A. How to Design a Good IEP
B. How to Track Your Child’s Progress
C. What to Do When Your Child’s IEP Starts to Get Off Track
D. How to Make Mid-Year Changes
E. How to Keep Your Relationship with the School On Track
F. Q&A
A. How to Design a Good IEP
Rebecca Hampton
Designing the IEP

From Emotions to Advocacy, by Pam Wright and Pete Wright
“Design is a plan for arranging elements in such a way as best to accomplish a particular purpose.”

- Charles Eames, American Designer

SMART IEPs are:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Use Action Words
- Realistic and Relevant
- Time Limited
Specific goals target areas of:
- Academic achievement, and
- Functional performance.

Specific goals are:
- Clear
- Descriptive

Specific goals include knowledge and skills to be taught to the student and how the student’s progress will be measured.
Erica will increase study skills for academic success.

Erica will demonstrate the following study skills: skimming written material and use reference materials in history class.
**Measureable**: means you can COUNT or OBSERVE the goals.

- Measurable goals allow parents and teachers to know how much progress the child has made since the performance was last measured.
  - This is a KEY factor for ensuring you keep your child’s IEP on track.

- Measurable goals allow you to know when your student reaches a goal.
Which goal is measurable?

- Blair will improve her second grade math skills.
- Given second grade math, Blair will answer 8 out of 10 problems correctly.
Start with: “The child will be able to…”

3 components that must be stated in measurable terms:
- Direction of behavior (increase, decrease, maintain, etc.)
- Area of need (reading, writing, social skills, transition, communication, etc.)
- Level of Attainment (to age level, without assistance, etc.)
Which of these goals includes action words?

- Wes will increase his productivity by being more organized.

- Provided with organizational management cues and adult support, Wes will be able to file papers by subject in his notebooks so that he can find and complete assignments at home.
REALISTIC and RELEVANT

- Having realistic and relevant goals and objectives will help address the student’s *unique needs* that result from a disability.

- Realistic goals for your student should not be based on external standards such as state or district tests, or district wide curricula.
Rebecca will demonstrate improved reading skills.

- Given second grade reading material, Rebecca will read a passage of text orally at 110-130 wpm with random errors.
Time limited goals ensure that a parent will be able to monitor progress at stated intervals.

- Ask questions like:
  - What does my child need to know and be able to do after one year of special education services?
Put the pen to the paper!

- Write down statements about what you want your child to know and be able to do.

- Revise goals until: Specific, Measurable, Use Action Words, Realistic, and Time-Limited

- If you do this, your goals will describe what the child will know or be able to do. The focus will be on behavior that you can count or observe and progress will be assessed objectively.
A parent/advocate always faces the danger that the IEP team proposes goals that are:

- Not specific
- Not measurable
- Do not meet the child’s academic and functional needs, and
- Do not describe how the child’s progress will be measured.

It is your job to challenge teachers to work harder to ensure that your child’s goals address his/her educational needs and are written appropriately.
But...How Do I Remain Vigilant?

- **THE COLUMBO STRATEGY**: “5 Ws + H + E”

- This strategy only works if you LISTEN to answers!
- Using this strategy skillfully may allow you to shift school personnel from reporting feelings to reporting observations and facts.
Designing your child’s IEP is only the beginning.

It is equally important to monitor your child’s IEP and to ensure that it remains on track.
How To Track Your Child’s Progress

By Blair Hornstine
Topics

• How to Organize Your Child’s File
• Understanding Your Child’s Test Scores
• Independent Educational Evaluations
How to Organize Your Child’s File

Without good organization, it is impossible to keep track of your child’s progress.
Creating a Master File

Gather all necessary information

• First – make a list of any group that might have information or records
  – Doctors
  – Therapist
  – Medical Professionals

• Second – draft a letter to send to these groups requesting a copy of your child’s records.
  – Please refer to the section on Letter to the Stranger
Third – write letter to the school requesting your child’s educational records

– Address a copy to both the Principal and the Director of Special Education

– Depending on your school district, you may have to pay a fee for this service

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008).
Organizing the Master File

• Date all Documents
  – Write date of document in lower right-hand corner of each document
  – Only use a PENCIL
  – NEVER write on your originals

• Place all dated documents into a 3-ring binder in chronological order
  – Start from the earliest date until the latest date

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed.2008).
Master File List

• Organize a spreadsheet to record each document in the master file
• Include these headings
  – Date
  – Author of Document
  – Type of Document
  – Significance of Document

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008).
Master File – Do’s and Don’ts

