appropriate for any given child. As with any work or activity, the IEP team and particularly the Education Specialist, were responsible for ensuring that each strategy was appropriate to the student's ability level and that the student would be able to draw information or personal growth from the activity.

Procedures
This manual addressed the lack of strategies available for younger or more severely cognitively impacted students. The manual opened with a foreword to educators, parents and students, describing the benefits and limitations of IEP inclusion. It noted that grade level
distinctions included with strategies were flexible and applicable as the IEP team and Education Specialist deemed appropriate.

In order to create a practical and successful intervention tool, the manual was structured to facilitate quick access to information, provide tips for inclusion in the IEP and also provide a comprehensive list of resources to assist teachers with the implementation of each inclusion strategy. The strategies were developed to be offered in stages or “scaffolded” with one activity building upon the prior activity to increase skill and confidence. They were also based upon academic difficulty, to allow a gradual introduction to the process of participating in an IEP meeting. These activities increased in difficulty and scope over time as the student grew physically and mentally.

As stated, the manual included direction for teachers and administrators to consider prior to implementation. This section addressed parents’ rights and offered a template of initial communication with parents or guardians regarding any preferences or concerns they had with the process. Since IEPs typically include sensitive information and because younger students are not legally required to provide input into their IEP, those who attempted to increase student involvement in the process ensured that they received permission from the students’ parents or guardians prior to implementation and inclusion in the IEP process. Additionally, teachers needed to spend time familiarizing themselves with the particular student in social settings prior to any implementation. This allowed teachers to assess the maturity and personal needs of each student involved, as well as address environmental factors and parental support in each case to determine which strategies are best suited for the situation. It was found that Education Specialists who started from the beginning of the manual, Elementary Level Inclusion Strategies,
were provided more opportunity to ensure that each student had an increased foundational knowledge of the concepts, terminology and processes of an IEP.

Included in the manual were Pre and Post assessments of self-advocacy and self-determination skills that were used, in addition to academic progress monitoring, to assess the students’ growth in these areas. These assessments allowed Education Specialists to evaluate the efficacy of the strategies chosen.

This IEP inclusion manual provided a blueprint for teachers, parents and administrators to consider when crafting an IEP. During the pilot, it was determined that the strategies needed to be modified, differentiated, or used with incongruous grade levels so as to ensure that each student had an IEP inclusion plan that would foster success. This evaluative method of choosing specific and appropriate activities required teachers to assess the maturity and personal characteristics of each student involved and to address environmental factors, including parental support, in each case, to determine which strategies were best suited for the situation.

**Ethical considerations / Limitations**

Limitations of this study include the difficulty in creating manuals that are effective across grade levels. What works well for high school students was not appropriate for students in elementary school. It was necessary to modify the strategies that were proven to be effective at the secondary school level to ensure they were appropriate for students at the elementary and middle school levels.
Additionally, the amount of participation and depth of inclusion was put in the hands of the parents when dealing with a younger student. Parents had the ability to significantly limit the amount of inclusion that teachers and administrators can provide to the student.

Summary
This manual was designed as a comprehensive compilation of strategies to increase student involvement in their IEPs, based on student, parental, teacher and administrator characteristics and environment. Many of the strategies included were adopted from successful secondary school strategies and adapted to serve the needs of students at the elementary and middle school level. This increased practice and familiarity with the creation and implementation of an IEP allowed students to provide more meaningful input into the process as well as increase academic success (Barnard-Brak & Letchenberger, 2010, p.346), and increase student self-advocacy and self-determination (Test et al., 2004, p. 392).
Chapter Four

Start Small
Finish Big

A Manual to Increase Student Inclusion in the IEP Process

By Casey Martin Turner

“Scaffolding Strategies to Increase Student Participation in the IEP Process before High School”
Start Small Finish Big Table of Contents

Scaffolding Strategies to Increase Student Participation in the IEP Process before High School

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*Grade level distinctions are simply a starting point and are in no way obligatory. Special Education is meant to be modified and accommodated to meet the needs of each student. Use resources that are at each specific student’s level, regardless of age or grade.
Introduction

“Self-determination is a process that emerges across the lifespan as children and adolescents learn skills and develop attitudes that empower them to become causal agents in their own lives” (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998 from Test & Neale, 2004).

Studies that show that increased student involvement in the IEP leads to an increase in self-advocacy, self-determination and student success (Barnard-Brak & Letchenberger, 2010; Test, D. W., Mason, C., Hughes, C., Konrad, M., Neale, M., & Wood, W. M., 2004). However, the resources and studies that are currently available for Education Specialists are almost exclusively aimed at students at the secondary level (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). Additionally, many are complex in nature and do not take into account the potential difficulties presented by these students’ cognitive disabilities. This manual is written to provide accessible strategies, interventions and activities to actively and successfully include students in the IEP process at all ages and ability levels.

IDEIA 2004 requires that students in high school be a part of or lead their own IEP meetings, which is a main reason so much focus is placed on students at this level and age group. Unfortunately, up until this point, many students are completely excluded or unaware of the IEP process and what it entails (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). By beginning to familiarize students with the IEP process earlier, they will be more equipped to participate in many facets of the IEP process when the time comes that they are legally mandated to do so (Danneker & Bottge, 2008).
The level of IEP inclusion will vary from student to student. It is an aspect of the IEP for the entire team (parents, administrators, teachers) to consider while crafting an educational plan. IEP inclusion will not look the same for any two students.

How To Use This Manual

This manual provides Education Specialists with activities, assignments and strategies designed to increase student participation in the IEP process. The strategies were designed for elementary and middle school students with IEPs, however, participants could include any student whose IEP team determines that he or she would benefit from implementation. In order to create a practical and successful intervention tool, the manual was structured to facilitate quick access to information, provide tips for inclusion in the IEP and also provide a comprehensive list of resources to assist teachers with the implementation of each inclusion strategy. The strategies are designed to be staged, based on academic difficulty, to allow a gradual introduction to the process of participating in an IEP meeting. These activities increase in difficulty and scope as the student grows physically and mentally.

Strategies are broken into groups based on age and grade with both Elementary and Middle School strategies. The grade levels attached to each strategy are recommendations based upon the Education Specialist’s knowledge and understanding of their student’s ability, maturity, and initial understanding of the IEP process; a method for displaying the “scaffolding” process. These strategies are not to be considered a leveled delivery framework, rather, are designed to be
used as is developmentally, cognitively and socially appropriate for any given child. As with any work or activity, the IEP team and particularly the Education Specialist are responsible for ensuring that each strategy is appropriate to the student's ability level and that the student will be able to draw information or personal growth from the activity.

