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An Educational Manual for Parents of Children with Significant Intellectual
Disabilities¹

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“We do the best with what we know.

When we know more, we do better.”

Rhonda Miga, Parent, Partners in Policymaking, Albany, NY, 2002

In 2000 a coalition of parents of children with disabilities, professionals and disability rights advocates, including The New Jersey Education Law Center, Disability Rights New Jersey, The New Jersey Statewide Parent Advocacy Network and The ARC of New Jersey, concluded that far too many students with a wide array of disabilities were not receiving individually appropriate educations in the least restrictive environments. In 2001 they filed a complaint in federal district court against the New Jersey Department of Education. Subsequently, experts that would assist in the gathering and analyzing of relevant information became involved. Lou Brown was one. Initially, it was intended that Brown and his colleagues would develop instruments that could be used to secure and evaluate information obtained from special and general education teachers, therapists, school administrators and parents and when observing in actual instructional and related settings. However, in effect, the court only allowed access to information that could be gleaned from up to three years of the IEPs of 147 randomly selected students (Brown, Conroy & Devlin, 2014). After that court ruling, developing the aforementioned instruments appeared moot. However,

¹ “Students with significant intellectual disabilities” refers to the lowest intellectually functioning 1 - 2% of a naturally distributed school age population. Most have been ascribed such labels as severely/profoundly developmentally disabled, autistic, multiply handicapped, cognitively disabled, mentally retarded or their synonyms. All students eligible for Special Education and Related Services are legally entitled to Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs).

after the case was settled in 2014, the Plaintiffs' team judged that at least some of the instruments considered for development might be helpful to parents, lawyers, teachers, therapists, school administrators and others. In addition to this manual, the instruments developed addressed intellectual factors that must be considered when determining IEP objectives, the importance of attending home schools, authentic assessment and instruction and school to post school integrated work transition plans. The settlement agreement, the instruments and related information are listed in the reference section and can be obtained from the Inclusive Education website of Disability Rights New Jersey - www.inclusioncampaign.org and the website of Lou Brown - www.website.education.wisc.edu/lbrown. While the court case was concerned with all students who functioned with IEPs in New Jersey, the instruments produced are focused on students with significant intellectual disabilities, if they can be adapted for effective use with students with different kinds and levels of disabilities, so be it.

In some instances, school officials prepare an IEP, propose it to parents and ask for their approval. Such parents can consider at least the elements addressed in this manual, apply them to the contents of the proposed IEPs and, if necessary, negotiate experiences that are acceptable to all involved.

In other instances, school officials and parents meet and develop an IEP. Such parents can use this manual to gather, organize and consider important information that can help generate IEPs of acceptable quality.

In still other instances IEPs have been developed, approved by parents and school officials and are being implemented. Sometimes parents have cause to wonder if the school experiences being provided are in accordance with their assumptions and understandings. Such parents can use this manual to evaluate many of the educational and therapy services actually being provided their children.

In all instances, it is extremely important that parents are aware of the legal, educational and other entitlements of their children to have reasonable

opportunities to benefit from receiving research, experience and common sense based “promising” educational policies, procedures and practices (Sailor, 2009).²

More specifically, this manual will focus upon factors related to: the school your child attends or should attend; the classroom and classes in which he/she functions; her/his intellectual characteristics; grade level academic content; individually appropriate supplementary aids and services; the fidelity of instructional objectives; the appropriateness of performance criteria; verifying that she/he will be learning, is learning or has learned; her/his involvement in school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities; travel experiences; her/his social relationship range; his/her school to post school transition; and, his/her remarkable uniqueness.

Licensed plumbers, physicians, automobile mechanics, accountants and many other professionals are required to keep abreast of improvements in their fields. So should professionals who interact with students with significant intellectual disabilities. Parents should not be required to be aware of promising plumbing or medical policies, procedures and practices. They should not be required to be aware of promising Special Education and related service policies, procedures and practices either. Perhaps soon all the promising policies, procedures and practices that can be effectively used with students with significant intellectual disabilities will be delineated and all professionals will learn how to use and evaluate them. Until that day, parents must be aware of as many as are individually feasible. The more information they have, the better able they will be to advocate for services of reasonable quality. Unfortunately, all important educational and related information that should be carefully considered cannot be addressed here. It is hoped that those involved in the life of a child with

² School professionals who interact with students with significant intellectual disabilities are legally and otherwise responsible to learn and use policies, procedures and practices that research, experience and/or common sense support as “promising” (IDEA, 2004).

significant intellectual disabilities will add those that are individually and situationally meaningful.

Dates this manual was utilized From _____ To _____

My name is - Our names are _____

My child's name is _____

The current age of my child is _____

My child's gender is ___ Male ___ Female

My Parent Assistant/Advocate is _____

My child's Case Manager is _____

My city/town of residence is _____

My school district is _____

My child's home school is _____

My child's current school is _____

My child's proposed school is _____

Special Education Classification

I agree with school district officials that my child's primary Special Education classification is as follows.

___ Brain injured

- Visually impaired - including blindness
 - Auditory impaired - including deafness
 - Deaf and Blind
 - Specific learning disabled
 - Preschool child with a disability
 - Cognitively impaired
 - Multiply disabled
 - Orthopedically impaired
 - Autistic
 - Emotionally disturbed
 - Health impaired
 - Communication impaired
 - Socially maladjusted
-

I disagree with school district officials. I think my child's primary Special Education classification should be as follows.

- Brain injured
 - Visually impaired - including blindness
 - Auditory impaired - including deafness
 - Deaf and blind
 - Specific learning disabled
 - Preschool child with a disability
 - Cognitively impaired
 - Multiply disabled
 - Orthopedically impaired
 - Autistic
 - Emotionally disturbed
 - Health impaired
 - Communication impaired
 - Socially maladjusted
-

I agree with school district officials that my child has significant intellectual disabilities.

Yes

No

I do not agree with school district officials that my child has significant intellectual disabilities.

Yes

No

School Placement³

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that at least the following actions relevant to placing a student with significant intellectual disabilities in a school be implemented.

First, the student should be placed in a general education school, preferably the one she/he would attend if she/he did not have disabilities. (IDEA, 2004; Rozalski, Stewart, & Miller, 2010).

Second, if a student is removed from, or is not attending, a general education school, her/his IEP team must seriously consider returning or moving her/him to or increasing the amount of time she/he spends in one at least annually.

³ It is highly recommended that at least the following two papers be examined: "The Home School: Why Students With Severe Intellectual Disabilities Must Attend The Schools of Their Brothers, Sisters, Friends and Neighbors"(Brown, et al., 1989) and "Why Home Schools for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities" (Brown, Toson & Lowenkron, 2015). They provide more detailed delineations of the advantages and disadvantages of functioning in home, clustered and segregated schools. The clear preference expressed in those papers, as well as in this manual, is for students with significant intellectual disabilities to attend the schools they would attend if they were not disabled - their home schools.

Third, if the student attends a segregated school, his/her IEP team must seriously consider moving her/him to one that is integrated at least annually.

Fourth, the first placement discussed in every IEP meeting must be a general education school. Not just as it currently exists, but as it could be modified through the provision of the individually appropriate Supplementary Aids and Services a student might need to thrive therein (McLeskey, Waldron, Spooner & Algozzine, 2014). Supplementary Aides and Services are considered in more detail in a subsequent section of this manual.

My child's school placement in the IEP proposed by school officials, in the IEP being developed or in the IEP currently being implemented is best described as follows.

- The same public school she/he would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification - her/his home school.
- A regular/general education private school within our district.
- A regular/general education private school out of our district.
- A clustered home public school. A clustered home public school is the one your child would attend if she/he did not have a Special Education classification. However, it is also attended by many students with disabilities who would not do so if they did not have Special Education classifications. Thus, the school is overloaded with students with disabilities.
- A clustered nonhome public school in our district.
- A clustered public school out of our district.

- A clustered private school in our district.
- A clustered private school out of our district.
- A segregated public school in our district. A segregated school is one attended only by students with disabilities.
- A segregated public school out of our district.
- A segregated private school in our district.
- A segregated private school out of our district.
- A public residential school.
- A private residential school.
- _____

If school district officials are proposing that your child not attend, if the IEP being developed does not require that your child attend or if your child does not actually attend the school she/he would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification - her/his home school, report what you think are the reasons.

- I wanted this nonhome school placement.
- I am/was satisfied with the nonhome school placement, although it may not be the most inclusive/integrated setting needed by my child.

- I am/was concerned that school district personnel could not meet my child's needs in a more inclusive/integrated school because of lack of appropriate personnel training and experience.
- I am/was concerned that school district personnel could not meet my child's needs in a more inclusive/integrated school because they would not provide the needed extra support in it.
- I am/was concerned that my child would not be safe in a more inclusive/integrated school.
- I am requesting or I requested a more inclusive/integrated school placement, but the district will or did not agree. I let them decide.
- In our district, students of my child's functioning level are not placed in neighborhood - home schools, even though the services they need are portable and can be moved there (Ronker v Walker, 1983).
- In our district, students with my child's Special Education classification are not placed in neighborhood - home schools, even though the services they need are portable and can be moved there.
- Our district does not offer inclusion with students without Special Education classifications at my child's age or grade level.
- A family with a child like mine must win in a mediation or a due process hearing if their child is to be allowed in a neighborhood - home school. I am not in a position to become involved in either.
- I tried to obtain a more inclusive school placement through mediation, but did not succeed.

I tried to obtain a more inclusive school placement through a due process hearing, but did not succeed.

The nonhome school placement was/is my child's preference.

Parents of children with disabilities are legally, educationally and otherwise entitled to be informed of and to participate in discussions in which a nonhome school is being considered by school officials, before their children are placed therein.

