

Stephanie:

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I am your founder and host here for all of our mini trainings here at the intentional IP. I'm here with Nikki and we're gonna be talking all about group planning for the diploma track. This is not my area of expertise. I even told her before this, I was like, she is gonna teach me a thing or two here. I'm so excited though. But before we dive in, Nikki, will you please introduce yourself, share about your teaching experience and your role at the IEP table?

Nikki:

Sure. Um, I'm Nikki. I originally started out wanting to be a, uh, elementary school teacher and switched, landed upon the special education field. Um, I've been teaching since around 2006. I'm actually at a private day school. Um, so in this, I get to work with students. I've worked with every year from elementary through high school and some beyond, but right now currently it's a high school mixture. Um, and so usually teacher at the, at the table for my caseload. Um, and I love it every day's great.

Stephanie:

<laugh> um, so excited. Talk about diploma track. I know there is the center diploma track, and then there is the non diploma track. Um, when I taught at the high school, I was an instructional support team facilitator, and I worked with students who didn't qualify for special education services, but they needed extra support. So they were on just the general standard diploma. So this whole world of alternative diploma track is very new to me. I'm very curious. So if I have extra questions that are not in our sheet over here, I'm not even gonna, because I have

Nikki:

All the question,

Stephanie:

But let's start with this. What does it mean for a student to be on the standard diploma track?

Nikki:

Um, essentially they are looking to meet all the requirements that they're ly developing peers with meet on the same, on the same level, like all those same requirements. So within class we're covering everything they need from courses related to those, as well as all their IEP goals that we're going through on there. Gotcha. And in, in Virginia, what you, you have your diploma and then you also have all the SOLs which are state of learning the assessments that you, uh, take that to pass in order to get the certified credits to go towards your diploma.

Stephanie:

Okay. So they have to meet all of those as saying as their nondisabled peers. Yes. Okay. Yep. So how does this affect lesson planning for you as a teacher?

Nikki:

You feel like you wear many, many hats. I was like, you feel like a multitude of teachers in one? Um, it is, I feel like a lot of planning to look at incorporating all their IEP goals, as well as all those different subjects with covering, like which grade level they're on for like math and English and history. Um, I actually usually take when I'm in things like that, I usually look to do some group lessons. We have group

lesson time. We have individual IEP time and I try to take, let's try another cheat sheet. I try to take their, this topic. One says transition goal skills, and I'll take all the students who had the transition, their IEP goals of that list them across together on one sheet. And then look at how can I develop a group lesson where we can cover components for each of the students within one group lesson or within this week's span?

Nikki:

How can I do a unit that would touch on all of those things? And then I do that across, you know, every different component of their like writing and their math and their reading for their IEPs and just group them together, um, for their general, you know, things that we have to cover under their electives and other transcript courses. I usually did Tuesdays career, Wednesdays, health, Thursdays disciplinary arts, and Fridays, the social skills recap. Usually Monday we do social skills introduction. We practice it during the week and then Friday we do the social skills recap and then fit in English and math and science and history and direct instruction time and PE. So the different components of when they had geometry or had some enrolled in algebra and then some in biology, um, this one in English, we were doing Hamlet. So this is from earlier in the year. So try and grid it out in a color. Okay. Go that way, uh, color part for the week, um, which just helps me be able to see it and try and plan in when I'm gonna have each thing happening. Um, but yes. So you feel like I host a teacher sometimes you wish I could pull in yourself, I think is what I like wish that I could do.

Stephanie:

Well, how do you, then I know you said sometimes you do direct instruction, you do individual work and you do group planning. How do you group, do you group plan for IEP goals then in the classroom? And what does that look like with a group of mixed age students?

Nikki:

Yes. Um, so on the group planning, I try to look at if any of their IEP equals overlap around some similar skill sets or from their assessments, if naming is similar. And then I'll look at putting those together. I'm really lucky with the group of, um, teaching systems I have in my room where I know if I like write something out on it and be like, okay, you're gonna have this group and I'm gonna have this group and we'll go through sometimes simultaneously having the students in two or three different groups, or sometimes we'll do a whole big lesson and then we'll do, um, we'll do coral responding or be like everyone, you know, get your dry erase order. You're gonna like answer one, I answer and like write down your letter or show me your answer to flip the dry erase where they have, or everyone like, shout out your answer when I give you the signal, uh, to go through. But it's, I found it really streamlined, streamlined time. I'm I find it's really helpful to streamline going through grouping some of the goals that are similar on a theme. So then we can knock on a couple of IEP goals that all the students might share in common or along that same, you know, thread of building foundational skills to get them, um, most time efficient way to cover it

Stephanie:

Does this, then all of this group planning, you're putting all the kids with like the same IEP goals or topics or grade level things together. Mm-hmm <affirmative> how does that overlap when you're writing IEP goals? And then how do you individualize goals from there for your students?