This IEP inclusion manual provides a blueprint for teachers, parents and administrators to consider when crafting an IEP. The strategies may need to be modified, differentiated, or used with incongruous grade levels to ensure that each student has an IEP inclusion plan that will allow for success. This evaluative method of choosing specific and appropriate activities will require teachers to assess the maturity and personal characteristics of each student involved and to address environmental factors, including parental support, in each case to determine which strategies may be best suited for the situation.

Good Luck
Remind students there is a team of people working together to ensure their success, but that they are a member of the team and should take the lead in learning how to help themselves to be successful in school and life.

Hart and Brehm, 2013, p. 48
Parental Communication

- All Ages -

When starting to explain the IEP process to a younger child it is important to sit down with them and talk about what they know about their disability and disabilities in general. This conversation might be the first time they are hearing about this concept, especially if they have recently initially qualified for an IEP and Special Education Services.

It is extremely important to speak with the parents or guardians of the student to ensure they are comfortable with you discussing these topics, and any topics they might prefer not be discussed, with their child. Below is a template which can be sent home to gauge parents position with regard to the topic or used as a checklist to speak with parents about this topic before engaging in an initial discussion with the student.

Initial Discussion Guidelines

Have you spoken to your child about their disability? If so, provide details. If not, why?

Are you comfortable with your child participating in their IEP? If so, in what role or capacity?

Are their areas of the IEP process that you would like your child to abstain from?

What areas of the child’s life are impacted by their disability?

What is your preferred method of contact to ensure consistent communication throughout this process?

What are your child’s strengths? Needs?
Early Grades Implementation Strategies
1st - 5th Grade
Reading about Disabilities

Reading about students with disabilities may lead students feel more comfortable talking about their own disabilities. There is a growing list of books about students with disabilities aimed at younger readers. If the student cannot read, teachers may also read the text to their students. Students can analyze the story and create an IEP for the student with a disability in the book, including Present Levels, Strengths, Needs and Goals. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 43*(4), 236)

My Character’s IEP

Name:

Book:

Character’s Birthday:

This character’s strengths are:

This character’s weaknesses are:

Some Goals for this character could be:

Accommodations to help this character meet their goals are:
IEP Scavenger Hunt

Develop an IEP scavenger hunt (Konrad & Test, 2004) that requires students to find certain information in their own IEPs. For example, prompts on the scavenger hunt might include the following:

1. Find the signature page of your IEP. Name two people who attended your last IEP meeting.
   a. 
   b. 
2. How many goals are in your IEP? 
3. What are two accommodations that you have for testing?
   a. 
   b. 
4. What are two accommodations that you have in the classroom?
   a. 
   b. 
5. When was your last IEP meeting?
6. What are two strengths of yours as listed in your current IEP?
   a. 
   b. 
7. What are two strengths of yours you would add to your IEP?
   a. 
   b. 
8. How many minutes a week do you receive special education services as indicated on your IEP? 
9. How many minutes are in a school week? 
10. What subjects do you receive help in according to your IEP?


Ellis, Mandy. Student led IEP Scavenger Hunt. *Teachers Pay Teachers.*
Student Visions

Work with students to help them develop vision statements for themselves. What do they want to do with their life beyond school? The vision statement might begin with a prompts like the ones listed below. Assist students with filling in the blanks with ambitious, yet realistic, goals.

Student Created Goals

Name:

Birthday:

When I grow up I want to be a:

I want to do this because:

If I want to be a ______________________________, when I grow up then I need to:

1) 

2) 

Draw a picture of you in your future job:

Investigate and Model Accommodations
The more students are involved in the investigation process, the more likely they will use their accommodations. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then they need to learn how to make certain what they need is provided in each of their classes. Therefore, allow students to investigate their list of accommodations, even reading them together as needed. Encourage students to highlight items they feel are important or that they do not clearly understand. (Hart, Juliet E., and Julianne Brehm. "Promoting Self-Determination: A Model for Training Elementary Students to Self-Advocate for IEP Accommodations." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 45.5 (2013): 40-48.)

**INVESTIGATING ANNUAL GOALS**

1. Do I know the annual goals that are included on my individualized education program (IEP)? Do I understand them?
2. Am I making good progress toward my IEP goals?
3. Do I understand how my current IEP goals will help me reach my post-secondary goals when I exit school?
4. What goals do I want to include on my next IEP?

**MY GOALS**

Goal #1 is: ____________________________________________

This goal is important because: ____________________________________________

Steps I’ll take to reach this goal are: ____________________________________________

**I LEARN BEST BY:**

- Looking
- Listening
- Touching

**CHALLENGES I HAVE IN SCHOOL**

- Being prepared for class each day
- Completing homework
- Participating in class

**POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

- Have at least 2 sharpened pencils
- Write homework in agenda daily
- Volunteer to answer questions
IEP Vocabulary Word Search

There are many large vocabulary terms which are associated with the IEP process. This terminology can be daunting for students, especially in the earlier grades. By reviewing important vocabulary with students they will become more familiar with the IEP vocabulary feel more comfortable in the process.

Made with: Discovery Education: Puzzle Maker
Invitation Letters

Have students write letters inviting meeting participants to attend and notes or emails reminding them about upcoming meetings. For students who struggle with writing, use a fill-in-the-blank letter template. This activity also provides an opportunity to embed writing instruction into a unit on IEP planning. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 43*(4), 23)

Dear____________________,
I am writing to remind you about my ______________. The meeting will take place on ___________ at ___. We will be meeting in Room ____. I have attached a ___ of my IEP so you can ______________. I look forward to __________________________.

Sincerely,
“I Will” Statements

Once students have identified their needs, have them take each need statement and turn it into an “I will” statement. For example, a student who needs to work on fractions may write, “I will add and subtract fractions.” These “I will” statements can then become the student's’ IEP goals. This process teaches students that each goal in their IEP comes directly from a need they have. These needs may be related to academic, social, daily living, or vocational skills. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. Intervention in School and Clinic, 43(4), 236)

My “I Will” Statements

Name:

Need:

To work on this need, I will:

Draw a picture of what this will look like.

