

KEYS TO inclusion

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this newsletter is the transition of students with disabilities to general education settings, whether it is a move from an out of district placement or from a self-contained classroom. There has been a concerted effort to educate students with disabilities within more inclusive settings; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 is clear in its language that students with disabilities should progress and participate in the general education curriculum and be included in district and statewide assessments. In addition, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires states to include students with disabilities in large-scale assessments, aligned with the general education curriculum, used to measure adequate yearly progress.

Mounting empirical evidence substantiates improved academic achievement, better socialization and communication skills and higher self-esteem when students, including those with more significant disabilities, are supported within general education classrooms, rather than pulled out (Moore, Gilbreath & Maiuri, 1998). Data from two longitudinal studies of students with disabilities, when controlled for socio-economic status, age, gender, disability type, and severity of disability found spending

more time in general education classrooms related independently to greater engagement, achievement, and social adjustment of students with disabilities at school (McSheehan, 2010). At the same time, no studies conducted since the late 1970s have shown an academic advantage for students with intellectual and other developmental disabilities educated in separate settings (Falvey, 2004)

In addition to the benefits of improved outcomes, a driving force has been the high cost of segregated, separate placements. The combination of tuition and transportation costs results in huge expenditures. As school districts deal with tighter budgets many are looking toward reducing the number of students placed in out of district settings as a cost cutting method.

Naturally, before student placements are changed a considerable amount of planning and preparation must occur to ensure the new setting has the proper supports in place. We focus on two key areas that require careful consideration: the student and the environment. This newsletter provides tools and information in both of these areas to help school personnel and family members prepare for a successful transition.

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DETERMINE THE THING
that can and shall be
done....and then we
shall find the way.

— ABRAHAM LINCOLN

KEY ISSUES FOR EFFECTIVE PLANNING

At NJCIE's Annual Meeting in June 2010, Dr. Roberta Wohle, the former Director of the NJDOE-Office of Special Education Programs, stressed that effective planning for transition to a less restrictive environment needs to be:

- + Systematic
- + Proactive
- + Deliberate
- + Collaborative
- + Individualized

The transition planning process requires, "An analysis of the differences in learning environments (i.e., the ones he/she is moving to and from), including consideration of differences in academic, behavioral, social, communication - language and physical demands, expectations and routines."

Gathering information about the Individual Student:

- + Strengths and interests
- + Current academic achievement
- + Current functional performance-communication, behavior, etc.
- + Unique needs
- + Effective learning and behavioral strategies

Gathering information about the new learning environments

- + Academic and behavioral demands and expectations
- + Instructional arrangements/methods
- + Materials and equipment
- + Assessment methods/progress monitoring
- + General routines and procedures
- + Social interactions
- + Physical demands

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KEY ISSUES FOR EFFECTIVE PLANNING c'td

Best practice for planning transitions between and among programs involves the following considerations:

Considerations for Students

- + Identifying the demands of the new classroom including the classroom routines, expected behaviors and academic skills
- + Identifying the supports the student is currently receiving and the supports that will be needed in the in-district program
- + Preparing the students for the demands of the new placement including:
 - planning and conducting school and classroom visitations, observations, orientation programs
 - teaching skills, routines, and expected behaviors needed for participation in the general education setting

Considerations for Families

- + Providing the family with information regarding the following:
 - the school structure and organization

including dress code, supplies, staff schedules, parent meetings

- the classroom structure and organization including seating arrangements, schedule,
- general education academic and behavioral expectations, general education curriculum, activities and routines
- school and community resources

- + Organizing family orientation programs and observations
- + Providing the opportunity to network with other parents of students with disabilities and with parents of nondisabled students


Considerations for School Staff Prior to placement:

- + Designate a person to coordinate communication, ensure transition activities are being implemented, facilitate problem-solving and obtain resources
- + Identify receiving staff (e.g. general education, special education and related services personnel)
- + Exchange student and program information

between sending and receiving staff and families - visitation and face-to-face discussions between sending and receiving staff is recommended

- + Determine strategies and needed resources to effectively work with individual students
- + Provide staff training or technical assistance to address staff concerns and to prepare staff to implement the support needs of individual students
- + Determine communication strategies among all service providers (e.g. related services, special education staff and general education staff) to coordinate program and services

Once the student is in the new program:

- + The receiving staff (e.g. general education teacher, special education teacher, related services providers) monitor the student's progress
- + The coordinating staff person meets with the receiving staff to review progress, problem-solve, identify and secure additional resources, as needed; facilitates and coordinates program and services (New Jersey Department of Education, 2007). 



MAPS

Another excellent way to actively involve all those invested in the inclusion process is to implement the MAPS process when developing the child's IEP. MAPS is a person centered planning process and stands for **M**aking **A**ction **P**lans or the **M**cGill **A**ction **P**lanning **S**ystem. In Maryland, many districts use this process as an integral part of planning transitions to less restrictive settings. All those involved with the inclusion of a child with disabilities are key players in the MAPs process. A typical MAPS meeting would include the parents and/or family members, friends of the family, special service providers, the child, and friends of the child. Meetings using the MAPS process can last an hour or longer, and it is suggested that some MAPS meetings take place over two or three sessions. As with the NJCIE Inclusion Clinic process (see article on facing page), the information gathered on the chart paper can form the content of the child's IEP. From the questions regarding the child's "strengths/gifts," "needs," and "ideal day," goals are developed and prioritized, and objectives are created (Circle of Inclusion, 2010).

