



OSEP Symposia Series: High Expectations and Appropriate Supports: The Importance of IEPs Symposium Live Recording

April 9, 2018

Janine Rudder
"Welcome"

<<Janine Rudder: Good afternoon. I'm very excited to welcome you to the 2018 OSEP Symposia Series. This year, we're highlighting the very important role that developing and implementing high quality IEPs plays in ensuring each child with a disability can be successful. There are three symposia in the series, and they are interconnected. We'll start by weighing the policy and research foundation, to establish a common understanding and set of principles. Next, we will explore what high quality IEPs mean in practice; delving deeper into what teachers, leaders, and IEP teams need to develop and implement high quality IEPs, and how we can support these needs. Finally, we will explore how education agencies, families, and other stakeholders, are working together to develop and implement high quality IEPs.

Today's symposium will focus on the importance of IEPs, high expectations, and appropriate supports. Today's speakers come with a diverse experience, and depth of knowledge in many areas. They include current OSEP grantees discussing factors that drive high expectations, such as child, family, and other stakeholder engagement; and to support children and families' needs to meet those expectations; supporting States to ensure that each child has access to an education that best meets her or his unique and individual needs. How high expectations relate to State academic content standards, and how we can support States and LEAs to incorporate evidence based practices in the IEP.

We definitely have a rich and engaging discussion planned for you today. As explained earlier, today's event is centered around the role that high-quality IEPs play in ensuring that each child with a disability can be successful. To really dig into this topic, we have expertise and perspectives from across the spectrum—including our Assistant Secretary—which we will hear from in a moment, a special education director of an SEA, an IDEA scholar, professors supporting educators to meet the needs of children who have intensive needs by working from their strengths in both early childhood and K-12 settings. We will also hear from parents of children with disabilities; one who leads a parent center, and the other a general education teacher. It's a wide breadth of expertise meant to emphasize the critical role all of you play in ensuring children with disabilities are held to high expectations, and given the appropriate supports needed to carry out high quality IEPs.

Without further delay, our first speaker today is our Assistant Secretary in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the United States Department of Education, Johnny Collett. In his capacity, he serves as the advisor to the Secretary of Education, on matters related to the education of children and youth with disabilities; as well as employment and community living for youth and adults with disabilities. Welcome Assistant Secretary Collett.



Johnny Collett
"Opening Remarks"

<<Johnny Collett: Thank you. Thank you for joining us today. It is my honor to lead the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in its ongoing mission to improve early childhood educational and employment outcomes, and raise expectations for all people with disabilities, and their communities, their families, and the nation. At OSERS, we are incredibly excited about this mission, and committed to the ongoing progress in this mission.

I'm often struck by the notion that OSERS really is unique; because we work to impact positively, really across the life of an individual with disability, from birth through adulthood, and including post-secondary opportunities and committed integrative employment. We are deeply committed to continue to make progress in our mission. We are committed to ensuring that all people with disabilities have positive outcomes, educationally early childhood and employment. As many of you have probably heard me say, there's really only one way for all to mean all. For all to mean all, it has to mean each. At OSERS, we are deeply committed to supporting States in their work, to ensure that each child has what they need, when they need it, to be successful and has access to an education that best meets his or her needs. We're committed to calling attention in this work, to both high expectations and appropriate supports, not one without the other. That's part of why I'm so excited that you're participating in this event today.

Consistent with the Secretary's final supplemental priorities for discretionary grants, we will focus on meeting the unique needs of students and children with disabilities, ensuring that they have the opportunity to meet challenging objectives; and receive an educational program that is both meaningful and appropriate, in light of their circumstances. Also consistent with the Secretary's final supplemental priorities for discretionary grants around promoting effective instruction in classroom and schools, we will be mindful of both the initial preparation and ongoing capacity needs of teachers, leaders, and others who work every day to ensure that students, children, with disabilities can have what they need, when they need it, to be successful.

As you know very well, IDEA emphasizes the importance of high expectations and also emphasizes the importance of strengthening the role of parents, ensuring that families have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children, at school and at home. These principles, we believe, were reinforced by the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the *Endrew F.* case, a landmark decision for millions of children and youth with disabilities, and their families, in our country. As you know, in the case *Endrew F.*, the court held that a school must offer an IEP that is reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress in light of the child's circumstances. The court additionally emphasized the requirement every child should have a chance to meet challenging objectives. While the court did not specifically define "in light of the child's circumstances," the decision emphasized the individualized nature in decision making required in the IEP process; and the need to ensure that every child—not some children—not most children—but that every child—should have a chance to meet challenging objectives, and be supported to make progress toward achieving them.

As part of why the Department released in December 2017 the questions and answers document on the *Endrew* case, to inform families, and educators, and administrators, of the impact of the court's decision. As Secretary DeVos has made clear, and will continue to be committed to, tolerating low



expectations, and accepting failure in a one-size-fits-all approach education for children and youth with disabilities is not acceptable. We must do better, by demonstrating that we do have hope for them, and we do believe in them. We will work very hard to support you in the work that you're leading, to do that every day. In doing that work to support you, we will remain mindful of the appropriate Federal role in supporting States to do the work that they, with their stakeholders, have envisioned to improve results and outcomes for children and youth with disabilities; and the that decisions like these are best made by those closest to the child.

In summarizing my few remarks this morning, or this afternoon, I'm proud of the progress we've made since Congress first passed Public Law 94-142, now IDEA, more than 40 years ago. I've committed that we will continue implementing that law. We will implement that law, but we will ensure at the same time, simultaneously, that we are focusing on raising expectations and improving outcomes for all people with disabilities, their families, their communities, and the nation. While we should celebrate our progress, and we will, we're going to remain mindful every day that we still have much to do together to ensure that each child, youth, and adult, with a disability has what they need, when they need it, to be successful, and be prepared for their next right step.

I'll leave you with this, while we all have a stake in the success of the individuals that we serve, no one has more of a stake in their success than they do. I am committed, and we at OSERS are committed, and the department is committed, to supporting you, and working with you, on their behalf. I'm excited about the opportunity we have today to talk about the important role of developing and implementing quality IEPs' place in the success of students with disabilities, the success that we, but most importantly the success that they, envision. Thank you.

Janine Rudder
Speaker Introductions

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you so much, Johnny. A significant goal today is that you come away with an understanding of *Endrew F.*; specifically, what it means for your work, and how you can positively impact outcomes for children with disabilities. How the *Endrew F.* standard can, and is, being implemented, and OSEP-funded efforts to support this standard. How the IEP can be used to ensure focus on high expectations, and appropriate supports; and, the role you can play in setting high expectations for children with disabilities, and supporting States to help children achieve those high expectations.

Our next speaker will be Dr. Mitchell Yell. Dr. Yell will talk through high expectations, and individualized supports to meet the *Endrew F.* Standard. By the way, I encourage you to read the full biographies of each of our speakers. Their work is fascinating, and you're only going to get a glimpse of their achievements today. Dr. Yell is the Fred and Francis Lester Palmetto Chair in Teacher Education, and professor in special education at the University of South Carolina. His professional interests include special education law, IEP development, progress monitoring, and parent involvement in special education. Welcome Dr. Mitchell Yell.

Mitchell Yell
"High Expectations and Individualized Supports to Meet the Endrew F. Standard"



<<Mitchell Yell: Thank you very much. My name is Mitch Yell, and I am a professor at the University of South Carolina, in special education law; so a level two hearing officer, and reviews of due process hearing in this State. What I think is important, is that I create a little bit of context for the *Endrew* decision, first off. As Johnny was mentioning, 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed by ... the name is now the Individuals with Education Disabilities Act. When that law was passed, it required that special educators deliver a free appropriate public education to all youngsters with disabilities, who are determined eligible under this law.

Well, a FAPE was not defined in an extraordinarily clear manner by Congress. What they did was, they defined it more in terms of what is in the IEP. In fact, the definition of FAPE says, states specifically, that a FAPE is special education and related services provided in conformity with a student's individualized program; thus, the IEP is the embodiment, or the blueprint, of a child's FAPE. Over the years, this question of, what exactly is a FAPE, has been litigated quite frequently in due process hearings, and in court cases. In fact, in 1982, the Supreme Court addressed the first special education case, specifically defining what a free appropriate public education is, in the *Board of Education v. Rowley*.