Need:

To work on this need, I will:

Draw a picture of what this will look like.
Self - Progress Reports

Have students develop first-person progress reports to share with their parents and the IEP team. Students can write a narrative self-evaluation for each goal, evaluating their progress and stating whether they are on track to reach the goal by the date indicated in the IEP. Students can also include graphs illustrating their progress. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 43*(4), 236)

**Progress Report**

Name:  

Date:  

Goal:  

So far on this goal I have ____________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

In order to continue to make progress on this goal I will need to:

1)  

2)  

3)  

Draw an illustration, chart or graph of your progress:
**Pre and Post Assessments**
Teachers can use Pre and Post Assessments in order to judge the efficacy of the strategies implemented. This information can also serve as a progress monitoring tool for teachers, parents and administrators to determine which topics need to be retaught or which concepts the student may need extra support, accommodation or modification in order to successfully complete or understand. These assessments can be in the form of simple IEP vocabulary tests, measures of self-advocacy and self-determination, and of knowledge of personal goals. Examples are provided here, with full page copies included in the Resources pages in the back of this manual.
IEP Vocabulary Assessment

Directions: Match the vocabulary term with its correct definition:

**WORD BANK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. IEP</th>
<th>B. Accommodations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C. Self Advocacy</td>
<td>D. Educational Setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. FAPE</td>
<td>F. IDEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Services</td>
<td>H. Goal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Every student gets a free and appropriate education
2. They kind of environment that a student is learning in
3. Standing up for yourself and asking questions
4. An individualized educational plan that is created for a specific student
5. An skill that a student is working on with the help of their teachers and parents
6. A law that makes sure each student gets the help they need
7. Changes in an activity or assignment that help a student learn
8. A action or class that help gives students the help that they need
Pre and Post Assessments Continued

Self-Advocacy Inventory

This assessment is designed to be given as a question and answer with the student verbally, or in the individual student’s preferred method of communication. It can be given as a pre and post assessment to compare a student’s growth based on IEP inclusion strategies.

Self-Advocacy Inventory

Strengths

Interests

Weaknesses

How to get help

Helpful supports

I work best when...

My goals are...
Middle Grades Implementation Strategies
6th - 8th Grade
IEP Legal Analysis Search

Assign students the task of evaluating their IEPs to determine if they contain all the sections required by law. Provide students with a checklist that begins, “Does your IEP contain . . .?” Then list sections of the IEP required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004; e.g., present level of performance, goals). Assist students in finding each section in their own IEPs. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. Intervention in School and Clinic, 43(4), 236)

Have student go through their IEP and highlight the different sections and pieces of information as they find them.

IEP Legal Analysis Search

Name:

Date:

Does your IEP contain:

1. Current Information
2. Disabling Condition
3. Present Levels of Performance
4. Goals
5. Progress on Goals
6. Strengths/Interests
7. Concerns
8. Accommodations/ Aides
9. Services/ Offer of FAPE
10. Percentages of General Education and Special Education time
Extended Scavenger Hunt

*This is an extended and more in depth version of the Scavenger Hunt previously outlined in the Early Grades Implementation Section.

Develop an IEP scavenger hunt (Konrad & Test, 2004) that requires students to find certain information in their own IEPs. For example, prompts on the scavenger hunt might include the following:

1. Find the signature page of your IEP. Name two people who attended your last IEP meeting.
   a. __________________
   b. __________________

2. How many goals are in your IEP? __________________

3. What are two accommodations that you have for testing?
   a. __________________
   b. __________________

4. What are two accommodations that you have in the classroom?
   a. __________________
   b. __________________

5. When was your last IEP meeting? ______________

6. What are two strengths of yours as listed in your current IEP?
   a. __________________
   b. __________________

7. What are two strengths of yours you would add to your IEP?
   a. __________________
   b. __________________

8. How many minutes a week do you receive special education services as indicated on your IEP? ______

9. How many minutes are in a school week? ______

10. What subjects do you receive help in according to your IEP? __________________
11. What classes do you go to with no supplementary aids? 

12. What classes do you have (if any) that you receive supplementary aids? 

13. Do you receive any related services? 
   a. If yes, which ones? 

14. What was the purpose of your last IEP meeting? 
   a. Initial eligibility 
   b. IEP review/revision 
   c. Reevaluation 
   d. Transition 
   e. Review of data 
   f. Termination of placement 
   g. Initial IEP 
   h. Other 

15. What is your disability? 

16. What do you think that means? 

17. What is your expected date of graduation? 

18. What is your resident school district? 

19. Who was the LEA representative at your last IEP meeting? 

20. Name two sections of the IEP. 
   a. 
   b. 

Student Visions

*This is an extended and more in depth version of the Student Created Goals previously outlined in the Early Grades Implementation Section.

Work with students to help them develop vision statements for themselves. What do they want to do with their life beyond school? The vision statement might begin with prompts like the ones listed below. Assist students with filling in the blanks with ambitious, yet realistic, goals. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. Intervention in School and Clinic, 43(4), 236)

My Vision

Name:

Date:

After high school, I plan to live _______________________________________.

I will learn more about _____________________________________________.

work _____________________________________________________________.

and play _________________________________________________________.

If they are able, have students expand and include other important fact about what they want their life to look like after high school.

Have students turn the prompted sentences into a paragraph and type it up on a computer. Once finished have them illustrate their writing. This paper can be saved and revisited later in the year to see if the students’ visions have changed.
Investigate and Model Accommodations

*This is a similar version of the Student Created Goals previously outlined in the Early Grades Implementation Section, however students would be expected to complete this activity with increased independence at this level.

The more students are involved in the investigation process, the more likely they will use their accommodations. Students need opportunities to learn which accommodations are most helpful for them, and then they need to learn how to make certain what they need is provided in each of their classes. Therefore, allow students to investigate their list of accommodations, even reading them together as needed. Encourage students to highlight items they feel are important or that they do not clearly understand. (Hart, Juliet E., and Julianne Brehm. "Promoting Self-Determination: A Model for Training Elementary Students to Self-Advocate for IEP Accommodations." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 45.5 (2013): 40-48.)
INVESTIGATING ANNUAL GOALS

1. Do I know the annual goals that are included on my individualized education program (IEP)? Do I understand them?
2. Am I making good progress toward my IEP goals?
3. Do I understand how my current IEP goals will help me reach my post-secondary goals when I exit school?
4. What goals do I want to include on my next IEP?

