Understanding Your Child's IEP: Keep it Simple
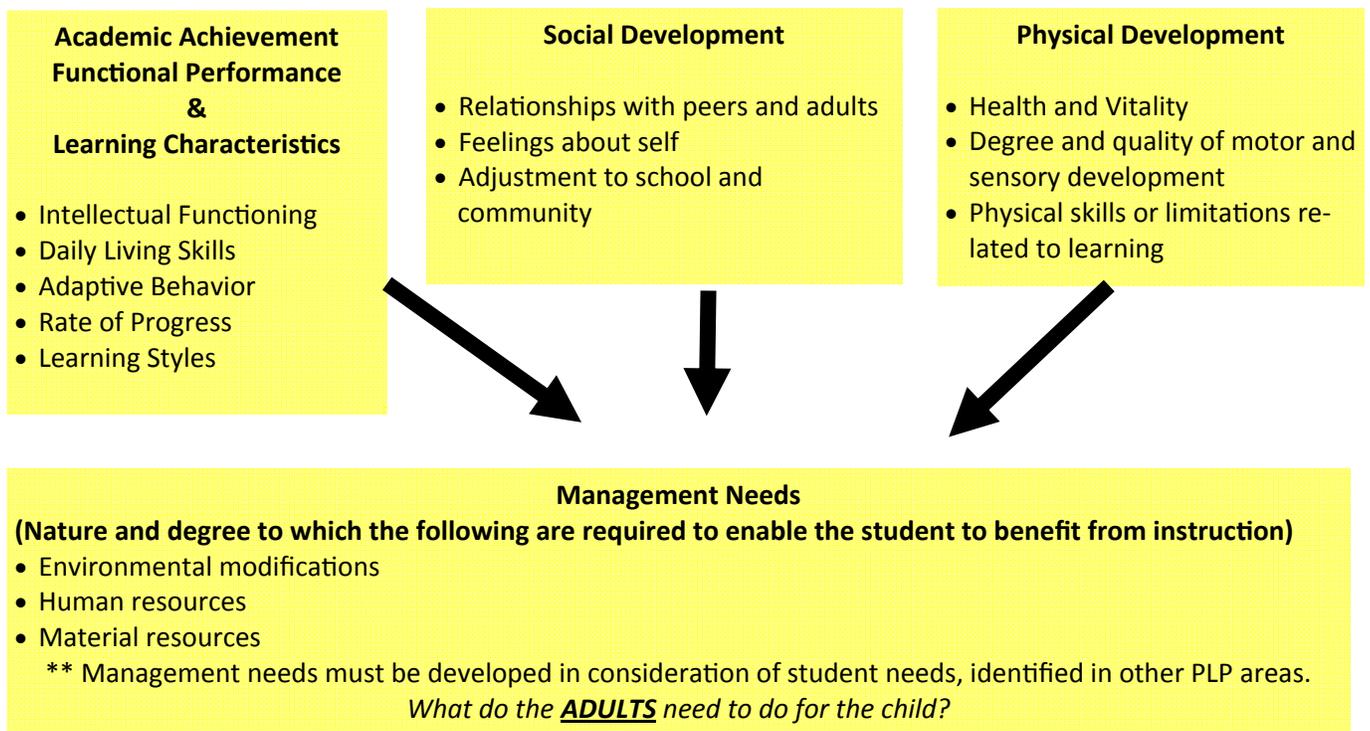
I am the "I" in IEP
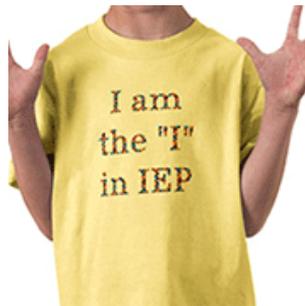
As research has shown, the first five years of a child's life are critical to his/her development. Sometimes, a child needs some assistance beyond the expertise of their parents. The NY State Department of Education (NYSED) can provide assistance to your child in meeting their educational needs and foster their interest and love of learning. This team of parents and professionals, including school district personnel, NY Department of Health (NYDOH) and related service providers, will create a plan to serve the child if, found eligible for special education services. We refer to this plan as an *Individualized Education Program* (IEP).

For some parents, this document becomes an invaluable piece of paper. A paper they believe to be the key to providing the supports and services to meet the needs of their child. In order for an IEP to be truly effective, all parties, including the parents, must contribute to its development.

As defined by NYSED, IEP means a written statement developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with state and federal policies (per §200.4) which includes specific components. For the purpose of this bulletin we will discuss two of these components: present levels of performance (PLPs) and measurable annual goals. Both components should consider academic and functional outcomes. PLPs and goals are intertwined yet both professionals and parents often see them as separate.

What's included in a PLP?

According to NYSED, there are 4 components to a PLP. A PLP must provide all parties, including parents, with information on a child's strengths and needs within that developmental domain. Each domain contains necessary components to be addressed. They are as follows:

Academic Achievement Functional Performance & Learning Characteristics

- Intellectual Functioning
- Daily Living Skills
- Adaptive Behavior
- Rate of Progress
- Learning Styles

Social Development

- Relationships with peers and adults
- Feelings about self
- Adjustment to school and community

Physical Development

- Health and Vitality
- Degree and quality of motor and sensory development
- Physical skills or limitations related to learning

Management Needs

(Nature and degree to which the following are required to enable the student to benefit from instruction)

- Environmental modifications
- Human resources
- Material resources

** Management needs must be developed in consideration of student needs, identified in other PLP areas.
*What do the **ADULTS** need to do for the child?*

Quality Indicators of PLPs ➔ What does this really mean?

