

Stephanie:

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I am the founder and host here at the intentional IEP and the summer PDU series for all of these guest speaker mini chats. Today, I'm here with my friend Abby, and we're gonna be talking all about accommodations and behavior plans, but before we get started, Abby, please introduce yourself. Share about your educational experience and your teaching role and your role at the IEP table.

Abbey:

Hi, I'm Abby. Um, so I am a licensed special education teacher in two states currently working in Idaho. Um, I've been doing that about 15 years and love helping families and kind of my area of specialty is behavior, particularly after I became a mom of a kiddo who had some pretty high behavior in me. So while I sit at the table right now, professionally as a special education teacher, um, I also have been on the other side of the table as a parent and currently as an IEP coach.

Stephanie:

Awesome. Well, behavior is a big topic for the summer PD series this year, but I'm excited to dive into more of the accommodation talk when it comes to behavior plans. So let's just get started. Well, and let's start at the beginning first, actually. So what is a behavior plan and what are accommodations?

Abbey:

Well, essentially a behavior plan is a part of the IEP that addresses behaviors that are considered not appropriate. It's off. It's supposed to be connected to a goal within the IEP. And it differs from accommodations in that accommodations are designed to be specific as supports to help the child access the general education setting and curriculum.

Stephanie:

All right, well, what do accommodations have to do then with behavior plans? How do they work together?

Abbey:

So I, they basically think of them as interchangeable. Another part of behavior supports within an IEP is called the positive behavior support. These are essentially accommodations that are specific to supporting the child's behavior. And so, um, I always, when I draft an IEP, put the positive behavior support into the accommodations and make that they are consistent in the same wording and reflected throughout the IEP.

Stephanie:

Well, where then, like where you said it's throughout the whole IEP. So where are we gonna find all of this information inside of the IEP? Or where will we write all of this data into the IEP?

Abbey:

And that's one of the reasons I write it multiple times. It varies from state to state. So some states will have positive behavior supports at the beginning before the present levels, others will have positive behavior supports and behavior intervention plans under that special factors section and accommodations in my experience typically goes towards the end of the IEP around the services section.

So because there's so much variance and because sometimes it's difficult for people to either get access to the full IEP or read it. That's one of the reasons I always tell people let's put it everywhere we possibly can. So that it's very, very clear who to anyone reading it, what kind of support this child needs

Stephanie:

That's called and from this is, was taught to me, this is what this is called. I never heard this until a couple years ago. It's called the stranger test. Have you heard that term before?

Abbey:

Not as that term, but I always tell people this needs to be understandable to anyone reading it. So I like to bounce it off of other people to make sure it makes sense to them the way it does in my brain.

Stephanie:

Yeah. So, and the, for those of you listening, the stranger test is essentially, this is not an IEP, but let's say this is an IEP and you drop it on the floor and you don't know we're gonna skip over the whole confidentiality and like all the laws and stuff that happens, but anyone else should be able to pick that up and read the IEP and know exactly how to implement it and be able like the IEP is that child's Bible and they should be able to know exactly about that child, what to do, how to do it, who's doing it, where they're going, when all the supports and services they have by just reading it. So it's really important that you're very specific. And I love that you said put it in all of the different places, because honestly, I, I feel like, and maybe you feel this way too. Like there's never too much information.

Abbey:

And actually as we're talking another, I was just thinking another place I tend to pop it is actually under assistive technology. Oh, very common that I will make a statement that this child needs access to their positive behavior supports in order to make progress with the goal. And so while I don't list everything there, it's another spot where I can make a team very aware that this child needs these supports to be successful.

Stephanie:

I love that I'm here for putting things in all of the places so that everyone knows where to look because, and like you said, you've taught in different states. So, and those of you listening know that I've taught in many different states and the guts of an IEP are all the same, right? So according to federal laws, like the guts are all the same, but different IEP systems have different boxes or click down things or check boxes or empty spaces. And when you print it out, it looks different. Even sometimes school to school, like the format of the IEP is different. So just making sure you have it in all of those places is essential, especially when they're moving from schools or moving up to a different school, or just in the event that you get a new IEP system. Like it's just put everything, don't put all your eggs in one basket and stick it in one spot, make sure it's spread out

Abbey:

True. And particularly if you're on the general education side of things, sometimes schools will only give you a snapshot and you, which doesn't always include the behavior plan. And so the more places we can put these supports in the more likely it is that information is gonna get out to the entire team and not just sit in the case of managers packet.

