



National Center on Advancing Person-Centered Practices and Systems

Student-Directed Individualized Education Plan (IEP): Bringing Person-Centered Practices to Schools and Beyond

Summary of a webinar from October 27, 2020

Introduction

This webinar is about Individualized Education Plans (also called IEPs). This is a plan to help students with learning differences. A person-centered approach to IEP means helping students be in charge of their IEP.

Miso Kwak, Project Coordinator for NCAPPS, led the panel. The panelists shared their stories and ideas about how to create person-centered IEPs.

When asked what is most important in an IEP, Mary Abby says, “That I have a voice in the different struggles that I have and that the IEP team is also aware of my strengths.”

Tool and Strategies for IEP Meetings

Panelists talked about helpful tools to use in IEPs. Beth uses the Charting the LifeCourse Portfolio. This helps students think about their goals. Emily likes to use “pre-paving”. This is a way to prepare all year long for the IEP meeting. Students get practice being in leadership roles and having their voice heard.

Lynn said it is important to come up with a vision. One way to do this is through a person-centered planning (PCP) meeting. It is separate from the IEP meeting. It is a place for a vision to take shape. The PCP meeting is creative and celebratory. It identifies the student’s strengths and barriers.

Sara says, “When I was younger everything was handled through my parents. But now I am involved in my meetings and I advocate for what I need.”

Words of Advice

The panelists were asked what advice they would give to people about IEPs. Mary Abby recommends that the student is prepared for the IEP meeting beforehand. A team member can explain the IEP process.

As an Occupational Therapist and Transition Specialist, Emily says it is important to always tune into the student. She is always trying to get to know the student better. And find goals that are important to them.



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Lynn talked about the ways that she gets support from other parents. Lynn also finds ways to educate herself about transition. She tries to step back and listen to what her daughter wants.

Beth says it is important to start this process early and give young people choices. She says, “As much as we want to give them the dignity to succeed, they need the dignity to fail.”






Sara would tell her younger self, “Don’t worry about speaking up and don’t panic. I would tell younger students be confident and brave in yourself for telling your team what you need.”

Mary Abby would tell students to learn how to speak up for what they need. She points out that it can be hard for young people to tell adults what they need. She says to practice different ways to ask for things. Even the small things to build your confidence.



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The speakers on this webinar were:

 A portrait of Sara, a young woman with dark hair, smiling.	<p>My name is Sara and I'm twenty-one years old. I have athetoid Cerebral Palsy. Athetoid Cerebral Palsy is a movement disorder caused by damage to the developing brain. This type of Cerebral Palsy is described by an unusual, unwilling movement. This inability to control muscle tone is what causes Cerebral Palsy symptoms. I am graduating from Cotting School this year. I love art and hope to study graphic design.</p>
 A portrait of Elizabeth (Beth) Bostic, a woman with dark hair, smiling.	<p>Elizabeth (Beth) Bostic is the proud parent and humble servant of King James, a 20-year-old medically complex young man. She is a seasoned Special Education Advocate who is highly respected by parents, school administrators and other stakeholders across Massachusetts. She is a Board Member of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, LEND Adjunct Faculty at UMASS Medical, an Executive MBA candidate at Suffolk University, Charting the Life Course Ambassador and member of the Special Needs Advocacy Network.</p>
 A portrait of Emily Berheide, a woman with blonde hair, smiling.	<p>Emily Berheide, OTR/L, M.Ed. is a Talent Discovery Specialist and Transition Consultant. She is passionate about helping youth discover their unique areas of talent and recognize their true potential! Emily works with a diverse population of youth in middle school, high school and transition programs. Her work focuses on engaging teachers and students in identifying students' areas of intelligence and natural aptitudes and connecting those with work opportunities. Emily provides professional development trainings for schools, organizations and family groups on topics such as The Power of Having a Vision, Student-Directed IEP meetings, Discovering Talents and Supported Decision-Making.</p>
 A portrait of Mary Abby, a woman with dark hair, smiling.	<p>Mary Abby is a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts Boston studying to become a teacher of students with visual impairments. Her passion lies in pursuing equality, equity and diversity within the classroom. During her undergraduate time at Rhode Island College, she was the president of the Advocacy and Beyond Club, a student-run organization whose goal was to promote diversity and inclusion throughout the community. She is currently working as an assistive technology coordinator at In-Sight.</p>
 A portrait of Lynn Waskelis, a woman with brown hair, smiling.	<p>Lynn Waskelis is mother to Maggie; who attends Perkins School for the Blind, and who will transition from school to adult services in 2022. Maggie communicates using Augmentative and Alternative Communication, or AAC. She currently uses Touchchat on an iPad. Building from Perkins' person-centered approach to the transition IEPs; Lynn has supported Maggie, and worked with her team to move toward a <i>Maggie-driven</i> IEP and transition to adult life.</p>