

Inclusive Standards-Based IEPs



Naomie Monplaisir hugs a co-worker at Empire Beauty School. An IEP vision statement for Naomie for her school years might have included this statement: “The most important thing for Naomie is to have friends, not ‘special’ buddies. When she is with her friends, she communicates more, learns more, and feels a sense of belonging.”

With increasing accountability for improving the academic achievement of all students with disabilities, IEP teams are encouraged to write standards-based IEPs. The indicators of an inclusive standards-based IEP are depicted in Figure 1. This brief describes four key sections of every student’s IEP that can be written to promote inclusion and hold students with intellectual disability to high standards.

Parent Vision

Writing a vision statement that goes on a student’s IEP and articulating that vision in team meetings can help assure that the

myriad of small decisions made with and on behalf of a student with intellectual disability are leading to, not interfering with, the ultimate goals she and her family have for the future. A vision statement should come from the heart; however, it should be specific enough so that an unfamiliar person knows exactly what is important to the student and his family. There isn’t a template for a vision statement, but it should contain a brief description of what the student’s educational program and experience should look like in the current school year, as well describe what the student’s life after high school might look like in regards to living arrangements, health and safety, post-secondary education,

employment, relationships, and leisure time. Depending on the age of the student, adult life may be very far in the future, such as in the case of a three-year-old; or it might describe the subsequent year, such as in the case of a 20-year-old.

Here are two examples of vision statements that could have been developed for people in the film earlier in their lives.

- We want Micah to have choices and opportunities in his life. Micah wants to be included in his school and neighborhood in meaningful ways, and have the same choices as his friends without disabilities. He wants to go to college and eventually live with friends. We want to support interdependence for Micah that opens up possibilities for him to work, socialize, and live within his community. In order to be successful, he needs to be comfortable working in a fast-paced and inclusive environment, have a good command of spoken and written English, have a well-rounded education, be able to manage his money responsibly, and increase his understanding of other people and cultures. Therefore, our vision for Micah's 10th grade education is that he be fully included in English, history, biology, PE, and pre-algebra; and that he join the cross-country and track teams.

Naomie's vision statement may have many of the same elements as Micah's, although it contains a greater focus on social relationships.

- The most important thing for us is for Naomie to have friends, not "special" buddies. Naomie loves her friends, but rarely has opportunities to be with them outside of school. When she is with her friends, she communicates more, learns more, and feels a sense of belonging. Yes, academics are very important, too, but without friends, Naomie's school experience and her adult life will be filled with loneliness. We want Naomie to be involved in all of the same classes and extracurricular activities as other sixth graders.



A childhood photo of Micah Fialka-Feldman (right) with his sister Emma Fialka-Feldman and parents Richard Feldman and Janice Fialka. An IEP vision statement for Micah might have included "We want to support interdependence for Micah that opens up possibilities for him to work, socialize, and live within his community."

Student Profile

The student profile section of the IEP should describe the student's interests, strengths, achievements in and outside of school; academic and functional areas of need; supports that maximize the student's performance; and personality. It should describe the impact of the student's disability on her ability to access the general education curriculum, and should reflect the perspectives of the student herself, her friends (particularly if she is unable to communicate effectively), her parents, and other members of her educational team. Below is a portion of a sample profile for a student named Allie.

- Allie is a confident and outgoing young woman. She loves school and takes an active part in the high school social scene. She is kind to others and quick to offer a comforting or encouraging word. She is generally laid back and not flustered by unforeseen events, with the exception of fire drills. She is very close to her two sisters and older brother, and enjoys the support of both parents. Allie has many of the same interests as her classmates without disabilities, such as pop music, celebrities, and the high school sports teams. She has been on the swim team since middle school and practices several times a week. Participation in extracurricular activities, service learning opportunities, and sports are essential for Allie to develop age-appropriate and functional skills such as self-determination, following the unwritten rules of social interaction, problem-solving, life-long fitness, navigating around the community, and developing career and independent living skills.
- Allie's long-term memory is optimized by assuring that all text and other instructional materials are presented, during both instruction and assessment, at her reading and comprehension level. They are also supplemented with pictures, graphic representations, and semantic maps or schema. Allie's recall difficulties may be due to language retrieval problems, rather than the absence of knowledge or conceptual understanding. She benefits from supports such as word banks, giving her a choice of several answers, re-stating questions using familiar vocabulary, making connections to her background knowledge, and analogies. If Allie is distracted by noise, movement, or changes in routine, the least intrusive prompts should be used. Structures that support her following classroom routines include task cards, encouraging her to follow what her classmates are doing, using her iPad reminder app, and chunking academic tasks into smaller steps.

