Stephanie:

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I am the founder of the Intentional IEP and I am your guest. I'm not your guest. We're going to start over. Hold on.

Nicole:

You could be. I mean, sure.

Stephanie:

This is why I cut the beginning and the end out.

Nicole:

Yeah. That's fine.

Stephanie:

Hey everyone. My name is Stephanie. I'm the founder of the Intentional IEP and your host for all of these guest speaker chats. Today, I am here with Nicole and we are going to be talking all about an IEP writing system. Super excited for this chat. It's a super important one, but before we even get started, Nicole, please introduce yourself. Share a little bit about you and your teaching experience and your role at the IEP table.

Nicole:

Sure. So I'm Nicole. I live in New York with my husband and my dog and our chickens. Yes, chickens. This is my third year at my current school, which will probably be my forever school. But before that, I worked in a whole bunch of random things, trying to get your foot in the door, being a TA, a daycare. I even did resource room at a Catholic school, which is a whole other thing, but it was really this job that seems to be where I'm meant to be.

Stephanie:

I love that so much. You just kind of have that like whole-

Nicole:

Everything's finally working out.

Stephanie:

I love it so much. Well, that makes me so happy for you.

Nicole:

And my role at the IEP table, well I teach third grade inclusion. So I really focus on how to make sure my kids' needs are met in our classroom because we're in a co-teaching setting. So just to make sure that they have all the supports they need and we do... I don't know how everybody does IEP, but we do them in the spring for the fall, so I won't see these kids in the fall. So I want to make sure that whatever's in the IEP is there for their next teacher.

Stephanie:

I love that. I actually just had a conversation with another teacher today about writing IEPs for the next school year, whether they're going to the same school. So look out for that chat. That's coming too, but yeah, let's get started. I'm super excited to talk about IEP writing systems and having a system in place when you're writing IEPs. So it is important to have a system in place for writing IEPs because not only does it make the process easier, but it keeps you in compliance with due dates and all of that stuff. So what does your IEP writing system look like?

Nicole:

Okay. So we do have a checklist from our director, so we know which parts are ours, but the thing that I do and I just have a plain blank one, it's like a little chart with the different areas for the CLEPs that I have to fill out. So one side has their school level progress and the other side has potential IEP goals. So I pretty much take it out couple of weeks to a month before I'm getting ready to write and I just keep it with me, like next to me on the... well, last year small group table or by my computer, or however I'm working with kids this year and I'll just like write a note, like if we work on long vowel sounds and I'm like, "Oh, this kid's got CBCE words." I just write a note or like, if we're doing subtraction, I'm like, "Oh, still can't regroup with four digits or still can't regroup across zero," so I'll just write these notes down like both strengths, weaknesses. I even have a behavior section just like, "Oh, hey, I didn't think about that." I just write it as it happens, so it just makes it a little bit easier. And then looking at goals based off of these notes that I've written, it seems to help.

Stephanie:

I love that. I love that it's all on one sheet and then you can kind of just take it with you wherever you're going to write IEPs because we don't always have enough time to write them during the school day and we do often write them at home.

Nicole:

Yes. I know. It was so hard my first year. I literally took home all my folders and I think I had like seven of them and I'm on my living room floor. I've got papers everywhere... Knock my TV over. And then I was just like looking through everything. I'm like, "Okay, well, how are they doing then? How are they doing now," like I was just trying to flip through so many things and I was like, "This is not happening again."

Stephanie:

Yeah. Well, I love that you have it all in one page. I think that's so important. So how does having this system in place help you?

Nicole:

I think it makes like sitting down to actually write the IEP so much faster because with life, sometimes I forget or I don't get around to do one. Even this year, some of my kids that have stayed home, it's been so much harder to even have all of this information to fill in about them, but when I do one of these sheets and I have goal ideas and just these, I just pull up... we use Frontline IEP, I pull it up and I just make a paragraph out of my notes, and then I put in the goals based on my notes and it goes so much faster for me. I just feel like I'm not sitting there thinking like, "Oh, wait, what about reading? Where are they in this," and like [inaudible 00:04:52] memories from nowhere.

Stephanie:

I love that. So I'm going to go rogue and ask you a question. Do you have this piece of paper all the time or is it just like when you're getting ready to write an IEP or how does that work?

Nicole:

More towards the spring. I mean, I do have a folder for every kid. I put their work in it all year, but just like right before meeting time... I don't know, maybe a month, a couple of weeks. Depends how many I have at once. I just take it out and I just start like putting notes in, so it's more like current. So when I write it, I can write this is what they're doing right now. I mean, maybe they'll go a little bit further if we have meetings in March for their next year of school. We might've gone a little bit further since we held that meeting, but just that's what they were doing and where they were struggling at that point in time, which is how we kind of go about our IEP process is like, "This is what's happening right now."

