

### WRITING QUALITY IEPs: INDICATORS OF BEST PRACTICE

The successful completion of the IEP process requires the gathering of information from a wide variety of sources. Of primary importance is an in-depth review of material relating to the impact of the student's disability(ies) on instruction as it relates to progress in curriculum, the ability of the student to adjust to new learning environments and strategies and the participation of the student in the Transition process. It is imperative that the collaborative IEP examine this information and include all applicable and pertinent data in the statements of present performance and management needs (pages 3, 4, 5). Additionally, information gathered will inform the goals and objectives (page 6), the supplementary aids and services/supports (page 7) and the other programs considered (page 8) for each student.

There are no specific statements that can serve each student as the IEP defines an individualized program of educational strategies, behavioral and health related supports. There are, however, ideas which generalize to all students and across all environments, and which should serve as guiding principles in completing the above referenced pages. A reminder! These areas are not mutually exclusive. Areas overlap, interact and inform the provision of appropriate services and supports for students. If we treat them as completely separate entities, we lose sight of the "whole child" and create gaps in the provision of instructional and behavioral supports.

Below you will find entries dealing with "Differentiated Instruction" and "Positive Behavior Supports", areas that underlie the completion of IEPs across all classifications of disability and recommended services. In addition, you will find entries relating to "Inclusion", "Autism Spectrum" and "Transition Planning" that include specific references that should be present on the IEP pages mentioned above.

For additional information regarding the completion of the IEP process, please refer to "Creating a Quality IEP" (March, 1999) and "The IEP: An In-Depth Review" (Spring, 2003). Both manuals have been distributed as part of district-based IEP training.

**WRITING QUALITY IEPs: BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS FOR DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION**

**Differentiated Instruction** is a way of thinking about teaching and learning based on a set of beliefs:

- Students who are the same age differ in their readiness to learn, their interests, their styles of learning, their experiences and their life circumstances;
- The differences in students are significant enough to make a major impact on what student need to learn, the pace at which they need to learn it, and the support they need from teachers and others to learn it well;
- Students learn best when they can make a connection between the curriculum and their interests and life experiences;
- Students will learn best when learning opportunities are natural;
- Students are more effective learners when classrooms and schools create a sense of community in which students feel significant and respected, and
- The central job of schools is to maximize the capacity of each student.

**Differentiated Instruction** tells us **HOW** to teach each student; *the curriculum tells us what.*

**Differentiated Instruction** shows us how to teach the same standard to a range of learners by employing a variety of teaching and learning modes.  
*Teachers differentiate curriculum by individualizing the content, process and product of instruction.*

<p align="center"><b>IEP Pages 3, 4 and 5</b></p>	<p><b>Present Performance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the information points contained in the box above to guide the entries in present levels of performance. This information is essential to the proper description of current learning/behavior and the projection of future progress.</li> <li>• Because the need to differentiate instruction might be due to the impact of cognitive, social, behavioral and/or physical/health issues, information must be included in present performance on all appropriate pages. For example, a student whose levels of frustration (and subsequent problem behavior) require the adaptation of course content as well as the time allotted for completion of assignments should have entries made on both pages 3 and 4. You would need to discuss the inter-relationship of these issues, not just that the student becomes easily frustrated. You need to discuss the why and how.</li> <li>• When referring to strategies that work and do not work, be sure to include information on why! Saying a student uses graphic organizers is not enough. Indicate that the student uses graphic organizers because.....</li> <li>• Remember to address Content, Process and Product as they relate to academic, cognitive, behavioral, social and/or physical/health issues. Each present performance page of the IEP addresses specific reasons why there is a need to differentiate instruction.</li> </ul> <p><b>Management Needs:</b> Include mandated and programmatic information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special attention should be given to the Human Resources (1:1 Crisis Management Paraprofessionals; Related and additional support services) which are required to carry out the individualized program of instruction and behavior support. Be specific as to the role each provider plays in the student's educational program.</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>IEP Page 7</b></p>	<p><b>General Education Environment:</b> Enter information regarding the appropriate instructional and behavioral programs and techniques used under Supplementary Aids and Service. Indicate the adaptations, modifications and specific devices that are deemed necessary for successful participation in the recommended service.</p> <p><b>Special Class Environment:</b> Enter information regarding the appropriate instructional and behavioral programs and techniques under Supports. Indicate the adaptations, modifications and specific devices and programs that are used to support instruction.</p>
<p align="center"><b>IEP Page 8</b></p>	<p><b>Other Programs Considered:</b> Address the level and intensity of the differentiated strategies that are used/required to support the student's success and progress in curriculum.</p>

**WRITING QUALITY IEPs: BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS FOR POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS**

**Positive Behavior Supports**

All Behavior Intervention Plans must be based on a Functional Behavioral Assessment. **Functional Behavioral Assessment is a systematic look at behavior(s) and its context in order to determine its function(s).**

The underlying assumption is that all behavior has a function, or purpose. By understanding the function we can determine what is maintaining (reinforcing) the maladaptive behavior and then structure the student's environment to eliminate or reduce this reinforcement. At the same time we must teach the student an adaptive way to achieve the same function.

