One Step at a Time: Creating Meaningful and Authentic IEPs for Kids with Autism

Building Authentic Individual Education Plans

An Authentic IEP is NOT:

☒ A comprehensive script covering the details of daily programming

☒ A plan for only the most severely disabled students

☒ A product developed by one educator planning in isolation

☒ A plan that is restricted to changes made to academic curriculum

☒ Limited to the resources available in the classroom or school

☒ A pristine document that should be protected from overuse

☒ A formal “hoop” that all educators must jump through in order to meet the expectations of their school board and their government

☒ A generic plan that is impersonal; a “one size fits all” sort of document

An Authentic IEP IS:

☑ A realistic and manageable written plan of action for a student who requires accommodations or modifications to the regular school program in order to access the curriculum and experience growth

☑ A plan to address the student’s autism needs through the alternative expectations (outside state or provincial curriculum such as sensory issues, behaviour goals, social communication and language skills)

☑ A flexible, working document that begs to be revised according to the student’s progress towards specified goals

☑ A plan that matches the student’s priority needs and strengths to teaching strategies, learning opportunities and assessment practices

☑ A legal document that educators are responsible to create within a month of the start of school and use daily

☑ A summary of the student’s strengths and needs (skills), goals and performance objectives and timelines towards meeting these objectives

☑ A plan incorporating the programming decisions of other service providers (Speech and Language pathology, Occupational Therapy, etc.) and linking them to the daily instruction the student receives

☑ The product of a collaborative effort of key persons involved with the child which is deliberately shared and open to persons directly involved with the child’s education (paraprofessionals, parents, administrators)

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Including the Autism Curriculum

IEPS must address areas of need in autism (not all at once of course!):

Social communication and Language development
Transitions
Cognitive Difficulties: Regulating or shifting attention, Flexible thinking, Executive function (Organization, Planning, Attention, Memory, Problem Solving), Perspective Taking
Sensory regulation
Repetitive and stereotypical behaviours and anxiety
Self -Regulation and emotional development
Leisure, play skills and Motor skills
Independent functioning; fading prompts and autonomy

Create SMARTER Goals

**S** = Specific - name exactly what someone would see if the goal was being met

**M** = Measurable – identify concrete criteria that can be counted

**A** = Action – start with a verb that shows what the student will do

**R** = Realistic – goals that reflect the reality of the student’s unique needs, learning style and disability rather than some external standard set by the state

**T** = Timely – bound by a time limit so that demonstration of the skill can be measured when the time is up

**E** = Everywhere - the student will perform the skill or action in a variety of settings in order to promote generalization

**R** = Repeated – goals that are said to have been achieved must be maintained over months/years

Use Methods and Principles that Match an Autistic Learning Style

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