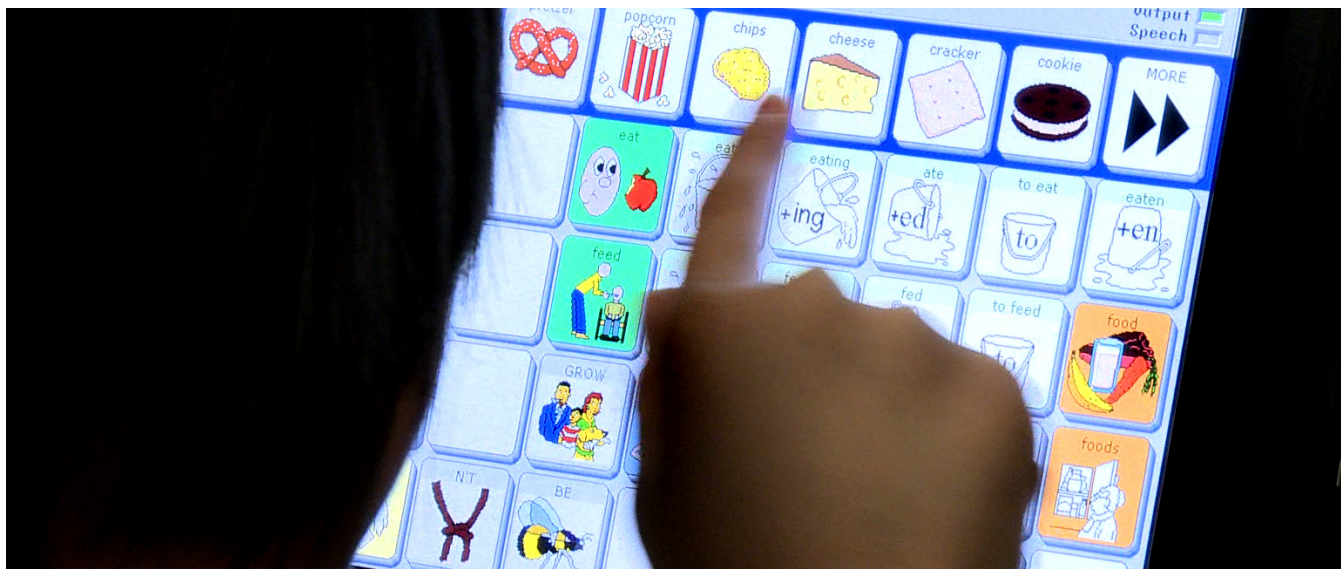
When describing the impact of the student's disability on her ability to make progress in the general education curriculum, it's important to be specific and to consider the foundation of Universal Design for Learning: the student is not the barrier—the curriculum, instruction, and materials are the barriers to learning. Don't write: "Allie's intellectual disability affects her ability to access 10th grade learning standards and curriculum." Do write: "Allie needs options and supports for receptive understanding and expressive demonstration of knowledge. She benefits from reminders, graphic organizers, and other tools that provide reminders and break tasks into small steps."

It's important to be specific and to consider the foundation of Universal Design for Learning: the student is not the barrier—the curriculum, instruction, and materials are the barriers to learning.

Annual Goals

Annual goals represent knowledge and skills that the IEP team projects the student can reasonably achieve within one year, or the term of the IEP. These goals do not represent everything that the team hopes the student will achieve in a year, but rather the highest priority goals that will help the student access and make progress towards achieving grade level standards, as well as other functional skills or developmental milestones. IEPs that contain 50 goals are invariably not implementable.

Measurable annual goals contain the following elements describing what the student will do.



A sample annual goal for an AAC user that is closely aligned with the general education curriculum and can best be implemented in a general education class could be: “During class with modeling from non-disabled peers, Anna will use her AAC system to describe the author’s purpose.”

Student:

1. Will do what...(demonstrated skill/behavior)
2. To what level or degree...(criterion – percent/number of opportunities/number of points, etc.)
3. Under what conditions...(conditions)
4. In what length of time...(time frame)
5. As measured by...(performance measure)

Sample annual goals that are closely aligned with the general education curriculum and can best be implemented in a general education class include:

- During class with modeling from non-disabled peers, Anna will use her AAC system to describe the author’s purpose, scoring 3 out of 4 on an evaluation rubric.
- When provided with text written at her reading and comprehension level, graphic organizers, pictures and symbols, schema, and Read & Write supports on a computer or iPad, Marisol will master one enduring

understanding/big idea, five vocabulary words/terms, and three facts/concepts/skills within each unit of the curriculum, scoring 75% on teacher-made end-of-unit tests.

