The Student-directed IEP Process:
Increasing meaningful involvement of students with deafblindness in developing high priority goals for school and life

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Outcomes of this session
1. Learn the phases and elements of a student-directed IEP process.
2. Learn of possible adaptations and supports that can be used to help students to meaningfully participate in each phase of the process: assessment and planning; collaborative IEP meeting; implementation of the individualized plan and goals.
3. Learn strategies for sharing information about the importance and positive outcomes of the student-directed IEP process with other team members and families.
4. Learn of available resources to help support their efforts in implementing a student-directed IEP process approach.

Student-directed IEP Process
WHY?
– IEP = Individualized education plan
– IDEA-1997 states that students should attend their transition IEP meetings
– Promote greater student involvement in planning goals and assessing progress
– Documented that parents and general educators participate more when IEP meeting is led by the student
– Develop self-determination skills, especially in areas of goal-setting, self-evaluation, self-awareness and self-advocacy
“The IEP is not a form.”
- US Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts

(Endrew v. Douglas County School District, 2017)

“What do I call this process?”

- Student-led
- Self-led
- Student-directed

I prefer the term "student-directed IEP" as it encompasses more than just the meeting and it also is more inclusive to students that do not have the skills or experience to truly “lead” the entire process.

Person-Centered Approach

- Student-directed IEPs are closely linked to person-centered planning practices.
- Holding a person-centered planning meeting is an effective way to plan for an IEP meeting or develop plans for implementing an IEP.

Both processes focus on:

- Student’s history
- Student’s abilities/strengths
- Student’s & family’s dreams/ goals
- Student’s & family’s fears/ nightmares
- Support needs
- Goal setting and Action planning
“Self-led IEPs amplify the volume of the traditional IEP process. IEPs can often feel clinical and negative, student-led IEPs ensure the purpose of the IEP, the student’s hopes, dreams, and goals, remain the focus of the meeting.”

~ Alyson Furnback, transition support teacher

“I feel the student-led IEP process really means for the student to take ownership of what they want in their school year to happen. They are the most important person in the IEP, so they should be able to participate and lead their meeting.”

~ Heidi Seretan, transition support teacher

**Phases of the IEP Process**

- **Assessment and Planning**
- **Implementation of plan and evaluation of progress on goals**
- **MEETING to discuss assessment and develop goals and support plans**
FIRST PHASE:

Assessment and Planning

Three areas to address to promote student involvement at the IEP meeting

1. Students need to learn about the IEP Process and their roles prior to IEP meeting.
2. Adult team members need to effectively facilitate and support student involvement.
3. The school and adult participants need to establish the expectation that students should be active participants in their IEP meetings.

(Wehmeyer et. al, 2000; Valenzuela & Martin, 2005)

PREPARING FOR MEETING (1 of 2)

• Planning and training sessions- either individually or in small groups
• Role play and videotape students and discuss performance
• Look over student data and products and teacher reports WITH student
• Student self-assessment report
PREPARING FOR MEETING (2 of 2)

• Invitations to team members developed and delivered by student
• Determine necessary adaptations to assist student to lead discussion at IEP meeting.
• Enlist a student who has already led a meeting to mentor/advise student.

Involving student in assessment process

• Share information about assessment tools
• Discuss results of assessments—identify areas of strength, progress and growth, and areas for more focus and practice.
• Connect the results to development of new or revised goals.
• Assist student to gather assessment data to share:
  • Student Profile or Portfolio
  • Review past work samples, data collection
  • Develop a guide for student to use to gather feedback from others.

Questions for Student Assessment Guide

1. What do you think I am good at? (strengths)
2. What strategies help me do my best? (services, supports, and accommodations)
3. What kinds of situations don’t work for me? (services, supports, and accommodations)
4. What do I need to work on to be successful and achieve my future goals? (areas of need)
5. What are your hopes for my future?
Suggestions for drafting goals

• Discuss what was learned from the assessment process then identify areas where 1) skills are needed or could be improved or 2) specific activities/tasks that the student wants to learn.

• Review last year’s goals with these questions:
  – Have I met that goal?
  – Is this goal still important to my life?
  – Is it a good goal but it needs some changes or more accommodations?

• Offer the student suggestions or choices for new goals based on student interests, current skills, future goals, or activities and skills other same-age students are learning and practicing.

Suggestions for drafting goals

• Consider all relevant areas for goals: academics, social, communication, vocational, independent life skills, self-determination and self-advocacy, leisure and recreation. Select goal(s) for each area.