That decision was like the first special education decision, involved a young girl named Amy Rowley. Amy was quite bright, had a 125 IQ. She was also academically very able, did very well in school, but she was profoundly deaf. As a result, the parents, when they had Amy first attend a public elementary school, requested that the school district provide a sign language interpreter for her; however, the school district did not provide a sign language interpreter. Parents believing that because she was profoundly deaf, she really needed the services in order to receive a free appropriate public education. The parents requested due process hearing, which eventually wound up in a U.S. Federal District Court. The district court decided that in order to provide a FAPE, the school district did have to provide a sign language interpreter for Amy, so that she could receive a full benefit of her education, and in essence receive an education equal to those provided to non-disabled students.

The school district then appealed to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, which upheld the lower court in deciding for Amy, that in fact the school district had not provided her with FAPE. The school district then appealed to the United States Supreme Court, and in the first decision that they were to hear on special education, they set forth a two-part test; which is our next slide. Their two-part test is as follows. First, any court, or any hearing officer, who is ruling on a FAPE case, has to first ask, "Were the procedures of the law followed?" The second question is regarding the IEP, "Is the IEP reasonably calculated to enable the student to receive educational benefit?"

Every lower court judge, every due process hearing officer, like myself, who does a FAPE case is going to have to answer these two questions. In the *Rowley* case, the two questions were posed by the Supreme Court. They believed that the school district had followed the procedures of the law well. Then they turn to the second part of the test, and kind of this is where the real problem lied; because Amy was not your typical special education child. She was at a very high IQ, she was doing very well in school. The Supreme Court was essentially able to bypass, or side step, the question about the educational benefit. In fact, they decided in favor of the school district, because they said, "Well, Amy was passing from grade to grade. Clearly, she must be receiving educational benefit." Although, they did also specifically mention a footnote, that we are only talking about Amy here.



Nonetheless, in future cases that have been heard on FAPE, what has happened is courts have tended to interpret this a little differently. It's never been difficult for the courts to decide if the procedures were followed. What has been more difficult, however, is deciding if a child received educational benefit. The next slide you can see, that the U.S. Circuits Court appeal, which are the courts right under the United States Supreme Court, have ruled in different ways when addressing the educational benefit. Two circuits, the Third and the Sixth, said that a school had to provide a higher degree of benefit. They had to provide meaningful educational benefit. However, six circuits uses a much lower standard, saying that a school provided FAPE by meeting the procedure, and providing some educational benefit. However, in the Tenth Circuit decision ... which is the next slide.

Perhaps the lowest of standards was announced, in the Tenth Circuit, by the United States Circuit of Appeal for the Tenth Circuit. That is, that educational benefit, mandated by the IDEA, must merely be more than the de minimis. De minimis being a Latin term standing for trivial. When we apply that to courts, what it means, if courts have issues before them that are de minimis, they don't even have to really acknowledge those; because they're just trivial matters that of no importance. In essence, what the Tenth Circuit seemed to be saying is, a school could provide educational benefit that was mandated by the law, merely by providing educational benefit that was slightly more than nothing.

A case came up in 2010, involving a young boy named Andrew F. Andrew F. was a young boy with Autism, he had severe academic problems, and severe behavioral problems. He was educated in the Douglas County School District from preschool, all the way through fourth grade. He did have IEPs. In fourth grade, his parents became increasingly upset with the school district, because academically his academics were stalled; and his behavior was becoming quite severe. So what they did was, they pulled Andrew and put him in a private school called the Firefly Autism House. They educated him for a year there, he did fairly well. Nonetheless, because of this low educational benefit standard, they decide to go to court to get attorney's fees; unfortunately, using this low benefit standard, lost at the due process level, the District Court level, and the U.S. Court of Appeals.

On the next slide, what we see is the parents' undaunted file of petition with the U.S. Supreme Court, asking, "What is the level of educational benefit? School districts must confer on children with disabilities to provide them with a FAPE. Supreme Court granted tertiary, which means they would hear the case. On January 11th, eight members of the Supreme Court ... which is the next slide. Eight members of the Supreme Court heard the decision, Neil Gorsuch had not yet been approved. On March 22nd, the Supreme Court issued a ruling. On the next slide, you can see the Chief Justice John Roberts. Essentially the Supreme Court, in unanimous decision, vacated the decisions of the lower court, and had a new, higher, standard; which is the following.

To meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances. This decision meant the following, there is now an Andrew ... more or less a *Rowley/Andrew* test, which is the next slide. The first test is really for Rowley, which is the procedural test. The second test is the substantive test, or is the IEP recently calculated. That was the next slide. In the *Rowley/Andrew* test, every due process hearing officer, every judge, will have to apply that new standard in FAPE cases. If we go to the next slide, the U.S. District Court actually decided that ... because this decision was actually remanded, the U.S. District Court overturned their previous decision saying that the school district, in light of this clarified standard, had not provided free appropriate public education; and had ordered the school district to pay for tuition reimbursement, and court costs, and attorney's fees.



There are some wonderful references we will be talking about today, and I refer you all to them. Thank you very much.

Janine Rudder
Speaker Introductions

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you so much Dr. Yell. Our next set of speakers will be a discussion on how to support each child's individual needs. Dr. Karen Erickson is a Director of the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, a professor in Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences, and the Yoder Distinguished Professor in the Department of Allied Health Sciences at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She's a former teacher of students with significant disabilities, who's current research addresses literacy, and communication, for students with significant cognitive disabilities.

We also have Dr. Kelly Henderson. She's the Executive Director of Formed Families Forward, a northern Virginia non-profit family organization, that trains and supports foster, adoptive, and kinship care families, raising children and youth with special needs. Formed Families Forward operates a community parent resource center, funded by the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs; and is a family partner to the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports project.

Following that, we have a video about the importance of challenging objectives, from Sarah Helena Vazquez; who's a motivational speaker, an advocate, and author, who holds a master's degree in disability studies. She's a true believer that anyone can pave their life's path by way of having dreams, with the support of her mother, who instilled in her that she should be defined by her abilities, not by her disability. Today, Vazquez is sure that she was born with cerebral palsy to change the face of what having a disability looks like. With the confidence she gained from her mother, and the high expectations of her teachers, Vazquez is now regarded as one of the nation's leading advocates for people with disabilities.

Please welcome Dr. Erickson, Dr. Henderson, and a video from Sarah Vazquez.

Karen Erickson
"Supporting Each Child's Individual Needs"

<<Karen Erickson: Thank you. My work for more than 30 years, has focused on improving the academic outcomes, specifically literacy outcomes, for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. As a teacher in the late 1980s, I was among the first generation of special educators to embrace assistive technology, including augmentative and alternative communication, as a way to improve and successfully support each child, and help them meet the high expectations we held. As researcher in 2018, I continue to focus on the power of assistive technology, augmentative communication, and literacy, to help students meet the high expectations we hold. Next slide, one more slide. Okay.

From the beginning of my career, I've pushed back on the way I was required to write IEPs, and the way I, and many of my colleagues, were encouraged to implement them. I've pushed back on the notion that mastering skills is the sole indicator of academic success, not just for students with the complex support needs that I work with, but for all students. What I noticed was that I could apply many different methods in order to help my students achieve mastering, but to what end?



As was the case nearly 30 years ago, I still see teachers setting aside a time in their day to teach IEP goals, or objectives, or benchmarks, to mastery. I argue that most of the skills that are taught in that way, one-on-one, working on it to mastery, in the isolation of their meaningful application, it's not helping our students achieve the type of high expectations that we have. Certainly all students, whether they have disability or not, should master a variety of skills. Most students master those skills as a result of variety, of learning opportunities, that extend well beyond the skills themselves. It's not a result of focused instruction on the skills. Next slide.

Today, I still see IEP after IEP, that seeks consistency in mastery of skills identified by teams. Usually, that consistency or mastery, is reflected in benchmarks or objectives that end with a criteria of 80% accuracy on four out of five days, or trials, or opportunities. I've certainly seen a positive shift towards academic goals that link to grade level standards, and that's very encouraging. However, the goals, benchmarks, and objectives address skills that are often so disconnected from the overall intent of our standards, that they have little meaning, and do little to help students progress through the grades in a meaningful way.