If school officials are proposing that your child not attend his/her home school, if your child is not scheduled to attend her/his home school in the IEP being developed or if your child does not attend the school he/she would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, were you informed that she/he is entitled to a wide variety of Supplementary Aids and Services so she/he might thrive in her/his home school before she/he is or was placed elsewhere?

Yes

No

School district officials cannot divert or remove your child from her/his home school, only because of her/his Special Education classification.

Did school district professionals inform you that your child could not be diverted or removed from the school he/she would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, only because of the Special Education classification assigned to her/him?

Yes

No

School district officials cannot divert or remove your child from her/his home school, only because of the severities of her/his disabilities.

Did school district professionals inform you that your child could not be diverted or removed from the school he/she would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, only because of the severities of his/her disabilities?

Yes

No

If it is being proposed that your child not attend her/his home school, if your child is not scheduled to attend her/his home school in the IEP being developed or if your child actually does not attend her/his home school, have school district officials actually discuss a plan with you to arrange for her/him to move to it each year?

Yes

No

If it is being proposed that your child does not attend his/her home school, if your child is not scheduled to attend her/his home school in the IEP being developed or if he/she is not actually attending the school she/he would attend if not disabled, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for her/him to do so?

Yes

No

Classroom and Class Placements

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that students with disabilities be given opportunities to function in the same classrooms and classes in which they would function if they did not have disabilities, at least 80% of their school days (McLeskey, Landers, Williamson, & Hoppey, 2012). If they

spend less than 80% of their school days outside the classrooms or classes in which they would function if they did not have disabilities, their placements must be evaluated and professionally defensible plans designed to increase the time they spend in more integrated settings must be seriously considered at least annually (IDEA, 2004; Rozalski, et al., 2010). In addition, the Supplementary Aids and Services and other resources needed to function effectively in integrated classrooms and classes 80% of their school days must be made available. Reasonable policies, procedures and practices relevant to these requirements are as follows.

First, IEP team personnel must actually visit and study the general education classrooms and classes in which your child would be placed if he/she did not have disabilities.

Second, if at all reasonable, your child must be given opportunities to function in more integrated classrooms and/or classes with appropriate Supplementary Aids and Services and other extra supports.⁴

Third, the effectiveness of the more integrated placement must be evaluated in professionally defensible ways (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

My child's proposed classroom or class placement/placements, the classroom or class placements scheduled in the IEP being developed or his/her current classroom or class placements is/are best described as follows.

___ The same classroom or classes he/she would be in if he/she did not have a Special Education classification at least 80% of school days.

___ The same classroom or classes he/she would be in if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, but less than 80% of school days.

⁴ "Extra supports" refers to what your child needs to benefit from functioning in integrated educational and related settings that she/he would not need if he/she did not have disabilities.

___ A Special Education resource room that serves only students with Special Education classifications more than 20% of school days.

___ Special Education classrooms or classes that contain only other students with disabilities more than 20 % of school days.

___ _____
___ _____

If the IEP being proposed requires that your child not function in, if your child is not scheduled in the IEP being developed to function in or if he/she does not actually function in the same classroom or classes he/she would if she/he did not have a Special Education classification for at least 80% of her/his school days, report the reasons why.

___ I am/was satisfied that the classroom or class placements is/are the most appropriate.

___ I am/was concerned that school district personnel could not meet my child's educational needs in more inclusive/integrated classroom or class settings because of the lack of appropriate training and experience.

___ I am/was concerned that school district personnel could not meet my child's educational needs in more integrated/inclusive classroom or class settings because they would not provide the needed extra supports in them.

___ I am/was concerned that my child would not be safe in inclusive/integrated classroom or class settings.

___ I requested a more inclusive/integrated classroom or class placement, but the school district would not agree and dispute resolution was not an option for my family.

___ I tried to obtain a more inclusive class or classroom placement through mediation, but did not succeed.

___ I tried to obtain a more inclusive/integrated classroom or class placement through a due process hearing, but did not succeed.

___ _____
___ _____

If the classrooms and/or classes being proposed, those that your child is scheduled to attend in the IEP being developed or those in which your child currently functions are not acceptable, report the kind of classroom or class placements you think would be better.

___ The same classrooms and/or classes she/he would be in if she/he did not have disabilities at least 80% of school days.

___ Half of her/his school time should be spent in integrated classrooms or classes. Half of her/his time should be spent learning to function in integrated community settings.

___ _____
___ _____

Parents of children with significant intellectual disabilities are legally, educationally and otherwise entitled to be informed of and to participate in discussions in which school officials are considering diverting or removing their children from the classrooms and/or classes in which they would function if they were not disabled, before such actions are taken.

Did school district officials involve you in discussions about diverting or removing your child from the classroom or classes she/he would be in if she/he did not have a Special Education classification, before he/she was placed in a different kind of classroom or class?

Yes

No

School district officials cannot divert or remove your child from the classrooms and classes he/she would be in if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, only because a particular Special Education classification has been assigned to him/her; e.g. Autism.

Did school district officials inform you that your child could not be diverted or removed from the classrooms and classes he/she would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, only because of the particular Special Education classification that has been assigned to him/her?

Yes

No

School district officials cannot divert or remove your child from the classrooms and classes he/she would attend if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, only because of the severities of her/his disabilities.

Did school district professionals inform you that your child cannot be diverted or removed from the classrooms and/or classes he/she would be in if he/she did not have a Special Education classification, only because of the severities of his/her disabilities?

Yes

No

If the proposed IEP requires that your child not function in, if your child is not scheduled in the IEP being developed to function in or if your child is not actually functioning in general education classrooms or classes at least 80% of school days, school officials are required to seriously consider arranging for her/him to do so at least annually.

If the proposed IEP requires that your child not function in, if your child is not scheduled in the IEP being developed to function in or if your child is not actually functioning in the classroom or classes he/she would be in if he/she did not have a Special Education classification at least 80% of school days, have school district officials agreed to or do they actually discuss a plan with you to arrange for her/him to do so each year?

Yes

No

If school officials propose that your child not function in, if your child is not scheduled in the IEP being developed to function in or if he/she does not currently function in the same classrooms and/or classes in which she/he would function if not disabled at least 80% of school days, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for her/him to do so?

Yes

No

Intellectual Capabilities.⁵

⁵ It is highly recommended that the paper "Intellectual Factors as Determiners of IEP Objectives for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities" be examined, even though substantial parts of it are presented here (Brown & Toson, 2015).

The Number of Skills. Your child can learn many skills, but less than 98 - 99% of all others. Thus, the most important skills he/she can and should learn in order to function effectively in integrated society should be selected for instruction.

Teaching unimportant skills, those that she/he really does not need, those that waste time, those that are chronological age inappropriate or will be by the time she/he learns them, those that will not be afforded the practice opportunities needed for maintenance, etc. is professionally and otherwise unacceptable.

Difficulty Range. If your child is asked to try to learn only skills that are too simple; i. e., at the lower ends of his/her difficulty range, she/he will not be challenged and will underachieve. If he/she is asked to try to learn skills that are too complex or otherwise out of her/his difficulty range, he/she will not learn them and will underachieve. It is best when skills selected for instruction are important and near the upper ends of the difficulty range of your child. In short, a skill may be considered important, but if it is too complex, it should not be considered an instructional objective acceptable for inclusion in the IEP.

The Number of Instructional Opportunities. A few students with significant intellectual disabilities can learn some skills simply by observing the actions of others or after receiving only a few direct instructional trials/learning opportunities. Most need many more instructional trials to learn important skills in their difficulty ranges than all others. If individually appropriate numbers of learning opportunities are not provided, your child's learning will be extremely limited.

Practice. Without practice your child will forget more and take longer to relearn what was forgotten than all others. Skills that cannot be maintained with reasonable practice opportunities should not be selected as instructional objectives. Knowing forgetting will occur and then allowing it to happen is wasteful, harmful and professionally irresponsible. Two important kinds of practice are vertical and horizontal. Assume I teach your child to count 5 things. Then I teach her/him to count 10 things. This operationalizes vertical practice because in the process of learning to count 10 things she/he is practicing counting 5. The problem with relying upon vertical practice strategies when teaching students with significant intellectual disabilities is that the upper limits of their difficulty ranges are reached quickly. This is extremely frustrating to students like your child and those who expect or demand progressions through vertically arranged academic or therapeutic objectives, but do not get them. Horizontal practice strategies offer important options. Assume I teach your child to count 5

things and I assume the responsibility for not allowing him/her to forget to do so. I then engineer horizontal practice by arranging for him/her to count 5 sit ups in her/his physical education class, to set the dinner table for 5 family members, to put 5 bananas in the cart at the grocery store, etc. If we teach your child skills that are useful in a variety of settings and activities, practice can be operationalized, retention can be maximized and forgetting can be minimized.

Generalization. A basic purpose of education is to prepare your child to live, work and play in a wide variety of integrated nonschool environments, activities and contexts at school exit. Unfortunately, your child has serious difficulties generalizing what is learned across similar but different conditions. Assume your physician informed you that your child needed eye surgery. You then asked her if she is the one who will do it. She then told you that she did a procedure like the one needed on a monkey while in medical school and would like to try it on your child. What would you do? You would find a surgeon who successfully performed the procedure actually needed on many children. Assume a pilot greets you as you board a plane and informs you that she successfully completed simulated training on a much smaller plane and that this will be her first try at flying one this big. What would you do? You would reschedule with a pilot that has successfully flown planes quite similar to the one on which you will fly. Assume I have taught your child to stop her/his electric wheelchair in front of a tape line on the floor of the school gym. Now I would like your written permission to take her to busy streets and see if she/he stops at actual curbs. What would you do? You would ask for authentic assessment and instruction. That is, you would require that I provide well planned, systematic, direct assessment and instruction safely in real traffic conditions. Even if artificial or simulated settings and activities are used, acceptable performance under authentic conditions must be validated empirically or developed (Brown, 2012; Brown & Kessler, 2015). We simply cannot continue to rely upon generalization skills we know, or should know, your child does not possess.

