INCORPORATING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES INTO THE IEP: RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Arizona Transition Conference
Charlotte Y. Alverson
Session Outcomes

- Attendees will learn how evidence-based practices can be incorporated into the IEP, using examples from real IEPs.
Initial Questions

- Are evidence-based practices and predictors of post-school outcomes being incorporated into the IEP?
  - *If so, where are they incorporated – PLAAFP, annual goals?*
  - *If not, how could they be incorporated into the IEP?*

- Can we identify or develop a model to incorporate them into IEPs?
District’s Interest

- Clear Research to Practice gap in education particularly, special education.
- Research with special education is HIGHLY contextualized- it needs a great deal of care and attention to apply practices within contexts and generalization of skills.
- Opportunity to audit practices with a fresh set of ‘eyes’ so we can shrink the gap between EBP and real world application.
- Practitioners are overwhelmed and the feedback from the study will help identify areas to tighten up IEP writing.
- How might we improve in aligning our IEP’s for effective linkages from present levels to placement?
This Study

■ **Purpose 1:** to describe whether and how evidence-based practices and/or predictors are evident in IEPs

■ **Purpose 2:** to describe or develop a method or resource to assist IEP teams to incorporate the evidence-based practices and/or predictors in the IEP.
Parts of a Whole

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments
Preferences Interests Needs & Strengths
Postsecondary Goals – Training, Education, Employment, & Independent Living
Annual Goals
  Practices – Instructional Strategies – Individual Level
Transition Services – Course of Study & Coordinated Activities
  Predictors – In School Experiences
Supplemental Aids and Supports

All Students Prepared for Positive Post-School Outcomes
Study Demographics

- **Total IEPs:** 95 (4 had no transition components)
- **Ages:** Ranged from 14 to 21 years old
- **Gender:** 67 males
- **Student’s grade when the IEP was written:**
  - Ranged from 8th to Transition
  - Most in grades 10 and 11
- **Race/Ethnicity:**
  - 73 White
- **Average number of annual goals:**
  - 3.85: 3 or 4 annual goals
- **Diploma types:**
  - 61 Standard Diploma;
  - 30 modified, Certificate of Completion, or Honors
Variety of Disability Categories Represented

- Specific Learning Disability
- Other Health Impairment
- Communication
- Intellectual Disability
- Emotional Disturbance
- Autism
- Traumatic Brian Injury
- Visual Impairment
- Deaf-Blindness
- Orthopedic Impairment

Majority: White, SLD, 15.7 years old, male
PREDICTORS:
in-school experiences (e.g., systems, programs, and general practices and skills) that help students be successful after high school; derived from correlation research studies.

PRACTICES:
instructional strategies or curricula that help students develop specific skills; derived from experimental research studies.
Effective Practices and Predictors of Post-School Success

- Identified from an evaluation of the amount, type, and quality of the research conducted, and categorized as (a) evidence-based, (b) research-based, or (c) promising (NTACT, 2018).
Why are practices and predictors important?

Effective practices and predictors ...

- Provide the best available peer-reviewed research to date that meets the criteria of scientifically-based and peer-reviewed research in secondary special education and transition
- Help educators better prepare students with disabilities for success in their postsecondary goals
- Increase the effectiveness and efficiency with which students gain new knowledge and skills
Relationship of Practices, Predictors, & Outcomes
### Effective Practices – Instructional Strategies

