

Stephanie:

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I am your host and founder here at the intentional IEP. And we are here with Heather again today to talk all about aligning state standards, to modified lessons. But first, before we get started, Heather, will you please introduce yourself your role in education and also your role at the IEP table?

Heather C:

Awesome. Hello everyone. I am Heather from full SP ahead. Uh, I am a self-contained special education teacher in Illinois. I've been teaching special education for eight years. Um, and most of my class is self-contained. Um, I work with middle schoolers right now, but their levels are significantly below grade level. I have a lot of students working in the kindergarten pre-kinder garden types of skills, um, and even up to first grade, um, skills. So this is gonna be an amazing conversation because I do have to modify a lot of my lessons to meet the state standards it's and in the IEP table, uh, I'm just a special education teacher advocating for my students and what they need.

Stephanie:

I love that. And this is such an important lesson. It's something that I've had to do in the past as well as a self-contained teacher. But I know I get a lot of questions that in Facebook groups, I see, how do you modify this IEP goal to fit grade level? Or how do I do this and how do I do this? So this is very much needed. Baline y'all we are gonna cover all of it, but let's start at the very beginning. What are state standards and why are they important?

Heather C:

So our state standards tell us what we should be teaching the students. Um, it's typically something that is assessed on the state assessment, a modified state assessment, um, so that the state is looking for our students progress towards those standards, um, to say that they are meeting the state standards, um, and keeping up with what is in the grade level. Um, so I, you all can roll your eyes because state standards sometimes are just like bizarre, right? They come out of the blue and you're like, how are my students going to, to solve algebraic equations? Um, but we're making it work. We're figuring it out. So I'm gonna show you a little bit about how I would do that and the things I would do for that.

Stephanie:

Awesome. Well, well, what are modified lessons then?

Heather C:

Modified lessons are what I'm teaching so that I can access my students and their abilities, but then also teach them those state standards. So it's kind of giving a little bit of hand in hand of what both of those are.

Stephanie:

Yes. Well, let's get started then. How do you align your lessons to state standards and modify them and all of those things?

Heather C:

Oh my gosh. So you gotta go way back in the beginning, so right. We're in the summer, let's bring in those state standards. So go ahead and research, find your state standards, whether they're modified, whether they're for your district specifically, I've seen that as well. Um, find them, print them out if that's your thing, look them over, um, and read through them, cuz that's gonna be the hardest part. You're gonna just have to kind of sift through what each standard truly means. Um, so when you look through those, sometimes I pull out like a key topic or a key idea, um, that they're looking for somebody to look back in the text, they're looking for somebody to underline keywords, they're looking for something, um, students to identify fractions, whatever it is, um, whatever that topic is and try to bring it to what your students might be able to do.

Heather C:

Right? You may have like these huge things that you're like, there's no way. Um, I always give the example that my students worked on a lapse time. Um, so how long something would take till something happens and then using a clock to show that, um, I never thought they would do it. I honestly never thought they could do it. They proved me wrong. So just keep that in mind, as you're looking at these standards, there might be better ways for you to access these standards and modify it so that it modify in your lessons so that they can't access it. So, woo. All right. That was a lot, but

Heather C:

You do, you really need to look at the standards because you're gonna laugh. You're gonna laugh at some of them. Um, but you really need to find the bigger ideas, the bigger pictures pull those out. I try to do 10 to 12. 12 is a lot about 10 units for the school year. So find 10 of those ideas that just keep coming up, especially if you have multiple grade levels. Um, so I have sixth, seventh and eighth graders. So in sixth grade they might just have to identify the main idea, but in seventh grade they actually need to put it into practice and relate it to their life. And then eighth grade, they might be doing something way different that doesn't even relate to it. So I, to bring something through it throughout all three grade levels, um, but just keep looking for those topics that keep coming up, and those are gonna be your units for the year.

Stephanie:

That's great advice actually. Well, so when then second question that aligns with all of this. What are your top like two or three tips for aligning those state standards with your lesson plans?