• Design a guide that the student can use to ask other people who are important in their life for ideas about potential goals.

Examples of possible goals

• "At my job sites, I will greet my coworkers with handshakes or high fives rather than hugs."

• "I will use my picture boards to express my wants and needs to my teachers, classmates, and family."

• "I will ask at least one friend to join me in card game and take turns in the game at recess 3 times a week."

• "I will plan my routes to community work sites using Google Maps by entering the departure and arrival points and time of trip, printing directions, and following the listed directions and times."

• "I will meet with my teachers each week to review the class materials that will need enlarged print copies for the following week."
SECOND PHASE:

Meeting to discuss progress and assessment results and develop NEW goals

Facilitation and Modeling

• Initially, some members of the team may not be comfortable with a student-directed IEP meeting.
• Inform them before the meeting & at the start of the meeting the purpose of the student leading the IEP.
• Assure team members the student’s progress, needs, and goals and their concerns will still be discussed.
• Pay attention to other team members language use and non-verbal cues (body language or facial cues).
• Model for others effective ways to support, encourage and provide feedback to the student.
• Seek feedback from other team members at end of or after the meeting.

Planning for the Meeting

• Plan for accessibility and assistive technology needs and other adaptations.
• Inform others that student will be actively participating during the meeting.
• Ensure enough time for student to share and others to respond and share feedback.
• Plan lots of opportunities for student to participate—ask for feedback, ask questions, offer opinions.
• Make sure student is comfortable presenting information. Support, don’t force.
A student-led IEP doesn’t really mean that the student is there to conduct all the meeting or with only some support from me. It means that the student is engaged in the planning and conducting the meeting to the best of their ability. Sometimes it could be that the student is only pushing buttons on the computer. I once had a student who could only push an adapted big red bottom to move through slides of the presentation of the meeting. However, that is—for her—still a form of leading an IEP.

~ Heidi Seretan, transition teacher

Use of Technology in Planning and Leading Student-directed IEPs

Support student to develop a slideshow presentation of student's history, past goals, and proposed new goals.

- Use photos and videos
- Use music and/or record student’s narrating information, goals or ideas
- Develop script for students to follow

• Use AT and AAC devices for students to lead portions of IEP and/or respond to other team members comments, questions or suggestions

Ideas for individualized supports and adaptations
**Student with Minimal Support Needs Participation Ideas**

- Use PowerPoint or Prezi to present
- Name cards in front of each person
- Develop a clear step-by-step agenda with highlighted information for student to refer to during meeting
- Have note cards with information prepared and ready
- Have a system the student can use to ask for assistance or to pass on duties if necessary (e.g. color coded cards, a signed gesture)
- Model respectful interactions with student that demonstrate understanding of the student's role as the leader of meeting

**Student with Moderate Support Needs Participation Ideas**

- Use a slideshow to present and include simple text student can read and photos and video clips.
- Pre-record audio comments or video to include in presentation if necessary, especially if student will be too nervous to present.
- Follow a predictable format throughout discussion.
- Follow a pre-planned agenda in which the student leads portions of the meeting and the teacher or another facilitator leads or co-leads other parts with input from student.
- Use graphic organized or note cards with steps to follow

**Student with Moderate Support Needs Participation Ideas**

- Use guiding questions to prompt student to perform their planned roles and tasks.
- Restate student’s statements or requests when necessary
- Model respectful interactions with student that demonstrate understanding of the student’s role as the leader of the meeting. Have a system the student can use to ask for assistance or to pass on duties if necessary (e.g. color coded cards, a signed gesture)
- Make sure student is seated next to someone who know their support plan for the meeting.
Student with Significant/Complex Support Needs Participation Ideas

• Use assistive technology for presentation—switches, prerecorded messages, signed communication, speech-generating devices.
• If the student uses a speech-generating device you can record it ahead of time and play recording of the presentation at the meeting.
• If the student uses signed communication or ASL an interpreter should be at the meeting to help student present.
• Make sure student has a means to communicate during meeting presentation and discussion and ensure all team members acknowledge the student’s messages.

• With slideshow presentation include text that team members can read and insert slides that elicit feedback from other team members.
• Plan a specific amount of time for the student to present information they wish to share. This may occur at one specific portion of meeting or at numerous planned times throughout the meeting.
• Provide the student with fidgets, breaks, etc. throughout the meeting.

Two transition-aged youth shared...