When I first learned about UDL, I was overjoyed with the idea that it might lead to a change in the way we craft IEPs. The emphasis on multiple and flexible that's the hall mark of UDL, left me hopeful that we might be able to move away from narrowly defined IEP goals, and benchmarks, and objectives, that specified the rigid conditions under which a child could demonstrate mastery of skill. I was hopeful that understandings of UDL would go beyond its emphasis on technology to level the playing field, to an emphasis on the needs of students to learn skills in multiple and flexible ways, that would allow them to express understandings of those skills in multiple and flexible ways. I'm not suggesting that we don't need IEP goals and objectives that are smart. While "smart" is not defined by everybody in the same way, it generally refers to goals and objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, results oriented, and time bound.

Smart goals and objectives do not have to focus on single skills demonstrated to mastery, with consistency over time. Smart goals and objectives can reflect the core principles of UDL, by allowing students to demonstrate specific skills in multiple and flexible ways; and by allowing teams to measure progress with those skills, by seeking increased frequency of success, and applying the skills, rather than the 80% mastery of those skills, and/or trials. As we work to craft IEPs that emphasize multiple, and flexible, representation, action, expression, and engagement, we also need to shift our focus from skills that we think students can master, to the kinds of pivotal skills that they need in order to progress from year to years.

The current focus of standards across our country, and the findings of *Andrew F.*, reflect an expectation that learning is going to build over time. Perhaps, narrowly focused IEP goals and objectives are one of the factors that keep many students with severe cognitive disabilities from building skills over time, and continuing to make academic progress after elementary school. If the standard has been goals and objectives that target skills that we think students can master each year, have we been doing our students a disservice? I still see too many students like this boy. They are approaching adolescence without being able to use speech, signs, or symbols, to communicate with the world. They master skills like matching the symbols to preferred objects, and foods. They identify symbols with 80% accuracy on four out of five days; but, they do not use symbols to initiate, respond, interact, share information, establish social connections, or communicate for any of the dozens of other reasons that are required for students to achieve academically from year to year, to year.



Much to our delight, and probably even more so to his, over the last 18 months there's been a big shift in this boy's IEP, and his educational program. He now is learning about not just matching those skills, but using those symbols in order to initiate, share information, and respond to open-ended questions. Now, he's successfully using a much larger array of symbols to achieve a much broader set of communication purposes, and his progress across the curriculum has been much clearer. The ability to participate actively, and interact with others in the environment, is a pivotal skill that is reflected in our current standards across the country. Students are expected to initiate, and participate actively, and effectively, in a range of collaborative discussions about a variety of topics.

How does one master the art of initiating, and participating, with 80% accuracy in four out of five trials? I would argue that you can't; but we can write IEP goals that focus on getting students who can't initiate, to initiate more frequently about a broader range of topics, with an increasing range of communication partners. I would argue that we could also write IEP goals that help those students who initiate a little too often, learn how to focus those initiations on the topic at hand, and to increase the active participation with the group.

Finally, as we work to create IEPs that support each student's individual needs, while helping them achieve high academic expectations, we must focus our expectations on the application and use of knowledge and skills. Decades of research suggest that students with significant cognitive disabilities, struggle to generalize skills as they learn them. Could they be more successful if our IEPs focused not on mastery of skills, with 80% accuracy, but instead focused on the use of those skills in novel context, for novel purposes? Could we be far less concerned that students demonstrate skills in the context of our carefully crafted trials, and instead concern ourselves with looking for the application of those skills where they are needed the most? Could we respond to the demands of current standards, and *Andrew F.*, by anchor standards, and pivotal skills, instead of focusing on skills that we clock from standards themselves? Could we realize the potential of UDL for all students, by building on knowledge and teaching skills in multiple, and flexible, ways that are required for students to apply and learn as they continue to learn over time?

These students, and hundreds of others like them, have helped me learn that we have no choice. If we are going to help students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, and I would argue all students, reach our highest expectations, we must concern ourselves with creating IEPs that address application, and use, of pivotal knowledge and skills that build over time; to maximize gains from one grade level to the next. Thank you.

Kelly Henderson
"Supporting Each Child's Individual Needs"

<<Kelly Henderson: Good afternoon. I'm Kelly Henderson, and I have the honor of directing a family-led non-profit, serving northern Virginia's foster, adoptive, and kinship families. I'm very pleased to be here today, and have the opportunity to share a few thoughts on this critical topic. First, a little about OSEP-funded parent centers. As we're all aware, parent and family involvement in special education is fundamental to IDEA. The Federal law has emphasized parent participation, not only through specific provisions regarding eligibility and IEPs, but also through its commitment to parent and family support, and technology assistance.



Currently, a total 65 parent training and information centers serve families in all States and territories. In 1997, community parent resource centers, or CPRCs, were born in their current form. Today, 26 CPRCs focus on specific underserved populations, such as those in a smaller geographic area, a community with particular language needs, and so on. We at Formed Families Forward work to support foster, adoptive, and kinship families. Kinship care is provided formally, or informally, by extended family members, such as grandparents, when their parents are unable, or unavailable, to care for their children.

To better understand our perspective on why the individual needs are so central, it might be helpful to know a bit more about foster, adoptive, and kinship families. Collectively, about 14% of children are raised in homes that are not headed by a parent, or step-parent. The first bullet on this slide provides that breakdown a bit. While many children in formed families do meet developmental milestones, many do not; and have organic, and acquired, conditions that may require special education and related services. Research supports a disability prevalence of about three to four times that rate of disabilities in birth families. Outcomes are pretty poor for children and youth and youth with special needs, raised in formed families. This challenge has recently been acknowledged, as ESSA now includes children in foster care status as a subgroup versus aggregated reporting.

The impact of serious, traumatizing, experiences on behavioral, social, emotional, and academic readiness, has contributed to a historical underachievement of many children and youth in care. So for foster, adoptive, and kinship families, the *Andrew F.* decision offers welcome clarification regarding FAPE. It offers a strong foundation on which all families can fulfill their advocacy and involvement responsibilities. Diana Autin of New Jersey SPAN, and others, have done some great work on helping families understand the implications of this ruling. In particular, these clarifications provide those of us raising, and working with, children who experience the greatest barriers to achievement, including those who are disproportionately represented in special education, and for whom expectations are often set sadly low, of the power of potential of every child and youth.

This is a critical shift in policy and practice to a presumption of progress towards challenging objectives, guided by an individual child's specific circumstances, no matter the tough places in their past or present. It serves families, schools, and a broader community well, in the immediate and for years to come. So how best to operationalize the FAPE demanded by *Andrew*? Families know their children best. They can identify critical strengths and challenges; and offer insights to strategies that work, and those that don't. The job, and the privilege, of the IEP team, is to really focus in on the needs of that one child. Informed by data from past performance, valid evaluation and assessment data, other parent and caregiver engagement, the team can craft a challenging individualized program that sets the stage for meaningful progress. As the *Andrew* decision directly states, "IEP procedures emphasize collaboration between family and educators, and require consideration of individual circumstances."

In practice, families want to see some pretty fundamental features honored in IEP planning and implementation. We often talk to families about the concept of P in IEP, a program of services and supports in the least restrictive settings. This goal derivative, this goal driven program, should assume and account for growth. Goals are central, so the team should dedicate careful consideration to crafting original and complete goals, informed by the family, and student, directly. Finally, *Andrew* reminds us that IEPs, and the meetings to develop, and review, a child's individualized program, is about content first. It is an occasion, at least annually, to define and renew our collective commitment to the child, to his, or her, teachers and staff, and to his, or her, family, to meet challenging and individualized goals.



Sarah Vazquez
"Challenging Objectives"

<<Sarah Vazquez: Hi, my name is Sara Vazquez. When I think about having expectations for students with IEPs, I recall an event in my life. I was a senior in college, and I was used to advocating for myself; but I had this one professor that told me that every time I spoke up in class, she would pass me by. I had to think about what she was really saying to me. I found myself in front of her again, in her office. I simply told her that I didn't expect her to treat me with any special treatment, but that I did expect her to treat me with the same level of respect she would any other student in her class.

When I think about that story, I often think, "It could have been different." It could've been different if my mother didn't raise me to have expectations of myself. I could've been different if my resource room teacher in high school, Mrs. Neustadter didn't have expectations for me while I was a student in high school. Both my mother, and Mrs. Neustadter, encouraged me to participate in my IEP meetings. Through my IEP meetings, I discovered how I best learned; and therefore, I discovered my voice, and I discovered that I could participate in how I was going to be educated.

As a professional that assists people to self-direct their lives, I'm acutely aware of how important it is to have expectations; how when parents, and teachers, and administrators, lay the foundation of having expectations for students with IEPs, we encourage students to grow into their citizenship's, and be full participants in society. Thank you.

