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—Making the IEP Process Easier and Better—

As a retired special educator, general educator, and parent of a son who received special education services, I have attended hundreds of IEP meetings and helped write more IEPs than I would like to remember! Like other educators, there were times I was so focused on writing measurable annual goals and dotting the i's and crossing the t's, that I forgot about the big picture. But there are ways to make the IEP process easier and better for all.

When looking at educational goals, it's important to step back and look at the big picture. How will the student's life be richer as a result of achieving a certain goal? How will the student's goals contribute to the child's present and future success? What does the student want to do in his/her life and how can we support the child's dreams?

In the land of special education law, Individual Education Programs (IEPs) include specific annual measurable goals. Instead of leaping into writing how the learner is going to do what, under what circumstances, with what materials, at what level of achievement, and on and on...*begin with the end in mind*. What's really important to the student? For example, does the student want to become a better reader so he/she can enjoy the latest *Harry Potter* book, read the sports section of the newspaper, or read and respond to Emails and Facebook messages? Using what's important to the student can motivate the student *and* help parents and teachers get focused on the most appropriate goals.

A [Student Profile](#), a "whole child" description of a student, that includes the child's strengths, what has/hasn't worked in the past, and other critical information can help students, parents, and educators have a common starting point for writing an appropriate IEP. Another tool is the [IEP Planner](#)—a way for students and parents to organize their ideas about the IEP. Teachers will also find this tool useful for sharing valuable information about the child with other staff members. Both of these tools are available on my [website](#), and they can help make the IEP process easier and better!

Identify your vision: **What is the big picture for the child's future?**

Use your voice: **Plan ahead for the input you can give at IEP meetings.**

Work together: **Develop meaningful educational plans that will engage students.**

Read previous issues of my newsletter on my website. [Click here](#). Please let me know if you're interested in one of my presentations and/or customized consulting and coaching.

What we anticipate, determines what we find!
Charmaine Thaner