



Foundations of Special Education

By Dr. Kathleen VanTol

Chapter 12: Writing a Plan

Discussion Questions

1. The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is often described as the roadmap for a student's education. Why is this an appropriate description? What information does the IEP provide that helps guide educational decision-making?
2. Parents are required members of the IEP team. Why is parent participation so important, and what unique information do families contribute to the development of an effective IEP?
3. The chapter emphasizes the use of person-first language while also acknowledging that some individuals prefer identity-first language. Why is it important for educators to be aware of both perspectives?
4. The Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP) serves as the foundation of the IEP. Why is it important that every annual goal, service, and accommodation can be traced back to information contained in the PLAAFP?
5. Annual goals should address disability-related needs rather than simply restating the curriculum. Why is this distinction important when developing an individualized educational program?

6. Well-written annual goals include measurable criteria. How could you turn an idea such as “Understands multiplication” into a goal that is observable and measurable?
7. Progress monitoring is an essential component of every IEP. How does regularly collecting data help teachers make better instructional decisions throughout the school year?
8. Special education is a service rather than a place. How does understanding this distinction influence decisions about where students receive instruction?
9. Supplementary aids and services are intended to reduce barriers to participation. Choose two examples from the chapter and explain how they help students participate more successfully in the general education classroom.
10. Accommodations and modifications are often confused. Explain the difference between the two and describe a situation in which each might be appropriate.
11. IDEA requires that placement decisions be made only after the IEP has been developed. Why is it important to determine a student's educational needs before deciding where services will be provided?
12. The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requires schools to educate students with disabilities alongside their nondisabled peers whenever appropriate. What factors should the IEP team consider when making placement decisions?
13. Most students with disabilities participate in the same state and districtwide assessments as their peers. What documentation is needed so that a student with a disability will have access to appropriate testing accommodations during these assessments?

14. Confidentiality is a legal and ethical responsibility for educators. Why is protecting student information important, and how can teachers balance confidentiality with the need to collaborate with other professionals?
15. An effective IEP is the product of collaboration among educators, families, related service providers, and the student. Which member of the IEP team do you think has the most challenging role, and why?

About the Author

Dr. Kathleen VanTol has over 35 years of experience working in the field of education. She holds a doctorate in special education from Western Michigan University and is a professor of special education at Dordt University. She is also a Board Certified Behavior Analyst and a Board Certified Advocate in Special Education.

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