Stephanie:

I love that. I love that you brought that's actually really, I love that you brought that up. Well, that actually leads perfectly into the next question. So how can special education teachers help the rest of the IEP team implement the behavior plans with fidelity accommodations included?

Abbey:

So one of the things that I found that makes the behavior plan successful is when we approach behavior from this dance that we need this child to be calm and regulated in order for them to access their educational environment, whether it's gen ed or at special ed. And so when I draft a plan, I work really hard espec with parent input because they know that child better than anyone else. Um, I work really hard to make sure that that plan lays out the levels of support the child needs when they're calm all the way up to crisis. And so what I have found is that oftentimes it's the adults that need to make some changes and recognize their role in contributing to behavior. Like, um, adults often love to argue with kids because the of kids aren't doing what the adults want. And so the more I can help to teach adults to shift their perspective that, Hey, this kid is just doing what they can right now.

Abbey:

This is a stress response. The better able adults are to implement that plan. Um, that's where I see the most resistance is in adults saying, well, they need to do what I want them to do and not understanding behavior as a stress response or as something the child cannot control. So I find doing a lot of education, a lot of explaining what it looks like a lot of, both on the behavior side and the intervention side is the most successful way to get a plan implemented with fidelity, um, because like the child can't control it. So if we put all the onus on the child beginning to comply, it's not gonna be successful because the child doesn't have those skills and compliance is not everything. And so that's where I've seen kids be most successful with families that I work with as a private coach. That's the way that I coach them with IEPs and behavior plans that I draft everything comes back to how does this child process their world and how do they respond to stress?

Stephanie:

I have a question for you that has not on our list, but is related to that, that came up as I was, as you were, um, telling us about that when it comes to like the trainings, um, and sharing how to implement all of these things, like when are you doing this? And what does that typically look like? Are you doing it, explaining it at the IEP meeting? Is it like a set meeting afterwards with the teacher? Or like, what does that look like for you

Abbey:

More often than not because of all the things teachers are asked to do in their school day? Um, it is during the I EEP meeting, um, I tend to have very long behavior plans and long positive behavior supports because I want that information to be out there. And so we do spend a notable amount of time going over every single part of that plan, including this is what level one stress looks like, level two, this is what we should do. It's a also gets documented in the meeting notes. That way gets documented in the written notice, um, in a perfect world as a teacher and case manager, I can float around and make sure it's happening with fidelity. We all know in the educational world that that's really hard. And so sometimes it becomes coaching and teaching on the fly as situations pop up. Um, hopefully not situations that land us back in the IEP meeting because the plan's been implemented with fidelity, but sometimes that's what happens is we have to regather and RECU why this plan's important.

Stephanie:

I love that. Thank you for explaining that. Cause I feel like maybe some people listening might have had that question. Like when do you do this training and what does it look like? So I will be the one to ask all the questions for everyone who may not be. Yeah, well, so now we've talked about like the training and how to implement it and where all this information is. If we're writing this new behavior plan or taking data for an FBA, a functional behavior assessment or whatever it may be, where, and how will we put all of this new data into the IEP?

Abbey:

So, because a behavior intervention plan requires at least one behavior goal. That goal has to have a plan written into the IEP about how it's going to be progress monitored. And it sh the family should be getting data through a progress report. However, the school determines they send those out. Um, as far as data for accommodations, I always look at how can we write in there when this is gonna be delivered, who's gonna be delivering it and what are we going to do as a team to make sure that it's working. And so, again, it comes back to documentation. And sometimes as teachers, we get limited in what our software allows us to write, but the written notice usually allows for a pretty lengthy document if you can and want to. And so that would be another place to document. What did the team agree to as the plan for how we're are going to ensure success?

Stephanie:

Have you ever again, not a question on our list of questions, have you ever, cause this is one thing that I'm learning from just teachers in general, I've never had, I've never done this, but I'm learning that other teachers do it is if they're because like you said, there's, sometimes those boxes are just check boxes and we can only pick, and we can't type in the accommodation in, or be very specific because it's like a predetermined box in the system. Have you ever written, like you said, you put it in like the prior written notice in the meeting minutes, have you ever attached like a Google doc with like specific, like as an attachment to the IEP that has like more specifics on like a behavior intervention plan or something like that? Or, or anything related to IDs?

