

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING GOALS AND TARGETS



By: Brett Speed

Brett Speed is a teacher and assistant principal at Dorset Primary School

Introduction

At our school we use Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to set individual goals and targets. IEPs are used to identify strengths or areas of improvement for a student's learning and are written following assessments and classroom observations.

We use IEPs to promote and monitor growth, to build confidence, and to develop knowledge and competence of specific topics and skills. They incorporate goal setting, data tracking and targeted strategies to assist development and synthesise the learning process. These documents are an essential tool when modifying programs as they support a teacher to track, record and review data, performance and engagement in a centralised location. They provide the student, family, teacher and leaders within the school environment with a snapshot of learning and what modifications, supports and strategies have been utilised over time.

Purpose

Individual Education Plans are a key component in supporting the learner and strengthening the home/school partnership. They can assist a teacher to build strong relationships with parents and families, and be helpful in securing the involvement of parental support with home-based tasks and activities. The importance of these relationships cannot be underestimated, with most families willing to support their young learners at home. The key is to negotiate the level of work to be completed, the timeframe and to keep the communication lines open between school and home, checking in regularly on progress.

Creating the plan

Teachers create the IEP in consultation with the student, focusing on a specific area of learning. When created with the student an IEP encourages the student to take ownership of their learning can encourage greater independence in the classroom. Communication is important in the early stages of IEP development, and as a graduate teacher it will be useful to discuss the structure of the IEP and how it used at your school with more experienced colleagues.

The IEP should outline strategies required to address the particular needs of a student in different classroom situations. Flexibility is key to the success of these documents, with opportunities for the student to work on goals in both the classroom and home settings.

When formulating an IEP it is important to know the interests of the students. If you have a student with an intense interest in sport, then focus the learning around the interest first. This will help to build student confidence and your rapport with the student. For example, for a student who loves football and requires work with comprehension, you can identify texts in your library that will be suitable for the student's interest and skill level. This might seem an obvious thing to do, but it demonstrates to the student that you have taken an interest in them and their interests. Writing the details into the IEP will help parents and carers and also any teacher who may come in to support your class e.g. Casual Relief Teachers.

The IEP should also consider that key inquiry question 'where to next?':

- If the student is successful at completing this goal, how can I consolidate their learning?
- How can I engage the student in an area they are not interested in?
- What contribution do students on IEPs need from home and how can I support that?

Implementing the plan

Work with the student in small groups or one on one in class, highlighting and reinforcing the strategies you are setting them up to use outside of school.

The plan might focus on using resources that are readily available and providing them to the student to use at home. Activities could include but are not limited to watching support clips, hands on practise of the skill, strategy-based worksheets, games, puzzles or readings for parental assistance. Providing a multitude of learning experiences for the student allows them to identify the style that best works for them, so accommodate them where possible.

IEPs can also be utilised as part of a transition process, providing information to a new staff member and ensuring reviewed areas or newly introduced concepts are monitored closely. These documents can also identify patterns and trends that occur throughout the schooling journey of a particular student, ensuring they are catered for in a variety of settings.

Creating documentation that supports or extends students allows for formalised tracking of student performance, whilst also honing skill sets and maintaining routine checks. Within your classroom, these documents become a focal point, allowing you to document learning goals for specific student, and monitor whether these have been achieved or require further work.

A school example

In my school, we regularly review data to ensure those above or below the expected Victorian Curriculum and specific year level benchmarks in literacy or numeracy are identified, targeted and have program modification to cater for their individualised and specific needs. A range of assessment tools including

Running Records, PROBE reading comprehension assessments, moderation of work samples and anecdotal records are utilised to triangulate data. School leaders discuss individual student needs and what additional supports need to be put in place to address these. Goals are reviewed each term, with assessments completed ensuring data is up to date and relevant. During these discussions, educators can also identify what has worked well in the past, how students respond to the strategies and work in the classroom and what learning needs to take place in order to meet or exceed the benchmarks.

Introductory meetings are held with families of students requiring an IEP, ensuring they are aware of the supports put into place, for extension and support. Regular contact is maintained with the family, ensuring consolidation is taking place outside of school as well as inside.

Focus group teaching sessions and individual conferences are held regularly to ensure the student with the IEP is benefiting from the strategies and making progress. Regular check-ins, both formal and informal, let the student know that you are monitoring their learning and provide an opportunity to give constructive and specific feedback for improvement. Explicit modelling of strategies and reinforcement of expected learning are completed where possible, with supportive documentation, strategies and activities provided where possible. Individual goal review sessions are completed, with pre-arranged meeting times for the family to attend to discuss progress, accessibility or concerns and provide feedback.