Synthesis in Context.

At school Charlie was taught to fasten and unfasten the Velcro straps on his new shoes. At home he fastens and unfastens the straps 15 to 20 times per hour 7 days per week. At school Sara was taught to pick up 3 crayons from a desk and put them in a basket. At the grocery store she puts 3 of every kind of produce she can squeeze into a cart. At school Bill was taught to cut out pictures of the foods he would

like to eat from magazines. At home he cuts out all pictures from all magazines, newspapers and family scrapbooks and albums.

The more intellectually able you are, the better you are at fusing, clustering, combining, synthesizing disparate bits of information and producing unique, helpful and lucrative outcomes. Scientists, artists, business leaders, inventors, authors and many others are remarkably good at doing so. Your child is not. We know how to teach him/her many important skills in her/his difficulty range, but we also know she/he will rarely synthesize and perform them effectively in appropriate environments, activities and contexts. Dan was taught a math skill at school and how to ride a public bus to his integrated work training site. Then he was taught to buy a snack at a grocery store and to eat it at his worksite. Then he was taught to perform these “splinter” skills in clusters in authentic settings and contexts. Specifically, on the way from his home to the bus stop he used some of the math and communication skills he learned at school to purchase a snack. Then he used his math, travel and communication skills to ride a public bus to work. During his break he ate the snack he bought on the way to work. He will probably perform this skill cluster, or one quite similar, in authentic settings and contexts for many years.

Observational Learning. If your child cannot or does not learn by observing, the models to which she/he is exposed have no effect on subsequent actions. However, if he/she can learn by observing, the models to which he/she is exposed can have profound effects on subsequent actions. Your child possesses, or is capable of acquiring, rudimentary observational learning skills, including those necessary to imitate; i. e., to match or approximate some of the actions of models. This makes it extremely important that she/he function in the presence of the best possible communication, dress, work, social and behavior models over long periods of time. It also makes it extremely important that functioning in the presence of inappropriate models is minimized or avoided.

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that instructional objectives be appropriately matched to the intellectual abilities of your child. For example, in one IEP it was reported that a child was estimated to

be functioning intellectually within the lowest 1 - 2 % of the local school population and was assigned an IQ score of 43. According to the Science component of his IEP, he was studying the scientific method, ecology, measurement, bacteria and cells. Without more information, it seems reasonable that the skills typically associated with such topics are too complex and thus it is extremely unlikely that he/she will learn them. In order to determine if instructional objectives are within the intellectual difficulty range of your child, at least the following are needed.

Examinations of his/her independently produced work products that clearly demonstrate she/he has acquired or is acquiring the skills of concern.

Witness reports of the exact correct responses she/he is making to the materials, questions, etc. being utilized.

Video records or other respected empirical evidence of skills of equivalent difficulty that he/she has learned or is actually learning.

Observations of him/her actually demonstrating the skills being learned in noninstructional settings and activities without the influences of persons with vested interests.

Is it reasonable to expect that your child is intellectually capable of learning the skills necessary to realize the specific objectives reported in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in her/his current IEP?

Yes

No

If Yes, report credible evidence that supports your judgment that your child is intellectually capable of learning the skills necessary to realize the specific objectives reported in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in his/her current IEP.

Examinations of his/her independently produced work products will be or are being made. They will be or are being used to clearly communicate if

he/she is capable of learning or that she/he is actually learning the skills of concern.

___ Individuals I trust will or actually do observe him/her make responses to the materials, questions, tests, etc. being utilized. They will or actually do report their observations to me.

___ Video records or other respected empirical evidence of the specific skills of equivalent difficulty he/she is scheduled to learn, is learning or has learned will be, are being or have been made. They will be placed in or are in his/her cumulative portfolio.

___ Observations of my child appropriately performing the skills that will be or that are being taught or that were learned in noninstructional settings will be or are being made by persons I trust. Their judgements will be or are being communicated to me.

___ _____

If No, provide empirical evidence that supports your judgment that your child is not intellectually capable of learning the skills necessary to realize the specific objectives reported in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in his/her current IEP.

___ Examinations of his/her independently produced work products that clearly demonstrate that she/he will be learning, is learning or has learned skills of similar difficulty are not scheduled to be made, are not being made or have not been made.

___ Individuals I trust are not scheduled to observe or do not actually observe him/her make responses to the materials, questions, tests, etc. that will be or that are being utilized.

Video records or other respected empirical evidence of the specific skills of equivalent difficulty he/she will learn, is learning or has learned are not scheduled to be, are not being or have not been made.

Observations of my child appropriately performing the skills that will be taught, that she/he is being taught or that he/she has learned in noninstructional settings will not be, are not being or have not been made by persons I trust.

The objectives have been in prior IEPs. He/she has not learned them in the past and probably never will.

If you judge that the instructional objectives that are in the proposed IEP, that are scheduled in the IEP being developed or that are in the current IEP are not appropriately matched to the intellectual capabilities of your child, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for them to be made so?

Yes

No

Grade Level Academic Content⁶

A concert pianist played a beautiful song on a perfectly tuned piano in a sound controlled studio. The music she produced was recorded on “state of the art” equipment and copied on a compact disc. She took the disc to her home and played her music. The sounds she heard in her home were exactly those she produced in the recording studio. This is an example of 100% or perfect fidelity. If the music she heard in her home was slightly different, but close to the sound

⁶ It is recommended that the paper “Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities” be examined (Brown, 2012).

she produced in the studio, high, but not perfect, fidelity could be claimed. If the sounds she heard in her home were substantially different from those she produced in the studio, low fidelity would be evidenced. Fidelity is a concept that has obvious and valuable uses in important areas of life because many find it understandable and practical.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 and the US Department of Education (2005) require that all students with disabilities experience grade level academic content that is closely “linked” to or that “mirrors” that experienced by other students (High Fidelity). It is also required that students with disabilities be assessed on their knowledge of grade level academic content with the strategies used with all other students. It was hoped that if students with disabilities were exposed to grade level academic content and generally utilized assessment strategies, instructional practices, academic achievement and educational outcomes would improve (Browder, Wakeman & Flowers, 2009). Requiring all students with disabilities to experience grade level academic content that “mirrored “ or that was closely “linked” to that experienced by those without intellectual disabilities and requiring all to experience generally utilized assessment strategies have been devastating for students with significant intellectual disabilities. Consider the following.

Jonas, a student with significant intellectual disabilities, was in a high school English class that was studying idiomatic expressions, the multiple meanings of words, contained in Steinbeck’s “Of Mice and Men.” The “linkage” generated was to try to teach him to match a card with the word “baloney” printed on it to a picture of a tube of the luncheon meat as well as to a picture of inflated balloons (Kleinert, Kearns and Kleinert, 2010). Wakeman et al. (2010) report that a student with significant intellectual disabilities could be taught such “linked” History content as touching a card with the word “constitution” printed on it in response to a teacher provided verbal cue when presented with four cards that contain different

words. They also provide the “linked” Science example of having a student point to the core and the crust on a topographical model of planet earth. Ahlgrim Denzell et al. (2010) consider having a student with significant intellectual disabilities sequence a series of pictures about the life of Paul Bunyan in chronological order as an acceptable “linkage.” Courtade, Taub and Burdge (2010) suggest the “linkage” of having a student with significant intellectual disabilities in a high school Science class match a picture of a rock to an actual rock.

Hopefully, few would require or recommend that the lowest intellectually functioning 1 - 2 % of students in a naturally distributed school district experience the exact same grade level academic content and the exact same assignments and tests as all others. Thus, an important issue then becomes: “How far from the academic content and assessment strategies used to educate students without intellectual disabilities can we depart and still be in compliance with the letters and spirits of relevant federal and state laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or judgments as to what are promising policies, procedures and practices? We argue for substantial and individually determined flexibility based upon the integrated post school outcomes wanted and the individualized accommodations and modifications needed to realize them. If “high fidelity”, “closely linked” or “mirrored” grade level academic content and assessment relationships help realize individually meaningful integrated school outcomes, so be it. If they do not, substantially less than high, and even quite low, fidelity relationships are preferable. The following are offered as guides to deciding if the content of a particular academic subject is acceptable.

If a skill is closely “linked” to or “mirrors” grade level academic content (High Fidelity), is important for your child to learn and if she/he is intellectually and otherwise capable of learning it, we should attempt to teach it.

If a skill is closely “linked” to or “mirrors” grade level academic content (High Fidelity), is important for your child to learn, but she/he is

intellectually and otherwise incapable of learning it, we should not attempt to teach it.

If a skill is closely “linked” to or “mirrors” grade level academic content (High Fidelity), is not important for your child to learn even if she/he is capable of learning it, we should not attempt to teach it.

If a skill is not closely “linked” to or does not “mirror” grade level academic content (Low Fidelity), is important for your child to learn and if she/he is capable of learning it, we should attempt to teach it.

