

Stephanie :

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I am the founder of the Intentional IEP and your host here for all of these guest speaker chats at TII. I'm here with Katelyn today, and we are going to be talking all about standards based goals for our students who take the alternative assessments. But before we get into all of that good stuff, Katelyn, please introduce yourself, share about your teaching experience and your role at the IEP table.

Katelyn :

Well, my name is Katelyn. I am a special education teacher. I teach moderate to severe special education. So all of my students are on alternate assessment. I've been teaching for five years. I am currently getting my masters in special education and working with students with significant disabilities as well as early intervention.

Stephanie :

That's so awesome. When will you finish your masters or did you just start it?

Katelyn :

I'm hoping to be finished this coming spring, so spring 2022. I've been doing it for about a year now.

Stephanie :

Yes. Well, congratulations. That's so awesome. I'm so excited for you.

Katelyn :

Thank you.

Stephanie :

Well, let's get started. I'm really excited to talk about this topic today because I think it's something that a lot of special education teachers have questions about.

Katelyn :

Yeah.

Stephanie :

But before we dive in, let's talk about the what. So what is a standards based IEP goal and what does alternative assessment mean?

Katelyn :

So a standards based IEP goal is basically when you are relating that goal that you're writing for the student back to the standards. So in Louisiana, we have the Louisiana Student Standards or the Louisiana connectors. And I typically will just put that standard number behind the goal. But an alternate assessment is for those kiddos who have a cognitive disability or something like that where they have to qualify for alternate assessment. So rather than taking the big state assessment, they have a different assessment that shows growth in a different way. So you're able to see those small steps in growth, rather than just looking at the overall they're not approaching basic or however it scores.

Stephanie :

Yeah. And Katelyn and I were talking about this before and how typically every State is the same, we all have standards, right? Like in Texas we have the teaks and they take the Star. The Star test is the State test, but then to write our standards based IEP goals where I taught in Texas, we used the Star alt framework and it had prerequisite skills, which were the connectors pretty much to the standards. And then I know in Florida, they have the essential elements, which connects those skills to the State standards and all of that fun stuff.

Stephanie :

So there's a lot of different terminology out there and it's very different State to State. But ultimately, it just means what are the prerequisite skills to get that student to that grade level standard and that's what we're going to be talking about today. So, all right, well, now that we got all of that basic stuff out of the way, so we're all on the same page, where do we start when writing standards based IEP goals?

Katelyn :

Well, I go two routes to start with. I start with the standards for the grade level that they're in, the standards are the connectors and I also start with where the student is currently. So we have the present level. So what can they do now? What do they need to be able to do in third grade, fourth grade, whatever grade it is. So I typically will start there. And then I look when I'm weeding through those standards, where can I get the most bang for my buck, right? So what standard is going to help them longterm? What is going to be able to transition into life skills, functional goals, all of those kinds of things, because I teach in the elementary school.

Katelyn :

So how can I get those skills and get them working on those standards and things like that and getting the accommodations and the assistive technology and things like that, that they need, so that way, when they do transition to those functional goals, they are ready and they have all of those skills. They can see where they're progressing to because as you write these standards based goals, then the standards progress and they build on top of each other. So then you can see where they need to go if you're an elementary, and if you're in the upper grades, you can see how they've progressed through this skill and then build on that.

Stephanie :

I love that you think longterm with your IEP goals and I mean, it's totally about what in the next year can we do, but I love that you're like, "I think about longterm too. When they move to functional IEP goals, what are they going to be working on and how can I help them get there so when that transition time happens from academic to functional goals, they already have everything laid out for them?" I love that, so, so much and I'm so glad that you brought that up.

Katelyn :

I think it's really important because I'm not just worried about for my students, just getting them through second grade or third grade. These skills that we're learning when they're very young and very impressionable, and they're just soaking in so much information, I need to try and build on that.

Stephanie :

Yes. I love that so, so, so much. Well, is there a specific IEP goal formula that we can use when writing this type of IEP goal? I know [inaudible 00:05:49] to be smart goals, right? Is there extra verbiage we need to include? I know you said you put the standard at the end of the goal. I love that.

Katelyn :

Yeah, I just put the little numbers in parentheses.

Stephanie :

Yeah. So you just use the smart goal formula and then add that at the end?

Katelyn :

No, I mean, it is a smart goal, but when we're in school, like college [crosstalk 00:06:14] the different components of an IEP goal, right? So one of the things that I really feel like is missing in just a smart goal is I can't remember the exact word, but it's what are you giving them? How are you presenting this? How are you going to take the data on it? What does it look like? So, yes, it needs to be specific and measurable and all of those things. But at the beginning of my IEP goals, I add, given whatever assistive technology, whatever accommodations or not just accommodations, but visuals, verbal prompting, all of those kinds of things. Given all of these things, the student will, and then it goes into my smart goals.