**Steps in Functional Behavioral Assessment:**

- Clearly define the behavior of concern, answering the questions: WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHO, WHO ELSE;
- Collect data to clarify the above questions, as well as HOW MUCH, HOW OFTERN, and HOW LONG;
- Examine **Setting Events**: Long-term factors that may predispose the student to behave in a certain way
  - History: Social history, family, trauma, long-term illness, irrational beliefs, physical/medical status
  - Situational: The context of the behavior: time, place, activity, people, etc;
- Examine **Antecedents**: "Triggers" that may precipitate the behavior;
- Examine **Consequences**: What typically happens after the behavior;
- Some helpful, efficient forms\* for collecting data are: scatter plots, ABC charts, Motivation Assessment Scales;
- Determine possible functions of the behavior (based on the above);
- Determine **Reinforcers**: Things the student likes (including praise, privileges, etc.) that can be used to strengthen new, adaptive behaviors;
- **Replacement behavior** (what you will teach the student to do to get his needs met). **THIS MUST WORK AT LEAST AS WELL AS THE MALADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR IT REPLACES;**
- **Crisis Plan**: What staff should do when the behavior occurs. This should minimize reinforcement;
- **Behavior Intervention Plan**: How you will reduce the maladaptive behavior and increase adaptive behavior;
- List **staff members** responsible for implementing and tracking the plan;
- Set **dates for review** of the plan and for modifications as needed.

ALL BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION PLANS MUST BE BASED ON A FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENT.

A Functional Behavioral Assessment should be conducted for all students whose behaviors impede learning, regardless of classification of disability.

\*Forms and training in Functional Behavioral Assessment are available through the District 75 Office of Positive Behavior Support.

<b>IEP Pages 3, 4 and 5</b>	<p><b>Present Performance:</b> Place information from Functional Behavioral Analysis on appropriate pages. Where appropriate note information on more than one page. For example, if behavior impacts on learning (rate, style, content, etc) place all pertinent information on page 3. Evidence of best practices re: differentiated instruction is appropriate. If behavior is a function of a health/physical issue, place information not only on page 4 but also on page 5.</p> <p><b>Management Needs:</b> Include mandated and programmatic information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special attention should be given to the Human Resources (1:1 Crisis Management Paraprofessionals, Counselors and any additional support services) which are required to carry out the individualized program of instruction and behavior support. Indicate the existence of a Behavior Intervention Program, and any specific individualized or school based behavior reinforcement system in use (e.g. Token economy).</li> </ul>
<b>IEP Page 7</b>	<u>See entries under Differentiated Instruction</u>
<b>IEP Page 8</b>	<u>See entries under Differentiated Instruction</u>

The tenets of Differentiated Instruction and Functional Behavioral Assessment are central to the development of appropriate instructional and behavioral interventions for ALL students. "Best Practices", that are based on both underlying philosophies and that utilize individualized techniques and strategies of delivered through collaborative effort, are the right of each and every student regardless of classification of disability, recommended service or mandated related and/or support services.

When addressing the areas of Inclusion, Transition and Autism some additional points need be added to the discussion of the collaborative IEP team. An examination of the information presented should hit a chord with team members - one that signals the importance of including these points of discussion in ALL collaborative IEP meetings. It will also become apparent that this, and related, information should be included on the appropriate pages of the IEP.

## WRITING QUALITY IEPs: BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS FOR INCLUSION

### **INCLUSION**

Specific information regarding the entries on Page 1 (Recommended Service) and Page 7 (General Education Environment) are included in the MEMORANDUM from Linda Wernikoff (School Programs and Support Services) dated July 3, 2002: Addendum to the IEP Manual. Please refer to this for specifics on writing appropriate entries and delineating points of discussion.

Below you will find questions that can form the basis for discussion at collaborative IEP meetings. These questions will help team members decide if Inclusion is appropriate at this time. They will also help elicit information that should be included on the various pages of the IEP. Suggested pages for inclusion of information are in parentheses after the question. Page designations are suggestions.