MY GOALS

Goal #1 is: ____________________________________________

This goal is important because: _____________________________

Steps I’ll take to reach this goal are: _________________________

I LEARN BEST BY:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Looking</th>
<th>Listening</th>
<th>Touching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Looking Image]</td>
<td>![Listening Image]</td>
<td>![Touching Image]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHALLENGES I HAVE IN SCHOOL | POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
---|---
Being prepared for class each day | Have at least 2 sharpened pencils
Completing homework | Write homework in agenda daily
Participating in class | Volunteer to answer questions
Career Investigations

So, You Want to Be A . . .

For this assignment students create an interactive display-board or booklet about a career that they are interested in or passionate about. Similar to a "how to" guide, the project will describe what a person needs to know and do in order to work in this specific profession. Whether they choose to be a writer, fashion designer, professional athlete, or business owner, the students will create a guide for people their own age who might be interested in the same career.

Your display-board should include the following:

1. A description of what it is like to be in this specific profession

2. The pros and cons of being in this profession/career

3. What you need in order to work in this profession (i.e. personality types, strengths, skills, education, job experience, and or knowledge)

4. An annotated list of resources for more information about this profession (books, magazines, websites, videos, national organizations, etc.)

5. A glossary: words and things that people in this profession use and what they mean

6. Flashy layout, pictures and images.

IEP Vocabulary Word Search

*This is a more difficult version of the Student Created Goals previously outlined in the Early Grades Implementation Section. Additionally, students would be expected to complete this activity with increased independence at this level.

There are many large vocabulary terms which are associated with the IEP process. This terminology can be daunting for students, especially in the earlier grades. By reviewing important vocabulary with students they will become more familiar with the IEP vocabulary and feel more comfortable in the process. After completing the Word Search, have students look up and write down definitions for each word.

My IEP Word Search

Made with: Discovery Education: Puzzle Maker
Meeting Invitations

*This is an extended and more in depth version of the Student Created Goals previously outlined in the Early Grades Implementation Section.

Have students write letters inviting meeting participants to attend and notes or emails reminding them about upcoming meetings (see Figure 2). For students who struggle with writing, use a fill-in-the-blank letter template (see Figure 3). This activity also provides an opportunity to embed writing instruction into a unit on IEP planning.


Dear ____________________,

I am writing to ____________________. To prepare for this meeting, I have ____________________. Before the meeting, I hope you will prepare by ____________________. Thank you for taking the time to ____________________.

Sincerely,

If the student is able, simply give students a list of things to include in the letter (purpose, date, attendees, preparations, etc.) that need to be included and let the student write the letter without a template.
“I Will” Statements

*This is a similar version of the Student Created Goals previously outlined in the Early Grades Implementation Section, however students would be expected to complete this activity with increased independence at this level.

Once students have identified their needs, have them take each need statement and turn it into an “I will” statement. For example, a student who needs to work on fractions may write, “I will add and subtract fractions.” These “I will” statements can then become the student's’ IEP goals. This process teaches students that each goal in their IEP comes directly from a need they have. These needs may be related to academic, social, daily living, or vocational skills. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 43*(4), 236)

My “I Will” Statements

Name:

Need:

To work on this need, I will:

Draw a picture of what this will look like.
IEP Input Activity

As part of a unit on paragraph writing, have students write paragraphs about their strengths and needs. For students who need more support, provide them with a topic sentence: “I have many strengths.” Then assist them in writing several sentences to support that topic. These paragraphs, once approved by the IEP team, can be copied and pasted into the present level-of-performance portion of a student’s IEP. As a follow-up, teach students to write IEP goal paragraphs in which the topic sentence is a goal and the supporting detail sentences are objectives to help them reach the goal (Konrad & Test, in press; Konrad, Trela, & Test, 2006). These activities provide more opportunities to integrate self-determination skill building with writing instruction. (Konrad, M. (2008). Involve students in the IEP process. Intervention in School and Clinic, 43(4), 236)

**Introduction/ Topic:** I have many strengths.

**Body:**

One of the strengths I have is ______________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

This is a strength for me because __________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

I can _____________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

Also, _____________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

That is why _________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

is one of my best strengths.
Pre and Post Assessments

It is important to constantly be assessing a student's progress toward increasing their self-determination and self-advocacy skill through the implementation of these IEP inclusion strategies. This allows the teachers, administrators and parents to assess the effectiveness of the techniques being used, how the student is reacting to the intervention, areas that the student is showing improvement and areas that the student needs reteaching and reinforcement. One of the most reliable and trusted assessments is the Arc’s Self-Determination Scale by Michael Wehmeyer and Kathy Kelchner.

The author’s description is as follows:

The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale-Adolescent Version is a student self-report measure of self-determination designed primarily for use by, and normed with, adolescents with cognitive and developmental disabilities. The scale has two primary purposes:

1. To provide students and educators a tool that assists them to identify student strengths and areas of support and instructional need in self-determination.
2. To provide a research tool to examine the relationship between and among self-determination and factors that promote/inhibit self-determined behavior, to evaluate the efficacy of interventions to promote self-determination, and for use with related research activities.

A copy of the assessment is included in the Resources section of this manual. More information can be found, including instructions and procedural guidelines, at:

Resources
IEP Scavenger Hunt

Name: ________________

1. Find the signature page of your IEP. Name two people who attended your last IEP meeting.
   a. ____________________
   b. ____________________

2. How many goals are in your IEP? ________________

3. What are two accommodations that you have for testing?
   a. ____________________
   b. ____________________

4. What are two accommodations that you have in the classroom?
   a. ____________________
   b. ____________________

5. When was your last IEP meeting? ________________

6. What are two strengths of yours as listed in your current IEP?
   a. ____________________
   b. ____________________

7. What are two strengths of yours you would add to your IEP?
   a. ____________________
   b. ____________________

8. How many minutes a week do you receive special education services as indicated on your IEP? ______

9. How many minutes are in a school week? ______

10. What subjects do you receive help in according to your IEP? ____________________
11. What classes do you go to with no supplementary aids? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________

12. What classes do you have (if any) that you receive supplementary aids? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________

13. Do you receive any related services? ______
   a. If yes, which ones? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________

14. What was the purpose of your last IEP meeting?
   a. Initial eligibility
   b. IEP review/revision
   c. Reevaluation
   d. Transition
   e. Review of data
   f. Termination of placement
   g. Initial IEP
   h. Other