Janine Rudder
Speaker Introductions

<<Janine Rudder: Sarah's done an amazing job highlighting the difference high expectations can have, not just on the individual's education, but on their entire lives. Thank you, Sarah. We'll have one more speaker on the topic of challenging objectives; and then, two speakers will describe how they're supporting integrating evidenced based practices into IEPs.

Our next speaker on challenging objectives, Dr. Christopher Lemons, is an associate professor of special education, at Peabody College at Vanderbilt University; and a member of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center. His research focuses on improving academic outcomes for children and adolescents, with intellectual, developmental, and learning disabilities. Dr. Lemons' recent research has focused on developing, and evaluating, reading interventions for individuals with down syndrome.

Our speakers focusing on incorporating evidence based practices in the IEP are Sarah Sayko, the Deputy Director of the National Center on Improving Literacy, which works to increase access to evidence based approaches, screen, identify, and provide instructional support to students with literacy related disabilities, including dyslexia. Sarah leads the parent and family engagement work of NCIL. She's also the West Virginia State Coordinator; for the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center; which helps State Departments of Education in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia, to enhance their capacities to undertake State educational initiatives successfully.

Then, we'll have Dr. Barbara Guy, who is the Director of Special Education, for the Iowa Department of Education. In this role, she has worked with regional and local special educators, to build State



infrastructures, and capacity, to provide quality special education services and supports. Prior to her current work, Dr. Guy was Iowa's education consultant for secondary transition.

Please welcome Dr. Lemons, Sarah Sayko, and Dr. Guy.

Christopher Lemons

"Challenging Goals & Objectives"

<<Chris Lemons: Hello everybody. I'm Chris Lemons, from Vanderbilt. First of all, I want to thank OSEP for putting on this symposium, which I think is really interesting and relevant. Thank you for inviting me to participate. Today, I'm going to be talking about three primary things related to challenging goals and objectives. You can go ahead. The first [inaudible 00:45:24] talk about the implications of *Andrew F.* on establishing challenging goals and objectives; then I'm going to talk about the relation between these goals and objectives, and state academic standards. Then, I'm going to talk about how IEP's teams can ensure that the goals and objectives are aligned with *Andrew F.*

First, what are the implications of *Andrew F.* on establishing challenging goals and objectives in IEPs? First of all, the justices were wary of the de minimis, or trivial educational benefits, as being appropriate for evaluating FAPE; much like Mitch said in his opening talk. The words of the judges say, "When all is said and done, a student offered an educational program providing merely more than de minimis progress from year to year, can hardly be said to have been offered an education at all. For children with disabilities receiving instruction that aims so low, would be tantamount to sitting idly, awaiting the time they were old enough to drop out." They emphasized that the IDEA demands more. "Instead, schools now will be expected to offer a cogent and responsive explanation for the IEP, and to demonstrate that it is reasonably calculated to enable the child to make progress in light of her, or his, circumstances."

So, now, goals and objectives must be appropriately ambitious, reasonably calculated, and challenging. To evaluate whether goals and objectives meet these criteria, I think a few questions the IEP teams can ask themselves: Are these goals based on assessment data, are they measurable? Can the IEP team monitor progress on these goals? Are they determined for the individual children, by members of the IEP team, based on that individual child's circumstances? Some non-examples that schools would really want to avoid were, like in *Andrew's* case, having the same IEP goals that the child was not meeting across multiple years, with really no progress on those goals. Also, I think schools should be cautioned from using computerized programs that develop goals that are highly similar across many students in the school; and also goals that just really easy to achieve, are probably goals that are not aligned with *Andrew.*

It seems to me that an IEP aligned with *Andrew,* would include some goals and objectives that were not met at the end of the annual review. If you're meeting 100% of your goals and objectives, I think you should go ask if you're really being ambitious. When writing the goals and objectives, ask whether the team believes meets most, or all, of these goals, "Is this really meaningful, and important, for the child's future?" For some students with disabilities who are included in general ed classes, the proof of an appropriate educational program, with appropriate educational progress, is really participating in a grade level curriculum and demonstrating passing marks, and moving from grade to grade. However, the court also reiterated that just meeting the standards of passing and moving from grade to grade, was not necessarily an indication of FAPE.

In their words, they say, "If that ..." So, passing. "is not a reasonable prospect for child, his or her IEP team need not aim for grade level placement, but, his educational program must be appropriately ambitious, in light of her, or his, circumstances; just as advancement from grade to grade is appropriately ambitious for most children in the regular classroom. I think these words really raise the bar, in terms of expectations, and IEP goals, for children with disabilities whose goals are not currently on grade level.

Next thing we're going to talk about the relations between challenging goals and objectives, and state academic achievement standards. Standards are written to outline a developmental trajectory through a content area. As you can see ... for example goals on the right hand side of your screen. Each of these could be and appropriate IEP goal or objective target, so a skill that we want a child to for a child with a disability that is functioning at that instructional level. Standards like these, I think, can really be useful to guide and evaluation of the student's present levels of academic performance. Again, the examples on the slide, you can imagine knowing and applying grade level phonics, and word analysis skills, and decoding words, that is a goal target that may be appropriate for a specific student.

If you look on the next slide, you can see how might turn the standard into an IEP goal. If we have that we want a child to segment spoken single syllable words, into their complete sequence of individual sounds, or phonemes, we would want to conduct an assessment. Here, I suggested that the school use a first grade curriculum based measure, or CBM, phoneme segmentation fluency at a first grade level, that is this child's instructional level. On the median of three probes, Chadwick, the student, was able to provide 12 correctly segmented phonemes within one minute. This provides us information that by the end of they year, a reasonable goal could be, "By the end of the year, when presented with three probes from a first grade phoneme segmentation fluency CBM, Chadwick will correctly proved 45 correctly segmented phonemes in one minute."

I think it's also realized that this also can provide instructional information, so you can see that Chadwick is currently providing only the first sound for words. That's the instructional target that we helped the teacher plan instruction. I think it's also useful to know IEP teams should not feel the need to do solely rely on standards to write objectives. The IEP team really should return to the language of Endrew, and as they're having conversations about the IEP goals, to return to these words and clarify whether they have a cogent responsive explanation for the plan, and whether it's really reasonably calculated for the individual child.

Okay. Why is considering instructional level goals and objectives important? A recent meta-analysis found that, in the area of reading at least, students with disabilities are currently performing 1.17 standard deviations less well than their typically developing peers. This represents about a gap of 3.3 years. I think that it's worth considering whether writing an annual goal that represents more than three years worth growth will really be seen as being defensible, or achievable. Further, writing goals that are more closely aligned to the child's correct achievement level, will often provide clear guidance as to what the actual instruction, or intervention, should look like.

Here's an analogy. What is ambitious or reasonable for you? Can you, maybe, by the end of the year run a 5K, a half marathon, full marathon? Or, are you like Yolanda Holder down here, who likes to run 3100 miles? For each of us, we probably have a different target there; so, it depends on your individual circumstances. I think that the same should really apply to IEP goals and objectives.



How can IEP teams ensure that goals and objectives are aligned with *Andrew F.*? Next slide. Justice Roberts referred to IEP as a fact intensive exercise, in which school personnel, and the student's parents, collaborate to develop and implement the special ed program for pursuing academic achievement and functional advancement. The focus of the IEP is on the unique needs of that individual student; and it's developed only after careful consideration of the student's present levels of academic and functional performance, his or her disability, and the student's potential for growth. Instructional changes must be made, when the data indicate a lack of progress.

I think a process that people watching this should really learn more about is, data-based individualization, or DBI. It's a researched based process for individualizing, and intensifying, interventions through the systematic use of assessment data, validated interventions, and research based adaptation strategies. Data are collected in a very systematic process, and adaptations are made to the interventions if there is insufficient response. Ensuring that this process is followed as an IEP is implemented would provide support for decisions that the IEP team makes; and it would allow for a collection of data to document student response. I think school teams that use this process would be able to defend whether their IEP aligned with *Andrew*.

On the next slide, you can see there are several resources if you don't know a lot about DBI. I encourage you to check these out: the National Center on Intensive Intervention; the IRIS Center has two incredible modules that are really helpful; and then there's the National Center for Leadership in Intensive Intervention. These are three major investments by OSEP. On the last slide, references. If you have not look at Turnbull and Turnbull article, or Yell and Bateman's article on Teaching Exceptional Children, which both provide a really nice, successful overview of the *Andrew* case, I encourage you to get those. Thank you very much.

