

Developing Recommendations

How can the IEP process be improved to ensure that students are enabled to narrow the achievement gap and achieve grade level standards?

CARMEN BROWN -MSDE- AUG 22, 2023 12:15PM UTC

Elevating Expectations for Students with Disabilities

Change special education teacher prep program requirements to include predictors of post-school success, transition evidence-based practices, current best practices in employment such as customized employment, job development and coaching, and other emerging models so they enter their careers with elevated expectations of students.

Provide training to IEP chairs on measurable transition activities that align with post-school outcomes. Include post school goals to drive academics. Every student should have a post school goal of a career, college, or independent living with the academic and transition skills to support/achieve those outcomes.

Start in Infants and Toddlers and across the years expose staff and families to successful adults. See "why not work" and other videos at MDOD website and terms exceed program at UMD.

Collaborating with institutions such as MCIE to work directly with systems to properly program for students.

Parent Engagement

Start with parental engagement that lifts parental expectations for each child with a disability.

Maryland should develop and implement a statewide strategy to promote and formally reinforce asset-based perspectives regarding students with disabilities at every level from MSDE to individual educators and staff.

COMAR and MSDE guidance should be revised to explicitly provide: Students w/significant cognitive disabilities are legally entitled to IEP goals/services that enable them to have access to grade-level content stds (ie gen-ed curriculum) and to meet alternate grade-level stds. Goals should be based on EBP, related services, and LRE principles that maximize their potential.

Unique Learning Systems is a platform that does a great of doing that – **ANONYMOUS**

Reflection tools on how to focus on what students can do vs. what they can't - eliminating the dangerous assumptions. Professional learning opportunities to address "loving them into low expectations" vs. challenging and providing tools. Culture shift/mindset shift - how can we do that?

Share more studies/examples and allow those closest to the work (teachers/paras) not just district level staff to observe and visit schools/programs who are demonstrating high expectations and bring those findings back to their LEA.

COMAR and MSDE guidance should be revised to explicitly provide: Students without significant cognitive disabilities are legally entitled to IEP goals and services that enable them to meet grade-level standards. When these students are behind grade-level standards, they should receive IEP goals/services that enable them to narrow the gap between stds and their performance levels.

Provide training/practice/coaching for staff on family centered practices birth to 21.

Provide time for staff to build relationships with their students and families to truly hear their hopes/dreams/wishes for their child/youth.

Data looking at children with different disabilities and those with "multiple disabilities" can help target barriers even more specifically.

We need to use state data to elevate mindsets and tell the story of students with disabilities that achieve at levels that are comparable to their peers. We all have these cases, and yet staff members hold outdated beliefs as a standard for success.

Using student success stories can be very helpful to address inherent bias. If students/young adults who have achieved beyond expectations are able to give their personal stories that would be great.

Writing goals & objectives that incorporate student strengths.

Provide local staff with training to self-reflect on inherent bias and internalized messages about the ability of students with disabilities to achieve at grade level.

Collecting and Analyzing Student Data

The same data that is tracked for non-IEP students should be tracked for IEP students, not students with disabilities. There are students who identify as having a disability but don't need an IEP. The numbers trend too high when we don't segregate the data.

A statewide universal reporting of data on IEP objectives. Use of the "Student Goal Matrix" page for case managers to record student data.

Use common software that will capture data, that will translate across counties. Everyone should be on the same page when it comes to gathering and analyzing student data.

Developing Staff Capacity and Process for Writing IEPs with High Expectations

Can start with the power of an example.

Allowing staff to experience firsthand examples of possibilities that already exist. Will motivate staff to write these IEPs.

Provide intentional ongoing coaching and mentoring of teachers to get practice and experience of writing IEPs - then measure, collect data IEP goals and if not being met access support (including the family) to immediately address.

Build in time to partner with families to gather authentic input in the development of their child's IEP.

Mentorship program

Use of AI to ensure IEP goals and objectives are aligned with standards and present levels.

Be consistent with PD and expectations- often at district meetings an expectation is shared, then later another district level stakeholder states a different expectation.

Rethinking Systems of Accountability and Monitoring

Revise compliance protocols

AIB, in consultation with MSDE, should set outcome measure targets for short and long-term growth in the achievement of students with disabilities.