**Note:** Many of these questions deal with information that reflects back to the discussions on Differentiated Instruction and Functional Behavioral Assessments.

- Can supplementary aids and services be integrated so the student can remain in the general education classroom and receive the level of special education support required to meet his/her IEP goals? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
- The student does NOT have to be on grade level to participate in an age-appropriate general education classroom (e.g. many students with severe cognitive delays participate in general education classrooms), but what are the student's academic skills and/or what are the non-academic benefits? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9)
- What curriculum adaptations does the student need to access the general education curriculum? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 6)
- Can the student address his/her IEP goals in the general education classroom? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 6)
- The student does NOT have to have excellent behavior to attend a general education classroom (e.g. many students with severe emotional disabilities attend general education classrooms), but what supports will the student need to succeed in general education and not negatively impact on the instruction being provided in the classroom? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 7)
- What behavior plan has been put in place? (IEP Page 4 and completion of FBA and Behavior Intervention Plan)
- What related services and other personnel supports will the student need to succeed? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9)
- What are the student's work habits and attitudes toward work? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5)
- What are the student's communication skills? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)
- What are the student's social and interpersonal skills? (IEP Pages 3, 4, 5 and FBA)
- What knowledge and skills will District 75 and general education staff need to help this students succeed in a general education classroom? (IEP Page 3, 4, 5, 7)

The following specific information needs to be addressed on the IEP for D75 students in "full-time" General Education with SETSS (revised 6/10/02)

IEP Page (See Note)	Specific Language/Information	Additional Explanation/Comments
1	<p><b>Recommended Service:</b> General Education with Special Education Teacher Support Services from a Specialized School (D75) _____ periods/day*, direct service** in the general education classroom*** and _____ periods of Paraprofessional support**** ("with related services" for mandated students). A maximum group size for SETSS must be entered on the "staffing ratio" line.*****</p> <p>*The IEP team must indicate the number of periods per day/week the student will receive Special Education Teacher Support Services. **The IEP team must indicate the distribution of time between direct and indirect services (or a combination of both). ***The IEP team must indicate the location of services (i.e., the general education classroom or a separate location or a combination of both). ****The IEP team must indicate the number of periods per day/week of paraprofessional support. *****The staffing ratio on Page 1 must also be completed indicating the maximum group size for the provision of Special Education Teacher Support Services. Regardless of the location of services, in the general education classroom or a separate location, group size may not exceed a maximum of eight students (i.e. staffing ratio of 8:1).</p>	<p><b>The SETSS mandate</b> indicates the number of periods/day or week that the D75 Special Education Teacher is providing instructional and behavioral support (direct and indirect) for <b>the D75 students</b> within a <b>specific</b> General Education classroom and/or separate location.</p> <p><b>Direct Service:</b> working with the student, the delivery of specially designed and/or supplementary instruction by a special education teacher that addresses compensatory skill development and remediation activities; addresses educational/behavioral needs directly related to the student's disability, and the impact of the disability on progress in curriculum. This includes modifications and adaptations to subject matter, the educational environment and/or instructional strategies that become necessary while working with the student(s).</p> <p><b>Indirect service:</b> provides <b>collaborative consultation</b> between the special education teacher and the general education teacher which focuses on specific strategies in the above mentioned areas that will enable the student to succeed in the general education classroom. These strategies are implemented jointly by the general education and special education teachers with the ongoing support of the paraprofessional assigned to the classroom.</p>
7	<p><b>For D75 students in "full-time" General Education with SETSS, information must be entered in the "General Education Environment" section as follows:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Area of Instruction:</u> ALL</li> <li>• <u>Language(s) or Communication Mode:</u> same as page 1 entry(ies)</li> <li>• <u>Periods per week:</u> ALL</li> <li>• <u>Supplementary Aids and Service:</u> (from "Recommended Service" on page 1).....Special Education Teacher Support Services, as outlined above paraprofessional support or other support ( please refer to pages 14-16 for specific examples of "Recommended Services"). In addition, for students in middle or high school, you must indicate the general content areas requiring support (e.g. social studies, math), indicating "primarily in.....". This applies to both the SETSS and Paraprofessional supports.</li> <li>• <u>Program Modifications and Supports for School Personnel:</u> May include staff development for community school personnel on modification and/or adaptation of curriculum; use of adaptive equipment; incorporation of specialized technology into the instructional process.</li> </ul>	<p>In the section for Supplementary Aids and Service you must enter the "recommended Service" as outlined above and in "Creating a Quality IEP".</p> <p>In the section for Program Modifications and Supports for School Personnel you will list those modifications and supports for school personnel specific to the student being served. See "Creating a Quality IEP" (March, 2001), pg. 46 for sample entries.</p>