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Anchored Instruction (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>At Work Vocational Rehabilitation Program (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Backward Chaining (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Beyond High School Model (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Check and Connect (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Community Based Instruction (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Computer Assisted Instruction (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Constant Time Delay (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Corrective Reading (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Differential Reinforcement (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Direct Instruction of Main Idea (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Embedded Story Structure Routine (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Envision IT Curriculum (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Expressive Writing Level One (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>FEAT Curriculum (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Forward Chaining (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Go 4 IT…NOW Strategy (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Graduated Sequence of Instruction (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Graphic Organizers (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Internships (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Mnemonic (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Most to Least Prompting (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Multimodal Anxiety and Social Skills Intervention (MASSI) (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Parent Training in Transition (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>One-More-Than Strategy (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Peer Assisted Instruction and Support (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Peer Assisted Instruction/Support Plus Simultaneous Prompting (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Peer Networking Intervention (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Person Centered Planning (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Progressive Time Delay (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Post-School Achievement Through Higher Learning Skills (PATHS) Curriculum (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Project SEARCH (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>RAP Paraphrasing Strategy (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension Strategy (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**E = Evidence-Based**
**R = Research-Based**
**P = Promising**

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**NTACT**
National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

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**Micro: Student Level**

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Effective Practices – Instructional Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Reading Comprehension Strategies Plus Attribution Retraining Concepts and Strategies (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Repeated Reading (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Response Prompting (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>REWARDS Program (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Schema-based Instruction (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Self-Advocacy Strategy (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Self-Directed IEP (E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Self-Management Instruction (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Self-Monitoring Instruction (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Self-Regulated Strategy Development plus POW-TREE (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Self-Regulated Strategy Development plus Graphic Organizers &amp; Mnemonics (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Service Learning (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Simulated Instruction (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Simultaneous Prompting (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Social Skills and Sports Program Curriculum (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>SOLVE IT Curriculum (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Strategic Note Taking (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Structured Inquiry (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Student Directed Transition Planning Lesson Package (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>System of Least Prompts (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Take Action: Making Goals Happen Curriculum (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Take Charge Curriculum (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>TRAVEL Mnemonic (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Total Task Chaining (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Total Task Chaining plus Prompting (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>TouchMath® (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>Video Modeling (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>Video Modeling plus Constant Time Delay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>Visual Displays (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>“Whose Future Is It Anyway?” Curriculum (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>Word Mapping Strategy (R)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>Working at Gaining Employment Skills (WAGES) Curriculum (R)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Predictors in Secondary Transition

1. Career Awareness
2. Community Experiences
3. Exit Exam Requirements/ High School Diploma Status
4. Goal Setting
5. Inclusion in General Education
6. Interagency Collaboration
7. Occupational Courses (CTE)
8. Paid Employment/Work Experience
9. Parental Expectations
10. Parent Involvement
11. Program of Study
12. Self-Care/Independent Living Skills
13. Self-Determination/ Self-Advocacy
14. Social Skills
15. Student Support
16. Transition Program
17. Travel Skills
18. Vocational Education (CTE)
19. Work Study
20. Youth Autonomy/Decision Making

Macro/Mezzo: School, District, & State Level
This Study: Overall Observations & Strengths

- Lots of information incorporated into present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) statement
  - *Evaluation data- academic, eligibility, and teacher progress reports*

- Wide variety of age-appropriate transition assessments used
  - *Interest inventories, surveys, conversations, formal assessments*

- Most postsecondary goals were written for after high school and focused on what the student will do, rather than wants, hopes, or would like to do ("Hope is not a plan." ~ESPN Commentator)

- Several courses of study included required and elective courses
### Most Frequently Observed Practices and Predictors in the IEPs

#### Practices
- Graphic Organizers \((n = 18)\)
- Social Skills Training \((n = 4)\)
- Self-Management \((n = 4)\)
- Job-Related Social Communication Skills \((n = 3)\)
- Community-Based Instruction \((n = 2)\)
- Using Technology \((n = 3)\)
- Time Delay \((n = 3)\)
- Peer Tutoring/Teaching \((n = 2)\)
- Constant Time Delay \((n = 1)\)
- Anchored Instruction \((n = 1)\)
- Mnemonics \((n = 1)\)
- System of Least-to-most Prompts \((n = 1)\)

#### Predictors
- Exit Exam/Diploma Requirements \((n = 95)\)
- Inclusion in General Education \((n = 95)\)
- Occupational Courses \((n = 27)\)
- Interagency Collaboration \((n = 18)\)
- Paid Employment/Work Experience \((n = 11)\)
- Career Awareness \((n = 5)\)
- Self-Advocacy/Self Determination \((n = 4)\)
- Community Experiences \((n = 3)\)
- Social Skills \((n = 3)\)
- Travel skills \((n = 3)\)
- Program of Study \((n = 2)\)
- Transition Program \((n = 2)\)
Examples of Practices & Predictors Located in ...

