

Stephanie ([00:00](#)):

Hello, everyone. Welcome back for another teacher guest speaker session here at the intentional IEP. My name is Stephanie. I am your founder and host of all of these guest speaker chats here at TII. And I'm here with Kristen today, and we are gonna be talking all about breaking down evaluations. So not only is she teaching you, she's also gonna be teaching me cuz this is outside of my realm of expertise as well. So get ready to take all of the notes, but first, Kristen, will you please share about your teaching experience, what you're currently doing and your role at the IEP table?

Christen ([00:28](#)):

Sure. Hi, my name is Kristen Hanz. I am a diagnostician currently, but before that I was a special education teacher for six years. I specifically taught instructional resource. Um, so I, I have a background in that. And then when I went back to school, I learned all of the ins and outs of doing evaluations and how to identify learning disabilities and other disabilities that might fall under I D E so autism spectrum disorders, emotional disturbances, and the like, so that is now my role at the IEP table.

Christen ([00:59](#)):

Now I'm the person that's conducting the evaluation and writing the report and then helping the IEP team build that IEP once I'm finished.

Stephanie ([01:07](#)):

I love that. I wish that I had you when I was a special ed teacher to explain all of the things to me. Um, so, well let's just get started. What is the purpose of an evaluation? Sure.

Christen ([01:19](#)):

So really an evaluation is that strength and weaknesses of a learning profile of a student. So a diagnostician, some states you guys might call it a psychometrist. Um, same thing. They might be looking at cognitive areas and achievement areas. So cognitive areas would be things like short-term memory, long-term memory or fluid reasoning or visual processing, auditory processing. So the parts of the brain that are responsible for taking in information in some way, that's the cognitive part. Then the achievement part is gonna be more of the academic side. So the actual reading skills, writing skills, math skills.

Stephanie ([01:54](#)):

Oh, all of those big words I'm already like, whew. All right, let's keep going though. Cuz you're gonna teach me about it. So how often and can evaluations be done and can parents just request a new evaluation at any time?

Christen ([02:08](#)):

So typically evaluations are done try annually. So that means every three years it's required to have one done, but that doesn't mean you can't do another one sooner

than that. If you feel like there's a need and yes, a parent can request one in writing to this school. Um, a lot of times the school staff might actually request an evaluation because you know, they're seeing the ins and outs of that academic struggle with the student. So they might have their, their meeting to discuss like, Hey, maybe there's some need here. And they might request the evaluation to the diagnostician as well.

Stephanie ([02:40](#)):

Um, I do wanna add in here, one thing that I've learned since leaving the traditional class from setting and doing more of IEP coaching and diving into law is you can actually have an evaluation every single year. Like if you request it. And I was like, well, schools never told me that. I didn't know that that was possible. So teachers you can if needed, have an evaluation done every year. I don't think it's typical though. That's not the norm.

Christen ([03:04](#)):

Not unless a lot of times that might happen if like social skills are involved, um, skills like that, that aren't necessarily academic, but you know, kiddos can change their behavior, change their social ability a lot. Um, especially when you're getting sometimes into those teenage years where they, they are growing and changing really fast. So the needs that happen one year could be completely different to another year and that evaluation might have something different.

Stephanie ([03:26](#)):

So definitely I just threw that in there. She had no idea what's gonna go there so well, what is one of the questions that I get often is what is the initial evaluation process and can teachers help the diagnostician or the psych, the psychometrist, that's a whole new word for me, um, in the process.

Christen ([03:46](#)):

Sure. So the teacher input in an evaluation is huge. And so I personally really take that teacher information very seriously because they're the ones in the trenches with that kiddo, you know, seven hours a day sometimes. So they're gonna really, um, a lot of information about that student that I might necessarily see when I'm just meeting with them for the testing session. So I send them a lot of forms that they might need to fill out of. Hey, what grade level do you think they're actually functioning at? Um, what types of grade level tasks are they doing independently and doing well? What, which ones are you to step in a lot? Um, I ask them a lot of times. What accommodations have you already tried? Maybe not official accommodations on a paper, but just have you tried reading things aloud to them and does it seem to work? Have you tried pulling them into a small group? Have they been seeing some other kind of intervention before? So what have we already tried? Did it work? Did it not? And that good me a lot of information on, okay. Hey, reading aloud still. Isn't really helping this kiddo. So red flag there. So I take that information very seriously. So when you get paperwork from a diagnostician, I know it might seem like another thing on your, on your to-do list that, oh, here's more paperwork I have to fill out. I

promise you we're looking at it and, and really digesting it and taking in. So the more detailed you can be on those intake forms the better.

