

## Inclusionary Practices and Systems:

# INCLUSIVE INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

### WHAT IS AN INCLUSIVE IEP?

All students are entitled to a free and appropriate education that meets their needs, provides access to the general curriculum and setting, and prepares them for life beyond the school setting. Individual education programs outline how a public school will provide that appropriately ambitious instruction and support to students with disabilities. Inclusive IEPs prioritize students' right to be educated alongside their non disabled peers and tie goals to grade level curriculum standards. To achieve this, a collaborative, multidisciplinary team is necessary. Educators, parents, and providers collaborate to co-create and target goals and to embed services and age appropriate supports into the student's school day and general education environment.

### WHY ARE INCLUSIVE IEPs IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

Inclusive IEPs provide a structured format and space that promotes collaboration and communication. IEP teams that center inclusivity create a space where providers are encouraged to collaborate on the creation and implementation plan of all goals. These goals should be based on assessment data, heavily center the student and families' priorities, and should relate to grade level curriculum standards. When goals are conceptualized based on student strengths and family priorities and are targeted in the natural environment by multiple educators, they have the potential to have meaningful outcomes.

It's important to reflect on the term "meaningful outcomes." We want learners to leave our classrooms with skills and experiences that help them navigate their next setting. From higher education to the workforce, the settings our students move to differ greatly and require many different skill sets, but they have one very important thing in common: community. Our learners are stepping out into a community that relies on collaboration, flexibility, and curiosity. A setting in which the ability to seek information and help is an invaluable tool. The most meaningful outcomes are ones that connect students to their community and provide them with skills to navigate and benefit from it. Our classrooms are communities; each containing their own knowledge, learning opportunities, and priorities. Inclusive IEPs allow educators to take these nuances into account to create individualized systems and goals that help connect students to their peers and community.

### IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Utilize and maintain an IEP planning form and schedule meetings in advance to allow for all team members to attend.
- Use supports & curriculum that are age appropriate and identify goals that center grade level curriculum standards.
- Services (Ex: speech, OT, etc.) should be provided in the natural setting.
- IEP goals should be targeted using evidence based practices that allow for data based decision making.
- The IEP team is collectively responsible for IEP implementation and should collaborate in creating goals so that they can be targeted by multiple educators across settings.
- Goals should occur in natural settings and times throughout the day.
  - Zipping practice before and after recess in winter months
  - Organizational skills when gathering materials or transitioning to new activities
  - Communication skills during group gym play and group classroom assignments
  - Handwriting practice signing books in and out of the library
- Activity matrices can be used to help guide personnel in knowing the who, when, and where regarding supports and services.

### **CASE STUDY: EVERGREEN HIGH SCHOOL VANCOUVER, WA**

Before 2010, Evergreen High Schools' on-time graduation rate was below 70% for all students in Evergreen Public Schools. After the district began working on their goal of 100% on time graduation, by 2013, the on time graduation rate soared to over 80%. Even with this significant change in supporting all students, data on state testing was showing that students with IEPs were performing much lower on average than students without IEPs. Students with IEPs were also not showing progress on state testing data in ways that students without IEPs in their grade level cohorts were. This forced Evergreen High School to take a hard look at the ways they were providing services to students with IEPs and part of that examination included how they were writing IEPs and the impact that had on student outcomes.

After reviewing the progress data for students with IEPs, Evergreen High School started to establish co-teaching and co-planning processes and rewrote IEPs so the goals aligned with the general education curriculum standards. When co-teaching classes were established and IEP goals addressed grade level standards, the data showed growth for students with IEPs as a result of receiving instruction on core academic content. There was significant growth in the percentage of students who accessed general education setting 80-100% of the day. Before 2010, students with IEPs were accessing 80-100% as low as 40% in some years. After 2013, the number increased to 76%. The access to general education classrooms and content helped students with IEPs achieve similar growth to their grade level peers without IEPs on state assessments over the next 7 years.

These shifts in both where and how and what students were learning stressed that special education is a service, not a location. It also reaffirmed for Evergreen High School educators and leadership that IEPs needed to align with grade level standards, knowing that the standards were the journey, not the destination. In addition to aligning goals with grade level standards, Evergreen High School also had to examine how special education teachers were functioning and how they were using their resources to achieve their goals and change students outcomes, This included reimagining how they wrote IEPs and then how they delivered SDI in general education classrooms. The professional development provided to reconceptualize the ways Evergreen High School supported students and provided special education services was rooted in helping to provide scaffolds and supports, but reinforcing that the classroom teachers were the primary vehicles for instruction. Evergreen High School made sure to explicitly address that students belonged with their peers. All students at Evergreen High School are general education students and some students receive special education services, but again, the location for this needs to be general education.

Professional development from special education focused on unpacking standards for IEP goals, measurable annual goals, co-teaching, paraeducator support, Universal Design for Learning, digital binders, and personalized learning plans. Book studies and co-teaching visits supported the learning of co-teachers. Addressing support materials to increase student access to the core curriculum came in the way of digital learning tools and programs. Speech-to-text, text-to-speech software, online reading programs, visual learning tools, and IEP writing software were different tools that supported special educators with helping students access the core curriculum. Partnerships with different departments also broke down silos around the district. Special Services partnered with Social/Emotional Learning, ELL, CTE, Federal Programs, Teaching and Learning, and IT departments in order to support access for all students.

Students were sharing that they wanted to experience opportunities to have math and English classes with their grade level peers. Students in co-taught classes appreciated the opportunity to learn with their grade level peers. They also appreciated being able to see how their IEP goals aligned with what was happening in the classes they were taking. They reported frustration with the previous practices of being segregated to receive specially designed instruction.

After co-teaching occurred for a few years, in 2013, students were asked if they successfully completed most class assignments and student reports indicated that 80.5% of the responses were most of the time or always. Students reported that they felt they were able to participate in class assignments most of the time or always at 86.9%. Students also reported that they were engaging in class discussions most of the time at 63%. When their IEPs were inclusive, focusing on what was happening in their learning environments and that there was a master schedule that also addressed times for all students to engage in essential skill development, Evergreen High School finally started seeing the progress of all their students, not just some of them.

## RESOURCES

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