15. What is your disability? ________________________________

16. What do you think that means? ________________________________
   ____________________________________________

17. What is your expected date of graduation? ______

18. What is your resident school district? ____________

19. Who was the LEA representative at your last IEP meeting? ________________________________

20. Name two sections of the IEP.
   a. ________________________________
   b. ________________________________
My Character’s IEP

Name:

Date:

Book:

Author:

Character’s Birthday:

This character’s strengths are:

This character’s weaknesses are:

Some Goals for this character could be:
Accommodations to help this character meet their goals are:

Draw a picture of this character completing their goal:
Student Created Goals

Name:

Date:

Birthday:

When I grow up I want to be a:

I want to do this because:

If I want to be a ____________________________, when I grow up then I need to:

1)

2)

Draw a picture of you in your future job:
INVESTIGATING ANNUAL GOALS

1. Do I know the annual goals that are included on my individualized education program (IEP)? Do I understand them?

2. Am I making good progress toward my IEP goals?

3. Do I understand how my current IEP goals will help me reach my post-secondary goals when I exit school?

4. What goals do I want to include on my next IEP?

MY GOALS

Goal #1 is: ____________________________________________

This goal is important because: ____________________________________________

Steps I’ll take to reach this goal are: ____________________________________________

I LEARN BEST BY:

Looking  Listening  Touching

CHALLENGES I HAVE IN SCHOOL

Being prepared for class each day
Completing homework
Participating in class

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Have at least 2 sharpened pencils
Write homework in agenda daily
Volunteer to answer questions
My IEP Word Search

Words:

ADD
DISABILITY
LEARN
SUPPORT
AIDE
PROGRESS
TEACHER
AUTISM

IEP

SLD

Made with: Discovery Education: Puzzle Maker
Invitation Prompts

Dear _______________________,
I am writing to remind you about my _______________. The meeting will take place on ___________ at ____. We will be meeting in Room ____. I have attached a ___ of my IEP so you can _______________________. I look forward to _______________________.

Sincerely,

Dear _______________________,
I am writing to _______________________. To prepare for this meeting, I have _______________________. Before the meeting, I hope you will prepare by _______________________. Thank you for taking the time to _______________________.

Sincerely,
My “I Will” Statements

Name:

Need:

To work on this need, I will:

Draw a picture of what this will look like.

Need:

To work on this need, I will:

Draw a picture of what this will look like.
Progress Report

Name: 

Date: 

Goal: 

So far on this goal I have ________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

In order to continue to make progress on this goal I will need to:

1) 

2) 

3) 

Draw an illustration, chart or graph of your progress:

Assessment
The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale-Adolescent Version is a student self-report measure of self-determination designed primarily for use by, and normed with, adolescents with cognitive and developmental disabilities. The scale has two primary purposes:

- To provide students and educators a tool that assists them to identify student strengths and areas of support and instructional need in self-determination; and
- To provide a research tool to examine the relationship between and among self-determination and factors that promote/inhibit self-determined behavior, to evaluate the efficacy of interventions to promote self-determination, and for use with related research activities.

The scale has 72 items and is divided into four sections. Each section examines a different essential characteristic of self-determined behavior: Autonomy, Self-Regulation, Psychological Empowerment and Self-Realization. Each section has unique directions that should be read before completing the relevant items. Scoring the scale (see Procedural Guidelines for scoring directions) results in a total self-determination score and subdomain scores in each of the four essential characteristics of self-determined behavior. The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines (http://www.beachcenter.org/education_and_training/self-determination/default.aspx) provides information for administration and scoring the measure and a discussion about the use of self-report measures in general. The scale should not be used until the administrator is thoroughly familiar with these issues.

The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale-Adolescent Version was developed by Michael C. Wehmeyer and Kathy Kechner at The Arc of the United States with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under Cooperative Agreement #H123I00012. Questions used in Section One (Autonomy) were adapted, with permission from the authors, from the Autonomous Functioning Checklist. Questions used in Section Four (Self-Realization) were adapted, with permission from the author, from the short form of the Personal Orientation Inventory. Appropriate citations for both instruments are available in The Arc’s Self-Determination Scale Procedural Guidelines. The Arc gratefully acknowledges the generosity of those researchers.

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## Autonomy

### Section One

#### 1A. Independence: Routine personal care and family oriented functions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Option 1: Do not even if I have the chance</th>
<th>Option 2: Do sometimes when I have the chance</th>
<th>Option 3: Do most of the time I have the chance</th>
<th>Option 4: Do every time I have the chance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I make my own meals or snacks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I care for my own clothes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I do chores in my home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I keep my own personal items together.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I do simple first aid or medical care for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I keep good personal care and grooming.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1B. Independence: Interaction with the Environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Option 1: Do not even if I have the chance</th>
<th>Option 2: Do sometimes when I have the chance</th>
<th>Option 3: Do most of the time I have the chance</th>
<th>Option 4: Do every time I have the chance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. I make friends with other kids my age.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I use the post office.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I keep my appointments and meetings.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I deal with sales people at stores and restaurants.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Notes

Directions: Check the answer on each question that BEST tells how you act in that situation. There are no right or wrong answers. Check only one answer for each question. If you have a disability that limits you from actually performing the activity, but you have control over the activity by using a personal care attendant, answer like you performed the activity.

**1A. Subtotal ____________**

**1B. Subtotal ____________**
### 1C. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Recreational and leisure activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I do free time activities based on my interests.</th>
<th>I do free time activities based on my interests.</th>
<th>I do free time activities based on my interests.</th>
<th>I do free time activities based on my interests.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do most of the time I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I plan weekend activities that I like to do.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I am involved in school-related activities.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>My friends and I choose activities that we want to do.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I write letters, notes, or talk on the phone to friends and family.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I listen to music that I like.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1D. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Community Involvement and interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I volunteer in things that I am interested in.</th>
<th>I volunteer in things that I am interested in.</th>
<th>I volunteer in things that I am interested in.</th>
<th>I volunteer in things that I am interested in.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do most of the time I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I go to restaurants that I like.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>I go to movies, concerts, and dances.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I go shopping or spend time at shopping centers or malls.</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I take part in youth groups (like 4-H, scouting, church groups).</td>
<td>I do not even if I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do sometimes when I have the chance.</td>
<td>I do every time I have the chance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. I do school and free time activities based on my career interests.</td>
<td>☐ I do not even if I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do most of the time I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do every time I have the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I work on school work that will improve my career chances.</td>
<td>☐ I do not even if I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do most of the time I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do every time I have the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. I make long-range career plans.</td>
<td>☐ I do not even if I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do most of the time I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do every time I have the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I work or have worked to earn money.</td>
<td>☐ I do not even if I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do most of the time I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do every time I have the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I am in or have been in career or job classes or training.</td>
<td>☐ I do not even if I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do most of the time I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do every time I have the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. I have looked into job interests by visiting work sites or talking to people in that job.</td>
<td>☐ I do not even if I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do most of the time I have the chance</td>
<td>☐ I do every time I have the chance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**1E. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Post-school directions**

