



AT A GLANCE

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The IEP Wheel of Misfortune

September 2012 Newsletter

How often are IEP meetings focused on what students can do well, areas where they shine, fascinations they have, favorite activities to do, friends they have, or what they're interested in learning? If you answer, "Not often," you may be caught on the IEP Wheel of Misfortune.

What is the IEP Wheel of Misfortune? A never-ending collection of negative test scores, lists of deficits, annual goals recycled every year, generic accommodations and modifications, and services and supports available only in special education rooms. When IEP team members operate from the mindset of needing to fix the student, or to get the student ready—forcing the child to earn the right to be educated in general education classrooms—the Wheel of Misfortune continues to spin.

So, what can IEP team members (both educators and parents) do differently to generate better outcomes for students? Focus on the whole person: what the student likes to do in his free time, what types of books he enjoys, what he likes to collect, his favorite video or computer games, and more. Gather similar information from others who know the student at school and other settings. Share this treasure trove with the IEP team.

Next, use this information in designing instructional strategies. How can a teacher use the student's strengths and interests to enhance the student's learning? There's no box for this on the IEP form, but it can easily be added to the sections about Strengths, Interests, and Preferences or to the Accommodations/Modifications section of an IEP.

As an example, John knows details about every Disney movie that's ever been made: the release date, the characters, much of the dialogue, and more. How can this information be translated into instructional strategies and help educators teach John new skills? A teacher can help John compare the Disney movie with the book version. If John has difficulty with reading, a digital version of the book could be provided, the book could be read aloud by a peer, or text-to-speech software could be used. To work on math skills, John could write down five release dates of Disney movies and put them in the correct chronological order. He could write a letter to an actor who played one of the main characters and ask how he or she prepared for the role. To see more examples of connecting strengths and instructional strategies, in the resources section of my website, [click here](#).

IEPs that focus on deficits and weaknesses create a downward spin of frustration, low expectations, and inadequate education—a dismal outcome for too many students. Fortunately, there are teachers and parents across this country who are changing this scenario: they focus on children's abilities and teach to strengths and interests, yielding a much brighter Wheel of Possibilities!

Identify your vision:

Base your vision on the student's strengths and dreams!

Use your voice:

Speak the truth, every student has gifts!

Work together: Help the student realize their abilities and how they can be capitalized on.

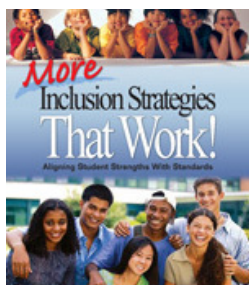
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Resources



Websites



More Inclusion Strategies That Work! Aligning Student Strengths with Standards by Toby J Karten

This great reference book focuses on using students' strengths when learning new concepts.



Dr. Kathleen Ross-Kidder does an excellent job addressing how students can learn in different ways and the importance of finding each students' hidden talents! [Click here](#) to read the article.

Please let me know if you're interested in one of my presentations and/or customized consulting and coaching.

Remember, what we anticipate, determines what we find!

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As a parent and an educator, I bring 35+ years of experience and enthusiasm to create positive change for students, families, and educators!

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