Including Families and Students as Partners in the IEP Process
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Agenda

- A vision of “authentic” inclusion
- IEP Process: early student involvement
• Nuts and bolts of family/student engagement and communication
• Student-led IEP example
• Family and student engagement = stronger IEP
• IEP supports person-centered planning (PCP)
• IEP and PCP informs transition planning
• Suggested IEP ground rules
Questions & Discussion welcome at any time!
The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that a school receiving ED funds “must place a person with a disability in the regular education environment, unless it is demonstrated by the recipient that the student’s needs cannot be met satisfactorily with the use of supplementary aids and services.”
“We tried inclusion and it didn’t work.”
But what is authentic inclusion?
Our family’s vision for ‘authentic’ inclusion

• Students with disabilities are proportionally represented in classes, courses, clubs, and extracurricular activities.
• Related services are delivered in typical, inclusive environments.
• Teachers have the skills to effectively practice differentiated instruction.
• Collaborative teaching (between regular and special educators, paraprofessionals and related service providers) is the norm, not the exception.
• Students have multiple means of learning and expressing knowledge (Universal Design for Learning).
• Peer support is a constant goal.
The IEP = A collaborative, positive roadmap for authentic inclusion and transition
It’s about relationships

Beth Swedeen: “Authentic inclusion requires as much focus on communication, interaction and relationship building as it does on curriculum modifications and accommodations.”
It’s about early student participation

- Even younger children (pre-school and on) can come to their IEP meeting for five minutes, say hi, introduce or acknowledge the people there, get an explanation about the meeting’s purpose (e.g., planning for next school year), and share some of their work (e.g., drawings, written work).
It’s about student ownership of the IEP

- Participating in IEP meetings helps students understand that the process is really about them and the supports to help them learn—not about paperwork and meetings.
- Giving students an opportunity to make choices that develop self-determination skills.
- Classmates/siblings also can come to the first part of the meeting to share ideas and information. Peers often have creative thoughts about useful supports and strategies.
It’s about building on strengths

• Do IEP meetings actively focus on a student’s interests and strengths?

• Students can share their interests, favorites (e.g., subjects, activities, friends at school), least favorites, and what would help them learn.

• Families can help staff by putting together a simple tip sheet of accommodations, modifications and other strategies that have worked in the past.
A successful IEP process goes well beyond an annual meeting.
Family/school continual communication and engagement

- Email/texts; sharing anecdotes, photos, videos
- Welcoming parents into the classroom (at least in elementary school)
- Google drive and Google classroom
- Home/school notebook
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Activity/Comments</th>
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**W**- wiggle (0- none, 1-very few, 2- some, 3- many)

**E**- Energy (0- asleep, 1- lethargic, 2- alert, 3- agitated)

**D**- Drool (0- none, 2- some, 3- consistent)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>activity/comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>math: good effort even though he was off a bit - worked on determining &amp; reasoning about problems/answers. Picked apart words like taller/shorter to what those words might mean at the determining fox.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sticking range of motion Brain gym, play gym with ball. PT: worked on sit-to-stand (knee squats).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Caf/office&lt;br/&gt;&amp; Had an excellent opportunity to mingle with some Nov '14 language. Passing through the hell baby - epic</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Went to Eng Rm to prep. Listen to flight planning Rm to prep. &amp; meaning most of period. Was super excited briefly - trying to explain that he wanted to invite carrot to the Macelmore concert.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Monthly Samuel-led check-in meetings
My 10th grade team check-in meeting

Concord HS

April 9, 2016
for coming today
Introducing...