Sarah Sayko

"Incorporating Evidence-Based Practices in the IEP"

<<Sarah Sayko: Good afternoon. Today I'll be talking to you about how to incorporate evidence-based literacy practices into the IEP; in particular, focusing on key considerations for that process. We'll begin by talking about a fundamental question, which is, "What literacy skills should be taught?" To answer that question, we can look to the early grades, which provides the most robust research evidence to answer this question; and it also becomes especially important for children with literacy disabilities.

Those key practices are related to foundational reading skills. There are a series of four critical skills that should be taught for effective, and adequate, reading instruction for children with reading disabilities. This includes teaching children academic language skills, and that includes more than just vocabulary development, but instruction in the system of our language; which is also focused on inferential and narrative language skills. A second critical skill is, developing students' awareness of speech sound and language. That includes how to manipulate speech sounds, and the focus of the relationship between those sounds and letters. It also includes a focus on word building activities, that development children's phonemic awareness; which is especially important for children with reading disabilities.

Another important skill is to teach students to decode words, analyze word parts, and write, and recognize words. This includes focusing on teaching students to learn letter sounds together, to be able to recognize word patterns, to spell those word patterns; and to deep read decodable words, and learn

non-decodable words, in the context of reading connected text. Connected text is the fourth and final key foundational reading skills for children in grade K through 3, which really supports accurate word reading. It also provides an opportunity for the teacher to listen to the child reading orally, and provide corrected feedback, in the context of accurate and efficient word identification.

Really understanding what these key literacy skills are, in the early grades, is important. There's two implications for knowing this answer. The first one is to think about what valid measures are being used to help determine a student's progress in relation to these skills; or, to determine their current performance in relation to these skills. The second implication is, how well, or to what degree, do the interventions being implemented align to the child's literacy skill needs, in these particular areas. Once it's determined that the child's response to the instruction is insufficient, then we can look to way to intensify the interventions. There's specific methods that we can go about to doing that. Next slide please.

Not only do children with reading disabilities require more explicit instruction, but they really have gaps in their phonological domain, compared to their typical peers. Because they acquire that knowledge more slowly, they really need more explicit instruction in the foundational reading skills. The first variable that we can consider to alter, whether through selecting and intervention to implement, or looking to the supports and services that are being provided within the IEP, is to look at the level of explicitness. This includes things such as, clear educator explanation of the skill or knowledge to be built, modeling and guided practice opportunities, also opportunities for the teacher to provide feedback to the child as the child applies that concept on their own, or skill on their own.

The second variable that can be altered is increased frequency, or duration, of learning time. So, when we think of the learning time, we're talking about how often the intervention occurs, also the length of intervention session, and finally, the duration of the intervention as a whole. We can think about altering decisions to learning time by thinking about how far below is the student's performance, in relation to the grade level expectations; also, think about the length and frequency of previous interventions that have already been implemented, as well as student and school factors.

Another important variable that can be altered to help provide specialized designed instruction, is to reduce the instructional group size. Research shows that approximately a group size of two to four is sufficient, as well as one-on-one instruction. When the group size is reduced, teacher attention can be divided between fewer students, so children have the opportunity not just to provide more response, but also the teacher had more opportunity to react to that response.

Also another variable is to increase the amount of response opportunities and corrective feedback. Feedback from teachers, in that context, should be specific and descriptive, so the child understands what he or she is doing in relation to the goal; and also that those student learning opportunities are concrete, and include a wide range of mechanisms in order to show what they're learning, within the context of that instruction and intervention.

The final variable to consider, when intensifying interventions, is to increase the amount of practice and review. Interventions should provide frequent opportunity for student practice response and feedback. Also, in addition to that judicious review of previously learned skills, and frequent opportunity to practice, there should be opportunities to practice correctly. That includes a real explicit focus on



teaching to transfer. One could ask one's self, "To what degree is the intervention being implemented provide adequate opportunities for children to transfer skills learned in the intervention context, into other contexts or situations?" Next slide please.

When we think about intensifying interventions, we want to think about those types of variables that can be altered, so that we can better improve the alignment between what happens in the classroom, what happens in the intervention context, and ultimately help the child to be on a trajectory for achieving that annual goal by the end of the year. We can look to some examples of what a strong literacy goal might look like in an IEP.

Here's an example of a third-grade student, and we see it reflects their present level of performance, as well as their annual goal, and if necessary, objectives. It focuses on being specific, quantifiable, and measurable; and it is based on the connection between the child's current level of literacy performance and what we hope that child achieves by the end of the year. If that child is not on target to achieve that annual goal, we can look back to these alterable variables that I shared before, to have a conversation about to what degree do we need to make modifications to those variables; so that the individualized instruction is best suited for that child's need, and ultimately, helps him or her to achieve that annual goal. Thank you.

Barbara Guy

"Ensuring Effective Specially Designed Instruction: Iowa's Experiences Implementing the SSIP and SPDG "

<<Barbara Guy: As State Director of Special Education in Iowa over the past five years, I have been collecting representations of "I", the letter "I", or in some cases, pictures of eyes. These are a couple of my favorite. Since I am from Iowa, I had to have two of our regions represented. If you're from our upper regions, University of Northern Iowa, your "I" is not dominant enough. The reason we've been doing this in Iowa, as we've recognized that we somehow in the process of trying to ensure quality services, and success, for students with disabilities, we lost a focus on individualization. We lost a focus on instruction. In the past five years, we've really been trying to reemphasize that, and create space where both of these are easier to do.

In the next ten minutes, I'm going to quickly talk you through just a little background on how we got here, the conversations we've been having in our State; also, give you an overview of what our State systemic improvement plan, and our state personal development grant work is; those are 100% compatible in our State. Also, I'm going to talk to you, hopefully spend most of my time talking about lessons we're learning.

The purpose of the other slide, if you'll go back, was also a visual prompt for me to tell you that the work I'm talking about is because of the lowans who have contributed to this. A lot of parents, our PTI, our area education agencies, our local education agencies, individual with disabilities, for a number of years have done this work, and are working hard. I could not ... Nothing I say is possible without the work of lowans.

Now, for the background, we really began in July 2013, when a group of us, our area education agencies, up to our regional agencies, each have a director of special education. There are nine of them. They, and a number of representatives of the Department of Education, got together, and we said, "Let's measure



the effectiveness of specially designed instruction." We came to the recognition that despite the punitive work of probably millions of years of expertise that were represented in that room, we couldn't agree on one behavioral measure that we could go in and look at, to define whether or not our specially designed instruction in Iowa was effective.

Through conversation, and at that very meeting, we identified 11 components of specially designed instruction. We took that up to the State, and we talked with stakeholders, and they worked with us. We refined that to a framework that I'm going to share with you in a little bit. That, luckily for us, became a focus in 2015 of our State personal development grant, and our State systemic improvement plan. We are currently in the third year of its development implementation, because we're learning that while we think we have the answer, sometimes as we implement, we learn we need to develop new things.

This is ... I know, very difficult to read. It is a representation of the framework for specially designed instruction in Iowa. I'm going to read across. Each of those colors represents one of the four components of specially designed instruction in Iowa. The first one says diagnosed for instructional delivery. The blue column there is design for instructional delivery. The third column is to deliver for student or learner engagement. The green, at the bottom, is to engage for learner results.

Before you flip that slide on. I want to point out that there's some language in here that really applies to Iowa. At the top, if you have really great eyes, you might be reading under diagnostic, it says, "Use RIOT and skill." In number two. RIOT is our acronym for reviewing, interviewing, observing, and testing; and underneath each of those columns there are nine critical features, while they look linear, are interrelated. The green that goes across the bottom, is really talking about what teachers, and parents, and families, need to do together to support students, so that they are engaged in their learning, and successful learners.

I think the other piece that's important to tell you about our framework, from this slide, is that it's content free. We intentionally designed it to be neutral, so that we could start with one content area; which I'll share with you in a minutes, is literacy. As we get the structures and processes developed, that we can add new content into it. For example, while we are now engaged three years in the work of literacy, we are beginning to talk about what would this look like for our social engagement, and especially being used with students who are one the spectrum. The beauty of it, from our perspective, is that this is not Earth shattering, but it gives a teacher language. The teacher's doing the same thing with all the students, regardless of the characteristics, but maybe going to different resources to complete this simple task analysis. We're going to flip real quickly here.