- During guided reading, Suri will verbally provide answers to questions about story sequence when provided with four word-picture choices with a latency range of 1–15 seconds, 90% of the time, in 3 out of 4 opportunities daily.
- During buddy reading, Jacob will participate in turn-taking with non-disabled peers by pressing a switch that plays a pre-recorded portion of the text 90% of the time, out of 10 trials during each week of the spring semester.
- After visiting two college campuses and meeting with staff from Admissions and the Student Services Office, Selena will demonstrate knowledge of two post-secondary educational opportunities by doing a PowerPoint presentation in her Advisory class at the end of the fall semester, providing five facts with 100% accuracy.

▶▶▶ FIGURE 1

INCLUSIVE STANDARDS-BASED IEP INDICATORS

- Defines the family's vision for their child as a valued and fully-participating member of general education classes and inclusive extra-curricular activities
- Portrays the student's strengths as well as needs
- Describes the student's present levels of performance relative to general education curriculum standards, as well as reports their performance in functional domains
- Describes the results of assessments in the context of the student's prior opportunities to learn, whether he has been taught using evidence-based instructional practices, and the limits of his current communication abilities
- Presumes the student's competence to communicate and learn
- Bases the IEP on the long-term goals of post-secondary education, community-based integrated employment and community living, and satisfying social relationships
- Uses chronological grade-level academic achievement standards as a guide for determining annual goals
- Annual goals and short-term objectives or benchmarks are measurable
- Identifies supports necessary for the student to achieve IEP goals
- Contains goals that can best be implemented and achieved in a general education classroom
- Specifies that special education and related services are delivered primarily in the general education classroom
- Specifies that a student is in an inclusive learning environment nearly 100% of the day
- May also address communication, pro-social behavior, technology skills, social relationships and skills, participation in extracurricular activities, work and community living skills, executive function, and health and fitness
- Describes the supports that the team needs on behalf of the student, such as common planning time, time to adapt materials, and professional development
- Checks the box that indicates the student's need for accessible instructional materials
- Indicates that the student will ride the regular school bus (with supports if necessary)
- Describes inclusive extended-year services (if the student needs them)
- Matches the accommodations available on large scale assessments to the accommodations the student receives during instruction
- Clearly recognizes the differences between accommodations and modifications
- By the student's 16th birthday (or younger if the team decides it is necessary), describes post-secondary goals, IEP goals and objectives related to those goals; transition services related to meeting the goals; and the student's projected course of study for the remainder of high school

▶▶▶ FIGURE 2

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

When a student with an intellectual disability is included in a general education class, his service grid looks very different from that of a student in a substantially separate classroom. James—who is a full-time member of a general education classroom—receives services during the regular school year according to the schedule depicted below.

Service Provider	Type and Location of Service	Length of Service	Frequency of Service
Inclusion Facilitator	Instructional planning meeting/Conference room	60 minutes	Weekly
Inclusion Facilitator	Direct /General education classroom	40 minutes	Daily x 5 times per week
Inclusion Facilitator	Indirect/Preparation of adapted materials	60 minutes	Daily x 5 days per week
Paraeducator	Direct/General education classroom and other school environments	6.5 hours	Daily x 5 days per week
All team members	Instructional planning/Conference room	60 minutes	1 time per week
SLP	Direct/General education classroom	60 minutes	3 times per week
SLP	Consultation with OT/Conference room or general education classroom	40 minutes	1 time per week
SLP	Indirect/Programming AAC device	60 minutes	1 time per week
OT	Direct support in general education classroom	60 minutes	1 time per week
OT	Consultation with SLP/Conference room or general education classroom	40 minutes	1 time per week
PT	Direct support in P.E.	40 minutes	1 time per week
Reading Specialist	Direct instruction in reading lab	30 minutes	3 times per week

Writer

Cheryl M. Jorgensen, Ph.D.,
Inclusive Education Consultant

Contributors

Deborah Taub, Ph.D., OTL Education Solutions

References

Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, Pub. L.
No. 114-95 § 114 Stat. 1177 (2015-2016).

Fialka, J. (2016). *What matters: Reflections on disability, community and love*. Toronto: Inclusion Press.

Individuals With Disabilities Education Act,
20 U.S.C. § 1400 (2004).

Jorgensen, C. M. (2018). *Inclusion is more than just being "in:” A step-by-step approach for students with disabilities*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.