**1E. Subtotal**

| 28. I choose my clothes and the personal items I use every day. | ☐ I do not even if I have the chance | ☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance | ☐ I do most of the time I have the chance | ☐ I do every time I have the chance |
| 29. I choose my own hairstyle. | ☐ I do not even if I have the chance | ☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance | ☐ I do most of the time I have the chance | ☐ I do every time I have the chance |
| 30. I choose gifts to give to family and friends. | ☐ I do not even if I have the chance | ☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance | ☐ I do most of the time I have the chance | ☐ I do every time I have the chance |
| 31. I decorate my own room. | ☐ I do not even if I have the chance | ☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance | ☐ I do most of the time I have the chance | ☐ I do every time I have the chance |
| 32. I choose how to spend my personal money. | ☐ I do not even if I have the chance | ☐ I do sometimes when I have the chance | ☐ I do most of the time I have the chance | ☐ I do every time I have the chance |

**1F. Acting on the basis of preferences, beliefs, interests and abilities: Personal Expression**

**1F. Subtotal**
Section Two
Self-Regulation

2A. Interpersonal cognitive problem-solving.

33. **Beginning:** You are sitting in a planning meeting with your parents and teachers. You want to take a class where you can learn to work as a cashier in a store. Your parents want you to take the Family and Child Care class. You can only take one of the classes.

**Middle:**

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you taking a vocational class where you will learn to be a cashier.

Story Score __________

35. **Beginning:** Your friends are acting like they are mad at you. You are upset about this.

**Middle:**

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you and your friends getting along just fine.

Story Score __________

34. **Beginning:** You hear a friend talking about a new job opening at the local bookstore. You love books and want a job. You decide you would like to work at the bookstore.

**Middle:**

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you working at the bookstore.

Story Score __________

36. **Beginning:** You go to your English class one morning and discover your English book is not in your backpack. You are upset because you need that book to do your homework.

**Middle:**

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you using your English book for homework.

Story Score __________
37. **Beginning:** You are in a club at school. The club advisor announces that the club members will need to elect new officers at the next meeting. You want to be the president of the club.

**Middle:**

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you being elected as the club president.

Story Score __________

38. **Beginning:** You are at a new school and you don’t know anyone. You want to have friends.

**Middle:**

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

**Ending:** The story ends with you having many friends at the new school.

Story Score __________

2B. **Goal setting and task performance**

**Directions:** The next three questions ask about your plans for the future. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. For each question, tell if you have made plans for that outcome and, if so, what those plans are and how to meet them.

39. Where do you want to live after you graduate?

☐ I have no planned for that yet.

☐ I want to live ____________________________

   List four things you should do to meet this goal:
   1) _______________________________________
   2) _______________________________________
   3) _______________________________________
   4) _______________________________________  

40. Where do you want to work after you graduate?

☐ I have not planned for that yet.

☐ I want to work ____________________________

   List four things you should do to meet this goal:
   1) _______________________________________
   2) _______________________________________
   3) _______________________________________
   4) _______________________________________  

41. What type of transportation do you plan to use after graduation?

☐ I have not planned for that yet.

☐ I plan to use ____________________________

   List four things you should do to meet this goal:
   1) _______________________________________
   2) _______________________________________
   3) _______________________________________
   4) _______________________________________
Section Three
Psychological Empowerment

Directions: Check the answer that BEST describes you. Choose only one answer for each question. There are no right or wrong answers.

42. I usually do what my friends want...or
I tell my friends if they are doing something I don't want to do.

43. I tell others when I have new or different ideas or opinions...or
I usually agree with other people's opinions or ideas.

44. I usually agree with people when they tell me I can't do something...or
I tell people when I think I can do something that they tell me I can't.

45. I tell people when they have hurt my feelings...or
I am afraid to tell people when they have hurt my feelings.

46. I can make my own decisions...or
Other people make decisions for me.

47. Trying hard at school doesn't do me much good...or
Trying hard at school will help me get a good job.

48. I can get what I want by working hard...or
I need good luck to get what I want.

49. It is no use to keep trying because that won't change things...or
I keep trying even after I get something wrong.

50. I have the ability to do the job I want...or
I cannot do what it takes to do the job I want.

51. I don't know how to make friends...or
I know how to make friends.

52. I am able to work with others...or
I cannot work well with others.

53. I do not make good choices...or
I can make good choices.

54. If I have the ability, I will be able to get the job I want...or
I probably will not get the job I want even if I have the ability.

55. I will have a hard time making new friends...or
I will be able to make friends in new situations.

56. I will be able to work with others if I need to...or
I will not be able to work with others if I need to.

57. My choices will not be honored...or
I will be able to make choices that are important to me.

Section 3 Subtotal _________
### Section Four: Self-Realization

Directions: Tell whether each of these statements describes how you feel about yourself or not. There are no right or wrong answers. Choose only the answer that BEST fits you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not feel ashamed of any of my emotions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel free to be angry at people I care for.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can show my feelings even when people might see me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can like people even if I don't agree with them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am afraid of doing things wrong.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is better to be yourself than to be popular.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am loved because I give love.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what I do best.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't accept my own limitations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I cannot do many things.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not an important person.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to make up for my limitations.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other people like me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident in my abilities.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 4 Subtotal ________________
Scoring Step 1:
Record the raw scores from each section:

Autonomy
1A = 
1B = 
1C = 
1D = 
1E = 
1F =  
Domain Total: 

Self-Regulation
2A = 
2B =  
Domain Total: 

Psychological Empowerment
3 =  
Domain Total: 

Self-Realization
4 =  
Domain Total: 

Scoring Step 2:
Sum each Domain Total for a Total Score:
Self-Determination
Total = 