Nikki:

Um, on some of them, for example, with the, the high school students that I have now, a lot of them on some of the transition goals with what they're looking at, I've tried to look at, oh, you guys are on, we're working on writing, but maybe we can all cover something related to like the resume component and they might be at different skill levels or things. But if we're looking at that area where it's like, you know, your functional medication words, or like reading the nutrition label. So like each of them, they might have vary numbers or maybe one student won't learn, you know, 50 within the year. Another might have less than that. But, um, in doing the assessment with them, I try to pick things that like, okay, and this is general category, but maybe we can be in the same thematic unit, um, to cover it together.

Stephanie:

Gotcha. I've I have so many additional questions here. I love this so much. I love that you are talking about functional skills with it goals. How do you, that's not on this list.

Nikki:

Yes. But

Stephanie:

I am a huge proponent of making at any age level. You can make academic goals functional for students. How do you do that with your students?

Nikki:

Yes. Um, I definitely agree. I feel like, yes, we have all the academic things we need to cover, but also I want you to have the best outcome as individual in life, and that you should be able to prepare for food for yourself or get dressed or do your laundry, or like the general things that you're gonna be able to be a great human in the world, um, and go out. So I usually, you know, we go go through all of the students that I work with currently can all, you know, they'll answer questions and tell me, so I'll do a checklist at the beginning of the year. I'm like, Hey, how many of you guys at home take out the trash or wash your clothes? Or is there a recipe you wanna learn how to make? Um, so we've just done a unit a couple months back about recipes and had all of them look at shopping.

Nikki:

So we talked about, you can actually go through the store, you walk through, you can pick out your items or there's, you know, click list and there's other online ordering. Like you can look at that. I'm like, I'm not sure what your parents do. Um, so looking at those things, then we've talked about money and looking at, you know, how you said, how to budget. Maybe you wanna make this dish, but today you have \$40 to market you to have 20. Like, how are you gonna adapt and kind of price compare. So try to do, I won't say like, everything is project based, but I'm like, I like to do hands on and things that I feel like will be meaningful to them instead of like, all right. Here's, you know, uh, basic

Stephanie:

Susie has \$20 and she buys boxes of cereal. Yes. How much money is like, that's important.

Nikki:

Yeah, it is. But I'm like in, you know, practicality, um, yeah, like last, I guess, pre, pre pandemic, when, you know, we could do more things on food preparation wise, we planned a Thanksgiving meal and

invited all our parents in. So everyone picked a recipe. We went shopping, they looked at it price compared, got all the items. We were able to make everything. And then they worked on like the invitations and like setting the table, like the whole kind of event. And then the cleanup, which they were not as interested in the cleanup. I'm like, this is a part of it. <laugh> the, the dishes and like cleaning up and putting everything, like resetting it back to how it was beforehand. So

Stephanie:

That's a very important life skill. Yes. Cleanup <laugh> yes,

Nikki:

Yes. Which you know, does not, does not to come inherently fun. Yeah. <laugh> yeah.

Stephanie:

I love this so much. And I love that you brought up money because a lot of times at the elementary school level, kids have to know like what a penny is and how much it's worth and a nickel and a dime and a quarter. And that's very important, but I think it's more important in today's society. Not a lot of people carry cash. I don't ever carry cash. We always have a card. So we need to know how to budget. We need to know how to compare prices. Do we have enough money for, and I love that you said all of these different topics that you can write IEP goals for money that wasn't counting pennies or dollars. Like there is a time and a place for that. Yes,

Nikki:

Yes.

Stephanie:

That you can make it a functional skill IEP goal that will serve them for further education, employment, and independent living.

Nikki:

Yeah. Um, I'm, I'm hopeful, you know, like, right. I would love it if they all had, you know, we had some sort of mock debit card system, but the students in the class, they earn money. So I have laminated, um, with their faces or like a little logo in the middle of money. So not counterfeit, but it's pretend money that they earn for their rules during the day. And then we usually do like, they purchase their breaks. And then once a month we do an auction where I'll get things and we auction off, but they have to keep a checkbook. And they're like, what is a checkbook? I'm like, well, right now this is just a ledger because you may have not ever seen a checkbook, but you're gonna need to balance your money of some way, even if it's looking at online or, you know, you have a paper system or a financial ledger, but, um, incorporating that. So they're like, I don't know what a check is. I'm like, oh, don't worry about that. Here's the, you know, pretend cash. Here's what you earned, purchase your break from the menu. And then you can use this to bid on things of the option.

