

Goals for Inclusive Education

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Inclusion

*“Inclusion is a battle cry,
a parents cry,
a child's cry to be
welcomed,
embraced,
cherished,
prized,
loves as a gift,
as a wonder
as a treasure.”*

Marsha Forest
1942 – 2000

Building Inclusion into your IEP.

The IEP drives your services. The last thing an IEP team does is to make a placement decision. A clever advocate creates an IEP with goals and services that can only be implemented in an inclusive placement. There are ways to make sure this happens.

The first thing for you to have in mind are clear goals. If you want an inclusive placement for your child, make it your priority to support every opportunity to develop relationships with children who do not have disabilities. These are referred to as “natural supports” and are an essential part of every day life.

It is hard for parents to imagine just what supports are. You may be afraid to ask for them. Everyone has them. Everyone has supplemental aids. Imagine a meeting in a typical conference setting. One person attends in a wheelchair. One way to characterize that meeting is to say that the person with the wheelchair brought his or her own chair. All others had to be “accommodated.” The room where the meeting took place was lighted with a complicated and expensive system of electrical hookups and wires that run all the way back to a dam or power source. That accommodation is not necessary for a blind person. Electric lights are simply an accommodation for sighted people. Your child’s need for accommodation is not so unique, complicated or expensive.

Before your meeting get to know the key people. Key people include parents who share your view of inclusive education. If possible get to know and talk with other members of the IEP team and let them know your wishes.

Some suggested ways to prepare and organize your input for an inclusive placement:

- Make a list of your child’s strengths and weaknesses. Include input from family members, friends and others who know your child.
- List your child’s needs and things you would like your child to do better. Think about the kinds of environments and/or supports that your child needs to learn new skills.
- Think of goals that reflect your priorities and think of ways that each could be taught in a regular classroom environment. TIP: When writing goals include phrases such as “with typical peers used for support,” “with one prompt from a typical child,” “in the presence of children without disabilities.” Obviously, once adopted, these goals can only be implemented in an inclusive placement.
- In determining how appropriate a goal may be, choose those that may interest a typical student the age of your child.
- Is the goal age-appropriate? Going to see Santa will appeal to non-disabled peers who are 6. When they are 16 that may not be an appropriate goal.

- What methods are necessary to teach my child appropriate skills?
- How will my child use new skills in increase opportunities to participate in the community?
- Document times where inclusion has worked successfully for your child. Video or photograph family vacations, church activity, etc.
- Request that evaluations be done by people with expertise in supported education. Remember that evaluation results often include placement recommendations. Ask the evaluator to include a description of accommodations and supports that will enable your child to participate successfully with typical peers. Remember that if you disagree with the results, you have the right to ask for an independent evaluation.

Building Inclusion During the Meeting.

Share your vision and expectations clearly with your team.

Keep the focus on your child's strengths.

Use words carefully but forcefully. Be assertive, clear and concise. State the things that *you* want: "building relationships is a priority ... needs experience learning in a group ... develop friendships with children in our neighborhood .. participate in all fourth grade activities ...needs behavior models from typical kids, etc."

Evaluate carefully what is being written down. The amount of time not spent in a regular classroom must be listed.

Ask yourself questions: How can this skill be taught in a regular classroom? Consider privacy and dignity – some skills may need to be taught in a different environment.

Bring an advocate. Another parent who shares your vision of inclusion is an ideal advocate. But anyone in your life that you trust is also ideal. Outline roles and strategy ahead of time. Who will take notes? Who has the tissues? Who will suggest a break?

Consider some kind of collaborative planning process. Think about these issues.

- What is my child's history?
- What are my dreams for my child?
- What are my nightmares about my child?
- Who is my child?
- What are my child's strengths, gifts and abilities?
- What are my child's individual needs?

- What would my child's ideal day at school look like?
- What must we do to make that day a reality?

Work as a team member and support the team.

Building Inclusion Into Your Goals

Special education advocacy is far more art than science. Nowhere is this more true than in writing the goals for the IEP. Here is where inclusion gets written in a way that will require an inclusion placement in order to implement the goals. This is fundamental. Do not wait for the end of the meeting when the placement decision is made. You will not receive an inclusive placement if your goals can be met in a more restrictive setting.

Rule Number One: **Never write a goal that a dead person can meet.**

"Adria will sit quietly in her chair" is not an education goal. It is a post mortem.

Goals must be written in an active voice and state specifically what your child is going to learn. Think about the difference between these written goals.

"Taylor will take piano lessons."

Or ..

"Taylor will learn to play the piano."

"Grendahl will attend 20 specialized reading classes."

Or ..

"Grendahl will increase his/her reading skill to a 2nd grade level by attending 20 specialized reading classes."

The first example tells us little about a measurable outcome. In the second, the students, Taylor and Grendahl, are actually setting a goal to be able to perform a very specific and measurable skill. The second goal is properly written.

One important tactic for you to learn and apply is to get the team to buy into IEP goals, one at a time, so that once the document is adopted, it will lead to an inclusive placement. If you include enough references to social situations, support from non-disabled peers, and the need for normalcy, you will have created an IEP that cannot be implemented anywhere other than in an inclusion placement.

Some Specific Examples of Well Written IEP Goals

“Rachel will learn to walk from her home to school with the support of non-disabled peers by Christmas break.”

“Annie will learn three exercises in the company of and supported by non-disabled peers in the afternoon dance class.”

“Ephraim will learn number recognition to 10 using adapted materials while participating in regular 3rd grade math.”

“Meredith will learn, with support from non-disabled peers, to tolerate distractions during the 8th grade health class and in the lunchroom.”

“Daniel will interact and participate actively with typical children in 10th grade social studies and science.”

Some Words to Use for Specific Skills

Motor Goals:

Play on the soccer team.

Drive a car.

Use scissors.

Perform in a recital.

Learn to swim.

Social/Emotional Goals:

Display good manners.

Sleep with the lights on.

Play with peers.

Participate in board games.

Vocational Goals:

Be on time.

Do household chores.

Learn to type.

Follow instructions.

Goals must be positive and clear. Think about what you are saying? Does it specify the skill to be learned? Is it really what you want.”

Is “Skye will learn to cross the street safely 90% of the time,” really what you intended to write?