- Present Levels Statement (PLAAFP) Evaluation Data
- Annual Goals
- Courses of Study
- Supplemental Aids & Supports
Example #1: PLAAFP noted...

- "In learning preferences, she rated visuals (seeing concepts, diagrams, flow charts) high”.
  - Graphic organizer
  - Computer Assisted Instruction (e.g., concept mapping)

- “STUDENT respects peers and learns best with peer teaching.”
  - Peer assisted instruction and support (aka peer tutoring, peer mediated instruction).
Example #2: Annual Goal

- Use of graphic organizer in annual goal for writing
- “... Will use a pre-writing graphic organizer...“
  - Effective with: reading comprehension, improving working memory (e.g., science terms)
Example #3 : Course of Studies

- Occupational Classes (i.e. \textit{individual courses that support career awareness...})
  - Health field $\rightarrow$ chemistry, biology, medical principles
  - Artist $\rightarrow$ art electives
  - Welding $\rightarrow$ medals, fabrication
  - Own a business $\rightarrow$ intro to business, personal finance
Course of Study

- Thoughtfully selected so the student can gain entry level skills in his or her chosen postsecondary employment and education fields.

- Is a multi-year description of coursework (required and elective), activities, and educational experiences from the student’s current to anticipated exit year.

- Is designed to help the student achieve his or her desired post-secondary goals (i.e., must align with the post-secondary goals).

- Reflects an educational program and plan ... from the first IEP to be in effect when the student turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team.
Example #4: Supplemental Aids & Services (including Accommodations)

- List of Accommodations:
  - Ability to type when more than one paragraph required
  - Alternative ways to show proficiency
  - Use of graphic organizers

- Use of Technology
- Computerized Concept Mapping
GRAB THE OPPORTUNITY
Opportunities & Hints

- PLAAFP – references in evaluation data to strategies that would/could be helpful
  - Use of graphic organizers, mnemonics, need for social skills
  - “Student benefits from graphic organizers, and controlled pace.”

- Transition Assessments
  - “Doesn’t know the steps for ...”
  - “Isn’t sure what she wants to do”
  - Discrepancy in assessment results (e.g., interested in hospitality, working outside, and likes to work alone)
  - Attendance problems
Example #1: PLAAFP

■ Present Level:
  - *In student interview in 201X, Stu Dent said she was interested in becoming an X-ray technician.*
  - “She does not know the steps to become an x-ray technician”.
  - She wants to live in the same community.

■ Postsecondary Goals:
  - *Training:*
  - *Education:*
  - *Employment:*
  - *Independent living:*

**ASK:** Where will the student need to live to attain her goal of becoming an X-ray tech? Can she live at home with family? Will she need to live in an apartment in another city? Alone or with roommate?
Example #2: Annual Goal

PLAAFP noted, “Stu Dent has difficulty self-advocating” (predictor)

Opportunity: Address self-advocacy as annual goal:

- **Annual goal:** After learning the self-advocacy strategy, Stu Dent will participate in his IEP meeting by answering 10/10 questions without deferring to an adult in the meeting, or using other avoidance techniques to not participate (e.g., saying, I don’t know, refusing to answer).