• Don’t write on or mark up your originals
• Don’t give your originals to anyone
• Do keep your file up-to-date
  – Easier to do constantly rather than trying to throw everything together at the last minute

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008).
How to understand what the scores tell you about your child’s progress
Comprehensive Evaluations

• Reading
  – Phonological awareness and rapid naming
  – Word recognition
  – Nonsense words
  – Fluency
  – Silent reading comprehension
  – Oral reading comprehension
  – Receptive language skills
    • Vocabulary
    • Listening Comprehension
• Writing
  – Handwriting and/or keyboarding
  – Spelling
  – Ability to formulate sentences
  – Writing fluency
  – Paragraph writing
  – Ability to plan and organize a story and/or essay
  – Oral language skills
  – Issue could be related to ability to express thoughts in writing
• Mathematics
  – Computational skills
  – Number formation for younger students
  – Math related vocabulary
  – Computational fluency
  – Math reasoning

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008).
How to Compare Test Scores

• To be able to track your child’s progress, you need to examine the evaluation test scores

• You can only compare the same tests and sub-tests

• Do not mix-and-match tests
Understanding the Meaning of Test Scores

• Using Statistics
  – By comparing the same test scores and sub-test scores you can track your child’s progress

• Key to Understanding Test Score Meaning
  – Raw Score
    • Number of answers child answered correctly
  – Standard Score
    • Score based on norm-referenced tests
  – Percentile Rank
    • Percent of scores that fall below a point on a score distribution
    • For example – 50\textsuperscript{th} percentile rank means that 50\% of children received the same score or lower

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008).
Example

• Alex is given a test when he is 7.0 years-old
  – Raw Score – 15
  – Standard Score – 10
  – Percentile Rank – 50% (average range)

Example provided by Dr. Suzanne Brassel, Clinical Psychologist
Phone: (757) 253 - 0371
• Alex is administered the same test when he is 10.0 years old
  – Raw Score – 15 (meaning he got the same number of items correct when he was 7 years old)
  – Standard Score – 4
  – Percentile Rank – 2% (deficient range)

• This means that while he is not deteriorating, Alex has made no progress

• In comparison to his peers, Alex is falling behind
Let’s Change the Facts

- Alex is administered the same test when he is 10.0 years old
  - Raw Score – 10
    - He no longer can achieve a score of 15
  - Standard Score – 1
  - Percentile Rank – 1%
- This means that Alex has deteriorated and has fallen behind his peers
Where Should Alex Be?

- For Alex to remain at the 50th percentile rank, then his raw score would need to be 35
- Children should be continuously improving and progressing
Norm-Referenced Testing

- Most educational testing is based on a child’s abilities in comparison to others of the same age group.
- Test scores are based on a particular age group within a three-month range.
- In this way, you can track your child’s progress or regression.

Source: Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008).
Is My Child Actually Making Progress?

• Start of IEP
  – Have an initial baseline score when formulating goals
  – Make sure goals are measurable so you can track progress

• Afterward
  – See how child did on post-testing
  – Did their scores remain the same, i.e. stagnating progress?
  – Did their score improve and are they at the same percentile rank?
  – Did their score decrease?
Independent Educational Evaluations (IEE)

How to request additional testing
Independent educational evaluation means an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner or examiners who are not employed by the local educational agency responsible for the education of the child in question.

Source: 34 CFR 300.502 (a)(3)(i), 8VAC20-81-10
Parental Rights to IEE

• If a parent disagrees with an evaluation conducted by the school, then the parent has a right to request an IEE at public expense.

• After a parent has made a request, the school must either provide the IEE or proceed to due process to prove that their evaluation is appropriate.

• A parent can only request one IEE each time the school completes an evaluation that the parent disagrees with.

Source: 34 CFR 300.502 (b) and (e), 8VAC20-81-170(B)(2)
While the school should provide with a list of professionals that can conduct the IEE, a parent has the right to choose who will evaluate the child as long as the evaluator meets the school’s criteria.

Consult: Independent Evaluations: Must Parents Choose an Evaluator from School's Approved List?

http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/test.eval.choice.osep.htm

Source: 34 C.F.R. 300.502, 8VAC20-81-170(B)
References

Pam Wright & Pete Wright, From Emotions to Advocacy (2d.ed. 2008)

For more information, please go to:

www.fetaweb.com

For more information on this topic, please see section on Parent as Experts:

www.fetaweb.com/expert.htm
C. What to Do When Your Child’s IEP Starts to Get Off Track

Andrea Johnson
What to do when your IEP starts to get off track

Simple steps any parent can take
Problem

• Susan came home without her weekly progress log, again. You feel angry and frustrated the teacher isn’t complying with provisions written in the IEP. You’ve brought this concern up with the school before, and the problem persists…

• What do you do?
Step 1: Stay Calm
Step 2: Write Things Down

• Write down your concerns as they happen

• Use your own words
Example

Friday January 4, 5:00pm

Susan did not receive her weekly progress report today. On Monday I will contact her teacher and ask for report on this past week’s progress.
Why?