Tangible direction from the state. Kids should have the same shot no matter what school system they attend.

Develop intentional schedules that allow for general ed/special ed teachers to have joint planning times.

State authority would be helpful given the variation across jurisdictions.

Case studies will always tell you more than raw data.

Looking at additional staffing so paperwork can be completed and monitored effectively. This needs to be something that is consistent no matter what school district you are in.

Use implementation of grade level standards and inclusion strategies as part of teacher rating systems.

Separate paperwork (clerical) and teaching- in this time with severe shortages something must change for teachers to do their due diligence and do the work with fidelity with large caseloads and the rising emotional, physical, and academic challenges our most vulnerable populations are exhibiting.

Review State monitoring tools and compliance protocols to ensure that IEP goals narrow or close the gap between present levels of achievement and grade-level standards, and that, based upon research and professional judgement, services are reasonably calculated to enable the goals to be achieved.

Breaking Down Silos between General and Special Education

There needs to be a transition tool/almost like an incubator that allows special education students to experience general education without launching them into "the deep" all at once.

Provision of collaborative planning for gen ed and special education teachers should occur daily to ensure that provision of SDI.

Required training for Gen Ed teachers.

Make it a requirement for Gen Ed teachers (all) to have ongoing training on how to be more intentional about helping IEP students' progress towards IEP goals. Many teachers state they don't know how to read an IEP or how to implement it, even in an inclusion classroom. It's also been stated that while this type of training is offered, it is not required.

Ensuring that general education teachers understand their role in also providing SDI, collecting data, and collaborating with the special education staff.

Providing time for general and special education teachers to plan together/collaborate. Also, professional dev't on effective co-teaching.

collaborative planning time is key! — ANONYMOUS

Joint professional development around UDL, DI and SDI - for ALL students. Clear state expectations to help building level staff understand the ultimate vision for students.

Ensuring that general and special educators really understand disabilities so they can stop making/accepting excuses for inappropriate and/or unacceptable avoidance behaviors and can then challenge students in their areas of strength.

Listen to those closest to the work, then give strategies and PD that can reasonably be implemented- have those closest to the work facilitate PD.

Gen. Ed. / SpEd

Students with disabilities must be seen as general education students that happen to need SDI to learn and make progress. It is critical to increase the capacity of general

education teachers in analyzing data, writing IEPs, implementing IEPs, progress monitoring, etc.

Other

Ensure predictors of post-school success are included in professional development training and in IEPs.

Ensure a broad array of post school pathways/preparations to include and ensure all employment and careers are represented, not just highly skilled/college options.

Balance focus on academic readiness with hands on career skills/readiness and develop measures and standards beyond industry recognized credentials including robust transition services and activities.

Include training on work incentives/benefits counseling to ensure every school staff can articulate to students how they can be on SSI and work and not jeopardize their earnings.

Create school system collaboration with independent schools.

Professional development for private providers about the IEP process/referral process.

Develop MTSS/RTI standards and implementation plan

A liaison between school systems and private providers to create a smooth referral process.

1. Cart before the horse: Higher ed has to prepare future educators for the job. As a building level Principal, this is extremely rare. 2. Staff not trained in the specific "art" of IEP/goal generation related to grade level standards. 3. Paras- important staff members of special needs students- are not appropriately trained for their task- no statewide criteria PD for these support staff.

A best inclusive practices guide for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Recruitment & Retention

Examine innovative ways to attract teachers and related service providers into the profession as well as ways to retain them.

We can have the best plans but if we don't have anyone to implement the plan, we Will not see the expected results.

Ensure that administrators are knowledgeable about special education processes and Services.

Develop compensation systems that reflect high workload and scarcity of special education teachers.

Time

Providing quality time for special education teachers to both plan with their co-teachers and complete case management.

Providing time for professional development; Special Education teachers need to build their capacity to understand and implement curriculum, but they also need to build their capacity in special education processes that engage parents and will lead to student progress.

Ensure administrators are observing instructional staff and reviewing lesson planning to require use of grade level standards.

Ensure that recommendations are solely based on the needs of the student and not based on the availability of services or staff at that particular school.

Funding

Funding must follow the recommendations