Stephanie:

Love that. So what would you say is the most vital part of this system for you? Yeah, I guess that's the question.

Nicole:

I think just having it. I mean the one page thing is great. I mean, save paper. But just being able to see it all at once and just having it all reflect on each other, so like if I have a behavior note that is easily frustrated during math, then I can look at math and see, "Oh, well these are the things that are struggling and let's make sure we put those as a target for next year, so that maybe that frustration will come down," and things like that, that you could see how it interrelates with each other.

Stephanie:

I love that. That's great. Again, I love that it's one page. Yeah, you can read this in the transcripts, but if you're listening or watching this and you're like, "That's amazing. LI wish I could do that with like everything else." Let me tell you that at the Intentional IEP, we have a data collection training and you will learn how to take data using sticky notes, but it's all that on one page and you have it all in your binder ring and like keeps everything in line. It is like the same you're talking about like, when you go to write IEPs a certain week, when you go to write progress reports and you have to write the present level or the PLP, the PLOP, PLAAFP, whatever you call it, having all of that data in like one binder ring and just being able to take it with you wherever you're writing your IEP makes it so convenient for you. You literally just have to look at it and look at the data and be like, "This is how he was doing with this goal and then you put that in the present levels and you're like, "This is where we're going to go next," it's the same way. You essentially could use them together.

Nicole:

Right. Yeah.

Stephanie:

I love that.

Nicole:

You could definitely pull your goals into this and even like if you just look through your data binder or your goal binder and you're like, "Oh, reading, we were working on CBC words. We made 80% progress

this year," and you can add that as a little note. I know I do that with our... we use Raz-Kids so I go on and I go to like, "Okay. Level E," wherever.

Stephanie:

I love that. That's awesome. I love that you can put them together. I am all for systems that make it easier and more efficient for us to write IEPs quicker, but like better at the same time. Well, what is your best piece of advice for utilizing an IEP writing system?

Nicole:

So I think just trying to pull it all together. So the reason I like this is because it's not just you sat down one day and this is all you thought of. It's like multiple days because if you asked me one day know what I thought about how someone's doing in math, I would really just think about what we did that day, maybe the day before. But if you keep this with you for a little while, a couple of weeks or so, then you'll be seeing different things that it's not going to be so repetitive or sometimes it's like pulling teeth when you're trying to write the IEP. You're like, "What else could I possibly say? We said X, Y, and Z already." And so it's helpful to just think of something and use it long enough so that you're not sort of getting a small, almost biased opinion [inaudible 00:09:07] snippet.

Stephanie:

It's more objective. You can see long range like, "This is what we've been working on the last couple of weeks and here's what we're still struggling with. We can work on this with the next IEP. Here's the meeting." I love that so much. I think that's so important. And again, I love that it's one sheet that just like-

Nicole:

Right. I mean, you're not going to break your back, brains [inaudible 00:09:29].

Stephanie:

It's so convenient for everyone like you could even have your parents could help fill that out, gen ed teachers could help fill that out, service providers. Like you could put it on a clipboard and you could travel with it. I love it.

Nicole:

In theory, if you want to get high tech, you could make it a Google form and just type stuff. I know people do that. I have not gotten into the Google form goals yet because... But people do it. You type in your notes every day. People have done that and you could do that for this too like, "How was he doing on reading, math, and other subjects today," and just [inaudible 00:10:06] and then you would just have a chart in your Google Sheets.

Stephanie:

Everyone could do it though.

Nicole:

Right. Yeah. Share it. Gen ed, speech, OT, PT, everything.

Stephanie:

Love it. Well, do you have this downloadable as like a freebie or anything that we can link below for everyone?

Nicole:

No, but I can.

Stephanie:

So by the time you guys are watching this, you'll see the video, you'll see the link down below to either go download it from Nicole's TPT store, which thank you so much for being here. Can you share with us before I like share it for you, where can we find you online on social media and all of those things? And then the links will be below and then you can find her freebie there too.

Nicole:

Perfect. On Instagram, I'm @differentiation_diva and on Teachers Pay Teachers, I'm differentiationdivaresources. It's been a little slow going this year due to the school year, but we will get back in business soon.

Stephanie:

That's okay. You know what? It's been a rough year. So summer break's coming. Those of you watching, it's not summer break anymore and we're back in full gear for school. So I hope you all had a great break.

Nicole:

Yes. Hopefully, it was relaxing.

Stephanie:

Hopefully. I hope so. I hope all of you got so much rest and recharged and oh my goodness. Well, thank you so much Nicole for being here today and sharing about your IEP writing system. I'm super excited to get your one pager in front of everyone and just streamline the process so much easier. I love it so much. So thank you so much for being a guest speaker today. I've enjoyed our chat and I hope those of you watching download the freebie and at least give it a shot. If it's not something that works for you, that's completely okay too, but definitely give it a shot and take it up. Take a look at it and we'll see you guys in the next chat.