## WRITING QUALITY IEPs: BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS FOR TRANSITION PLANNING

### **Transition Planning**

**Transition Planning is a process consisting of a set of coordinated activities that:**

- Build on previously learned skills; (information included on pages 3, 4, 5, 10)
- Identify new skills for instruction; (information included on pages 6, 7, 10)
- Provide the students with opportunities to learn in meaningful, age-appropriate environments, (information included on pages 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10), and
- Establish connections with Adult Service Agencies. (information included on page 10)

### **Implications of Differentiated Instruction and Functional Behavioral Assessment:**

- Modifications and adaptations to instruction, including in content, process and product, follow the student to the work place;
- Appropriate expectations should be determined based on these needs, and
- Some students with behavioral issues will learn appropriate social behavior and coping skills more readily at community-based work sites (the natural environment for such behaviors to occur).

<b>Specific entries for students in full and part-time work programs (Page 7)</b>	
For students in full-time work programs	<p><b>General Education Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of Instruction: All</li> <li>• Language(s) or Communication Mode: Same as entries on page 1</li> <li>• Periods per week: All</li> <li>• Supplementary Aids and Service: _____ is meeting his/her IEP goals by following a career development/life skills curriculum at a community based work site.</li> <li>• Program Modifications and Supports for School Personnel: Enter any instructional and/or behavioral modifications and adaptations that on-site workers should know about so they can be more fully involved in interactions with student.</li> </ul>
For students in part-time work programs	<p><b>General Education Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of Instruction: Work Study</li> <li>• Language(s) or Communication Mode: Same as entries on page 1</li> <li>• Periods per week: exact number of periods in the work study site</li> <li>• Supplementary Aids and Service: _____ is meeting his/her IEP goals by following a career development/life skills curriculum at a community based work site.</li> <li>• Program Modifications and Supports for School Personnel: Enter any instructional and/or behavioral modifications and adaptations that on-site workers should know about so they can be more fully involved in interactions with student.</li> </ul> <p><b>Special Class Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area of Instruction: All except above</li> <li>• Language(s) or Communication Mode: Same as entries on page 1</li> <li>• Periods per week: All except above</li> <li>• Special Class and Staffing Ratio: enter mandated staffing ratio</li> <li>• Supports: can be related services, 1:1 para, alternate placement para, token economy, picture communication symbol board.</li> <li>• Reason for non-participation in General Education Environment: can be an indication of the impact of the disability and the intensity of needed supports, the extent to which the general education curriculum must be modified, the need for a career development/life skills program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Suggested Order for Completion of the IEP for Transition Planning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify abilities, interests, needs for support and dreams to determine Long Term Adult Outcomes (top Page 10)</li> <li>• Identify skill based, cross-content information for inclusion in Present Performance and Management Needs, incorporating the tenets of Differentiated Instruction and Functional Behavioral Assessment. (Pages 3, 4, 5)</li> <li>• Develop Annual Goals and Short Term Objectives that will "bridge" the gap between present performance and desired outcomes. (Page 6)</li> <li>• Complete the "Transition Services" section, creating an action plan to connect all the previous information, defining the environments in which to develop/practice identified skills. (Bottom of Page 10)</li> </ul>	

## WRITING QUALITY IEPs: BEST PRACTICE INDICATORS FOR STUDENTS WITH AUTISM

### **Autism**

When completing IEPs for students with Autism, all information previously discussed should be addressed. Special attention should be given to the correlation between the communicative and behavioral aspects of autism. All components of Differentiated Instruction and Functional Behavioral Assessments should be addressed in the IEP. In addition, the following should be noted:

- While the IEP addresses a broad range of developmental and educational needs, it specifically includes in-depth discussion in the areas of communication, social interaction, behavior and emotional development and play and use of leisure time.
- Address specific teaching strategies using generic descriptors (e.g. discreet trial instruction rather than ABA);
- Every student should have a consistent communication system in place, including any augmentative and alternative modes employed;
- Program should be devised to allow student to become as functionally independent as possible;
- The IEP identifies program modifications, including environmental and instructional adaptations and accommodations that are needed to support the student;
- Instructional and environmental management needs include the use of one-to-one instruction, small group instruction, child-initiated interactions, teacher-directed interactions, play and peer-mediated instruction, and
- Instructional methods noted emphasize the use of naturally occurring reinforcers, promote high rates of successful performance, encourage communication and social interaction and encourages the spontaneous use of learned skills in different settings.