- **Annual goal:** In general education classes after directions have been given by the teacher and using a conversation script, Stu Dent will advocate to verbally process instructions with a teacher or peer 9/10 trials with 6 teachers.
Example #3: Annual Goals

- Given guided and independent practice in **reading comprehension strategies** ...will improve accuracy in answering comprehension questions

- Opportunity: specify effective practices that support reading comprehension, especially when the strategy has been effective for that student:
  - Mnemonics
  - Graphic Organizers
  - Strategy Instruction
  - Repeated Readings
Example #4: Transition Services (including course of study to assist in meeting postsecondary goals)

Three elements

- School year
- List course
- Coordinated Activities

What we saw

- School year: 20XX-20XX
- List courses: Choir, English, math, science, PE, social studies
- Coordinated Activities: vague (e.g., hands-on, active) or missing
Example #5:

- PLAAFP: “needs to learn to use public transportation”
- MPSG employment: After high school Jeanna will work at local library for 20 hours each week
- Annual Goal: Jeanna will read survival words in context with 85% accuracy 9/10 times.
- Predictors-in school experiences: community experiences, travel training
- Practices- instructional strategies: community-based instruction; total task chaining
IDEA says

- Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP Team, and updated annually, thereafter, the IEP must include—

  (1) Appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and, where appropriate, independent living skills; and

  (2) The transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching those goals.
Transition service “a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that ... (a) is designed to be within a results oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including:

- postsecondary education,
- vocational education,
- integrated employment (including supported employment),
- continuing and adult education, adult services,
- independent living, or community participation; and
Transition service “a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that …

(b) is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes:

1. instruction,
2. related services,
3. community experiences,
4. development of employment objectives and other
5. post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate,
6. acquisition of daily living skills and
7. provision of a functional vocational evaluation

(IDEA, 2004; 20 U.S.C. 1401(34))
Two Elements of Transition Services

Destination – work, education, life

What goes into their suitcase for success
Definitions ....

- **COORDINATED**: These activities have a **purpose and goal**. They are selected with a plan in mind to accomplish a **specific** postsecondary goal (PSG).

  - STUDENT will attend ___, work at ___, obtain training in/for ___, live ___

- **RESULTS ORIENTED PROCESS**: focused on student “outcomes” not the “process”. The central question is **What has the student learned or achieved?**

- **ACADEMIC AND FUNCTIONAL ACHIEVEMENT**: Link to course of study that is functionally meaningful as students set and attain goals.
Post-Secondary Goals (specific)

■ **Examples**
  - Obtain a job in Phoenix, AZ at South face Solar and Electric
  - Enroll in Pima Community College for welding
  - Work as a welder for 20 hours per week
  - Work full time as a make-up artist
  - Enroll in Cochise Community College (for what?)
  - Will enroll in local diesel repair (where?)

■ **Non-Examples**
  - Will work while in a program for his chosen career
  - Enroll in a program to develop skills
Seven Transition Service Categories
**Ask:** In order for STUDENT to attend school, have competitive integrated employment, live in his community, or access adult services, what . . .

- Instruction is needed (what does the student need to learn)?
- Related services are needed (will adult services be involved)?
- Community experiences are needed?
- Employment objectives are needed?
- Other post-school adult living objectives are needed?
- Daily living skills are needed?
- Is a functional vocational evaluation needed?
Transition Services (projected course of study) and Coordinated Activities

- **Instruction**: learn about taxes and managing personal finance
- **Related services**: Ability to communicate with people unfamiliar to her/him
- **Employment objectives**: Develop strength needed to carry equipment by enrolling in weight lifting course; participate in job club learn professional social skills for the work place
- **Other post-school adult living objectives**: Obtain driver’s license; learn to advocate for herself
- **Daily living skills**: Open a bank account;
- **Community experiences**: Trip to CCC to become familiar with the campus; meet with student support services to learn about accommodations
- **Is a functional vocational evaluation needed**: No
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Parts of a Whole: Through Line

Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments
Preferences Interest Needs & Strengths
Postsecondary Goals – Training, Education, Employment, & Independent Living

Annual Goals
Practices – Instructional Strategies – Individual Level
Transition Services – Course of Study & Coordinated Activities
Predictors – In School Experiences

Supplemental Aids and Supports

All Students Prepared for Positive Post-School Outcomes
References


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