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

• My Parents
• My Teachers
• My Para-Professionals
• My Special Education coordinator
• My Related Service Providers
• Other Important People
Today’s Agenda

Updates for:

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

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

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

What’s going well?
What could be improved?
Communication Device Updates
OT/PT/Speech Updates

What’s going well?
What could be improved?
Extra-curricular Updates
What’s going well?
What could be improved?
Family/student engagement leads to a stronger IEP.
Samuel is an audio-Visual kind of guy
Parents would like to make certain that Samuel has easy access to curriculum via auditory information. He learns best through universally designed material, i.e. material presented auditorily, experientially and visually. His class work also best reflects his knowledge and understanding when he completes assignments in a UDL manner, i.e. text, visuals and auditorily on his Communication Device and through Powerpoints and online book creation.
Samuel plays an active role in his accommodations:

• Samuel has ‘self-advocacy’ buttons on his device so he can express where he thinks he can best get work done.

• He has access to audio books to keep up with his classmates on reading assignments.

• iPad mounted next to device for individualized instruction

• Teens only page. %&*$#@!
Peer collaboration and support
PEER SUPPORT
Positive peer engagement with Samuel is, as with any student, an important way to engage Samuel socially but is also a highly effective strategy in his academics. When working with Samuel and his peers, it will be important to encourage an "aide and fade" model, where adult support fades as much as possible, as often as possible, to increase Samuel’s self-advocacy and communication skills. He enjoys working with peers, and has a strong group of peers that work well together. Samuel will make new friends throughout his time at CHS, and it will be necessary to encourage Samuel to make new friends and get acquainted with others. A major goal of the family is to steadily increase the ‘natural support’ model for Samuel in the school and community, where Samuel’s peers are playing a more and more active role in his inclusion, physical supports and academic and social success. Some examples of peer support that have been utilized include: providing arm support for Communication Device use during class presentations, collaborative instruction among peers, and having a peer Samuel is comfortable with drive his wheelchair between classes. Samuel will also need to increase his self-advocacy abilities while with his peers. For example, if they are too close, and if Samuel needs some space, Samuel will need to use his Communication Device to ask his peers for space.
His class work also best reflects his knowledge and understanding when he completes assignments in a UDL manner, i.e. text, visuals and auditorily on his Communication Device and through Powerpoints, films and online book creation.
Universal Design for Learning

Example from Samuel’s 10th grade US History and English classes
IEP intersects with transition planning

- Peer modeling and support for college, employment, relationships
- Developing “Social Capital”
- Person centered planning with peers
Facilitated person centered planning with friends and family
Start by appreciating accomplishments.
Create the ‘ground rules’

Communicate
Use your mind
Question Authority
Challenge rules... make new ones
Creative
Teamwork
“Think outside the island”
Brainstorm short and longer term goals
Expanding on one big goal: socializing with friends
Navigating challenges

How can we avoid, get over around through challenges?

Tired?
- Coffee up ☕
- Timing: Most energy = Wk. end, mid-day
  - Will rally @ night
- Check in - Text - maybe closed group chat

Communication
- Refresher on elbow support

Settings
- Check out ahead of time
- Design an adaptation for chair
- Advocate - Write, letter, call
- Research NE Passages
- Research accessible trails, places in town

Transportation
- "Train" friend to drive van, use ramp

Health stuff
- We (friends) can get training that Matt has
How can we support each other to stay on track?

"Networking"—Use those you know, ask your connections, talk to people → TALK TO EVERYONE...make new friends

Communicate & plan...use technology → Cell phone → Tlx → E-mail

→ Facebook → iPad → Stylus, other equip.

Check w/ our parents

- Jacob
- Daniel
- Mark
- Zachary
- Fletcher

Follow through and specific actions
PCP and IEP development informs transition planning

• Self-determination strategies and leadership development
• Regular high school diploma track in general education
• Interagency collaboration between school, vocational rehabilitation, area agency
• Community based experiences such as extended learning opportunities, internships, work study and apprenticeships
• Paid work experience and entrepreneurship development
• High family expectations
• Assistive technology and effective access to mainstream technology
• Higher education opportunities and supports
IEP Process: Suggested Ground Rules

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Stay in touch!

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Universal Design for Learning: Example from Samuel’s 10th grade US History Class