1. Provide instructionally relevant information about the student.
2. Are descriptive and specific.
3. Provide the basis for annual goals and direction for provision of appropriate educational programs and services.
4. Are written in such a way that they can be understood by parents, professionals, and paraprofessionals.
5. Are based on the results of individual evaluations and progress toward meeting annual goals.

6. Reflect the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child.
7. Identify what impact the student's disability is having on his or her ability to participate and progress in age-appropriate activities or in the same curriculum as nondisabled peers.

➔ If the student moved tomorrow, would the teacher understand the students instructional strengths and needs?
➔ What the student can and cannot do.
➔ The skills a student needs to master the content of the curriculum.

➔ Anyone picking up this document should understand the strengths and needs and have a clear picture of the child.

➔ The PLP should summarize data/information from a variety of sources, translated from evaluation reports to clear, concise statements.
➔ Parents are encouraged and allowed to include their concerns.
➔ The PLP must indicate the child's ability to participate within the general education curriculum, and the resources the child requires to in order to benefit from their education.

Source: DeLorenzo, 2010

Quality Indicators of Annual Goals ➔ How do we know if they are well-written?

1. Are directly related to the student's present levels of performance (PLP) statements.
2. Are written in measurable and observable terms.

3. Identify an ending level of performance that is achievable within one year.

4. Identify objective procedures to evaluate a student's progress.
5. Are achievable in relation to the student's current level of educational performance, expected rate of progress, strengths and needs.
6. Are instructionally relevant.

7. Are written in terms that parents and educators can understand.
8. Support participation and progress in the general education curriculum and, for preschool students, participation in age-appropriate activities.

➔ The goal should directly align with statements made within the PLP. ***Not all needs require a goal.***
➔ If you close your eyes, can you visualize the goal? Does it make sense, what will your child be able to do? What does 80% over 6 months really mean?
➔ All goals should be written so a student may achieve it within a year. If goals are carried from year to year with little progress, the goal is inappropriate.
➔ These are the tools and timeframes used to monitor progress. Example: Observation using a developed checklist.
➔ Goals should be written in consideration of the child's individual abilities, rate of learning, learning styles, etc.

➔ Ask yourself what's the purpose of this goal? How will it educationally benefit my child?
➔ If you do not understand the goal or words, it may not make sense to others, so ask for clarification.
➔ Since not all needs require a goal, some needs can be met within the general education curriculum.

Source: DeLorenzo, 2010

Sample PLP & Goal

Academic Achievement, Functional Performance & Learning Characteristics PLP

Levels of Knowledge and Development

<u>Cognitive</u>
- explores familiar toys with support
- distinguishes characteristics, such as primary colors, big/little

<u>Speech/Language</u>
- discriminates symbols, such as all letters, letters of his name, and some numbers
- can select a picture from a group of 3, when prompted
- communicates using a few signs: please, my turn and help, using simple picture symbols to communicates and using a communication device to indicate choices and needs

His neurological status and several medications impact Jordon's alertness, stamina and ability to perform academic tasks. He is easily distracted and shows fatigue as the school day progresses. His average time for attention to small group tasks, such as circle, is 5 minutes. His average time for attention to hands-on activities is 10 minutes. He becomes easily frustrated when the activity involves skills beyond his fine motor abilities, contains too many steps, or involves too many materials.

Student Strengths, Preferences, & Interests

Jordon enjoys hands-on learning activities and has strong cognitive potential.

Academic, Developmental, and Functional Needs of the Student, including Concerns of the Parent

Jordon's attention problems result in failure to follow teacher's directions and responding inappropriately during group activities. He needs to further build upon his play skills and use toys in a more spontaneous and functional manner for longer periods of time. He should also begin to develop more independence in his daily routine. Jordon's mother is concerned about his attention and ability to play with peers because she wants him to do well in school and have friends.

Multidisciplinary Preschool Annual Goal:

Should address the student's unique needs across activities so that the student has the foundation skills and strategies needed to participate and progress in the general education curriculum throughout his/her day

Annual Goal:	Evaluation criteria:	Evaluation procedures:	Evaluation schedule:
Given 3 symbol pictures, Jordon will independently communicate via pointing to at least one desired choice.	A minimum of 1x per activity throughout the day for two consecutive weeks	Chart	Daily

Example of a Progress Monitoring Tool for the above goal = Chart

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Morning free play		X		X	X
Circle time					
Outdoor play			X	X	X
Small group activity		X			X
Lunch	X	X	X	X	X

The Hundred Languages of Childhood

*The child
is made of one hundred.
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking.*

*A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling, of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.*

*The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and at Christmas.*

*They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.*

*They tell the child:
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together.*

*And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.*

Loris Malaguzzi
Founder of the Reggio Approach

Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center

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WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN, THEY TEACH US.

ecdc

30 Years
Caring for All Children

SOURCES
DeLorenzo, J. P. (revised December 2010). *Guide to Quality Individualized Education Program (IEP) Development and Implementation* Albany, NY: The State Education Department, Office Of P-12 Education, Office of Special Education. Available: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/iepguidance/IEPguideDec2010.pdf.

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University's Center on Human Policy.

ECDC services to families are free and confidential.

ECDC Staff

Tracey Menapace, Director
Maria Gill, Education Coordinator
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Cyndy Colavita, Office Coordinator
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Workshops & Resources

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as child development, special education transitions, sensory integration, and parent involvement.

Workshops include:

- **Including All Kids**
- **Parent Partnerships**
- **Developmentally Appropriate Practices**
- **Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags**
- **Supporting Social Emotional Development**
- **Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies**
- **Moving On: Transitioning Families (EI-CPSE) & (CPSE-CSE)**
- **What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?**
- **What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?**
- **Writing IEP Goals**
- **Getting Ready for Kindergarten**

Looking for more copies of this bulletin? You can download it from our ECDC website or contact us.