Examine the lives of adults with significant intellectual disabilities from ages 25 to 30. Determine the skills they were taught at school that are not needed in their post school lives. Then determine the skills they really need in their post school lives that were not taught when they were in school. Alternatively, or additionally, compile a list of the skills your child will likely need and is capable of learning so he/she can function effectively integrated residential, vocational, recreation/leisure and general community environments, activities and contexts at school exit. Then consider the “high fidelity,” “linked” or “mirrored” grade level academic skill of teaching him/her to match a picture of a rock to an actual rock in a high school Science classroom as reported above. Where else but in the Science classroom would she/he be required to perform the skill? We cannot think of one. How often would he/she need to practice it so he/she would not forget it? Probably many times. Would this skill be important in his post school life? No. If you were asked to list 500 of the most important skills we need to teach your child, would it be on your list? No. Is there an alternative that would yield better returns on scarce and valuable resources? Definitely.

Are relationships between grade level academic content and the actual content in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the IEP being implemented currently clear and reasonable?

___ Yes

No

I cannot answer this question until the proposed IEP or the IEP under development is implemented. When it is, I will determine if the relationships between grade level academic content and the actual content he/she experiences are clear and reasonable.

If Yes, report evidence that supports your judgment that there are clear and reasonable relationships between grade level academic content and the content addressed in the proposed IEP, in the IEP under development and in the current IEP.

I examined her/his proposed IEP. He/she is scheduled to be instructed on the grade level academic content she/he would experience if not disabled.

I examined the IEP being developed. He/she is scheduled to be instructed on the grade level academic content she/he would experience if not disabled.

I examined her/his current IEP. He/she is being instructed on the grade level academic content she/he would experience if not disabled.

I observed him/her in integrated classrooms and classes. He/she is being instructed on the grade level academic content he/she would be experiencing if not disabled.

Her/his teachers have working knowledge of relevant grade level academic content. I am confident my child will be or is experiencing it.

She/he is being educated in integrated chronological age appropriate classrooms and classes. He/she is experiencing acceptable kinds and amounts of grade level academic content.

If No, report evidence that supports your judgment that clear and reasonable relationships between grade level academic content and the content in the proposed IEP, in the IEP under development or in the current IEP do not exist.

___ I examined her/his proposed IEP. He/she is not scheduled to be instructed on the grade level academic content he would experience if not disabled.

___ I examined the IEP being developed. He/she is not scheduled to be instructed on the grade level academic content he would experience if not disabled.

___ I examined her/his current IEP. He/she is not being instructed on the grade level academic content he would be experiencing if not disabled.

___ I observed him/her in integrated classrooms and classes. He/she is not being instructed on the grade level academic content he/she would be experiencing if not disabled.

___ I observed her/him in segregated classrooms and classes. I have serious doubts that she/he is being instructed on the grade level academic content he/she would be experiencing if not disabled.

___ He/she is being educated in a segregated school. I have serious doubts that she/he is being instructed on the grade level academic content he/she would be experiencing if not disabled.

___ _____

Fortunately, if a student cannot benefit from experiencing grade level academic content and generally used assessment strategies, alternative content and assessment strategies are legal, educational and otherwise acceptable options. Specifically, students with disabilities are legally entitled to IEPs that address “additional” or “nonacademic” skills and assessment strategies appropriate for their disabilities. Additional and nonacademic refer to skills generally considered

functional, social, motor, vocational, communication, travel, shopping, personal maintenance, domestic living, etc. The individualization mandate and the option to utilize alternative instructional content and assessment strategies afford legal and educational licenses to engender reasonable departures from confining instructional content and assessment strategies to those appropriate for more intellectually and otherwise able students. In short, the achievement portfolios of your child at school exit should include meaningful grade level academic and many other kinds of skills that actually allow her/him to live, work and play in integrated society. His/her education is too important to be reduced or confined to the grade level academic content and assessment strategies appropriate for more intellectually able students.

Are there departures from grade level academic content in the proposed IEP, in the IEP under development or in the current IEP?

Yes

No

If Yes, are the departures from grade level academic content being proposed, scheduled for or currently being experienced by your child acceptable?

Yes

No

If Yes, report why you judge that the proposed, scheduled or current departures from grade level academic content are acceptable.

Grade level academic content is too complex. She/he is capable of learning little, if any, of it.

She/he needs to learn the skills they are actually teaching more than grade level academic skills.

If No, report why you judge that the proposed, scheduled or current departures from grade level academic content are not acceptable.

- The proposed departures are chronological age inappropriate.
- The departures will, or actually do, lower his/her status in the eyes of peers without disabilities.
- The departures will not be performed in meaningful contexts.
- The departures are too simple. He/she is not being challenged.
- _____
- _____

If you judge that relationships between grade level academic content and the content in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not acceptable, would you be interested in assistance that might help improve them?

- Yes**
- No**

Supplementary Aids and Services⁷

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that your child have access to individually appropriate Supplementary Aids and Services. Federal law refers to Supplementary Aids and Services as: aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with children without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate. Federal law also stipulates that

⁷ Much important and useful information regarding Supplementary Aids and Services can be obtained from www.wrightslaw.com

the IEP of your child contain: “A statement of the special education and related services and Supplementary Aids and Services, based on peer reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child:

To advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals;

To be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with paragraph (a)(1) of this section, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and,

To be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children in the activities described in this section” (IDEA, 2004).

Supplementary Aids and Services include therapies, accommodations, modifications and other individually appropriate extra supports. There are thousands of examples of effective Supplementary Aids and Services and promising practices currently available and many others are under development. As experience accrues, creative, practical and effective individuals continue to generate new and better ways of arranging for students with disabilities to thrive in integrated schools, classrooms, classes and in work and related settings.

Accommodations. An accommodation refers to your child trying to learn the same grade level academic content as chronological age peers, but the assignments and/or tests designed to measure her/his learning of it are different than those used with peers without disabilities. Allowing more time to take tests and taking them orally rather than in print are examples. However, if ninth grade algebra is the academic content being studied, the assignments and tests, regardless of the accommodations provided, must be valid measures of ninth grade algebra. If your child can study grade level academic subject content like ninth grade algebra and complete assignments and pass tests with

accommodations that verify that he/she has actually learned it, by definition, he/she should not be considered significantly disabled intellectually.

Modifications. Modifications refer to rather obvious changes, almost always simplifications, in grade level academic content and in the assignments and/or tests used to measure if or how much of it was actually learned. Modifications are much more appropriate for and useful to students with significant intellectual disabilities than accommodations. For example, class peers without intellectual disabilities were studying ninth grade algebra. They were required to use some of it to participate with Habitat for Humanity personnel in the remodeling of a small house. The grade level algebra content was out of the difficulty range of the student with significant intellectual disabilities involved. A meaningful accommodation could not be generated. Thus, the content, assignments and tests used to allow meaningful partial participation and to verify her learning were modified substantially (Ferguson and Baumgart, 1990). She was taught to mark the code required distances between electric outlets and verify the heights of counter tops and the dimensions of window wells using tape and wooden rulers and pictures. The following procedure is offered as a reasonable guide.

First, your child is placed in the same school, classroom, class or related setting in which she/he would function if she/he did not have disabilities.

Second, the IEP team must gather and consider comprehensive and valid knowledge of his/her unique learning abilities and difficulties.

Third, the professionals must have a wide variety of accommodation and/or modification information in their repertoires.

Fourth, the IEP team must select or create accommodations and/or modifications that will likely result in the delivery of individually meaningful educational and related experiences.

Fifth, the professionals must implement the individualized accommodations and/or modifications and evaluate their effectiveness empirically.

Sixth, the professionals must make the necessary additions, adjustments, substitutions, etc. and evaluate them continuously. If their effectiveness is validated empirically, they should be continued, added to, etc. If they are

not validated empirically as effective, they should be terminated, replaced, etc.

Does the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or the current IEP contain individually meaningful accommodations and/or modifications?

Yes

No

If Yes, report why you judge that your child will be or is being provided individually meaningful accommodations and/or modifications.

The modifications made for her/him are acceptable. She/he could use the skills he/she will learn or is learning at school to play games at home.

The modifications made for her/him are acceptable. She/he is actually using the skills he/she is learning at school at home.

If No, report why you judge that the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or the current IEP does not contain individually appropriate accommodations and/or modifications.

The modifications made for her/him are not acceptable. I doubt that he/she could or will use what he/she might learn anywhere but school.

The modifications made for her/him are not acceptable. He/she is not using what he/she has learned or is learning anywhere but school.

He/she just sits in the back of the class with a paraprofessional while the teacher lectures. I can see no evidence that she/he is engaged in the

lecture or that he/she is learning anything. Being exposed to something is not learning it. Major modifications are clearly needed.

Related Services. Generally, related services are extra supports provided by persons other than teachers. They include, but are not limited to: speech and language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling orientation and mobility services, medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes, school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, parent counseling and transportation instruction and supportive services.

The number and kinds of related services endorsed by state and federal laws, rules and regulations increase or otherwise change constantly. Thus, it is important for parents and professionals to keep abreast of the continuously evolving promising policies, procedures and practices in this important area.

According the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or the current IEP, my child is scheduled to receive or is receiving the following Supplementary Aids and Services.

- Adaptive physical education
- Physical support
- Special Education teacher
- Paraprofessional
- Audiology
- Behavioral therapy
- Interpreting services, including those for individuals with hearing difficulties
- Occupational therapy

- Orientation & mobility services
- Physical therapy
- Recreation
- Rehabilitation counseling
- School health and school nurse services
- Social work services
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Family counseling
- Speech & language therapy
- Specialized Transportation
- Specially designed instruction
- Modifications
- Accommodations

I do not know what Supplementary Aids and Services my child is scheduled to receive or is actually receiving.

It is my judgment that my child is not scheduled to receive or is not receiving the following Supplementary Aids and Services he/she actually needs.