The ... go one more please. The work that we're doing in our SPDG is in three areas of focus: preschool, significant disabilities, and K-6. We are embedding accessible educational materials in that, and I'll talk about that in a minute, in terms of lessons learned. We are currently in 102 usability sites. Usability being, those sites who are partnering with us to try to figure something out. Cohort sites being those sites who are trying our package. We have structures we're building that will last beyond the grant, beyond our SPDG; which are designed teams who develop the content, a delivery and support team which coordinates the professional learning across the State, and a network of coaches.

There are three things that I want to talk about with you today, in terms of the lessons learned ... actually, the lessons we're learning, because we haven't reached the stage of generalization on these



three things. We continue to keep learning about them. One, as we try to align both within the content of special education, and outside of special education, and align with our general education efforts, it's messy and probably the most difficult work I've ever done. While a plan is necessary, adaptation is essential. Lastly, this is a new one for me, we can't measure the effectiveness of specially designed instruction in any one method, unit, variable indicator.

Alignment is messy, and very difficult. What I mean by that is, three examples of that for you, is in terms of content rich, we have built wonderful depths of knowledge within education overall, and in special education. That gets ... when we try to apply that across all those content areas, for one individual student, or one individual teacher, or a district, or a building, it's cumbersome. It's hard to get people out of, or able to let go of, elements of their learning. I think the best example of that is, I'm talking about our learning we go get across our three strands of preschool, significant disabilities, and K-6; there are many things that we do, but there are so many things that we feel like we have to do in using the terminology we have, rather than across characteristics of students. Go back, sorry.

The meaning of access is, after we try to get our Accessible Educational Materials involved, we had a separate team looking at AEM, and what we realized is once again with that content rich, the scaffolding was too deep. Now, we're trying to teach it embedded within. The strategies we have for alignment are really difficult, and cumbersome; because the most successful ones right now are having the same people on multiple committees. That just doesn't work very well. So, the slides aren't advancing, but I do want to say that the ... when we talk about strategies, we didn't talk about that, adaptations ... the piece about a plan and having adaptations, what's important is that, when you talk about three years on adaptation, we had planned to have ... one second ... I've got to skip the adaptation and we'll go there we go. Everything takes longer, it takes three years to develop. We thought we could do it in a year, and then move to scale up.

Capacity building of coaches, we heard this from the literature and we ignored it. I would say to you, don't ignore this. Let your coaches learn before you start working with districts, because when we learn together, everybody is frustrated. You will not save time by trying to do that. Also, I would encourage you to think about changing the district, rather than building. I'm going to say that scale up people are going to want you to scale up faster than you're ready to go. We can go to the next slide.

Here's the important piece for me. Effective specially designed instruction starts with, "How did you diagnose?" Did you identify the right skill? Did you do a comprehensive assessment? Did you then link that to a strategy that's been proven effective to make that change? Did you then design a way to provide that strategy, and then actually provide it in the classroom? Then, what's the result of that? The only way we can effectively measure specially designed instruction, is through comprehensive assessment, that includes an interview of the teacher, and observation, and student consult; and probably some review documents as well.

We'll go to the last slide. This is a paraphrase from Tim Robinson but, I truly believe in what we're learning in the work, I know I was, we cannot fulfill a promise of specially designed instruction, unless we share a belief of expectations; so that we all expect high things of all students, and ourselves in providing that instruction. That we all believe, general and special educators, that our purpose is to teach students, so that they're; and we believe that we are responsible for ensuring that they have a successful outcome. Thank you.



Janine Rudder
Speaker Introductions

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you Barb. Thank you to our speakers for providing such great insight on what challenging objectives might mean; and also to our speakers who described their roles in supporting educators in incorporating evidence based practices. For our final section, prior to the Q&A, I'd like to introduce two speakers who will describe how families can, and should, be co creators in the process of developing a high quality IEP.

Dr. Milagros Santos is a professor in the Department of Special Education at the University of Illinois, her research focuses on young children with disabilities, and their families within the context of early intervention and early childhood special education services. Specifically, she's interested in developing an understanding of the ecologic influence of families and culture on parents, and professionals, in facilitating male children's development and learning.

We also have Melody Arabo, she's a third-grade teacher at Keith Elementary School, in West Bloomfield, Michigan. She held a hybrid role in the Walled Lake Consolidated school district, as both a 14-year classroom teacher, and district leadership developer. Ms. Arabo is the 2015 Michigan Teacher of the Year, and plays an active role in her school and local community. She facilitates professional development in a range of topics, including implementation of State standards, reading comprehension strategies with an emphasis on meta cognition, math fact fluency, and her biggest passion, bully prevention. An area where she has published multiple books.

We are so pleased to have Dr. Milagros Santos, and Melody Arabo.

Rosa Milagros Santos
"From Start to Finish: Families as Co-Creators of IEPs"

<<Rosa Milagros Santos: Good Afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to speak today at this webinar. Go to the next slide. My part of this conversation focuses on the importance of home school partnerships, when developing and implementing high quality IEPs. My goals are to engage you in a conversation around why collaborating families is critical in the IEP process, or the research process, about family/professional collaboration, and how that knowledge translates to everyday practice in the field. Next slide.

Let's start by taking a step back on what we do in our respective programs, to help and engage families in activities, programs in your schools, or centers. Take a moment to share your ideas on the chat, or the Q&A pod that's right there on your screen. Okay, so I think people are probably typing in, and we'll catch up as we go along.

Our speakers earlier have shared a lot about the *Andrew* case, and I'm not going to repeat what they said; other than to say that, the decision of the *Andrew F. vs Douglas County School District* highlights the important roles parents, and family members, play in IEP development process. The FAQ released by OSEP emphasizes the input of parents, and family members, as pivotal to ensuring that the spirit of the law is met. An important point I want to make is that, what is included in this ruling is not anything different than what we already know and believe; particularly around the roles families play in the IEP



development. In fact, in many ways the emphasis plays on the need for families to be active participants in the IEP process, affirms what we value as a field, what we already know from research and practice. If you have not had a chance to review the FAQ yet, the folks that have put it out have found it very informative, and I think you will too, as you move forward to ensure your program is meeting the requirements of this new rule. Next slide.

Borrowing from Simon Sinek's ideas, let's start our conversation with why. Why is involving families in IEP development important? Why should we gather input from families in IEP development? Based on the core values we hold in our contemporary society, and evidence from decades of empirical studies, we know for a fact that in the majority of circumstances, families are the constant in the life of individuals with disabilities. Regardless of the age of the group of children we worked with, whether they're infants, or toddlers, elementary age, middle schoolers, secondary ed, and beyond, each of these children, each of these students, grow up. That's what we want for them to do, right? That means that whatever we as teachers, as professionals, are doing with them in the present, we must always remember that we will not be there with them in the future. The best decisions, plans, programs, we make today, impact not just the individual receiving those services at this particular point in their life, also the families and caregivers will continue to care for and be part of that individual's life, as they transition to the next program. Next slide.

Families are the most powerful partners we can have. Consider the quantity, and the quality, of information they possess, that can help generate meaningful IEP goals, and socially valid interventions that truly matter. Just as interventions look different for each and every child, there are many ways we can work together to create goals that are individualized. True partnerships with families can help us capitalize on those inner strengths that they bring to the table. Next slide.

Finally, it is important for us to remember that individuals, each one of us, did not develop in a vacuum. We are all part of our social world, our families, our communities; and thus, it is critical that we as teachers/providers, provide services that promote active participation in families in decision making related to their child, that leads to the development of a plan that supports families in achieving the goals that they hold for their child, and other family members. Next slide please.

Are there other reasons that you can think of why families should be co-creators of IEPs? Take a few seconds to share your ideas on the Q&A pod now. Alright, we'll post later. Alright. As mentioned earlier, I went into early childhood world, and in our field, we have systematically identified practices that we know, based on decades of research, in our collective values and professional wisdom, practices that make a positive impact on children and their families. DEC recommended practices are those with the highest expected leverage, and impact, and outcomes, provided basically the biggest bang. These practices are observable, they're non-visibility specific; but most importantly, they can be delivered in a lot of settings, and build on, but not duplicate, our standards for typical early childhood settings, such as the ones that are developed by our sister organization which is the National Association for Early Childhood Young ... Early Education of Young Children.

