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S'more About SEP's

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Homeschooling a struggling learner

Homeschooling is not without challenges--especially when it comes to teaching struggling learners and children with special needs. This newsletter will introduce you to some resources which may help you with the challenge of developing a Student Education Plan (SEP).

Dilemma

"Mom A," a very conscientious mom who was in her first year of homeschooling, told me she and her son were schooling from early morning until 10 p.m. "Mom A" explained why they were adhering to that schedule. They had to meet the deadline requirements established by the curriculum provider who would be awarding the grades for each class in which her son was enrolled.

That mom's voice conveyed her exhaustion and also her fear that her son, a slower processor, was equating learning with misery, and that he would ultimately "just plain give up." Clearly, both mom and son were candidates for burnout.

I commended "Mom A" for her obvious diligence in homeschooling her son. Since she was sending out an SOS, I gave her some ideas for modifying her program. I explained that "to modify" means "to make changes." That mom elected to make those changes on her own.

Direction

Modifying a program, a curriculum, or daily plans to meet the needs of your student is really what the SEP is all about.

If they choose, parents can develop their own SEP in conjunction with a learning disabilities specialist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, reading specialist, speech/language pathologist, or other professional. You may want to review pages 38-39 of the [November/December 2009 Court Report](#). One of the Frequently Asked Questions addressed there is, "How can I develop an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) for my child?" PLEASE NOTE: We call an IEP for home educators a Student Education Plan.

Parents sometimes "transfer" goals from their child's public school IEP into an SEP. Parents don't have to "dream up" the wording for SEP goals for their children. That work has already been done by some experienced homeschool parents and other professionals. I own and have described these widely used resources to parents:

The IEP Manual: A Functional Skills Curriculum for the Home Schooled Handicapped Student by Debby Mills

Debby and husband Jim removed their son from a public school program for the severely handicapped to school him at home. She calls the IEP a "blueprint for a child's individual education." She has developed the Functional Curriculum "which will prepare the student--regardless of functioning level--with everyday living skills for life." The Functional Curriculum is organized into six basic categories: domestic, vocational, community, academic, recreation-leisure, and character spiritual. This one-inch thick book contains IEP-type forms, outlines of skills for ages 2 through high school, and so much more.

The Student Education Plan (SEP)--A Preparation Guide by Judith Munday

Judy defines the SEP as "a document which accurately describes the present skills and needs of a student, using recent test

data if available, and then links to those documented needs the specific goals necessary for the student to achieve measurable educational progress." Her book contains suggested wording for annual goals and also short term goals. She includes sample SEPs which you (or someone working with you) could use as guides for preparing your own SEP. She explains the difference between modifications and accommodations and why documentation of them in the SEP may be critical for your student's college entrance testing as well as his performance on tests in the college setting.

Note: Judy has also written the book *Teaching Your Special Needs Student: Strategies and Tools That Really Work*. In that book she discusses direct instruction, choosing curriculum materials, study strategies, assistive technology, testing, and also use of graphic organizers and rubrics.

IDOC--Individual Documentation System by Sharon Wallace and Julia Hoch

Between the two of them, Sharon and Julia have 35 years of experience homeschooling their children (including ones with special needs). After homeschooling for many years, Sharon went on to earn a master's degree in special education.

The IDOC (Individual Documentation System) is filled with samples of different forms and explanations about using them. Included are forms for step-by-step charting of progress as well as monthly learning logs. Those sample learning logs cover elementary, junior high, and high school levels. The authors also "spell-out" using and documenting accommodations.

The IDOC contains some valuable information about awarding diplomas and/or certificates of completion.

This resource should greatly simplify your record keeping.

These resources can be very helpful to you if you want to write an IEP/SEP for your child. However, like "Mom A," you have the right on your own to make changes to your child's program when the need arises.

"Dial" Us

I expect this newsletter to generate more questions. Please know that HSLDA is more than an organization. It is people dedicated to helping our members. Faith Berens, Dianne Craft, and Betty Statnick, of the HSLDA Special Needs Department, are available to assist you with your questions and concerns about SEPs and other matters.



This resource is provided by the Home School Legal Defense Association's Struggling Learner's newsletter as a service to the homeschooling community.

To subscribe join HSLDA or visit its website, please click here.

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