- Adaptive physical education
- Physical support
- Special Education teacher
- Paraprofessional
- Audiology
- Behavioral therapy
- Interpreting services, including those for individuals with hearing difficulties
- Occupational therapy
- Orientation & mobility services
- Physical therapy
- Recreation

- Rehabilitation counseling
- School health and school nurse services
- Social work services
- Individual counseling
- Group counseling
- Family counseling
- Speech & language therapy
- Specialized Transportation
- Specially designed instruction
- Modifications
- Accommodations
- _____
- I do not know what Supplementary Aids and Services my child needs that are not scheduled to be or that are not being provided.

When parents sign IEPs that promise specified kinds and amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services, they are entitled to assume and to trust that they will be or are being delivered to their children. If every kind of related service promised in an IEP is provided in the amounts promised, so be it. Unfortunately, in too many instances kinds and/or amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services are promised, but not delivered. For example, a student was scheduled for individualized therapy sessions 1 hour per day for 3 days per week. His/her parents assumed that their child was actually receiving 3 hours per week of direct services from a qualified therapist. However, when they observed actual sessions, the therapy personnel also interacted with 5 other students in the same room during the same time periods and that only a paraprofessional directly interacted with their child about 5 minutes per hour. Thus, the promised amount of 3 hours per week was really 15 minutes per week.

Are there clear and acceptable relationships between the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP and those that are actually being or that will be provided your child?

- Yes
- No
- I cannot answer this question until the proposed IEP or the IEP under development is implemented. When it is, I will determine if the kinds of supplementary aids and services promised are being provided.

If Yes, report evidence that supports your judgment that there are clear and acceptable relationships between the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services in the current IEP and those that are actually being provided your child.

- I read the IEP and observed her/him at school. He/she is receiving the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.
- I receive detailed reports of the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services my child receives from individuals I trust. They are those specified in the IEP.
- Someone I trust observed her/him at school and tells me that he/she is receiving the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.
- _____

If No, provide evidence that supports your judgment that there are no clear and acceptable relationships between the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services promised in the IEP and those that are actually being provided your child.

- I read the IEP and observed her/him at school. He/she is not receiving the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.
- I read the IEP and observed her/him at school. She/he is being provided some, but not all, of the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services promised in the IEP.

Someone I trust observed her/him at school and tells me that he/she is not receiving the kinds of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.

Are there clear acceptable relationships between the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised in the IEP and those that are actually being provided your child?

Yes

No

I cannot answer this question until the proposed IEP or the IEP being developed is implemented. When it is, I will determine if the proper amounts are being provided.

If Yes, report evidence that supports your judgment that clear and acceptable relationships between the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised in the IEP are actually being provided your child.

I read the IEP and I observed her/him at school. He/she is receiving the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.

Someone I trust observed her/him at school and tells me that he/she is receiving the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.

If No, provide evidence that supports your judgment that clear and acceptable relationships between the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised in the IEP and those that are actually being provided your child do not exist.

I read the IEP and observed her/him at school. He/she is not receiving the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.

I read the IEP and observed her/him at school. He/she is receiving less than the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.

Someone I trust observed her/him at school and tells me that he/she is not receiving the amounts of Supplementary Aids and Services promised.

Were you provided and allowed to carefully consider important information related to the Supplementary Aids and Services that might have allowed your child to thrive in integrated classrooms and/or classes in her/his home school, before she/he was placed elsewhere?

Yes

No

If you judge that the Supplementary Aids and Services in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the IEP being implemented are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange or make improvements in them?

Yes

No

Instructional Objective Fidelity

An IEP is essentially a contract between you, your child and school officials. All involved are legally and otherwise bound to honor the agreements made. State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as

promising educational policies, procedures and practices require clear and close relationships between the educational and therapy objectives stated in an IEP and the actual instruction being provided.

Many parents spend substantial amounts of time, money, energy and other scarce and valuable resources negotiating for IEPs they judge appropriate. Most function from the assumption that if instructional objectives are contained in an IEP, professionals will actually try to teach their children to reach them. However, when they observe instructional activities, too often they cannot see reasonable relationships between the objectives contained in IEPs and those their children are actually being taught to reach. Putting an objective in an IEP knowing that instruction will not be devoted to it is misleading and otherwise unacceptable. So is putting an objective on an IEP and then not providing the associated instruction.

Consider students who are intellectually brilliant. Imagine the task of specifying every instructional objective on which they will receive instruction in every subject. This includes every vocabulary word, every math operation, every chemical component, etc. The associated IEPs would be hundreds of pages long, hundreds of objectives would have to be updated hourly, daily or weekly, more time would be spent testing than teaching and the process would be too burdensome for all involved. Thus, when intellectually endowed students are of concern, objectives are typically reported in rather global ways. “Understand the scientific method”, “Appreciate the differences between communism and capitalism” and “Use complex problem solving skills” are examples. In addition, progress toward reaching only relatively small samples of them is actually assessed because they reach so many so quickly. Finally, measures of progress, or the lack thereof, are typically taken after relatively large amounts of time.

Students with significant intellectual disabilities are legally and otherwise allowed to strive to learn less and less complicated content and to experience individually appropriate ways to verify what they have and have not learned. As they realize relatively few objectives in any unit of time, compiling and updating lists of them is not burdensome. As progress toward realizing them is slow, it must be

evaluated frequently after short periods of time. If reasonable progress toward realizing objectives is not being realized, changes must be made quickly. If too much time passes without empirical evidence of progress, or the lack thereof, too many scarce and valuable resources will have been wasted. For example, one teacher tried to teach Sid to tie the laces of her shoes in a bow 5 times per school day for 180 days. Then he gave her a shoe tying test. She failed. He said he will try again next year because shoe tying is important, chronological age appropriate, will reduce demands on others, is functional, will enhance her social status, etc. Another teacher tried to teach shoe tying to 1 of her students with abilities similar to Sid's 5 times per school day for 2 weeks. Progress was not observed. The teacher arranged for her to wear shoes with Velcro straps. She learned to use them effectively in context in 2 days and the teacher proceeded to another important objective.

Are there clear and close relationships between the educational and therapy objectives stated in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP and those your child is actually being taught to reach?

Yes

No

I cannot answer this question until the proposed IEP or the IEP that being developed is implemented. At that time, I will determine if clear and close relationships between the educational and therapy objectives stated in the IEP and those my child is actually being taught to reach are operative.

If Yes, report the evidence that supports your judgment that clear and close relationships between the educational and therapy objectives stated in the IEP and those your child is actually being taught to reach are operative.

I read the IEP and observed the educational instruction she/he is receiving. He/she is being taught to reach the educational objectives described in the IEP.

___ I read the IEP and observed the therapy services she/he is receiving. He/she is receiving instruction on the therapy objectives described in the IEP.

___ Someone I trust read the IEP and observed the educational instruction and therapy services she/he is receiving. She/he reports that my child is receiving instruction on the educational and therapy objectives described in the IEP.

___ _____

If No, provide the evidence that supports your judgment that clear and close relationships between the educational and therapy objectives stated in the IEP and those your child is actually being taught to reach are not operative.

___ I read the IEP and observed the educational instruction she/he is receiving. He/she is not being instructed on the educational objectives presented in the IEP.

___ I read the IEP and observed the therapy services she/he is receiving. He/she is not receiving instruction on the therapy objectives described in the IEP.

___ Someone I trust read the IEP and observed the educational instruction she/he is receiving. He/she reports that my child is not receiving instruction on the educational objectives described in the IEP.

___ Someone I trust read the IEP and observed the therapy services she/he is receiving. He/she reports that my child is not receiving instruction on the therapy objectives described in the IEP.

___ _____

If you judge that the educational and therapy objectives stated in the proposed IEP or in the IEP being developed are not acceptable or if you judge that the fidelity relationships between the objectives stated in the current IEP and those your child is actually being taught to reach are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange improvements?

Yes

No

Performance Criteria

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible performance criteria be established for each educational and therapy objective in an IEP. If objectives are stated clearly, logically defensible and individually appropriate performance criteria can be established rather easily. For example, Susan will stop her electric wheelchair acceptably at 10 different curbs in the presence of real traffic. If objectives are not stated clearly, it is extremely difficult to establish logically defensible and individually appropriate performance criteria. For example, "Jose will complete a task accurately 70 % of the time." What if the task is getting off a public bus at correct stops, replenishing salt and pepper shakers and tightening the lids at a fast food restaurant, putting that which is on a 10 component family grocery list in a cart, refilling toilet paper dispensers at a worksite, getting dressed for school or taking a shower? Would 70% accuracy be reasonable and acceptable for each? Of course not. It is untenable to operate from the premise that one performance criterion will suffice for many educational or therapy objectives.

Are the performance criteria established for each educational and therapy objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible?

Yes

___ No

If Yes, report evidence that supports your judgment that the performance criteria established for each educational and therapy objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ I examined the performance criteria established for each educational objective in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. They are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ I examined the performance criteria established for each therapy objective in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. They are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ I examined the current IEP and observed the educational services that are being provided my child. The performance criteria established for each objective are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ I understand how it will be determined that my child will be learning to reach, is learning to reach or has reached each educational objective in her/his IEP.

___ I examined the IEP and observed the therapy services that are being provided my child. The performance criteria established for each objective are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ I understand how it will be determined that my child will be learning to reach, is learning to reach or has reached each therapy objective in her/his IEP.

___ A trusted friend examined the performance criteria established for each educational objective reported in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being

developed or in the current IEP. She/he reports that they are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ A trusted friend examined the performance criteria established for each therapy objective reported in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She/he reports that they are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ A trusted friend reports that he/she understands how it will be determined that my child will be learning to reach, is learning to reach or has reached each educational and therapy objective in her/his IEP.

