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Tom the IEP Assistant

**Tom has a fully functional prototype accessible at:** [**https://tomiepassistant.azurewebsites.net/#/**](https://tomiepassistant.azurewebsites.net/#/)

Created to assist users in creating or enforcing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Tom is an Azure Bot hosted on an Azure Web app that aids the Special Education community. Named after Senator Tom Harkin who originally introduced the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Tom walks users through the process of setting up an IEP. This application utilizes a Create React App codebase to imbed the Azure Bot’s web channel so that the application is easily accessible for all users.

Currently Tom utilizes language understanding to gather information from the requestor in order to send them to one of sixteen different endings depending on their situation. Twelve of these endings link to an email generator. These endings will automatically open the user's email application along with the embedded email draft. The four endings that do not result in an email draft give the user further information on their situation - with some endings directing the user to reach out to specific specialists. In addition, Tom utilizes personal responses from the user to create more personalized emails. By creating further personalization and including the requestor's name, the child’s name (if the requestor is reaching out on behalf of another person), and the teacher’s name in the body, Tom constructs a more user friendly process.

Tom has the potential to create massive amounts of impact. As many parents struggle to set up IEPs for their children, it is important to create a straightforward process that allows for easy comprehension. The current process is confusing - between being riddled with legal jargon and failing to provide a step-by-step process for parents, it fails to set parents and students up for success from the start. As this results in many parents being unable to assist their children with disabilities, it results in children being left behind; however, this situation could be easily overcome if parents are simply given a guide that could walk them through the IEP process. Tom addresses this situation and solves the problem at hand.

In addition to assisting users in setting up an IEP, Tom also provides users help in making sure IEPs are being reinforced. In some situations, parents are able to get an IEP established with the school district but are unable to ensure that this IEP is successfully followed by the staff. This failure often results in the same end as when IEPs are not established at all - students getting left behind. Currently, the learning community has had to make drastic changes when switching to remote learning, and many students who require specialized assistance are being left behind. By providing parents with steps that can be taken to make sure the IEP is enforced, Tom helps assist users in ensuring that those in Special Education are not being forgotten.