Stephanie:

That's so, so important. All of those skills, like in, I love how you're like, well here, this is a check. You might not need it, but here's what it is. But the, it correlates to online. It's still the same system you would use for the old school checkbook. Like we learned how to write, like how to fill out a checkbook.

And I had to fill out a check today. Like, it's still a skill, but it's not as prevalent as when we were, we were going into school. Um, yes.

Nikki:

<laugh> yes. And I'm like, okay. Yeah. Now you just swipe, but

Stephanie:

<laugh>. Yeah. But it correlates to making sure your bank statement is accurate and making sure that everything came out and you can't go spend the last \$500 on whatever in your bank account, because you have something coming out for \$200 or something like,

Nikki:

Yes. Yeah. Looking at, you know, what you, what you have, uh, and what you need and what you have left.

Stephanie:

Yeah. So important. And I love that all of this aligns with the diploma track, the standard diploma track.

Nikki:

Yeah.

Nikki:

I'm trying to, um, look at like all of their, you know, their course across the year and see what they need to go through. And a lot of times I'll incorporate, um, the other thing in their group sessions is sometimes we're doing vocab and they, if they create note cards, we'll do peer tutoring. Well, one of them will hold the card out cause with their abilities, with reading and um, those things. So one of them will hold the card out that other might say the definition of vice versa. So they'll partner, even if it's not their subject, they can like give them a yay or NA. Yeah. Um, and initially they're doing like larger sheets. Sometimes they'll take data on it, but sometimes I'm just over to the side and taking the data for them, but they'll partner up to work on those flashcards together.

Stephanie:

I love this so much. And all of these ideas can be used and adapted and modified for any grade level. It's these, aren't just things that people could do at the high school only level or the middle school only level and vice versa. Like there are things at the elementary level that can be adapted up to high school and middle school. So, um, keep that in mind when you're going through these trainings and you're like, oh, this is just for high school teachers, keep an open mind. You might learn something that might change your, your mind or give you something easier to do. Or you're like, oh, well now functional IEP goals make sense. I get it. Like, it might just take that one perspective to click in your brain, you know?

Nikki:

Yeah, definitely. I think the, the part where I thought about the money is I remember seeing, you know, this one elementary school age classroom, and they were doing like tokens in these cups and these other parts. And I'm like, well, like they're past that through this point, but we can do the same concept

and just do you know. So I think, I think you could find sources and ideas anywhere, but like, just like you said, and modify them to fit, you know, your, your need at the moment.

Stephanie:

Absolutely. Well, what is your best piece of advice, Nikki for group planning for a mixed age class?

Nikki:

Yeah. Um, I have found it really helpful to try and create opportunities for some, the students who have stronger skill sets in certain areas who might have higher functioning in certain areas and use those to help tutor the, either younger students on that, or, you know, partner them up with someone who might need some assistance on it, because on one side, like teaching something really helps, you know, that, you know it, and then the patience of working with someone who may not be able to have that skill as well as on the peer to peer, because teachers like we're giving them all the good things usually every day. And like we're the holder, all the stuff, but working on peer to peer or even if it's older and younger friendships and development and social skills, I found it to be really helpful to have those interactions. So they're not always so reliant on just, you know, the teachers and teaching assistants that they can look to each other for help.

Stephanie:

I think that's great advice again for any grade level. Yeah. <laugh> yeah. Any way that you can do peer to peer and have students take more ownership over their learning and their education ultimately sets them up for success for when they're out of our classroom and they're in the community.

Nikki:

Yes, yes. I always say like, it would be great if we can just do this to work ourselves out of a job that they won't even need us anymore, that they'll be just solely independent and doing well.

Stephanie:

I love that. Well, thank you so much for being here and sharing all about group planning, whether it's for IEP goals or lesson planning for that standard diploma track. Um, I appreciate you being here and sharing all of your expertise on this topic. Where can we find you online to reach out to you or follow you for more ideas, tips and tricks and advice. Um, and I will link Nikki's all of Nikki's things below this video. So who can click and go find her?

Nikki:

Sure. It's a Instagram account from a group of teachers that I've with and it's special underscore ed underscore teacher underscore community, and it's on Instagram. So we're newer to the social media world. So, so far that is the only thing listed. I'm hopeful to have a Pinterest account linked up soon where we can put some things on there as well.

Stephanie:

Well, welcome it to the online social media community. I'm so excited. I will link her. Thank you. Um, Instagram below here, and then you can go follow her, send her a DM. Um, like all of her stuff, ask her questions, collaborate with her. She is your expert here for all things. Um, high school diploma, track IEP goal, writing functional goals, like all of the things that we talked about. Um, so thank you again, Nick so

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much for being here and sharing your expertise. Thank y'all for being here and learning more about group planning for the standard track. We will see in the next training.