The challenges

If you are using an IEP with a student, it's important to stay organised. Have an action plan mapped out as to how you are going to monitor the progress of the goals. Utilising a S.M.A.R.T. goal format is essential. The goal needs to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. (more information on SMART goals is contained in the article in [this edition by Noah Kim](#).)

Examples of IEP goals

{Name} will continue to build on previously learnt mathematical concepts and topics through visual and hands on activities daily. {He/She} will engage in whole class tuning in sessions followed by small group focus sessions to consolidate learning.

{Name} will practise {his/her} spelling words daily focusing on the 100 common word list and attempting to use the correct spelling through a range of activities including visual, rhyming, word building and written tasks at both home and at school.

The document needs to state individual and shared responsibilities and document all of the supports in place at home and school. It should address the following:

- What strategies are going to be incorporated to ensure the learning is maximised?
- How will the content be monitored and assessed?
- Will the frequency of the IEP occur weekly, fortnightly, monthly or across the term?

Another stumbling block that you may come across is minimal interest from the student or lack of support on the home front. If this is the case, it's important to persist and remind yourself that the document supports your plan for intervention and extension. Continue to use the plan to document strategies and

progress, and be consistent about applying the components in your classroom sessions. The work that you put into the document is valuable. Continue to work on building strong relationships with the student and family and persist with your plan.

I have provided examples of the templates that we are currently using:

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN (ILP)		
Home / School Learning		
Name:	Focus Area: Extension	Date: 26/2/18 Term: 1 2 3 4
Assessments and Achievements:		
2018: PROBE Level		
TERM 4	Set 19 Non-Fiction Comprehension 30% Not Achieved	
2019:		
TERM 1	Set 19 Fiction Comprehension 60% Not Achieved	
TARGET	Set 20	
S.M.A.R.T. Goal/s:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current fictional text, providing in depth character analysis, synopsis / overview and give an appraisal of the book by the end of term. This will be displayed as an alternative book jacket and will be completed during Independent Reading sessions. Utilise the clues within the text to make inferences, personalise reactions to the events, problems and solutions and evaluate the responses/choices of the characters. 		
How you can help at home:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging the use of daily notes on the characters and events. Discussing aspects of the text after a quick recap and justifying responses with evidence from the text. 		
Next Date: Week 4, Term 2		
Signatures:		

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN (ILP)		
Home / School Learning		
Name:	Focus Area: Mathematics - Number	Date: 26/2/19 Term: 1 2 3 4
Assessments and Achievements:		
Essential Assessment number test (EA)		
2019:		
TERM 1	Essential Assessment General number test – level 3.5 64% (2.5-4 range test)	
TARGET	EA general number test – level 4 40% (3.5-5 range test)	
2019:		
TERM 2	EA general number test – level 4.0 46% (3.5-5 range test)	
TARGET	EA general number test – level 3 60% (3.5-5 range test)	
S.M.A.R.T. Goal/s:		
To utilise hands on materials or visual aids to assist in the completion of number based tasks. Student will provide working out to problems daily in focus group sessions to consolidate on learning.		
How you can help at home:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch the 'counting on' strategy on Mathematics and apply to Questions 1-6] Utilise Mathematics at home to consolidate on topics from the classroom. Play games that involve simple addition/subtraction including a range of card or dice games – see attachment for examples. Completing "real world" examples of addition and subtraction e.g. shopping, renovation plans etc. 		
Next Date: Week 4, Term 2.		
Signatures:		

A key takeaway

IEPs can be used to extend and support students with specific needs at both ends of the educational continuum. Refer to the Victorian Curriculum F-10 to identify the achievement standards for each level. They can be used to target specific learning goals and provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning by helping them to identify what success looks like when completing independent work.

These plans are only as effective as you make them. If you can agree goals in collaboration with students and families, you are diligent about monitoring and recording progress, and you regularly review them, your plans will have an impact.

Discussion with your mentor

With your mentor:

- Discuss how your class is tracking in general and raise any concerns or queries you have about any specific students. Collect evidence for this discussion.
- Check that you are using the correct school-based template and that you understand all sections of the template (and suggest improvements if you have found other examples in your research).
- You can also work with your mentor to co-write an IEP. This could be a helpful learning exercise for both of you.
- Ask a mentor if you could observe an IEP parent meeting they are holding.

Further Reading

Department of Education and Training 2019, Support students with additional learning needs, viewed 6 August 2019, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/default.aspx>

Department of Education and Training n. d., Individual learning goals and targets: Developing, monitoring and reporting on individual learning goals and targets, viewed 6 August 2019, <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/teachingresources/reporting/goalsandtargetsstages.pdf>