Katelyn :

So I just like to add how I'm setting them up for this problem. [crosstalk 00:07:14] math, I might say, "Given the use of a calculator and answer choices in a field of two or three and given a word problem read aloud," and those kinds of things, so that way, anyone who picks up that IEP knows exactly what they need to achieve that goal. And then too, you're making it measurable. So given all of these accommodations and things, they're able to achieve this. And so, when you go into the next year, you can maybe take some of that away and say, "Okay, well maybe they don't need answer choices. Let's give them no answer choices and see if they can verbalize the answer."

Stephanie :

I love all of that so much. I do the same thing. Given this, and whether that's the accommodations or what modifications they are. I'll even say given a set of flashcards, a set of 10 flashcards, student was able to do X, Y, Z or given three different sets of math manipulatives, student will be able to sort. So it's very specific the skill that I want them to be able to do. And that's essentially, like you said, the what of the IEP goal.

Katelyn :

Right. And then too, you're able to, I feel like when you set up your goal with that, you are able to better relate it to the standards while also working with them where they are. So some of my kids can't identify their numbers yet, right? So maybe I will give them a word problem on grade level, give them the, what's it called? I'm sorry, I'm blanking.

Stephanie :

It's okay.

Katelyn :

The math sentence.

Stephanie :

Oh, yeah!

Katelyn :

So give them the [crosstalk 00:09:04] and the word problem solved and then given the verbalized answer and an answer choice in a field of three, they will identify the given answer. So I am relating it to that goal and we are exposing them to these complex fractions and decimals and things like that. But I'm able to scaffold it down very, very low by giving them more things that they [crosstalk 00:09:31] get there.

Stephanie :

Yes. You're providing all of the supports [inaudible 00:09:36] into the IEP goal. So anyone can look at it and know exactly what you want the student to do.

Katelyn :

Exactly.

Stephanie :

Not like, student will read an informational text with 80% accuracy, three out of four times. Well, how long is it? What words are we looking for? It's specific. You'll know exactly what you want. And that's great advice even for if your IEP goals are not standards aligned. I think that's just a great standard practice across the board.

Katelyn :

Self help goals, behavior goals, all of that kind of stuff.

Stephanie :

Yes. And I love for your standards based goals, I've written standards based schools in Texas, but I've never put the standard at the end. I love that. That is genius.

Katelyn :

I don't know if they require it or if a mentor teacher told me that one time, but it's pretty life changing.

Stephanie :

Yeah.

Katelyn :

[crosstalk 00:10:34] go back and refer.

Stephanie :

Yes. And you can, in the IEP meeting, tell parents, "Well, these are the specific goals we're working on, but this is how we're going to get there with this." So we're aligning it. Oh, I just love it so much. Guys, if

you're writing standards based IEP goals, make sure that you do that because my mind is blown. Such a simple little thing [crosstalk 00:11:00] so meaningful. Oh my goodness. Oh, yes. I love it. Well, how did these standards based IEP goals then relate to the alternative assessments?

Katelyn :

So the alternative assessments in our State it's called Leap Connect. And so, those directly reflect the connectors. So our connectors will be like, here's the main goal and then it'll give you an A, a B, and a C and it's like, "Okay, in order to do this, you need to be able to do these three things." So then when you're giving them those assessments, it puts them in different levels. So it's like, okay, if you can do this, part B, then you should be able to do part A and it shows where they are within the overall standard. So, are they a level one or a level two?

Katelyn :

And then, the parent can see that growth on not just progress reports and stuff, but also on standardized testing. And we also do, if our kiddos are on alternate assessment, then they get alternate tests throughout the school year. So they're graded on a modified rubric. And so, because a lot of times these kiddos, if you were just giving them the same tests and things as everybody else, they would just get F's and so, that does not show any growth. But a 0% and a 40%, those are both F's but that is huge growth.

Stephanie :

Oh, yes.

Katelyn :

So it really just allows teachers and parents and everybody working with that kiddo to see the growth, which is so important to the kiddo, to the parents, to everyone, to just be able to see that growth. So then you can also see it on your State assessments when you get what level they're on. And then it compares the percentile ranks and all that kind of stuff, it compares for everybody taking that assessment. And so, you're able to see within that level how many other kiddos are on that level and stuff like that. So it's just a better reflection of what they can do instead of just honing in on they're not satisfactory.

Stephanie :

Yeah. I love that so much. I love that they connect directly. I'm pretty sure that the essential elements do that. There's different levels of each one. But Texas, I know that the curriculum aligned specifically with the Star alt, which was the alternative assessment in Texas, but there weren't what you were describing it from what I remember, it wasn't like that, so that's awesome that it does that.