Heather C:

So like I said, you really need to pull those out and be selective about which ones you wanna focus on. Um, so that there is a lot of that overlap, especially within multiple grade levels. Um, and then just know you are going to modify. So even if it says algebraic equations, right, can they set up, um, some type of money algebraic equation, right? Where they're just adding money and can they set up or a word problem that might be something that you have to modify it to. Um, we're not using total algebra, but it's something that can be related to it. Um, so I, so really just finding those things that keep coming up, the things that you feel are important too, because if these things are keep coming up, they're probably pretty important. Um, and just truly making sure that you are going to find ways to modify it. Don't pull something out that you don't feel confident in. Um, you know, find out an instructional coach or somebody who can maybe support you. If you really feel like this is an important topic, but I have no idea how to modify it, um, or reach out to one of us. Like we can help modify, you know, something for you, if it's really, this is kind of important. I need it. So I don't know if I really answered that question.

Stephanie:

You did. I have two, well, I have two things to say. So one thing, um, when you're looking at those state standards and you're looking at all of them and you're choosing your 10 big topics, um, one of the buzz words you might hear is prerequisite skills. A lot of states will give you, especially for students on the alternate. Is it alternative or alternative assessments?

Heather C:

I think it's alternative

Stephanie:

Alternative assessments. We'll go with that. Those that are on the alternative assessments, they usually give you those prerequisite skills or like those vertical skill lists. What do they need to know before they get to this goal before they get to this standard? And then you can kind of go from there. I will say that by the time this air, so we're recording this in the spring. By the time y'all are seeing this in the summer, we should have the intentional IEP should have our IEP skill matrix out. And if it's out, I will link it below. It's gonna give you all of those prerequisite skills and line and all of the things. Um, so I'll link it below. Y'all can check out the videos and all of that stuff. But also I wanna say this because Heather didn't too her own horns, I'm gonna tune it for her. Um, I know this from just conversations with Heather and reading her blog and watching her on social media, she is fantastic with taking a skill and turning it into a functional skill. So when you're thinking about standards, I to think of ways that you can make it functional. Right. So do you wanna add, add anything to that?

Heather C:

Yeah. Um, sometimes I just forget cuz I know what I'm doing. So I just say word vomit. Um, but like really I've looked at, um, a lot of my math standards is really something I have to modify for my students. Um, so just even, um, fractions right. Can be super complicated for my students to understand numerator and denominator. And what does this mean? Um, but I've taken that and made it into measurement tools. Um, so my students are identifying the fractions and the measurement tools or can they scoop some beans in a half cup, um, where it really is totally functionally modified for them. And then we bring that into our cooking lessons. Um, you know, even just learning how to use a ruler, we get a little crazy and we took our little 12 inch rulers and we measured our whole bodies, like, you know, where they just had to practice a starting point, a stopping point, um, and using that ruler and identifying the numbers. Uh, so just you're right. There is ways to make it more functional and fun and um, you know, things that your students do need to know in a life skill.

Stephanie:

Yeah. And I love that you brought up cooking in the classroom. I'm a huge proponent of cooking in the classroom. So for those of you that are like, I don't have time to cook in the classroom. One you're gonna cover like five or six or 12 or 20 different skills in one single cooking lesson. You don't need a stove. You don't need a microwave, you can do no bake lessons. Um, so I'll link some things that I have for Mrs. D's corner about cooking in the classroom. I'll link some things that Heather has as well about cooking in the classroom and functional skills and all of that below this video. So you can go check those out as well. Um, but so how to, how does all of this, these standards and modified lessons, how does all of this align with your classroom IEPs?

Heather C:

So like you said, you can totally bring cooking in the classroom and there's an IEP in that turn taking, um, waiting your turn, pressing buttons, uh, measurements everything's like can go right into that. Um, a lot of my students have telling time goals are being able to identify what time of day it is, what time events happen. So I totally just bring that right into our schedule like, oh, because they'll be like, oh, when's lunch and be like, well, what time is lunch? You know? And then they have to tell me, lunch is at 1205. Okay. Then there you go. Now you IEP goal check, um, you know, where you just do, you find ways to make it fun. Interesting, engaging. Um, my students are off curriculum for their IEP goals. They're not using or IEP goals that are directly related to the curriculum. Um, and a lot of them have like environmental signs.

Heather C:

So I might set those up in my classroom, like an exit or a bathroom or a, um, stop or a go or an emergency, something like that. Um, wet floor I might set up for them. Um, something like that. Or so you, you do you find those ways to just integrate it into the room? And so when they approach something, you go, oh, what was that? And then they have to identify it for you or tell you what it is or what does it mean? Um, so you do have to kind of get creative, but it helps the flow of my classroom where I just don't feel like I have to hold on, let's go over here and work on an IEP goal. We can kind of do it throughout the room.