• Create examples
  – Avoids general statements, which feel antagonistic
  – Clearer communication of your concern
  – Quicker resolution of the problem

• Prepares you
Write Down Quickly

Write things down as they happen

- More accurate
- Less of a burden
Low-Tech Paper Trials

• You can keep these writings in whatever form works for you
  – Contact Log
  – Calendar
  – Journal

• Keep in mind: these are intended to be shared with the school--not private

What to track in your paper trial

• Write down your summary of all interactions
  – In-person meetings
  – Phone conversations

• Keep all documents from the school
  – Letters sent home
  – Emails
  – Progress Reports

Agreements Reached

• Write down your interpretation of what happened
• Ensure your understanding is the same as the school’s
  – If possible, have the teacher sign your recap
  – If uncomfortable or not possible, send follow up email
What to write down

• **Who**
  – Names of who was part of the communication

• **Where**
  – What form of communication (phone, person) and where

• **When**
  – Include date and time
    • As specifically as you can

What to write down Continued

• What
  – Recap of your conversation
    • What was said
    • What will be done in the future

• Do NOT include
  – Your emotional reaction
    • Stick to the facts
      *Remember you are preparing this to be shared with the school

# Example of a Contact Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Contact Log: Telephone Calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you wanted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you were told</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This chart was taken from http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/advo.create.trails.htm
# Example of a Contact Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Mom and Ms. Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>Monday November 2 at around 4:30pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you wanted</td>
<td>To know how Sam’s speech went today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you were told</td>
<td>Sam didn’t have speech today because Ms. Speech was sick. I asked if missed speech time would be rescheduled and Ms. Teacher said she would get back to me about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Sam mentioned he missed speech today because he likes time with Ms. Speech.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keep Your Log

• Keep your log in one place
  – Loose-leaf binder
  – Calendar
  – Computer

• Keep your logs from year to year
  – Don’t throw them out
What to do with your log

• Bring to meetings with the school
  – Use to support your concern
    • Provide concrete examples instead of general statements

• If eventually need outside help, give to the clinic, advocate, or attorney
Step 3: Letter to the Stranger

• This is a place for your emotions

• Tell your story, narrative
  – Use your own words
    • Can revise later if needed

• Address to unknown advocate
  – Tell a persuasive story

Letter to Stranger Cont

• Story
  – Chronological order
    • Start with the beginning
  – Continue to update this letter
    • Include additional concerns or successes in the story
Letter to Stranger Example

• Can be very long

• Excellent example on Wrightslaw webpage

http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/Letter_to_Stranger.html
Parents, educators, advocates, and attorneys come to Wrightslaw for accurate, reliable information about special education law, education law, and advocacy for children with disabilities.

Begin your search in the Advocacy Libraries and Law Libraries. You will find thousands of articles, cases, and resources about dozens of topics:

IDEA 2004 | Special Education | Law | Advocacy
Books, DVDs, Websites

Alert! Supreme Court Issues Pre-Chair Decision in Forest Grove School District v. T.A. - In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court held that that IDEA allows reimbursement for private special education services, even when the child did not previously receive special education services from the public school.

In this issue of the Special Ed Advocate, you'll find A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention and specific questions parents should ask to ensure that their child will be accurately identified and is receiving appropriate instruction.

Law School Exam - Give it a try. Take the Final Exam that Pete and Pam administered to their students at the William & Mary School of Law. To see one of their students in oral argument in an ALR case, click here.

You are Invited ... Visit the Wrightslaw Way Blog. Help us create a unique, helpful online community. Recent posts and comments ...
Step 4: Communicate your Concern

- Start within your child’s local school
  - Teacher
    - Special education teacher
    - General education teacher
  - IEP Team
  - Case manager
  - Assistant Principal
  - Principal

Who to Contact outside of the School

• School System
  – Director of Special Education
  – Student Services
  – Other Parent Resource Center

• State school board
  – Virginia Department of Education
    • Parent Ombudsman
    • Additional online resources

From Virginia Department of Education webpage, www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/sess
Outside Resources

• PELE Clinic
  – Applications available

• Other area clinics, if not near Williamsburg
  – University of Richmond Law School
  – University of Virginia

• Community Services Board
D. How to Make Mid-Year Changes to Your Child’s IEP

Jeff Martin
How to Make Mid-Year Changes to Your Child’s IEP
Congrats on designing the perfect IEP!

