

# Using IEP Data to Improve Your Practice and Your Caseload

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## Go Beyond Compliance: Use Individualized Education Programs to Answer Strategic Questions and Improve Programs

Data from IEPs Includes . . .

- Disability Identification
- Accommodations and modifications
- Goals and Service time
- Rates of identification by school or grade
- Testing participation
- Transition planning
- Race, ethnicity, WIDA Levels, home languages

Data in IEPs: How can this be analyzed?

- Snapshot in time
  - Individual IEPs
  - Aggregated data
- Trends over time
  - Individual IEPs
  - Aggregated data

### **Confidentiality and Ethics of Obtaining IEP Data**

When analyzing IEP data, users must maintain compliance with:

FERPA

HIPAA

IRB (Ethics)

Ensure de-identification or parent permission

### **Local Review**

- You may review your own IEPs
- Administration may review IEPs for staff
- Before sharing data with others
  - consider all requirements
  - seek approval

### **Data Analysis For: Compliance, Eligibility And Service Delivery, And Professional Learning**

#### **Procedural Compliance**

- Meets the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
  - Timelines
  - Dates
  - Contains PLOP, goals, services statements
  - Meeting attendees
  - Consent

#### **Substantive Compliance**

- Relevant to the individual student's needs
- Logical and appropriate connections between key IEP components.
  - Goal content, alignment with student needs
  - Amounts, types of services
- More than de minimis benefit (Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District, 2017)

**Does an IEP with all parts included equal a good IEP for the student?**

### **Going Beyond Procedural Compliance**

IEP data may be used to examine and inform ...

- Instructional Programs
- Service trends or patterns
- Eligibility trends or patterns
- Policy and guidance development
- Professional development

## Monitor for Substantive Compliance

Whether for individual students or groups of students, review IEP data to determine whether:

- A present levels of observed performance (PLOP) statement is included describing both academic and functional performance.
- Measurable annual goals are related to a need described in the PLOP.
- Accommodations or modifications related to needs are described in the PLOP.
- A description of the amount and location of services is described in the PLOP and is related to the student's needs. e.g., not based on class period or overall schedule time segments

<p><b>Data Analysis to Inform Eligibility Decision-making</b></p> <p>Patterns of identification can reveal issues with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application of eligibility criteria by and between schools, grades, or races</li> <li>• Overuse of disability categories (e.g., MD instead of ED, LD, SLI)</li> <li>• Absence of data to document educational impact or need for specially designed instruction</li> <li>• Lack of member statements documenting different views</li> </ul>	<p><b>General Considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does evaluation data align with content of IEP?</li> <li>• Do goals match areas of need listed in the PLOP?</li> <li>• Do accommodations and modifications align with the areas of weakness listed in the PLOP?</li> <li>• Are goals rigorous and based on data?</li> <li>• Are progress monitoring targets relevant to the student's curriculum and not using standardized or norm referenced tests to document progress?</li> <li>• Do service times/frequencies vary according to student needs (e.g., not according to the school bell schedule)?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data Analysis to Inform Caseload Management</b></p> <p>Patterns of assessment and eligibility can reveal issues with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overuse of standardized tests or biased measures</li> <li>• Lack of data on educational impact or need for specially designed instruction</li> <li>• Overuse of SLI or related services without documentation</li> </ul> <p>Patterns with PLOP, goals, and services can reveal issues with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students on low level service to increase caseload numbers</li> <li>• Cookie cutter services and goals that limit individualization</li> </ul>	<p><b>More Sample Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there consistency in disability identification practices across evaluation teams, schools, or LEAs?</li> <li>• How do student and school factors impact special education processes?</li> <li>• Are there patterns or trends in student IEPs that suggest a need for additional professional development or monitoring?</li> <li>• Are there patterns or trends in identification by race, SES status, disability or school team?</li> <li>• Are there patterns or trends in locations of services delivered?</li> </ul>
<p><b>IEP Data May Be Accessed Using a Variety of Methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff review of files</li> <li>○ IEP software pre-built reports</li> <li>○ Ad hoc or custom queries             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Administrative dashboard</li> <li>▪ Vendor</li> <li>▪ Researchers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Who Analyzes IEP Data?</b></p> <p>State education agencies (SEAs)          Local education agencies (LEAs)          Schools          Special education administrators          Individual providers          Technical assistance centers, researchers, nonprofits, etc.</p>

### Using IEP Data to Improve Therapy

- Identify goals that target specific treatment approaches aligned to development and standards of learning
- Identify evidence-based therapy techniques
- Utilize metrics supported by research
  - When is enough enough? 75%
  - Sound, sentences or conversation level
  - Language and literacy targets aligned to development

<b>Using IEP Data to Guide Professional Development Planning</b>	<b>Sample Considerations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Patterns in assessment and eligibility data reveal needs like:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Comprehensive assessment</li><li>○ Language sample analysis</li><li>○ Dynamic assessment</li><li>○ Speech sound disorder norms</li><li>○ Documentation of educational Impact and Need for specially designed instruction</li></ul></li><li>• Patterns in IEPs reveal treatment topics like:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Less frequent needs (e.g., fluency treatment or Apraxia of speech)</li><li>○ Language and literacy skills for diverse populations</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do students' goals suggest the need for professional development on difference vs. disorder and non-discriminatory evaluation practices? Examples of this include:</li><li>• Grammar or articulation goals that target variations present in a student's dialect (e.g., marking plurals or pronunciation of /θ/ for speakers of African American English).</li><li>• Language goals that target variations present in a student's primary language, for English learners.</li><li>• Are there trends or patterns of achievement related to the amount of services or unique school programs?</li></ul>

### Inform Professional Development (PD)

- How to use IEP goals to identify PD targets for a group of students (by disability, grade, school, or LEA).
  - e.g., goals to target dialect (such as marking past tense or plurals or addressing f/th substitution for speakers of African American English) suggest a need for nondiscriminatory evaluation practices or understanding difference vs. disorder.
  - e.g., high number of goals addressing fluency may support PD for speech-language pathologists (SLPs) in fluency.
- How to use IEP PLOP and accommodations and modifications data (by disability, grade, school, or LEA) when determining eligibility and writing IEPs.
- How to use IEP service data to identify when students' services are minimal (e.g., 30 minutes per month) and eligibility should be reconsidered.

### Develop LEA or SEA Policy and Guidance

An example: SEA data analysis revealed service rates by LEA for specific disability categories were highly variable (e.g., 12%–85% for speech or language impairment [SLI], 0%–6% for multiple disabilities).

Issues noted with:

- Misidentification related to impact of dialect, poverty, and cultural and linguistic diversity on communication skills.
- Inconsistent application of multiple disabilities criteria to include any two or more disabilities (e.g., learning disability [LD] and SLI, LD and emotional disturbance [ED]).
- SEA developed new guidance document using IEP data and suggestions from stakeholders with effective practices.

## Review of Trend Data And Ways To Improve Usability Of IEP Data

Collaboration Between Groups:

### Want to Know ...

- Which IEPs are substantively compliant?
- Which service models result in the best outcomes for students in a group?
- How consistent are eligibility teams across your LEA?
- Is disability identification influenced by SES or race?
- Which students are doing better on high-stakes tests, and does placement or amount of services relate to student outcomes?
- Are there patterns in IEP data that require professional development to address issues?
- Do you have another question?

*IEPs provide extensive data that can and should be used by SLP to collectively improve programs, processes, and especially caseloads. We hope this session will spark the interest of SLPs to use this data for positive change in the school setting.*

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