Stephanie ([05:06](#)):

I think that's relatable too, because as special education teachers, we send out those input forms to families and other teachers on the team. So it's no different. We're just on the end receiving end of that. We love the specifics of how are they doing in the gen ed class? How are they doing in specials? We need to do that for y'all as well. I think that's, I love that. You said that cuz I was gonna, I was like guys, just be specific. Just all of it. Yes. Do you think there's too, this is I'm gonna go rogue. I do this all the time. I'm gonna go rogue again. Do, is there too much, like can there be too much information shared or do you think you're just like give it all to me?

Christen ([05:39](#)):

I, I say give it all because there might be thing that could really be impacting the way that they might function with me in a testing environment. Even even little things like they gotten a huge fight in recess this morning might actually help me depending on how their behavior is. Um, so at any and all things that you can share is helpful. I love that.

Stephanie ([06:00](#)):

I love that. Well, this is a, this is a big question and I ask this mostly for me, but because I know other teachers are probably thinking this as well. So how do you take those evaluation results and put that information into the IEP then?

Christen ([06:12](#)):

Sure. So when I look at the strengths and weaknesses, I'm all already thinking about what kinds of services and what kinds of accommodations match those needs. So for example, if they do have a strength in auditory processing, I'm gonna say, okay, that kid might do really well being read to having like that oral accommodation, because that's a strength they're able to input that information and work with it. Um, if they have a visual processing strength, I might say, oh my gosh, supplemental age, graphic organizers. Those might be a really great accommodation for a student like that. Um, so I definitely try to translate that in how does that match into something that we can put into the classroom for that student?

Stephanie ([06:51](#)):

I'm gonna, I have another question that I, I's not on our sheet of questions. So I've worked in a lot of different schools, public charter, many different states, so it's different everywhere I go. So I'm curious how, cuz I've taught in Texas too, and she's in the state of Texas. Um, and for evaluations, are you like, are you handing that evaluation off to the teacher and they're inputting that into the present levels? Or do you assist with that as well? Or how, how does that work with you?

Christen ([07:21](#)):

That really depends on the school team. Okay. And how they like to do it. Um, so I've done both. Sometimes I just pass it off and they like to do the rest because they feel like they, they know the student a little bit better. Um, but sometimes especially if it's an initial evaluation, um, or maybe a student that hasn't been at this particular campus for a long time, they might ask my help to translate that into a present levels or Hey, what could be an appropriate goal for this? If they're struggling with, um, written expression, uh, what's an appropriate goal for his current level that I can address the reading with. So it just depends on the team, but I have done both.

Stephanie ([07:54](#)):

I think that makes the most, and that's asked the school, what does the school and how does the school do it? Um, um, I like that. Well thank you for, for answering my rogue questions.

Stephanie ([08:02](#)):

I appreciate it. Um, well what is your best piece of advice to teachers or parents who may be having difficulties understanding or maybe interpreting those evaluation results?

Christen ([08:13](#)):

Sure. And really best practice is that diagnostician of that psychometry should be picking up the phone and explaining most of it to you already, before you even set foot into that IEP meeting and you have the right to ask them to do that. If they haven't. And I know they have crazy caseloads and make it busy just as much, but that really is part of it. So I know for me personally, I make sure I pick up the phone or schedule a zoom meeting before the IEP meetings even scheduled to explain the results of the evaluation in a way that is easy to understand because you know, for our legal purposes, we have to include a lot of different numbers and some jargon in there to stay compliant. But I try to make sure I cut to the chase and like, this is the meat and potatoes of it. This is what this strength means. This is what this weakness means. And this is how it translates into an eligibility for your student.

Stephanie ([09:02](#)):

I, I think that's really important. And I love that you said that because I'll get questions sometimes or just comments. Like when I ask questions on social media about how it works at different schools. Cause I'm fascinated by just how special education is different everywhere. Like it fascinates me. It's frustrating, but it's fascinating at the same time. And teachers are just like, well we have our eligibility in our first IEP meeting back to back and the eligibility meeting when the parents come, that's the first time they're hearing anything about the evaluation and I'm like, no, gonna be that way. No.