It is critical that:

- + the meeting be held at the school the child is expected to attend, and at a time convenient for the family—the family's presence is essential;
- + explanations of the process are provided to the participants prior to the meeting;
- + two facilitators are present (one to lead, the other to record); and
- + no reports are given; rather chart paper is used to record participants' input and the information on the chart paper is summarized later for all.

Questions to Ask at the Meeting

The facilitators pose the questions first to the family and then encourage all who know the student to contribute. It is the facilitator's job to keep the group focused on the questions and to minimize note taking and other discussion. It is not a time for debate or problem solving; rather it is a time for discovery. The recorded responses on the chart paper are summarized


for distribution to all participants.

1. What is _____'s history?
2. What are your hopes and dreams for _____ over the next year/in the future?
3. What are your fears or nightmares for _____'s inclusion and future?
4. Who is _____? (personality, characteristics, likes, dislikes)
5. What are _____'s unique gifts and talents?
6. What are _____'s support needs for successful participation?
7. What would an ideal day look like?

MAPS : Developing the Action Plan

Part 2 involves planning specific ways to implement the student's IEP and provide supports across the school day and in various school activities. Prior to this second planning meeting, the facilitators review the following documents with members of the planning team: MAPS 1 summary, IEP, and class/grade schedule.

The team then develops a matrix that matches the student's IEP goals with his/her daily schedule. The team also develops an action plan that identifies specific actions to be taken, the person responsible for the actions, and the date by which the actions will be implemented. Possible areas that might be covered in an action plan are:

- + Instructional accommodations and modifications
- + Communication methods and any needed assistive technology
- + Methods to enhance physical mobility and independence in the school routine
- + Social supports and positive peer relationships
- + Equipment or materials that need to be transferred, purchased, or installed prior to participation
- + Transportation modifications to the schedule, location of pick-up, etc.
- + Personal supports such as assistance with appearance, hygiene, etc. that the school and family will work on together
- + Collaborative teaming (who, when, where) for ongoing planning for meaningful participation in general education lessons
- + Roles and responsibilities in supporting and supervising paraeducators 

INCLUSION CLINIC PROCESS

Below is a process used by NJCIE to provide individual student planning. The Inclusion Clinic Process is a simple team process that can be used to assure serious consideration of the placement of a child with disabilities in a general education classroom. It requires the presence of a planning team, which includes, at minimum, general education teacher at the child's grade level, a special education teacher, and the parent. In addition there is a basic premise that general education curriculum will be the framework in which the student is taught.

Below are the steps the planning team of parent, special educator and general educator use this process:

Step 1: Together, the planning team creates a student profile on pieces of chart paper

- Strengths
- Interests
- Challenges (Academic & Functional)
- Learning Strategies
- Supports
- Educational Goals (Academic & Functional-communication, socialization, behavior, etc.)?

Step 2: The planning team discusses and charts out the typical day

- + The general education teacher describes, globally, what happens in her classroom during a typical day, hour by hour, from drop off to dismissal.
- + What are the typical activities she uses to get content across to her students?

DAILY ROUTINES (SCHEDULE)	TYPICAL CLASS ACTIVITIES & ROUTINES & PURPOSE/EXPECTATIONS FOR CLASS	SUPPORTS, STRATEGIES, NEEDED FOR THE FOCUS STUDENT
8:15 AM - 8:45 AM ARRIVAL	Students arrive and put away their things. They sit at their desks and check the board for the daily "Do Now." They write an answer in their journal. A short discussion, follows.	Student can independently take off coat; put things away; write in journal. Adult stops by the student's desk to discuss "Do Now" prompt and student's ideas. Student works to write at least two sentences on her idea.

Step 3: The planning team problem solves and brainstorms supports:

General adaptations are patterns or formats that mirror the predictable routines and instructional activities used in the classroom. They can be planned in advance and used repeatedly.

- + Option 1: Can this child access the standards and curriculum as written?
- + Option 2: With accommodations?
- + Option 3: With modifications, [receive instruction on grade level standards at a lower complexity level within the context of grade level curriculum, ensuring that the intent of the grade level standard remains intact?]

Step 4: The planning team considers class wide supports and learning strategies to help the student access the classwide general education curricular goals. The team discusses learning strategies, instructional arrangements and classroom expectations and procedures that could support all students and also support the student with disabilities. [This is the concept behind universal design for learning and differentiated instruction.]

Step 5: The planning team reviews the student's schedule for optimum opportunities to work on the student's personal IEP goals academic and functional (i.e., social, communication, etc.).

- + Document these opportunities in a matrix (Infused Skills Grid) to help all teachers/staff support progress in the student's goals...

[For more information on this go to: http://njcie.net/tools_student.asp and click on Inclusion Clinic Process.]

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & ENHANCEMENT

These strategies can improve and enhance learning for all students:

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

- + Cooperative learning groups
- + Peer tutors
- + One-to-one teacher/student instruction
- + Independent work
- + Buddy systems
- + Base teams
- + Learning stations
- + Homework (frequency, duration)
- + Rules, norms, routines
- + Behavioral rules and contingencies
- + Norms for student interactions and movement
- + Procedures for routines (e.g., lining up, handing in assignments, jobs, etc.)

SCHOOL-WIDE PROGRAMS

- + Building-wide instructional accommodations plans
- + Alternative text/supplementary text
- + Assistive technology (e.g., electronic white boards, talking word processors)
- + School-wide positive behavior supports
- + Recognition system incentives
- + Signage for positively stated behavioral expectations
- + Data system to monitor office discipline referrals and develop interventions
- + Skill building programs (e.g., social skills, anger management, character education)

(NJ Dept. of Education, 2007)



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