Stephanie:

I love that. And Heather's previous chat was all about data collection. So if you have questions about data collection, go watch that. Um, but also you mentioned earlier, you mentioned elapsed time, and then we were just talking about cooking. You could a hundred percent do an elapsed time lesson in cooking. Yep. How long did it take us? When did we start? When are we gonna be done? What time is, if you have a stove, what time are the cookies gonna be done or yep. When's your, when, how long did it take you to make your sandwich? How much time pass? Like

Heather C:

Yep.

Stephanie:

Y'all, there's so many skills that come with cooking, huge proponent of cooking. Well, what is your best piece of it vice then for aligning those state standards with the lesson plans.

Heather C:

So really get familiar with the state standards. I think that's the most tedious part of it. Um, but it is really important. Um, especially if you know, you're gonna stay with that grade level for a while that you can really know, Hey, I need to hit these topics. Um, and truly understand for yourself what they mean. Um, like I said, they can seem scary and um, if you need help finding what your state standards are, just reach out. I have no problem helping you try to figure out where they are and what they are for your district. Um, but then, like I said, what you're comfortable with too, because you don't wanna overextend yourself, but you do have to meet state standards, right? You have to try to do what you can to get there. Um, and I know it's not easy. I definitely know that, but, um, take those topics.

Heather C:

What you're comfortable with, what you feel you can modify and make a unit out of that means a couple weeks of something. Um, and where you're really trying to practice that. Like I said, if you're looking at the main idea of the, um, story or the characters or something like that, um, really make sure you're honing in on what that means. Um, so that if anybody did question your lessons, you can say, Hey, this is what I'm teaching, because is, this is what the state standard says. And this is how I'm modifying it to meet that state standard.

Stephanie:

And you said at the beginning of this chat, you were like over summer, look at the standards. So I just wanna reiterate, I was having a conversation with another teacher yesterday. We were talking about front loading when it comes to IEPs. And I do that 100%. I've also front loaded for the year, like with lesson plans. And this is the same thing. So if you're like, man, I don't wanna do this over summer. It's my break. A hundred percent. Get it, take your time off, do your thing. But at least when back to school comes, you need to look at those standards and do some front loading. So you at least know what you're gonna be teaching.

Heather C:

Yeah. At least find them and print 'em off. You have 'em you put 'em in a binder so that if anybody is questioned you at the beginning of the year, like, what are you teaching the first week of school, please don't do that. But you know, but you can have, 'em say, Hey, this is the state standards. I'm ready to look them over and figure out what we're doing this, um, this year. Cuz you wanna take some time to get to know your students too, too. So you don't wanna jump right into the school you're teaching. Um, but you need to take some time to get to know your students. You can look back at the state centers and go, oh, well maybe we're just not gonna do that. Algebraic equations one right now. But maybe at the end of the year I can throw it at the end.

Stephanie:

Yeah, absolutely. You can slip, flip and swap and do all of the things and move things around. Nothing is said in stone. When it comes to special education, we can amend IEPs. You can amend lesson plans just as easily. Well, thank you so much, Heather, for being here today and sharing all about aligning state standards to lesson plans, before we go, will you share where we can find you online? Whether it's a website, social media and I will link all of Heather's, um, blog, post all of the things below this. So you can just click and go find her.

Heather C:

Awesome. You can find me at full SP ahead. Um, I have a website, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube. You can find me pretty much everywhere.

Stephanie:

Heather's tos and reels. I don't, I don't have TikTok, but her reels that she shares, I still have to say the one that you did about the, the Grinch one with the Grinch voice where you're like low entirely. That's my favorite one. We all have a favorite. Yeah. So I might link that below just so people can see it because it's when you guys see, you're gonna be like, oh my gosh, that's so accurate. Like, yeah, I'm a link reading through IEPs basically, you know, the Grinch hole. It's too funny. Well, thank you so much again for being here, Heather. Thank y'all for listening in on this chat for the summer PD series. Um, I hope you learned something new today and we're able to take this during summer and use it to plan for next

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school year. Do you have any questions, please reach out to me or to Heather. You have all of her links to socials below and we'll see y'all in the next chat.