___ _____

If No, provide the evidence that supports your judgment that performance criteria relevant to each educational and therapy objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not clearly stated, individually appropriate and/or logically defensible.

___ Performance criteria relevant to each educational objective in the proposed IEP, in IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not reported.

___ Performance criteria relevant to each therapy objective in the proposed IEP, in IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not reported.

___ I examined the performance criteria established for each educational objective in the proposed IEP, in IEP being developed or in the current IEP. They are not clearly stated, understandable and/or logically defensible.

___ I examined the performance criteria established for each therapy objective reported in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current

IEP. They are not clearly stated, individually appropriate and/or logically defensible.

___ I examined the IEP and observed the educational services being provided my child. The performance criteria established for each educational objective are not clearly stated, individually appropriate and/or logically defensible.

___ I do not understand how it will be determined that my child will be learning, is learning or has learned to reach an educational objective.

___ I examined the IEP and observed the therapy services being provided my child. The performance criteria established for each objective are not clearly stated, understandable and/or logically defensible.

___ I do not understand how it will be determined that my child will be learning, is learning or has learned to reach a therapy objective.

___ A trusted friend examined the performance criteria established for each educational objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She told me that they are not clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ A trusted friend examined the performance criteria for each therapeutic objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She told me that they are not clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.

___ _____

If you judge that the performance criteria relevant to or established for the educational and therapy objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help improve them?

- Yes
- No

Empirical Verification of Learning

“How can I be sure that my child is actually making progress toward reaching, or has actually reached, an IEP objective? “How do I know if or what she is actually learning?” “Is he learning anything at all?”

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that the learning of your child, or the lack thereof, be empirically verified in professionally acceptable ways. “Empirically verified” refers to you being able to see, hear, touch, taste, feel, smell or otherwise sense evidence of the progress of your child, or the lack thereof. If objectives and performance criteria are clearly stated, progress toward their realization or the lack thereof can be empirically verified rather easily. If instructional objectives and performance criteria are not clearly stated, it is extremely difficult or even impossible for you to empirically verify progress toward their realization or the lack thereof.

Are the educational and therapy objectives established in the proposed, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP sufficiently clear so they can be verified empirically? That is, so you can see, hear, feel, smell or otherwise sense if your child is learning to reach or if she/he has actually reached them?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, report evidence that supports your judgment that the objectives reported in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are sufficiently clear for you to empirically verify that your child will make, has made or is making progress toward reaching or has actually reached them.

- ___ I studied the educational objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. I understand the specific educational skills my child is scheduled to be taught or is being taught and how progress toward learning them will be or is being empirically verified.
- ___ I understand how it will be empirically verified that my child has actually reached an educational objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP.
- ___ I studied the therapy objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. I understand the specific therapy skills she/he is scheduled to be taught or is being taught and how progress toward learning them will be or is being empirically verified.
- ___ I understand how it will be empirically verified that my child has actually reached a therapy objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP.
- ___ I observed my child receiving educational instruction. I have a clear understanding of the skills she/he is being taught and how progress toward learning them is being empirically verified.
- ___ I observed my child receiving therapy. I have a clear understanding of the skills she/he is being taught and how progress toward learning them is being empirically verified.
- ___ A trusted friend examined how the progress of my child will be or is being empirically verified in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She/he told me that the strategies being proposed or that are actually being used to verify progress toward reaching educational objectives are clearly stated, individually appropriate and logically defensible.
- ___ A trusted friend examined how the progress of my child will be or is being empirically verified in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She/he told me that the strategies being proposed or that are

actually being used to verify progress toward reaching therapy objectives are clearly stated, understandable and logically defensible.

If No, report evidence that supports your judgment that the IEP objectives reported in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not sufficiently clear for you to empirically verify that your child will be making or is making progress toward reaching them or whether or not he/she has actually reached them.

- I studied the educational objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the IEP currently being used. I do not understand the specific educational skills my child is scheduled to be taught or is being taught or how progress toward learning them will be or is being empirically verified.
- I do not understand how it will be empirically verified that my child has actually reached an educational objective in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP.
- I studied the therapy objectives in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. I do not understand the specific therapy skills she/he is scheduled to be taught or is being taught or how progress toward learning them will be or is being empirically verified.
- I do not understand how it will be empirically verified that my child has actually reached a therapy objective in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP.
- I observed my child receiving educational instruction. I do not have a clear understanding of the skills she/he is being taught and how progress toward learning them is being empirically verified.

I observed my child receiving educational instruction. I do not understand how it will be verified that she/he has reached a particular educational objective.

I observed my child receiving therapy. I do not have a clear understanding of the skills she/he is being taught and how progress toward learning them is being empirically verified.

I observed my child receiving therapy. I do not understand how it will be verified that he/she has reached a particular therapy objective.

A trusted friend examined how the progress of my child will be or is being empirically verified in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She/he told me that the strategies being proposed or that are actually being used to verify progress toward reaching educational objectives are not clearly stated, understandable or logically defensible.

A trusted friend examined how the progress of my child will be or is being empirically verified in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the current IEP. She/he told me that the strategies being proposed or that are actually being used to verify progress toward reaching therapy objectives are not clearly stated, individually appropriate or logically defensible.

Are clear and comprehensive records of the specific skills your child has learned in the past 1 month, 6 months and 12 months available?

Yes

No

If Yes, report evidence that supports your judgment that clear and comprehensive records of the specific skills your child has learned in the past 1 month, 6 months and 12 months are available.

___ The teachers made weekly and monthly video records that document exactly what educational skills my child did or did not learn. They are in her/his cumulative portfolio.

___ The therapists made weekly and monthly video records that document exactly what therapy skills my child did or did not learn. They are in her/his cumulative portfolio.

___ The teachers made daily or session by session written records of his/her educational progress or the lack thereof. They are in her/his cumulative portfolio.

___ The therapists made daily or session by session written records of his/her therapy progress or the lack thereof. They are in her/his cumulative portfolio.

___ When a teacher or therapist judged that he/she had learned a particular skill, a parent or another person verified it. Those reports are in her/his cumulative portfolio.

___ _____

If No, report evidence that supports your judgment that clear and comprehensive records of the specific skills your child has learned in the past 1 month, 6 months and 12 months are not available.

___ The teachers did not make weekly and monthly video records that document exactly what educational skills she/he did or did not learn. Thus, they are not in her/his cumulative portfolio.

- The therapists did not make weekly and monthly video records that document exactly what therapy skills she/he did or did not learn. Thus, they are not in her/his cumulative portfolio.
- The teachers did not make daily or session by session written records of his/her educational progress or the lack thereof. Thus, they are not in her/his cumulative portfolio.
- The therapists did not make daily or session by session written records of his/her therapy progress or the lack thereof. Thus, they are not in her/his cumulative portfolio.
- When the teacher or therapist judged that my child had learned a particular skill, a parent or another person did not verify it. Thus, those reports are not in her/his cumulative portfolio.

Are the strategies being used to record the progress of your child toward realizing the objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP understandable and acceptable to you?

- Yes
- No

If Yes, report why you judge the strategies being used to record the progress of your child toward realizing the objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are understandable and acceptable to you.

- My child has been seen using the skills learned in one subject in others.
- Video records of his/her progress are being made and shared with me.

- Individually appropriate data sheets are used to record her/his learning or the lack thereof. Summaries are in her/his cumulative portfolio.
- My child is demonstrating the skills learned to me and to others at home.
- My child is performing the skills in nonschool settings, activities and contexts.
- Someone I trust visited the school and reported seeing acceptable evidence of her/his progress.
- _____
- _____
- _____

If No, report why the strategies being used to record the progress of your child toward realizing the objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not understandable or acceptable to you.

- He/she is not using the skills learned in one subject in others.
- Video records of her/his progress are not being made and shared.
- Individually appropriate data sheets are not being used to record her/his learning or the lack thereof. Thus, summaries are not in her/his cumulative folder.
- My child is not demonstrating the skills learned to others.
- My child is not performing the skills in learned at school or in nonschool settings, activities and contexts.
- Someone I trust visited the school, but could not see evidence of his/her progress.
- _____

If you judge that the strategies that will be or that are being used to empirically verify that your child is learning or has learned are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help improve them?

Yes

No

Extracurricular and Nonacademic Activities

Each year millions of students without disabilities are afforded opportunities to experience constructive and enjoyable social, educational, physical and other benefits from participating in a wide variety of school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities. State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that your child have the same opportunities. In order to ensure these opportunities are available, at least the following must take place.

First, IEP team members must learn of the extracurricular and nonacademic activities available to students without disabilities at the school your child would attend if she/he did not have disabilities.

Second, the array of opportunities at the home school should be communicated to you and your child.

Third, the Supplementary Aids and Services and other extra supports your child might need in order to at least partially participate meaningfully in a particular extracurricular or nonacademic activity must be delineated and communicated to you and your child.

Fourth, your child should be encouraged to participate in one or more of the available activities throughout each school year.

Fifth, if your child chooses to participate in a school sponsored extracurricular or nonacademic activity, the district must provide the

Supplementary Aids and Services and other extra supports needed for success therein.

Sixth, your child's participation must be evaluated consistently and appropriate adjustments must be made as needed.

Were you made aware of the school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities available at the school your child would attend if she/he did not have disabilities?

- Yes
- No

Are you aware of or were you were informed of and allowed to carefully consider important information regarding involving your child in school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities?

- Yes
- No

Will or do school district officials permit and help arrange for your child to participate in a reasonable range of chronological age appropriate and integrated school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities?

- Yes
- No

Will or do school district officials provide the Supplementary Aids and Services and other extra supports your child needs in order to effectively participate in school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities with peers who do not have disabilities?