Katelyn :

That was a recent thing. So I've only been teaching five years and that was something that within the last three or four years, they started implementing that. And we actually have something called essential elements cards.

Stephanie :

Okay.

Katelyn :

[crosstalk 00:14:00] deeper into the scaffolding down on how to do that and stuff. And if you just wanted to I don't know if this is allowed or not, but our State has, it's called louisianabelieves.com or org or something and you can just go on that website and you can actually download all of the connectors, the essential elements cards and everything like that. You just go to teacher support toolbox. And so, even if, I guess, maybe if their State doesn't have it, you could still see how those things gives you an idea of how to scaffold it.

Katelyn :

So we had a student who didn't quite meet the criteria for alternate assessment, but was borderline. And so, I worked with his regular ed teacher, so just showing her that, and even though she's not a special ed teacher, it gave her ideas on how to scaffold the lessons and the information to better reach him.

Stephanie :

I love that. Guys, I will try to find and search that from Google and put the link below here, but yes. Use all of the resources out there that are available for you when it comes to scaffolding and different prerequisite skills and things like that. Google is your best friend to find things and definitely check your State department of ed's website. They usually have so many resources available for you for alternative assessment and things like that.

Katelyn :

I used stuff from other States all the time to get ideas and some States will post really good trainings and things like that. So if you Google it, I do that all the time.

Stephanie :

Yes, that's great. Oh my gosh, that's great advice. Well, now I'm going to ask you for your best piece of advice and I feel like I don't know how you tap that and also adding the standard at the end of the goal. So you've set the bar high here for yourself.

Katelyn :

I don't know. My biggest thing with some of the IEP's that I inherit, it feels very cookie cutter and it's not very student specific. And then, if our kiddos are on alternate assessment, they have to have objectives as well. And a lot of times the objectives don't even relate to the goal. And then there's no present level, there's no numbers, there's no percentage. So how can you measure growth if I don't have a present level of where they are? And then none of it's related, it's just these are the things that we're going to work on in third grade and everybody's going to work on the same thing. And that, I just feel like is not best practice. I feel like it- ...

Stephanie :

It's not individualized.

Katelyn :

Yes, it needs to be individualized with where they are currently, where you want them to go. And then, there's so many different ways that you can make it achievable for them. And it was shocking to a lot of

my coworkers that my kiddos were achieving objectives and goals, and [inaudible 00:17:06] like, achievable. They didn't even know how to go in, like we use [SUR 00:17:11], which is where we put in our IEP's, they didn't even know how to go in and put the date achieved on there.

Katelyn :

So it's one of those things, if you don't write these really good, measurable goals and you can see where they are and where they're going, and it's specifically for that student, then they're not going to be able to achieve it. You need to really look at the kiddo as an individual, not get bogged down with the standard and say, "Oh, okay, well, in second grade we learned money. So everybody's going to have IEP goals based on money." That doesn't do anybody any favors.

Stephanie :

Oh my gosh, I don't have anything to say. I just want to bow down to you on your pedestal about please don't copy and paste IEP's. Don't write all of the same IEP goals for all of your kids in your grade. It makes it easier for you right now, but longterm, and for the betterness, that's not a word, of the kids and your job and the families that you service, please don't do that.

Katelyn :

Yeah, it makes a big difference for the parents. That is one great way to get the parents on your side is when they see and maybe even bring student work into the IEP and you're like, "Look, this is what they can do and this is what we're going to do this year to make them successful with these standards." And then they're more receptive, they will also support you and they will work on things at home. And it makes a big difference when you do it just for that kiddo.

Stephanie :

Yes. Oh my gosh. I love this whole conversation so, so much. Thank you so much for coming in today to be a guest speaker and sharing your knowledge about standards based IEP goals. You've taught me some new things to try out with IEP goal writing and just Google different things. Oh my gosh. Thank you so, so much.

Katelyn :

Thank you so much.

Stephanie :

Where can viewers find you online if and at all? And then I will link anything below.

Katelyn :

I am on Facebook and Instagram, but it's just my personal one, so you're more than welcome to add me. It's just KatelynPopulace and other than that, I don't know.

Stephanie :

Well, I will link them below if Katelyn wants me to link them below. Other than that, y'all can reach out to me and I can reach out to Katelyn for you. Or if you have any questions, please reach out to me and I'll CC Katelyn on the email or something, but yes.

Katelyn :

Thank you.

Stephanie :

If you have any questions about anything at all, please reach out to either one of us, we are here to help you with this. And I hope you guys really enjoyed this session because I really enjoyed the session. There was so much good information shared in it. So thank you again, Katelyn for being here today and we will see you guys in the next chat.