Practices specific to families include promoting the act of participation of families in decision making, the development of a service plan, as well as supporting families in achieving the goal they hold for their child and their families. Family practice encompasses three themes, as you can see on the slide. Family centered practices, practices that treat basically families with dignity and respect, individualized,



flexible, responsive to each families' unique circumstances. They also look at family capacity building practices. Those that include participatory opportunities, and experiences, that are afforded to families, to strengthen their skills and knowledge. Finally, practices that really build on professional collaboration.

What does research tell us, and what does it mean for our practice? The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education, recently released a joint policy statement on the importance of family engagement, to remind programs, including Part C and Part B, are to prioritize family engagement as a critical component of service delivery. The policy statement emphasizes that a child's need cannot be fully met without engaging their family. Family engagement strategies describing the policy statement that are relevant to special education programs, include establishing trusting relationship between families and professionals supporting their connections and capabilities, and developing relationships with partners in the community who support the family.

These strategies are central to our work, and should be embedded in our practices with families. Family centered practices are key to high quality services, and best when we're implementing these practice, we need to become partners, consultants, and problem solvers with the family; rather than experts who impart knowledge to the family. This requires a shift in our role, that we need to recognize and value the expertise families bring to the table. Families also have reported that many times they have not been part of ... they don't know ... families don't understand their specific [inaudible] One of the things we know, is that we need to really be able to build a time for them to gain the information that they need, at that particular moment, when they need it. Some of these things that we know from research is that, we need to build time into the process, to encourage ongoing discussions and not overwhelm families with all the information at one time.

Finally, supporting them through advocacy, by building connections between and among families, to share information with each other. When we think about the core of partnership ... I wanted to bring up this slide, because I want to talk about how communication is really at the heart of partnerships. Hancock, Beneke, and Cheatham, offer us some concrete suggestions on how to support the often power imbalance that are inherent in family-professional interaction. Often times we find that families are simply grateful for what they have, or that they fear losing services, or that they fear that there is a retaliation on the child. Us professionals need to become aware of how that imbalance impacts how they engage with us, in the services.

Thinking again, what are some of the strategies do you engage families with? What strategies, or new information, have you gained from all the speakers today, that you would like to try in your program at this time? So, to summarize, families are their children's first, and most important, teachers, advocates, and nurturers. As such, strong family engagement is central, and not supplemental to their success. We, all of us, have the responsibility to promote, and implement, a effective family engagement to improve children's learning development and wellness. In conclusion, one of the things I want to point out is that, families really must come away from interaction with us believing more in themselves, than when we started with them. Here's some resources for you to consider as you move forward in thinking about practices that you would like to use. Thank you very much.



Melody Arabo

"Lessons Learned from a General Education Teacher"

<<Melody Arabo: Good Afternoon. I'm pleased to be here today to share my lessons learned as a general education teacher, and special education parent. I've been a general education teacher in Michigan, where I've taught third grade for the last 16 years. I have young twins with disabilities; and once they reached preschool age, I was shocked by how much I struggled to navigate the IEP process. I didn't know what I didn't know, until I had to learn as a parent.

I had students with IEPs in the past, but I relied heavily on the resource teacher to lead, and I just followed along, and gave input when needed. I never had a true understanding of what an IEP should, or shouldn't, be. I know I'm not the only one. I also had very limited experience with kids with disabilities, especially in the classroom. It was only after I started to pay attention, that I recognized how ill prepared I was to teach students with disabilities properly. It struck me, that in over a decade of teaching, I never had a student with cerebral palsy, or down syndrome, or autism. I started questioning where those students were, and why they weren't in our school with their typically developing peers. Next slide.

My biggest takeaway from my experience is that there's a severe lack of preparation of general education teachers, in regards to special education students. We have outdated systems and structures. Self-contained classrooms, and center-based programs, have prevented me and my students from opportunities to teach, and learn, from students with special needs. My school did not have self-contained classrooms, so my staff did not have access to the training, and resources, that these other schools had. I have never been trained in IDEA law, IEP development and implementation, 504 plans, positive behavior supports, response intervention, seclusion restraints, or universal designs for learning. All things that would benefit any student in my class. These structures lead to culture and climate issues, because our staff is full, we're not equipped to teach kids with more significant disabilities. The attitude was that, those students do not belong in our school, and should be elsewhere. This is a reality in many places, even though 30 years of research show the opposite. Next slide.

What are the challenges that perpetuate this stifling culture and climate? General education and special education work in silos. They seem like two separate worlds. Funding is separate. Training is separate. Curriculum and resources are separate. For example, the resource for teachers in my district use a totally different reading curriculum than the general education teachers. I don't even know how their reading program works, but shouldn't I, so I can support the same type of instruction in my classroom? Many times instruction is separate. Even when students are not in self-contained classrooms, they're often pulled out of their gen ed classrooms, to receive support specific to their IEPs. Their gen ed teachers do not get to see the individualized instruction they get from their resource teacher, and that creates a barrier to collaboration.

My journey as a special education parent has been truly eye-opening experience, and has definitely made me a better teacher. Through all of these hurdles, I'd like to focus on possibilities. First, rethinking personnel preparation is important. OSEP offers 325A discretionary grants, focusing on interdisciplinary work for universities that support early childhood special education teachers, or service providers. The funds require that they're trained together with general education teachers. Think of how easy that could be, and how much they will learn from one another. There are approximately 40 grants funded for interdisciplinary work, reaching around 900 scholars.

Next, I would love to see special education training for all educators, so we can have high expectations for all students. One class in the teacher prep program, like I had in college, is not enough. It should be embedded throughout the preparation, and throughout our career. Ideally, we would move toward more inclusive practices, like co-teaching models, push in services, and universal design for learning techniques.

Lastly, we need greater awareness, and use of resources like IRIS center. It took me being a fellow with the U.S. Department of Education to learn about all of the important, and valuable, work that is being done at OSER. How great would it be if all teachers knew of these resources at the beginning of their career? I'm thrilled to see all of the progress being made here, by all the caring and committed people at the U.S. Department of Education. As both a parent, and teacher, I look forward to seeing how we can bring special education and general education together even more, in the future. Thank you.

Questions and Answers

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you Melody and Dr. Milagros Santos. We've received questions for our Drs. Lemons and Erickson. We'll have them join us at the podium to respond directly to those questions. After that, we'll have a moderated Q&A session with Dr. Rosa Santos, she'll be joining us again, Dr. Mitchell Yell, Dr. Kelly Henderson, and Dr. Barb Guy.

<<Chris Lemons: Okay. Thank you very much. We had one really interesting question, "Dr. Erickson, and Dr. Lemons, are seeming to provide different recommendations regarding goals. Dr. Erickson says don't pluck right from standards. Dr. Lemons gives examples of goals and objectives that are right from standards. What do they want to comment on this seemingly discrepancy?"

I think it's important to note that IEPs can include various types of goals. We both provided different recommendations of what those goals could look like. Ones like I provided examples of, and ones like Karen provided, are both appropriate to include in IEP. What is important is that the goals be ambitious, reasonably calculated, and challenging. I think both of us agreed upon that. It's important to note that goals, and even the types of goals, should also be individualized to the individual child. This is the IEP's job, is to determine what types of goals are appropriate.

I strongly agree with Karen's focus on generalization, so I would recommend that as students met the goals of the ones I provided examples of, so related to standards, as students are mastering that content, we really do need to consider developing additional goals that focus on generalizing that mastery content, in a broader way to other settings and other places throughout the school.

<<Karen Erickson: I would like to add that my focus was on students who have no significant cognitive disabilities. By definition, one of the biggest challenges that group of students has, is being able to generalize the skills that they've taught. If I'm working with students who can master the skills in one setting, and then generalize them, not the notion of generalization that means they can do the same thing with a different person, in a different place; but the true notion of generalization, meaning they can take those skills to accomplish a number of different things that we taught them for in the first place, then it makes sense to have a very skills focused kind of IEP.



When we're talking about children who can't generalize, who find it very difficult once they learn a skill, to then take it and use it to do something else, I think we need to think differently about those skills. Part of the point I was trying to make was, I wonder if part of the reason why many students with severe cognitive disabilities, appear to make all of the progress that they're going to make academically when they're children, as opposed to adolescents and young adults, is this mastery focus that we've always had. If we had from the beginning a focus in our goals and objectives where we're teaching those skills, but the goal isn't mastery, the goal is application and use.