- Yes
- No

Will or does your school district permit, encourage and assist your child to participate in activities, such as field trips, nonschool instruction, work/study

programs and internships without special or burdensome conditions, such as requiring you to accompany your child?

Yes

No

If you judge that the involvement of your child in school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities will be or is unacceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might arrange for or help improve his/her involvement?

Yes

No

Travel⁸

When your child exits school, she/he should be able to walk, wheel, ride or otherwise travel to and from integrated work and community settings on cost efficient public busses and trains, in car pools and taxi cabs by herself/himself and/or with others who are and are not disabled. If your child is not taught such extremely important integrated travel skills during school years, chances are great she/he will not be taught them later. If she/he must use segregated or specialized transportation services during school years, so be it. Unfortunately, if you and he/she are dependent upon segregated or specialized transportation services in post school years, his/her integrated work and other opportunities will be constricted.

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as

⁸Two articles are highly recommended: "School Transportation and Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities: A Cost Analysis Strategy" (Brown, Toson & Burrello, 2012) and "Building Travel Relationships between a Student with Significant Disabilities and Nondisabled Schoolmates" (Brown, Courchane et al., 1984). They contain detailed information about the important short and long term travel experiences of your child.

promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that your child have the instruction and related experiences during her/his school career that prepare her/him to travel to and from a wide variety of school and nonschool environments in cost efficient ways with others who are not disabled.

My child is scheduled to or actually leaves for school at about _____ AM.

My child is scheduled to or actually arrives at school at about _____ AM.

It will or it usually takes my child _____ minutes to get from home to school.

My child is scheduled to or actually leaves school for home at about _____ PM.

My child is scheduled to or actually arrives home from school at about _____ PM.

It will or it usually takes my child _____ minutes to get from school to home.

Are the amounts of time your child is scheduled to or actually spends traveling to and from school about the same she/he would spend if she/he was not disabled?

___ Yes

___ No

Are the amounts of time your child is scheduled to or actually spends traveling to and from school acceptable?

___ Yes

___ No

Your child is scheduled to travel or actually travels to and from school as follows.

___ Walks

___ Rides a bicycle

- Ambulates in her/his wheel chair
- Rides in a small van
- Rides in a large school bus
- Rides in a public bus
- Rides in a train
- Rides in a taxi
- Rides in the vehicle of parents
- Rides in the vehicle of a teacher
- Rides in the vehicle of a paraprofessional
- Rides in the vehicle of a schoolmate
- Rides in the vehicle of a therapist
- _____

Are the ways your child is scheduled to or currently travels to and from school acceptable to you?

- Yes
- No

Report the most typical and cost efficient ways your child will be intellectually, behaviorally, physically and otherwise capable of traveling to and from integrated work and other community settings at school exit.

- Walk
- Ride a bicycle
- Ride in her/his wheel chair
- Ride in a small van

- Ride in a public bus
 - Ride in a public train
 - Ride in a taxi
 - Ride in the vehicle of parents
 - Ride in the vehicle of a job coach
 - Ride in a vehicle of a coworker
-

Is your child is scheduled to travel or is actually learning to travel in ways that will be the most appropriate in post school years?

- Yes
- No

Your child is scheduled to or actually travels to and from school with the following.

- Alone
- Students with disabilities
- Students without disabilities
- Students with and without disabilities
- Teachers
- Parents
- Paraprofessionals
- Therapists
- Adult volunteers
- Family members

Are the companions your child is scheduled to or actually travels to and from school with acceptable?

- Yes
- No

Report the companions your child is intellectually, behaviorally, physically and otherwise capable of learning to travel to and from integrated work and other community settings with at school exit.

- Alone
- Coworkers with disabilities
- Coworkers without disabilities
- Coworkers with and without disabilities
- Job Coaches
- Parents
- Neighbors without disabilities
- Friends

Is your child scheduled to learn or actually learning to travel with persons who will be appropriate companions in post school years?

- Yes
- No

If your child will not or does not have opportunities for important and reasonable travel experiences with students and others without disabilities,

would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for her/him to have them?

Yes

No

Social Relationships with Individuals without Disabilities

A basic purpose of schooling is to prepare your child to live, work and play in integrated society. An important component of post school life is being able to enjoy and benefit from interacting with individuals with and without disabilities in a wide variety of environments, activities and contexts. The more your child interacts with peers without disabilities and vice versa during school years, the better able, and thus more likely, he/she is to participate in integrated environments, activities and contexts in post school life. Thus, it is extremely important that your child have frequent opportunities over long periods of time to participate in a wide variety of integrated environments, activities and contexts. Concomitantly, barriers to participating in a reasonable array of integrated school and related activities must be removed.

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices require that your child be given reasonable opportunities to participate in, and to benefit from, a wide array of environments, activities and contexts with peers and others without disabilities.

Is your child scheduled to or is he/she actually developing travel relationships with schoolmates and others who are not disabled?

Yes

No

Is your child scheduled to or is he/she actually developing play and other social relationships with schoolmates who are not disabled during lunch, recess and other “free” times at school?

- Yes
- No

Is your child scheduled to or is he/she actually developing the skills needed to eat with classmates with and without disabilities at school?

- Yes
- No

Is your child scheduled to or is he/she actually benefitting from relationships with tutors at school?

- Yes
- No

Is your child scheduled to or is he/she actually developing social relationships with schoolmates without disabilities at school and then engaging in them during nonschool days and times? After school, weekends, holidays and during summers are examples.

- Yes
- No

Are classmates without disabilities scheduled to or actually receiving training that will allow them to effectively assist and otherwise support your child in appropriate activities in integrated classrooms and classes?

- Yes
- No

Is your child scheduled to or does she/he actually interact with peers without disabilities more in your home and community than at school?

- Yes
- No

Is school the only place your child is scheduled to or actually functions in settings and activities that contain only others with disabilities?

- Yes
- No

Are you aware of or were you informed of and encouraged to carefully consider important information regarding developing your child’s short and long term social relationships with peers and others without disabilities?

- Yes
- No

If you judge that your child is not sufficiently involved in or is not scheduled to be involved in social relationships with peers and others without disabilities in school and nonschool environments, activities and contexts, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help improve his/her social life?

- Yes
- No

School to Post School Transition⁹

State and federal laws, rules, regulations, administrative codes and/or reasonable judgments about what research, experience and common sense support as promising educational policies, procedures and practices affirm that your child is legally, educationally and otherwise entitled to an individualized school to post school transition plan and associated services.

“Transition services are a coordinated set of activities that promote movement from school to such post-school activities as post-secondary education, vocational training, employment, adult services, independent living and community participation. They must be based on the individual

⁹ It is recommended that at least two papers that address legal, educational and other entitlements of your child to experience individually appropriate school to post school transition services be examined: “Educational Standards for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities” (Brown, 2012) and “A School to Integrated Work Transition Manual for Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities” (Brown & Kessler, 2015).

student's needs, taking into account his or her preferences and interests. Transition services must include instruction, community experiences, and development of employment and other post school adult living objectives. If appropriate, daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation may also be included. Transition services must be included in all IEPs when the student reaches age 16. They may be included for younger students if it is deemed appropriate by an IEP team." (IDEA, 2004).

Individualized transition services require at least the following.

Your child is legally, educationally and otherwise entitled an Individualized School to Post School Transition Plan as part of her/his IEP.

Starting at age 16, age 14 if requested, you and your child must be invited to participate in meetings to discuss his/her goals for life when school ends

You and your child may invite representatives of post school service and funding agencies to Individualized Transition Plan meetings to discuss transition goals and the extra supportive services that will be needed to realize them.

The integrated work and related training experiences offered your child should be based on his/her preferences, abilities and capacities.

Any integrated work or related training experience should help your child develop skills that are of personal interest to him/ her and should allow his/her unique abilities to be successfully utilized and improved.

Annual school to post school transition related activities should clearly lead to preferred post school outcomes.

Progress toward learning to or actually reaching school to post school transition goals should be empirically verified frequently.

Are you aware that the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires that your child be given opportunities during his/her school career to learn to function in integrated work settings at school exit? (Gupta, 2015; Lane vs Brown, 2015; Perez, 2012; Perez, 2013).

- Yes
- No

Are or were you aware of and are or were you allowed to carefully consider important information regarding the school to post school transition of your child at age 16 or shortly thereafter?

- Yes
- No

Are school district professionals scheduled to prepare or are they actually preparing your child to function effectively in integrated community settings such as stores, parks, movie theatres, busses, trains and supported apartments by the time he/she exits school?

- Yes
- No

Is your child scheduled to be or is he/she actually being prepared to function effectively in integrated work settings and activities by the time she/he exits school?

- Yes
- No

If you judge that an acceptable school to post school transition plan designed to prepare your child to live, work and play in integrated society at school exit has not been designed and/or is not being implemented effectively, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help produce one that is?

- Yes
- No

Uniqueness

Parents who preceded you were told by professionals that their children could not learn and/or that they did not know what or how to teach them. Thus, they were denied access to public education. Some of those parents convinced federal and state legislators to require IEPs that were logically and meaningfully related to the unique characteristics and needs of their children (Martin, 2012). As no two individuals with disabilities are exactly the same, no two IEPs should be exactly the same. In short, school district personnel are legally and professionally responsible for learning of and honoring the uniqueness of your child.

Does the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or the current IEP contain clear evidence of experiences, services, etc. that are unique to your child?

Yes

No

I cannot determine if the educational and therapy experiences scheduled will be unique until I see them being implemented.

If Yes, report the evidence that supports your judgment that the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or the current IEP contains clear and acceptable experiences, services, etc. that are unique to your child.