Scoring Step 3:
Using the conversion tables in Appendix A, convert raw scores into percentile scores for comparison with the sample norms (Norm Sample) and the percentage of positive responses (Positive Scores):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autonomy</th>
<th>Norm</th>
<th>Positive Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1D =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1E =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1F =</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Domain Total: 

Self-Regulation
2A = 
2B = 
Domain Total: 

Psychological Empowerment
3 =  
Domain Total: 

Self-Realization
4 =  
Domain Total: 

Scoring Step 4:
Fill in the graph for the percentile scores from the norming sample. From the appropriate percentile down, darken the complete bar graph (See example in Scoring Manual):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One A</th>
<th>One B</th>
<th>One C</th>
<th>One D</th>
<th>One E</th>
<th>One F</th>
<th>Two A</th>
<th>Two B</th>
<th>Two C</th>
<th>Two D</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring Step 5:
Fill in the graph for the percentile scores indicating the percent positive responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One</th>
<th>Two</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Four</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN IFPS: A LOOK AT EARLY INTERVENTION
IEP Vocabulary Assessment

Directions: Match the vocabulary term with its correct definition:

WORD BANK

IEP
B. Accommodations
C. Self-Advocacy
D. Educational Setting
E. FAPE
F. IDEA
G. Services
H. Goal

1. Every student gets a free and appropriate education____
2. They kind of environment that a student is learning in____
3. Standing up for yourself and asking questions____
4. An individualized educational plan that is created for a specific student____
5. A skill that a student is working on with the help of their teachers and parents____
6. A law that makes sure each student gets the help they need____
7. Changes in an activity or assignment that help a student learn____
8. An action or class that helps gives students the help that they need____
Student:

Circle one: Pre-assessment  -  Post-assessment

Date of Birth:

Date of Assessment:

Assessor:

Self-Advocacy Inventory

Strengths

Interests

Weaknesses

How to get help

Helpful supports

I work best when...

My goals are...
IEP Legal Analysis Search

Name:

Date:

Directions:

Search your IEP for the following sections and information.

As you find each one, highlight the section on your IEP and place a checkmark next to the title on this checklist.

Does your IEP contain:

1. Current Information
2. Disabling Condition
3. Present Levels of Performance
4. Goals
5. Progress on Goals
6. Strengths/Interests
7. Concerns
8. Accommodations/ Aides
9. Services/ Offer of FAPE
10. Percentages of General Education and Special Education time
My Vision

Name:

Date:

Directions: Fill in the blank spaces with your ideas for your vision of your life after high school.

You may expand further and include more information that is prompted below.

Once finished, type up your Vision summary and add a picture that illustrates how you hope to see your life after high school.

After high school, I plan to live ______________________________. I want to live here because ________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

I will learn more about __________________________________________ because ______

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________.

I will work ________________________________________________________________.

I will play ________________________________________________________________.

Overall, I hope my life is ________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________.
Career Investigations

So, You Want to Be A . . .

Directions:

For this assignment you will create an interactive display-board or booklet about a career that you are interested in or passionate about. Similar to a "how to" guide, the project will describe what a person needs to know and do in order to work in this specific profession. Whether you choose to be a writer, fashion designer, professional athlete, or business owner, you will create a guide for people your own age who might be interested in the same career.

Your display-board should include the following:

(1) A description of what it is like to be in this specific profession

(2) The pros and cons of being in this profession/career

(3) What you need in order to work in this profession (i.e. personality types, strengths, skills, education, job experience, and or knowledge)

(4) An annotated list of resources for more information about this profession (books, magazines, websites, videos, national organizations, etc.)

(5) A glossary: words and things that people in this profession use and what they mean

(6) Flashy layout, pictures and images.

### My IEP Word Search

```
MAIGQYVDDFXIND
PROGRESSEGJNJ
TGZWATSICBDZIS
PUSIKWCQMCLOQOTC
ACCOMMODATIONAL
WGFZCERCQJYBRCO
SELFADVOCACYIS
DISABILITYVEAFU
PLBMNCJNPJRAUIR
ZEUXMVVFVNIITDE
AKIBOMAJISDDIOF
HJLDGTCPNTESMX
KZAAOFEOYEEINMOG
TONFLSDKBTVJJDW
CZPYULSAPFJYMXP
```

**Directions:** Find these words and then add a definition on the list below:

- **ACCOMMODATION**
- **DISABILITY**
- **IEP**
- **AIDE**
- **SELF ADVOCACY**
- **AIDE**
- **DISCLOSURE**
- **MODIFICATION**
SERVICES

AUTISM

GOAL

Made with: Discovery Education: Puzzle Maker
Meeting Invitation

Name:

Date:

Directions:

Write a letter inviting meeting participants to attend your IEP meeting. You need to include the purpose of the meeting, preparations, dates and who will be attending the meeting.

Dear ________________________,
I am writing to ________________. To prepare for this meeting, I have ________________________. Before the meeting, I hope you will prepare by ________________________. Thank you for taking the time to ________________________.

Sincerely,

Meeting Invitation

Name:

Date:

Directions:

Write a letter inviting meeting participants to attend your IEP meeting. You need to include the purpose of the meeting, preparations, dates and who will be attending the meeting.

Dear _____________________,

_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________________

Sincerely,

______________________
IEP Input Activity

Name:

Date:

**Directions:** Use this template to create a paragraph explaining one of your strengths. Once you have filled out the template, type up your paragraph and create an illustration to go with your work.

**Introduction/ Topic:** I have many strengths.

**Body:**

One of the strengths I have is ____________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________.

This is a strength for me because ______________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

I can ______________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

Also, ______________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________

**Conclusion**

That is why __________________________________________________________________________
is one of my best strengths.

IEP Goal Paragraph

Name:

Date:

Directions: Use this template to create a paragraph explaining one of your goals. Once you have filled out the template, type up your paragraph and create an illustration to go with your work.

Introduction/Topic: One of my goals for the next year is____________________________

____________________________________________________________________________.

Body:

I want to be able to do this because________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________.

In order to achieve this goal, I need to ______________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

also, ________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Conclusion

That is how I will be able________________________________________________________
References


Snyder, E. P., & Shapiro, E. S. (1997). Teaching students with emotional/behavioral disorders the skills to participate in the development of their own IEPs. *Behavioral Disorders, 22*, 246-259.