What do you have so far?
What do you have so far?

A very expensive high tech exercise program for the teachers!
What is a teacher’s day like?

A very expensive high tech exercise program for the teachers!
One is adorable, but 18-20?

• Homework
• Dinner
• Bath
• Brush
• Bed
• Our Bed
• Her Bed

*(repeat as needed!)*
Whose job is it to help keep the IEP on track?
YOURS!

Why?
You are your child’s best advocate!

What happens if you don’t?
What happens if you don’t?

Finally. A home exercise system that really is a clothes rack!
How do you tell if it’s working?

Direct:
1) visit the classroom
   a. volunteer!
2) ask questions

Indirect:
1) your child’s progress reports

What happens if you don’t?
What happens if you don’t?

You have a very expensive high tech IEP clothes rack!
Who made you a coach?

* Does the coach know the rules?
* How often is an IEP meeting?
* How often for educational evals?
8VAC20-81-110. Individualized education program.

5. Each local education agency shall ensure that the IEP team reviews the child's IEP periodically, but not less than annually . . .

a. Any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general curriculum, if appropriate;
b. The results of any reevaluation . . .
c. Information about the child . . .
d. The child's anticipated needs; or
e. Other matters.

Who???
Threshold???
8VAC20-81-110. Individualized education program.

6. Each local educational agency shall provide special education and related services to a child with a disability in accordance with the child's IEP.

7. Nothing in this section limits a parent's right to ask for revisions of the child's IEP if the parent feels that the efforts required by this chapter are not being met.

How many times can you meet? What is the threshold? Reasons for revisions?
Reasons for Revising/Amending the IEP

- Amend present levels of performance;
- Amend consideration of special factors;
- Amend participation in general education;
- Amend participation in physical education;
- Amend annual goals and objectives/benchmarks;
- Amend participation in district and state assessments;
- Amend placement;
- Include/amend transitional plan;
- Include/amend a functional behavior assessment;
- Include/amend the behavior intervention plan;
- Include/amend an extended school year plan; and
- Include/amend plan for non-certificated staff providing specially designed instruction
Examples of changes:

Study notes not coming home.

New twist on an old behavioral problem.
   *If . . . Mrs. Miller will send a note home.*
   *If . . . Mrs. Martin will be called.*

Resource teachers not showing up.
   *A weekly log will be kept, showing . . .*

Proper computer technology missing
   *By 12/1/09, Kala’s classroom computer will have Reader Rabbit installed.*
How do you make amendments to the plan?
How do you make amendments to the plan?

Develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP

What happens if you don’t?
What happens if you don’t?

You have a very expensive high tech IEP clothes rack!

How do you amend?
8VAC20-81-110. Individualized education program.

9. In making changes to a child's IEP after the annual IEP team meeting for the school year, the parent(s) and the local educational agency may agree not to convene an IEP team meeting for the purposes of making those changes, and instead may develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP.
C. To Meet or Not Meet

What are the benefits of meeting or not meeting?
Why not write it as a parental attachment?

**Written Notice of a Refused or Tabled Action**

Student Name: ___________________________ Birth date: _______________

Parent(s): ___________________________ Date: _______________

The Virginia Special Education Regulations (8VAC20-91(C)) require notice to the parent(s) of any refusal “to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education for the child.”

**Purpose of this notice:**

☐ An action being accepted by the LEA Date of implementation: _______________

☐ An action being refused by the LEA

☐ An action being tabled by the LEA Date of next consideration: _______________

**Notice:**

1. A description of the action refused [or tabled] by the local educational agency.
Why not write it as a parental attachment?

Written Notice of a Refused or Tabled Action

Student Name: Jadyn
Birth date: 1/01/02

Parent(s): Jeff & Tracy
Date: 11/1/09

The Virginia Special Education Regulations (22AC20-81(C)) require notice to the parent(s) of any refusal “to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education for the child.”

Purpose of this notice:
- An action being accepted by the LEA
- An action being refused by the LEA
- An action being tabled by the LEA

Date of implementation: ____________
Date of next consideration: ____________

Notice:
1. A description of the action refused [or tabled] by the local educational agency.

We propose to amend the reading goal of Jadyn’s IEP to: “By 6/5/2010, Jadyn will be reading on a 3.0 grade level” because, after extensive summer reading, Jadyn has already met her IEP reading goal.”
Why not write it as a parental attachment?