“...I didn’t like when I had to be in my IEP meetings and sit and listen to everybody talk. It was long and boring. I like it better now that Annette asks me to meet to talk to me about my meeting. Now during my meeting I help to set up and I go make copies of papers when they need me to. I also like that I’m told I’m the “quarterback” of my meeting. I am in control. I stand up and talk about the things that I am doing good.”
"I really like to use PowerPoint when I have my IEP and using the computer to hear my IEP. Before I came to this school I only used to sit down in my meetings and then they asked me to sign the paper at the end. Now I like to be the one in charge of putting together the information and presenting to everyone at the meeting."

"My students participate in their IEPs, creating the PowerPoint presentations as much as possible, whether it be giving them the different slide titles and saying 'go for it' or having the students choose pictures of themselves/take pictures, write about their favorite things about themselves or interests, etc. Basically they participate in the preparation process as much they are able. As for the meeting, the students "lead the meeting". It looks different for everyone but they can read the entire slides, just the titles, or click through the PowerPoint and point."

~ Dana Zimpelmann, high school teacher

THIRD PHASE

Implementation of PLAN and evaluation of progress on goals
Implementation of plan and goals

Support student to understand this next phase through...

- Direct instruction
- Small group lessons on topics of goal setting, self-determination, and self-advocacy
- Consistent, daily or weekly opportunities to practice, track, and discuss goals
- Use of necessary adaptations, including specific accommodations/adaptations listed in goals, modified goal-tracking sheets, IEP matrix or list, student schedules

Continue to focus on IEP as process, not just forms and an annual meeting.

“I would suggest giving the student an individualized tool and working goal progress recording or self-reflection into the student’s daily schedule. Last year, my students did it every day during 7th period. They used the same tool at the same time each day and eventually almost all of them completed it independently, and brought it to me asking for my input. This process became a part of the students’ day that they could count on, recording their progress was motivating, and they became extremely independent.”

~Dana Zimpelmann, high school special education teacher

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Work Habits</th>
<th>Try Again (field)</th>
<th>OK Ask/ hint (2)</th>
<th>Awesome! (3)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Got to work on time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Put away stuff, ready when shift started</td>
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<tr>
<td>Said hello and conversed with supervisor &amp; co-worker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asked for help when I didn’t understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did NOT goof around much with friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focused on each task until it was done.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gave my best effort</td>
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<td>Asked for a break when I needed one.</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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A transition teacher shared...

"The changes I have noticed in my program before and after running student led IEPs and involving students in their goal monitoring have been huge! Our program outcomes are so much more comprehensive and successful because we involve our students in the creation and implementation of their educational programs. My students understand that success is a process and not a product."

“Alyson Furnback, teacher of transition-aged students

Questions for you

1. What challenges or barriers do you foresee in promoting and using this type of student self-advocacy and/or student-directed IEP process?

2. What are the first steps you could take toward utilizing a student-directed IEP process with the students you serve?

Online Resources (1)

• I'm Determined Project — Wonderful Internet resource for educators, families and youth on a variety of topics related to self-determination and self-advocacy. This project was developed by the Virginia Department of Education. It includes a variety of resources that teachers can use to organize student involvement in their IEP meetings, including lesson plans, templates, self-assessments, checklists, brochures, and PowerPoint Training slides. http://www.imdetermined.org/

• IEP Involvement Tool from I'm Determined Project: Helpful tool for teaching and preparing students for the IEP process. http://www.imdetermined.org/resources/detail/02_iep_involvement_tool
Online Resources (2)

- **My Future My Plan**: This curriculum is designed to motivate and guide students with disabilities and their families as they begin early transition planning for life after high school. The curriculum package includes a videotape and discussion guide, a workbook for students, and a guide for family members and teachers. All materials are available in English and Spanish. [http://www.ncset.org/publications/mfmp.asp](http://www.ncset.org/publications/mfmp.asp)

- **FYI Transition Self-determination Resources**: This website includes a comprehensive list of many curriculum available to teach self-determination, self-advocacy, goal-setting, and IEP participation. The list includes a detailed description and contact list for finding or purchasing the curriculum: [http://www.fyitransition.org/Minicourses/selfdetermination/selfdetermination6.html](http://www.fyitransition.org/Minicourses/selfdetermination/selfdetermination6.html)

Online Resources (3)

The article this presentation was based upon and includes more detail and specific examples:


Part 1: [http://files.cadbs.org/200002551-f293ef38dd/1reSourcesSummer2015.pdf](http://files.cadbs.org/200002551-f293ef38dd/1reSourcesSummer2015.pdf)


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