Abbey:

I have not specifically for a behavior intervention plan, mostly because the software I've had has allowed me to get in there. What I feel like I need to get in there. Um, I have done that in other situations, such as rubrics or, um, like for goals specifically. And I've had students in the past with the school safety plan gets attached to the IEP. Um, another way that I like to take data on the accommodation specifically would be using a Google form. And so while that is not necessarily specifically attached, because it's often a link, um, it is a way as a case manager that I just throw some questions in that address those accommodations while we're taking data on the goal and such,

Stephanie:

I lo I love that I'm Google I'm, I'm, I'm all for Google forms. I'm very paper pencil, but like Google forms are the way to go, like graph everything for you. So if you're like, oh, how do I take like data virtually? We have another, um, data collection training in the summer PD series this summer talking all about digital data taking. So make sure to check that out. Well, what is your best piece of advice, Abby, for choosing accommodations when you're writing behavior plans,

Abbey:

I would say always consider how this child is processing their world and how can you use accommodations to keep demands appropriate to the child's ability? Um, one such example is we've all had a student that comes in and just has to touch everything like it's, they can't control it. They have to sit on it, they have to put their hands on it. And so that tells me that that child is using movement and touch to us, their world. Whereas I, as a fully functional, mostly adult can go in and clearly see in my mind by that this desk is gonna be hard and smooth, that child cannot. And so that tells me right off the bat, that, that child's gonna have difficulty with visualizing and predicting with understanding what's coming next in their day, seeing the impact of their decisions across their day. And I better have some accommodations in that IEP that helps that child to visualize and predict. I better have some opportunities for that child to move and touch whatever materials I'm using. And so those are, those are kind of my two big questions. How do I help this child stay common, regulated and tools? Are they currently using to process their world?

Stephanie:

I think that is great advice. Absolutely. Go ahead. Sorry.

Abbey:

Oh, I'm sorry. I was just gonna add that. This is what, I'm just another part of the IEP process that makes parent input so critical. Because a lot of times I will ask parents questions like, Hey, let's go back before the student blows up or completely shuts down. Um, which are the big behaviors. We often notice what happens when stress starts to increase a little. And so parents having spent their entire child's life with them can often lend those, those clues to what early stress cues look like so that we can provide intervention before it becomes a big problem.

Stephanie:

I love that you brought up parent input. And again, we have, um, a couple of trainings during the summer PD series this year for parent input and beyond the parent input statement. So if you're listening to this and you're like, what does that even mean? How do I get this input? What does that look like? Go check out those trainings that are also included in the summer PD series, because yes, parent input is so vital to the whole entire IEP process and we should be including their, um, their insight, their vision, and all of that when it comes to not only writing an IEP, but also behavior plans and choosing accommodations and just every step of the process. So I love that you brought that up. Well, thank you so much for being here today. Abby, I have enjoyed talking with you about behavior plans and accommodations. Can you share with us before we go, where all the viewers can find you, whether it's a website or social media and guys just like any of the other trainings, I will link all of Abby's things below this. So you can just click and go.

Abbey:

Awesome. So I do have a website it's Abby butcher.com. I spell Abby funny. There's an E in there. So, um, the link will be really helpful. I also have a Facebook page by the same name and an Agram account, um, that you can follow me, ask questions. Um, behavior is kind of my jam. Honestly, the behavior plans and accommodations are literally my favorite part of the IEP, because if those pieces are dialed in, everything else seems to work. Now you have a kid ready to work on an IEP goal. And so, um, if you enjoy those things, I will talk about them all day long.

Stephanie:

Yes, please. I will. And I, this is not the first time I have said this. I am not the guru on behaviors and all of those things, I can talk IEPs till the cows come home. But when it comes to behavior plans, please reach out to Abby. She is our guest expert. That is why she is here. She is here to help you, you and she will thrive and love talking about behavior plans and accommodations with you. So please, if you have additional questions, use the links below this video to go check her website out, reach out to her on social media and chat all things, behavior plans and accommodations. Well, thank you again, Abby so much for being here today. Thank you guys for being here to view this and thank you for being here and listening and learning, especially over summer. I appreciate all that you do. We will see y'all in the next chat.