Christen ([09:31](#)):

Yeah. So, and more that IEP meeting really gets into building that plan of goals and accommodations of scheduled services. You have to make sure that the whole committee even agrees with the evaluation and sometimes that is skipped over. So

technically you should be starting with here's the evaluation results. Do we all accept it or do we feel like we need to address X, Y, Z component because it doesn't seem to match the student or we didn't get enough information. Um, so you gotta make sure everyone on the IEP team agrees with the evaluation before you continue.

Stephanie ([10:06](#)):

You just taught me something brand new that I did not know. I didn't know that we had to agree. I thought the evaluation was just what it stop.

Christen ([10:17](#)):

So yes, that diagnostician and that psychiatrist, I mean, they are trained to, to do these things, but you have to remember that they are still an equal weighted member of that IEP team in that committee. So if for some reason there is an issue or maybe the parent doesn't agree with the evaluation or maybe that teacher says, Hey, this isn't something I, I don't think we have a enough information here. You need to have that conversation before you start developing the IEP because if the evaluation isn't sound and we need to open up another timeline to add some more tests or maybe, Hey, we gotta get another, another professional in, Hey, maybe we need to call the occupational therapist or the speech therapist or these other related service providers to supplement something in before it's finished. That has to be addressed first,

Stephanie ([10:59](#)):

stop it. This makes my heart so happy. You know, like that is I, I, I truly, and those of you you're getting, like, if you're watching this, like this is my, like I had no idea, this was a thing. And I'm curious if it's like, like that's not best. That is what is supposed to happen per the law. Yes.

Stephanie ([11:23](#)):

You are gonna change so many IEP teams in such a I,

Christen ([11:26](#)):

I hope so. I hope so. And I mean, ideally if everyone is inputting information and doing everything with fidelity, then it is a good evaluation when we can move on. But remember that parent might not agree with it and it's okay for them to say that and we can make changes and call in some other related providers or, you know, make some changes before it's finalized. If that's the case and everyone's voices needs to be heard at the table, even with the evaluation before the IEP is made.

Stephanie ([11:55](#)):

I think parents need to hear this. Like I think too. Oh my gosh. So teachers please that are listening, first of all, thank you so much for sharing that and all of your information, Kristen. Like I am just mind blown. I don't know what I'm gonna do with the rest of my day, cuz I'm just gonna sit and ruminate on that.

Stephanie ([12:13](#)):

But teachers that are listening or watching share this with the parents that you work with, if you are holding eligibility meetings back to back with an IEP meeting one, no that's not best practice. And I've known that before, like, but wow.

Christen ([12:33](#)):

And remember there's should be a buffer time in between. Right? So right. Different states might have different exact number of days, um, vary, but you should have X amount of days to complete the evaluation and then another X amount of days to actually hold the meeting. Right. So there's enough time in there to make sure teachers have looked at the evaluation. Parents have looked at it. Admin has looked who whoever's eyes need to touch that rapport. That that's enough time for them all to see it and make sure it's, it's agreed upon.

Stephanie ([13:03](#)):

Wow. I am just, I just wanna talk to you forever about evaluations. So many more questions. Well thank you so much for being here. I Kristen, will you please share? I know people are, I'm probably like, oh my gosh, I just wanna talk to her about all of the things and what can I do? So where can we find you? Whether that's a website or social media and I'll leave links. So you can just click and go to follow Kristen and reach out to her, um, below this video.

Christen ([13:33](#)):

Great. Yes. My website has all my information, so it's just Chris SIM shots.com. And on there you can see, um, all my tips and ways to contact me, um, ways to ask me questions and things like that. And you can also follow me on Instagram and my, my username will be there on the screen for you.

Stephanie ([13:51](#)):

Awesome. Well, I will leave links below this again. Y'all so you can just click and go. If you have more questions for her, she is a, just a wealth of knowledge. Oh my, I see. I told y'all and I told her before this, I was like, you are gonna teach me today. And I bet she didn't think she was. And I'm just like, oh my goodness. But thank y'all so much for being here. I hope that you learned something new as well during today's teacher chat. Kristen, thank you again so much for being here. Um, I feel like we could have another one of these about, um, but please reach out to Kristen if you have any questions or just want to talk best practice with evaluations and eligibility and all of that stuff. Um, and we will see in the next.