

Software Solution for IEP Management

Context:

Eltown Area High School has had a one-on-one laptop program for three years. The school's performance goal is to improve upon teachers' communication of individualized education plans (IEPs) for special needs students. (This directive was based off a school needs assessment survey and subsequent conversation.) As it stands, the documents are written by special ed teachers after school, and many documents need to be rewritten after each IEP meeting. Because the current system is paper-based, regular education teachers must receive a copy of this sensitive text in their mailboxes. There have been cases where student schedules have been switched and the new regular education teacher had been unaware that the added student needed instructional IEP modifications. Given the legality of IEP documents, traveling teachers lock them in their filing cabinets and do not have them at hand when they teach in different classrooms.

The Technology Integration Specialist has been assigned to lead an IEP Communication Improvement initiative by implementing the use of an application called *IEP Anywhere*. *IEP Anywhere* is a user-friendly mobile technology that allows special ed teachers to write, manage, and report IEPs from any place with an internet connection. It updates quickly to reflect state and federal changes, and it allows unlimited contributors to each document. While that lessens the burden for teachers leaving their classes to attend IEP meetings, it also eases the worry associated with the risk of carrying a tangible IEP document because *IEP Anywhere* integrates with the student information system that

teachers already use for attendance and academic records. The decisions that follow form a plan for teaching staff how to use this *IEP Anywhere*.

How the New Technology Addresses the Current Issue

Constantly scanning the environment and understanding where the present method of IEP management falls short will enable me to clarify and inform my vision of how I will implement *IEP Anywhere*. Simply moving forth with a modification plan without knowing how teachers are responding to the current one is a disservice to them as their technology leader. My strategy is to keep them in the loop as much as possible without interrupting their already busy schedules. Connected leaders establish relationships with staff members and by way of empathizing with my colleagues' plight, I will gather information that I might not have otherwise known. This might trigger ideas in my future implementation of this mobile technology. My assessment and analysis of their thoughts on current IEP communication will help to inform my vision of how to get them on board with the shift.

Strategies for assessing current needs as part of visioning plan:

- Attend special ed department meeting and inform staff about upcoming shift
- Observe IEP meetings (if legal) and/or interview teachers who deal with IEPs
- Survey staff for input on current process and how it could be improved
- Attempt to write IEP the old way myself
- Learn ins-and-outs of the *IEP Anywhere* and attempt to write same IEP
- Meet with Special Ed Department Chair for insight on *IEP Anywhere*

- Modify new software/instruction to focus on how staff would use it and eliminate superfluous options with Special Ed Chairperson approval
- URL for mobile application: https://samegoal.com/v4/login_page.py

How the New Technology will be Integrated

Given the demanding nature of their occupation, teachers need to know that what they are devoting their time to outside of the classroom will positively affect their instructional practices. Therefore, it is appropriate to clarify the goals associated with *IEP Anywhere* by aligning them with district and NET standards—clear goals will help communicate the point of the new application. Networking with the school population, the software company, and fellow technology leaders would also provide insight regarding ways to know whether teachers are really grasping the use of *IEP Anywhere*. Since I want to support teachers' use, my evaluation must be continuous and open. Constructing a schedule to re-evaluate and address concerns will help me as a leader to stay on top of the process and close any gaps in misunderstanding before teachers get frustrated with the change.

Strategies for planning the goals and evaluation:

- Analyze administrative directives and staff input to generate goals
- Organize goals so that they directly relate to improvement or problems
- Align objectives with NETS-T
- Construct a flexible time-frame for meeting certain objectives
- Network with peers on [ISTE Community Ning](#) to determine if there are new ways to formatively assess implementation of mobile technologies

- Determine how to assess teacher use of program through IEP *Anywhere's* management mode; contact company to view/track reports if necessary
- Take into account teachers' levels of concern by increasing schedule availability
- URL for ISTE Ning: <http://www.iste-community.org/>

How I will Communicate my Vision of the New Technology

Sharing my vision with teachers via multimedia will make them more receptive to the use of the software because my digital story presentation would remind them that this new application will be easier and save time. Using other schools as an example will reduce resistance by explaining the potential of what our school can achieve from this plan. In leading the plan, it would be appropriate to organize the staff into smaller groups based on IEP case load for the initial PD session because 1) I would be able to provide them with more attention during their hands-on experience of using the program for the first time and 2) these teachers will typically work together writing IEPs and will be able to facilitate learning with community support. The logic behind posting my presentation, tutorials, and screen casts about the software online is to give teachers an opportunity to revisit the information and teach it to themselves. Also, increasing my availability and communication during the implementation of *IEP Anywhere* will allow me to provide extra support on a day-to-day basis while holding teachers accountable for the change. Rewarding commitment by using teachers' positive experiences as an example will reinforce their behavior while inspiring others.

Strategies for communicating and leading organization change:

- If possible, draw upon what other school are doing to serve as an example

- During a scheduled PD meeting re-introduce plan and involve everyone
- Be honest about the positive and potential downsides with the shift
- Provide multimedia examples to communicate software use
 - PPT of old system vs. new system advantages
 - Create screen cast of how to use *IEP Anywhere*
- Organize teachers into smaller groups according to IEP case load for PD sessions
- Post instruction and resources online in addition to PD delivery
- Encourage teachers to discuss and assist with use of software in school's online portal
- Increase communication as technology leader
- Reward commitment for change/Best Practices/sharing of intermittent results