Chapter Five

Implications

Increased student inclusion is not only a proven beneficial component of the IEP process, but it seems only natural that a student would be given the opportunity to provide input into their own education plan. By constantly excluding students from the process of educational planning, they are removed from the big picture and may interpret education as a continuous barrage of daily menial tasks. Allowing students to participate in creating the larger picture of their education curriculum can increase their awareness, confidence, self-reliability and overall success (Test et al., 2004; Barnard-Brak & Letchenberger, 2010). In moving forward, educators must ensure that promoting self-advocacy and self-determination is an integral part of each IEP.

Lessons Learned

After a review of current literature and the creation and implementation of a manual of strategies to increase student inclusion into the IEP process, two central themes emerged.

Using tested IEP inclusion approaches and strategies in appropriate settings can increase student success.

Increased inclusion in the IEP process is correlated with an increase in self-determination. Previous studies concluded that “Involving students in the Individual Education Program (IEP) process is an important step towards increasing self-determination skills in young adolescents. Providing opportunities for students to express their interests and preferences along with their wants and desires leads to increased self-determination skills for students with disabilities” (Van Reusen & Bos, 1994; Zhang, 2001 from Test and Neale, 2004, p. 135). Additionally, “Involving students with disabilities in the process of planning their Individualized
Education Plans (IEP’s) allows them the opportunity to utilize the important skills related to self-determination such as self-awareness, self-advocacy, and goal setting” (Test et al., 2004, p. 392). Supplementary observations were obtained through a student self-advocacy assessment before and after IEP inclusion strategies were implemented. Results showed that students were not familiar with many aspects of self-determination and self-advocacy including listing their strengths, weaknesses and helpful supports during initial testing, however they performed higher overall following IEP inclusion strategies and a post assessment. With assistance and prompting, students were better able to provide examples of the aspects of self-determination and self-advocacy stated above.

In order to enact inclusion approaches, there are existing and tested strategies to increase student involvement in the IEP process that increase student progress and success. "One strategy that has potential for significantly impacting student self-determination and self-advocacy skills is to prepare students to be significantly involved in the development and implementation of their IEPs, including meaningful involvement at their IEP meetings and involvement in monitoring their own goal achievement” (Test, et al, 2004, p. 393). Furthermore, “Anecdotal evidence suggests that students who lead their IEP meetings may gain some status and recognition for their involvement” (Mason, McGahee-Kovac, Johnson, & Stillerman, 2002 from Test, et al., 2004, p. 393). Research indicates that there are tested IEP inclusion approaches and strategies in appropriate settings that can be used to increase student success as well as increase students’ self-advocacy and self-determination skills.
Increasing IEP implementation strategies earlier can lead to an increase in student’s self-advocacy, self-determination and success when they are legally obligated to participate in the IEP process.

Studies have shown that “Student participation had several positive effects on the IEP process: (a) Meetings became student centered, (b) elementary students had the opportunity to use self-determination skills in an authentic setting, and (c) adult participants noted increased collaborative problem solving” (Danneker & Bottge, 2008, p. 4).

Additionally, early exposure to the IEP process can further increase students’ success when leading and participating in the IEP process later in school (Danneker & Bottge 2008). Danneker and Bottge (2008) state that, “most self-determination curricula focus on secondary students as they prepare for the transition to adult life as required by law (i.e., Individuals With Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997, PL 105-17, 20 U.S.C. § 1414 [d][1][B][vii]) rather than on elementary-age students, who likely will need these skills as they progress through school” (p.1). They expand by insisting that, “Waiting until students get to middle school to teach self-determination skills could reduce the time needed for them to sufficiently learn and practice these skills” (Sands & Doll, 1996 from Danneker & Bottge, 2008, p. 1).

Project Implementation
In order to ensure successful implementation of the resources included in this manual, educators need to create positive relationships with all involved parties: parents, teachers, administrators and the student. A strong relationship with the student will allow implementers to choose activities, environments and assignments that accurately address the student’s needs and are at an accessible level for the student to derive meaning and growth. Facilitating strong
relationships with parents and administrators through consistent and open communication will allow educators to access as many details as is possible to make informed choices about the direction of the student’s inclusion into the IEP process. It is important for all parties to consider a student’s inclusion into the IEP process as a decision of the IEP team and that each member is able to provide input regarding their recommendation for a student’s inclusion. Success of implementation of this manual should be evaluated on the basis of individual student growth in areas of self-advocacy, self-determination, and overall academic student success as well as by any successful increase in student inclusion in the IEP process.

Global Implications

This project adds a concrete compilation of strategies to increase student inclusion in Elementary and Middle level students. If these strategies and others like them prove effective in the long term, potential implication could include reworking aspects of IDEA 2004 to include early inclusion provisions. The law that mandates students be included in the IEP process at age 14 mentions no supports to ensure students are ready for this responsibility. By mandating new legislature for early partial inclusion, we can ensure students are being provided adequate support, training and exposure to the IEP process before they are fully included into the process at age 14.

Further Study Needed

More sound academic testing and attention needs to be placed on the inclusion of younger students. When we exclude students from the IEP process until they are 14 and then invite them to run their own meeting they are usually unable to completely do so without training (Test & Neale, 2004). By increasing involvement slowly and steadily throughout their younger
years, students will be better prepared to lead their own IEP meeting in high school (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). Future studies need to focus on impacts of early inclusion and in creating a more inclusive IEP process. Additionally, more testing and research on potential practical applications and methods of inclusion is needed.

Conclusion

This study is important because it reminds students, educators and parents of the bigger picture of education. Many times all involved parties seem to be caught up in the small bits of education, the facts, dates, and grades, and not enough importance is placed on ensuring that each student is prepared for life outside of school. Increasing students’ inclusion into the IEP process will allow them to increase skills like self-determination and self-advocacy that will enable them to take more control of their lives both in and out of school (Danneker & Bottge, 2008). “Self-determination is a process that emerges across the lifespan as children and adolescents learn skills and develop attitudes that empower them to become causal agents in their own lives” (Wehmeyer & Schwartz, 1998, as cited by Test & Neale, 2004, p. 136). It is vital, especially for students with disabilities, to learn to advocate for themselves and to realize that they have control of their lives. They can only learn to do this if we as educators and parents allow them the access to do so.
References


Snyder, E. P., & Shapiro, E. S. (1997). Teaching students with emotional/behavioral disorders the skills to participate in the development of their own IEPs. *Behavioral Disorders, 22*, 246-259.