His/her IEP is clearly different from those of other students who are the responsibility of the Special Education teacher and the IEP team.

I observed her/him being instructed in the classroom. The accommodations and/or modifications made only for her/him were obvious.

I observed her/him being instructed in therapy sessions. The accommodations and/or modifications made only for her/him were obvious.

If No, report why you judge that the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or the current IEP does not contain clear and acceptable evidence of experiences, services, etc. that are unique to your child.

___ Several students with disabilities who are also the responsibility of this Special Education teacher have essentially the same IEP.

___ Several students with disabilities who are also the responsibility of this therapist have essentially the same IEP.

___ There is little, if anything, I can see in the IEP that is unique to my child.

___ I observed her/him being instructed in the classroom. I could not determine if unique accommodations and/or modifications were made for her/him.

___ I observed her/him being instructed in therapy sessions. The whole group is being taught the same things in the same ways.

If you judge that the educational and therapy experiences that are proposed for or that are actually being provided your child are not sufficiently unique, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for them to be made so?

___ **Yes**

___ **No**

Summary and Conclusions

Several of many possible components of your child's educational experience that were addressed above are presented below so as to afford a convenient review. It is highly likely that others are at least equally important. Thus, you are encouraged to add to those presented and to address them in ways that are locally appropriate.

If it is being proposed that your child does not attend his/her home school, if your child is not scheduled to attend her/his home school in the IEP being developed or if he/she is not actually attending the school she/he would attend if not disabled, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for her/him to do so?

Yes

No

If school officials propose that your child not function in, if your child is not scheduled in the IEP being developed to function in or if he/she does not currently function in the same classrooms and/or classes in which she/he would function if not disabled at least 80% of school days, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for her/him to do so?

Yes

No

If you judge that the instructional objectives that are in the proposed IEP, that are scheduled in the IEP being developed or that are in the current IEP are not appropriately matched to the intellectual capabilities of your child, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for them to be made so?

Yes

No

If you judge that relationships between grade level academic content and the content in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the

current IEP are not acceptable, would you be interested in assistance that might help improve them?

Yes

No

If you judge that the Supplementary Aids and Services in the proposed IEP, the IEP being developed or in the IEP being implemented are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange or make improvements in them?

Yes

No

If you judge that the educational and therapy objectives stated in the proposed IEP or in the IEP being developed are not acceptable or if you judge that the fidelity relationships between the objectives stated in the current IEP and those your child is actually being taught to reach are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange improvements?

Yes

No

If you judge that the performance criteria relevant to or established for the educational and therapy objectives in the proposed IEP, in the IEP being developed or in the current IEP are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help improve them?

Yes

No

If you judge that the strategies being proposed or that are being used to empirically verify that your child is learning or has learned are not acceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help improve them?

Yes

No

If you judge that the involvement of your child in school sponsored extracurricular and nonacademic activities will be or is unacceptable, would you be interested in securing assistance that might arrange for or help improve his/her involvement?

Yes

No

If your child does not have opportunities for important and reasonable travel experiences with students and others without disabilities, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for her/him to have them?

Yes

No

If you judge that an acceptable school to post school transition plan that is focused upon preparing your child to live, work and play in integrated society at school exit has not been designed and/or is not being implemented effectively, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help produce one that is?

Yes

No

If you judge that your child is not scheduled to be or is not sufficiently involved in social relationships with peers and others without disabilities

and others in school and nonschool environments, activities and contexts, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help improve his/her social life?

Yes

No

If you judge that the educational and therapy experiences that are proposed for or that are actually being provided your child are not sufficiently unique, would you be interested in securing assistance that might help arrange for them to be made so?

Yes

No

If you have delineated components of your child's educational and therapy experiences that are not acceptable, much of information gathered and considered thus far should help all involved design, implement and evaluate improvements. It is extremely rare that all of the elements delineated for improvement can be addressed at the same time. Thus, it is usually necessary to select specific targets and then design and implement action plans. In addition, if you are in need of assistance, consider at least the following sources.

New Jersey's Inclusion Campaign – www.inclusioncampaign.org

Disability Rights New Jersey – www.drnj.org

The ARC of New Jersey - www.arcnj.org

The Education Law Center - www.edlawcenter.org

The Statewide Parent Advocacy Network - www.spanadvocacy.org

Target # 1 - We should figure out a way to return my child to her/his home school and arrange for him/her to be based in the same classrooms and classes in which he/she would be based if not disabled.

Target # 2 - My child functions in too few environments. We need to increase them.

Target # 3 - My child has a very restricted social relationship range. We need to expand it.

Target # 4 -

Target # 5 -

The process being used to generate evolving versions this manual is dynamic. That is, with every use elements are revised, clarified, added, localized and hopefully improved. When parents, teachers, therapists and others examined earlier versions prior to implementing them, they made such comments as: "Do I have to do it all?" "Is all this detail really necessary?" "I am a teacher; do I have to complete one of these for all my students?" "I am a parent; do I really need to know or to be aware of all this information?" "I pay my taxes. I should not have to do their work for them." "You are asking too much of parents." "There is much more to the education than can be put in an IEP."

No, you do not have to do it all, but what elements do you want to omit? No, you do not have to complete one of these for all your students, but which student would you not use it on and why? No, as a parent you may not need to do the work it requires and you pay your taxes so you should not have to do it. What if you do not do the work and teachers and therapists do not do it either? If there is much more that is important to the education of a child with significant intellectual disabilities than is addressed here or that is in the typical IEP, describe it precisely and add it.

After actually using a version of this manual, responses are often quite different. “You left out X, Y and Z, I had to put them in.” “More detailed information about possible modifications is needed.” “You did not emphasize social relationships enough.” “Where and how can I get someone to help me do one of these for my daughter?” (Please see Appendix A.)

Our basic assumption is that the more relevant information you have, the better are the probabilities of providing individually acceptable educational, therapy and other services. For example, if your child was placed in a segregated school and /or classroom, would it matter that the only people he/she interacts with are others with disabilities and persons who are paid to be with her/him? Yes, it would matter very much because chances are overwhelming that his/her social life at school exit will be terribly restricted. Would it matter if your child had essentially the same IEP year after year as do many children? Would it matter if instructional objectives, performance criteria and assessment strategies were unclear and professionally indefensible? Would it matter if the development of your child or the lack thereof could not be empirically verified? Yes, yes and yes. Would it matter that your child travels to and from school with, eats at school with, is involved in class projects and extracurricular activities with schoolmates and neighbors without disabilities? Yes, because then he/she would have a better social life at school exit. Would it matter if she/he needs and you think she/he is receiving speech and language, physical and occupational therapy, but really is not? Yes, because

Finally, assume you improved this manual and applied it to your child. Assume you had a world class IEP team. Assume that all that was promised in the IEP and much more was delivered beautifully. At the end of her/his school career your child would still be significantly disabled intellectually. However, he/she would have a better chance at a decent life.

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APPENDIX A

In September, 2015 Lou Brown asked Jackie Philpott, the mother of a daughter with significant disabilities, to examine and comment upon an earlier version of this manual. Her response follows.

Hi, Lou

Years ago you told me that we shouldn't let school districts or anyone else fob off their language. Don't accept their interpretations, you said. Hegemony of language it's called. Control. As a parent (and I am a parent) I would not complete the existing parent manual you sent me. It is too long and the language is "their" language. Before anything else, I would gauge each parent's ability/willingness to address this language issue by asking them to complete a manual of the type I include here. Not as a screening out, but just a short questionnaire to get them thinking about just what they are willing to do.

This is a short screening questionnaire.

Differently worded parent manuals can follow,

but they need to be tailored differently according to the age of the child.

Of particular importance are manuals for the youngest children, before they get sucked into school district labels and parents buy into others' expectations.

October 11, 2015

Jackie Philpott's Parent Action Committee - PAC

My child's name and age:

These are my child's best qualities (write on the back of these pages if you need extra space. Take as much space as you need and use extra paper if needed. Feel free to attach typewritten pages if you prefer. It is important information and you will appreciate reading it in the future):

These are my child's strengths:

This is my short term goal for my child:

These are my longer term goals for my child (a year from now, ten years from now. Where do you hope your child will be as an adult)?

Members of this PAC: People who are willing to assist me/us (teacher, therapist, extended family members). Assume the best, then add or remove names as you learn of their willingness to help you achieve your goals for your child.

What are you willing to do to help your child achieve these goals?

Are you willing to meet with the principal of your child's school? Yes No

With administrators of your child's school district? Yes No

Are you willing to disagree with people in positions of authority? Yes No

What is your comfort level regarding disagreement with people in decision making positions regarding your child's needs?

Do you have previous experiences disagreeing with people in positions of authority regarding your child's needs? Please give examples:

Sometimes people in decision-making positions are local and private: preschool director, daycare owner. If schools are privately owned then people will often negotiate with you on including your child, because they can be persuaded that it is the right thing to do and you may be able to negotiate terms. If schools or organizations are public, there are laws in place against discrimination. As a parent you must decide what you are willing to do and how you are going to reach the goal of inclusion for your child in a way that you believe best serves your child. These decisions can't be made by anyone else, and everyone has different thresholds for interactions or in some cases, confrontations. What is your line in the sand? Only you can decide.

If your child is not yet participating in preschool or other school settings, describe the setting you think would benefit him/her best:

If your child is already in a preschool or other school setting, describe the setting you think would benefit him/her best:

Describe your child's current school or preschool setting:

Do you have ideas regarding how to achieve these goals for your child? Do you have people with whom you can problem solve about these goals?

Would you like to speak with people outside your current network about how to realize your goals for your child? Yes No