Written Notice of a Refused or Tabled Action

Student Name: Nate
Birth date: 1/01/1995

Parent(s): John & Clarice
Date: 11/1/09

The Virginia Special Education Regulations (8VAC20-81.1) require notice to the parent(s) of any refusal “to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education for the child.”

Purpose of this notice:
☐ An action being accepted by the LEA
☐ An action being refused by the LEA
☐ An action being tabled by the IFA
Date of implementation: _____________
Date of next consideration: _____________

Notice:
1. A description of the action refused [or tabled] by the local educational agency.

We propose to amend Nate’s BIP plan to include: “Nate’s case manager will spend 20 minutes each week with Nate on developing organizational skills” because Nate’s lack of organization is causing him to miss homework assignments.
1. A description of the action refused [or tabled] by the local educational agency.

2. An explanation of why the local educational agency refuses to take the action [or tables it].

3. A description of any other options the IEP team considered and the reasons for the rejection of those options.

4. A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the local educational agency used as a basis for the refused [or tabled] action.

5. A description of any other factors that is relevant to the local educational agency's refusal.

_________________________________________ (Signature)  _______________________________________ (LEA Position)

C. 2. The notice shall include: (34 CFR 300.503(b))

a. A description of the action proposed or refused by the local educational agency;

b. An explanation of why the local educational agency proposes or refuses to take the action;

c. A description of any other options the IEP team considered and the reasons for the rejection of those options;

d. A description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report the local educational agency used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;

e. A description of any other factors that are relevant to the local educational agency's proposal or refusal;
E. How to Keep Your Relationship with the School On Track

Cassandra
Maintaining a Good Relationship with Your Child’s School
Parent-School Conflict is Normal

- Your child’s education is your first priority, it’s natural to want to provide them with everything they need yourself
• The best way to ensure that your child’s needs are met is to build a strong, positive relationship with everyone who plays a role in your child’s education

• Developing and maintaining your child’s IEP is a team effort
Start on a Good Note

• Ideally, lay the foundation of a positive working relationship with your child’s teachers and other staff members by connecting with them before the school year even starts.

• Let them know you are looking forward to partnering with them in achieving your child’s educational goals.
• Exchange email addresses with your child’s teacher and agree to keep in touch, even when things are going well

• Keep your child’s teacher updated on the progress your child is making at home
Maintain the Connection

• Stay involved! It’s important to remain connected during the school year
• Be on time, positive and prepared for meetings and activities
• Offer to volunteer your time or talent at your child’s school
Obstacles for Parents

- Strong parental emotions
  - Being deeply invested and passionate about the success of your child’s education is a good thing
  - However, overseeing 12 years of school for your child is a LONG term project
  - As is the case with any long term goal, there will be moments of frustration and disappointment – expect them so you’ll be prepared to control them

- Emotions are often cited as the “Achilles heel” for parents of students with disabilities because intense emotions in this context may result in poor judgment
  - To be an effective advocate you must be prepared to recognize and control your emotions so that you may use them as a source of positive energy
Warning: Common Emotional Traps

• Recognizing common emotional obstacles of other parents will help you identify and control them yourself
  – Sadness
  – Frustration
  – Anger
  – Self-defeated
Reach out for Support and Motivation!

- Don’t go alone to meetings
- Contact a support group or special education friend
- Focus your energy in a positive direction – on solving problems! Use your emotions as a source of energy
- Focus on your goal – getting an appropriate education for your child
Practical Suggestions

• Problems and negative experiences are not the only items on the table for discussion
  – If something is going well, say so! Good will is invaluable and reinforcing the positive aspects of your child’s program is a great way to maintain good will

• Frame concerns and issues in a way that focuses on your child, not the shortcomings of the teachers, school, etc.
Be Specific

• If you have a problem, make an effort to discuss the specific concerns you have as they related to your child

• Be clear about you want to happen differently with your child’s IEP
  – It’s not enough to say that something isn’t working
  – If you don’t know what’s wrong, ask questions of the team and consult people that can advise you
• Storytelling reduces resistance. Make requests by telling your child’s story.

• Be prepared!
  – Come to meetings with a list of goals for the child; list the school’s responses to create a record of the meeting
  – It’s cliché, but true - knowledge is power

• Send a post meeting “thank-you note” to follow up and summarize your understanding of the meeting
  – It’s important to affirm your respect and appreciation for the school’s work and effort
  – It also re-affirms the professional, working relationship you seek to develop with the school
F. Q&A

Please keep your questions general so that they will apply to more people.