Part of our conversation, as we were thinking about answering this question was, imagine if for students who participate in the ultimate assessment, based on ultimate achievement standards, who have annual goals, and either benchmarks or objectives, if the annual goal really focused on the application and use of the skill. Then, potentially the benchmarks and objectives could focus on the mastery of those skills. That, that's sort of this place where potentially we're more alike than it might have seemed on the surface as we were presenting.

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you for joining me again for a few ... one sec. Thank you for joining me again for a few questions that have come in for our participants. The first question is for Dr. Yell. The question is, "Does the Endrew educational benefit FAPE standard include both academic and behavioral progress?"

<<Mitchell Yell: Yes, it clearly does. The IDEA talks, and many points in the IDEA recognizes that our present level statements, our ambitions, our goals, must stress academic and functional needs; and functional needs being social skills, development, behavioral issues, communications. Those sorts of things. Also, it is important to recognize that when the District Court actually overturned their decision in the original Endrew case, it was really because of behaviors; that the IEP did not address behaviors appropriately. So, yes, it does address both academic, and any functional issues a child might have.

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you so much for that presentation Dr. Yell. Next question that came in is for Dr. Henderson. Kelly, you mentioned challenges related to trauma, and foster, and adoptive, and kinship, and other families. Can you tell us about some good resources of IEP teams, and educators, on trauma?

<<Kelly Henderson: Sure. Thanks for the question.

<<Janine Rudder: Sure.

<<Kelly Henderson: I've been learning a lot more about the impact of trauma. It's fortunate that a lot of good materials, and resources, are out there. I wanted to just highlight a couple that I would mention off the top of my head. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, that's a mouthful but the acronym is NCTSN.org, has a huge number of resources designed for families, as well as for professionals in the mental health field, and education field. That is largely supported by SAMHSA.

Another good resource speaks to the research being done around adverse childhood experiences, which is a set of ten experiences that children have during their youth, that we find have been correlated strongly with really, unfortunately, negative outcomes if those issues are not addressed early in childhood. Those adverse childhood experiences, that research in that area, the resources around that, more information about ACES, can be found at acestoohigh.com, aces too, t-o-o high dot com, about a lot of really good resources for educators and for families there.



<<Janine Rudder: Thank you so much for providing those resources. Another question came in for Barb Guy. "How does the work you're doing to increase effectiveness of specially designed instruction connect to development of the IEP?"

<<Barbara Guy: So, that ... one thing we know for sure is that IEP teams have to get it right. In our past, in terms of general supervision, and the technologies that were available to us, when people would ask a question, we'd try to give them an answer that ended up being a little bit more black and white, and more procedural, than possible. What ended up happening is, people focused on getting the wording right. As I mentioned before, we lost the individualization, and the focus on instruction.

<<Barbara Guy: The work we've been doing really focuses on the planning, and the diagnosis; going through those four steps of SDI, specially designed instruction, and not the documentation of it. What we're finding in working, with teachers, and IEP teams, and actually building teams, is that teachers are going back and identifying that they may not have identified the right area to work on. They are changing the skill area in the goal. Many times, unfortunately, because of our focus on SMART goals, we ended up writing goals we could measure, and not necessarily goals that are what the skill needed for instruction. We're finding new ways to change that, or to write better goals that are linked to standards.

Also, we're finding, or hearing, from our participants that general education teachers, and special education teachers are having more authentic conversations because they are around the standards and skills that students will be teaching, and are seeing the connections better; which we think will improve participation in IEP meetings. We're really focusing on specially designed instruction, not the documentation in the IEP. We're also trying to find ways in the State, I didn't talk about this, to reduce the time that's spent away from instruction. Simpler ways to develop an IEP, to write it; so we're not spending as much time in paperwork, as we were.

One last thing on that, then I'll let you ask your next question. Which is that, we're also finding that in the IEP itself, people have forgotten that, that special education can be throughout the full day, so that's the piece of that access. Access is about the full day, not just accessing instruction within an IEP goal.

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you Barb, for those insights. The next question's actually for you, again. Before we get started, I just wanted to remind everybody to speak up, myself included. Barb, "For States that have locally controlled districts, how have the SEA ensured new FAPE requirements are being met?"

<<Barbara Guy: I think I want to start with the fact that I disagree that these are new FAPE requirements; that it might be a new articulation, or a better articulation, of FAPE requirements. I think the requirements have always been there, and actually NASDSE, the National Association for State Directors of Special Education, wrote an amicus brief for *Andrew F.*, that I think articulates what many States have already been doing. If they haven't been looking at some of those things with general supervision, I think you should take a look at that brief.

I also would say that OSEP's movement to results based accountability within our monitoring side, has really put a lot of attention to States on what we might be able to do to put more emphasis on results, and less on the procedural side of compliance. Not that it doesn't matter to have it correct procedurally, but that if it's correct procedurally but doesn't make any difference for a student, that we know we need to do something a little bit better.

<<Janine Rudder: Alright, thank you. Now we have a question for Dr. Milagros Santos. "What's the most important thing that a family member could do at the IEP meeting?"

<< Rosa Milagros Santos: Okay, that's a great question. I think it's ... if you think about ... I guess, for families, I want to say recognize the fact that we are all busy, and it's hard. One of the things that could help families most at an IEP meeting is, come prepared. What I mean by that is, that's really coming to a meeting with questions on hand, with ideas that they might have. Most of all, I think they need to probably get some information beforehand. If there's a way for them to talk with the teacher, or somebody in the school to ask a little bit more information; because often times families come into these meetings, it's their first time coming to the IEP meeting, not understanding what the process is.

Having some background, or maybe talking to another parent, if there's another parent who has gone through the same process, and get some more information. I think coming prepared to the meeting really will help them be able develop some questions that they might have, that they can ask at the meeting. They can also then be able to think about if they want to bring an advocate with them. Perhaps there's some issues that they're not agreeing, and maybe not sure that's something they can bring up. Having somebody with them to be able to advocate, to speak up for them, to speak on their behalf, would be a great way to help prepare for that.

I think what's most important, and I think what families really bring at the table is the ability to go in and share about their child, about their family. The information that they have is so important, that I think we tend to ... it gets diminished as children get older, because a lot of the things we look at, when we look at a child, is what happens in school. We forget, this child, outside of the eight hours, or six hours, that they might be in school, lives at home; and they have other things that are going on. That family can bring that information to the teachers, to the programs when they come to the IEP meeting.

Preparation, important, and asking questions, making sure that they really take the time to ask questions. Lastly, I want to say, when they are at the IEP meeting, take time, ask for time, if you can, to consider any new information that's presented to them at the IEP meeting. I don't think parents should be compelled to sign anything right there and then, if they're not prepared to be able to consent to any new information that they have not had before, and have had time to consider them. I think to ask for that time to say, "Okay. Let me take this home, let me get back to you tomorrow. Or, can I think about this a little bit, before we sign off on this?" I think, again, be prepared, ask questions, and again, take time. Ask for time if needed, when presented information you're not quite sure about.

<<Kelly Henderson: I would just add to that great answer, and that your parent training and information centers, and your community parent resource centers in your State, and local area, can be really helpful to preparing you as parents, helping you prepare parents/caregivers for the IEP meeting. They have great resources, and lots of training; so, use those resources .

<< Rosa Milagros Santos: Absolutely.

<<Janine Rudder: Thank you, for providing those really important points on how parents can be meaningful contributors to the IEP meeting. Much appreciated. That concludes the questions that I have for you during this time. I think this is the end of this portion. Before we close, I just wanted to thank all of the speakers. Huge thank you to all of you; and then participants, we hope that you come away with a



policy, and research foundation, for understanding high quality IEPs, and supports, and high expectations, that must be present to meet a child's individual needs.

For our next symposium, we'll explore what high quality IEPs actually mean in practice, specifically will delve deeper into what educators, and leaders, need to develop and implement high quality IEPs; and how we can support those needs. During our last, and final, symposium, we'll learn about how education agencies, families, and other stakeholders, are working together to develop and implement high quality IEPs.

Additionally, again, thank you to all the participants for all of your questions. If your question was not answered by our panelist, we'll be sure to include it in the collaboration space. If you come up with a question after we close today, please log on to the collaboration space and add your question to the conversation. Also, was just such a pleasure to be a part of this truly enriching discussion. Thank you, and we're really looking forward to the next symposium.