

March 12 SpEd Series – The ABC’s of IEPs

Quick recap

The meeting focused on IEP implementation and compliance, led by Dr. Lane, who discussed the importance of a structured system for special education services. Participants explored common IEP failure points, including procedural and content issues, and examined a case study of a student with intellectual disabilities who graduated with a high GPA but struggled academically. The group analyzed potential warning signs and responsibilities of various administrators in such cases, emphasizing the need for clear roles and data-driven progress monitoring. Dr. Lane highlighted the importance of maintaining documentation, communicating with parents, and ensuring that IEPs align with students' needs and state requirements.

Summary

IEP Implementation and Compliance

Dr. Lane discussed the importance of structurally protecting IEP implementation to ensure legal compliance, emphasizing that it cannot rely on individual effort but requires a coordinated system of leadership and accountability. They explained key components of IEPs, including FAPE, LRE, procedural safeguards, and the use of SMART goals, highlighting the need for progress monitoring and baseline data to measure student growth. The discussion also touched on the challenges faced when IEP implementation depends on a single person and the role of various stakeholders in ensuring compliance and supporting students with disabilities.

IEP Implementation and Service Delivery

Dr. Lane discussed common IEP failure points, including missed timelines, team composition issues, and weak present levels of performance. They emphasized the importance of data accuracy in special education systems and staffing oversight, including master scheduling and caseload management. Dr. Lane also highlighted the need for service logs to verify that services are delivered as written in the IEP and addressed challenges with provider shortages. The discussion concluded with a question about managing service delivery difficulties and the potential use of the 311 model for service delivery.

Service Delivery and Staffing Challenges

The discussion focused on the 311 model for service delivery, where Jessica explained that their district moved away from this model due to legal concerns about how services were

documented on IEPs. Dr. Lane emphasized the importance of maintaining proper documentation and parent communication when service delivery is inconsistent. The conversation then shifted to staffing challenges, particularly regarding TA coverage across different buildings, with Kristen describing how staff are willing to move between schools to cover for absent colleagues due to significant staff shortages. The discussion concluded with an overview of operational systems, highlighting the roles of school business officials in managing financial structures and the director of curriculum instruction in supporting IEP implementation.

IEP System Alignment and Accountability

Dr. Lane presented a holistic view of the IEP system using a pyramid model and state alignment frameworks, explaining how IEPs connect both special education and general education aspects. The discussion focused on understanding why principals would be interested in aspects like Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placements, with participants noting fiscal, compliance, and equity reasons as key motivations. Dr. Lane also outlined various IDEA indicators including discipline rates, graduation metrics, assessment participation, and transition planning, emphasizing the importance of coordination between in-district and out-of-district placements for accurate accountability tracking.

Student Transition and Support Planning

The discussion focused on transition planning and support for students, particularly those in CTE and work-based learning programs. Trina explained that their District 75 program has a Transition Coordinator who works with families to obtain OPWDD eligibility, which is crucial for accessing VR support and employment services after leaving the district. The conversation also covered the importance of IEP implementation and risk awareness, with Dr. Lane suggesting the development of a role clarity matrix to define responsibilities across different positions in the district for monitoring and implementing special education services.

Special Education Role Implementation

Deborah discussed implementing new roles in their district, including an IEP coordinator and transition coordinator, which has improved family engagement and support at IEP meetings. Karen emphasized the importance of clearly defining roles and responsibilities through documented charts, which helps both staff and parents understand responsibilities. Dr. Lane then outlined the need for structural protection in special education, including clear workflows, accountability measures, and regular monitoring to ensure compliance and continuity of practice. The discussion concluded with an overview

of an active lawsuit involving a student named McCain, highlighting claims of educational malpractice and improper diploma awarding, and prompting reflection on potential early warning indicators that school leaders should have identified regarding the student's progress.

IEP Compliance and Monitoring Review

The meeting focused on analyzing a case involving a student with an intellectual disability who received a high GPA despite poor academic performance on assessments.

Participants discussed various warning signs that should have been addressed, including inconsistent progress monitoring, unmet IEP goals, and discrepancies between academic assessments and grades. The group explored potential system failures at multiple levels, including instructional, operational, and legal compliance, and identified actions administrators could take to prevent similar issues, such as reviewing progress data, ensuring proper goal alignment, and improving curriculum alignment.