IEP Group
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Assignment 2d: Contextual Inquiry

<u>Interviewees:</u>

- Carolyn Beck - Classroom teacher for over 10 years and parent of a student who had an IEP while in school and continues to receive special services. Carolyn Beck is currently working in the Montgomery County School District in Maryland. She is the aunt of group member Kristen Olson who was able to interview her over the phone.
- Amy L-X- College student that has legal guardianship of her sister, who has an IEP. Amy currently attends University of Hawaii-Manoa and is the cousin of Jessica Wong. Due to our different locations, we were only able to interview her over the phone.
- Lisa L-X- Currently a graduating senior in high school with an IEP. She is the sister of Amy and cousin of Jessica. Since she also resides in Hawaii, we were only able to do a phone interview with her.
- Master/Apprentice Joleen Franklin - Is a recently retired Special Education Teacher with over 35 years of experience. Walked through creating IEP goals from a mock evaluation. Discussed the task/functionality of IEP online, the current tool SPS uses to generate IEP's. Artifact: Mock up of current IEP online task and features.
- Nichelle Alderson, MSW, LICSW is a parent of a former IEP student. Walked through a student's IEP goals and parent and student involvement in the IEP process.
- Christine King, a parent of four students, two of which have IEPs, one with a 504 plan, and one who was pulled out of SPS and is in a private school. Christine has three children currently in Seattle Public Schools two at Graham hill, and one at Aki Kurose. She is a highly engaged parent, she is a member of the PTA (Parent Teacher Advisory Board) of two schools, she is a member of PAC (Parent Advisory Committee). She has been involved with the Graham hill PTA for two years and helped start the Aki PTA. The PTA is meant to involve parent voices in decision making at schools. It has 10 continuing members that discuss race and equity, fundraisers, changes to educational plans etc.

<u>Interview/Apprentice Reflections:</u>

Gaining access to unknown teachers, parents, and students is a daunting process. Our group was fortunate in the sense that we all had personal relations or acquaintances with our target group, but with more time we would have liked to get in contact with a more objective group of participants for contextual inquiry. One group member had the great idea to contact the Disability Services Office at the UW to see if we could connect with students over 18 who had experiences with IEPs. Unfortunately we ran into the roadblock of needing Human Subject Review approval to go down that path, which was not feasible for this project. On the bright side all of the participants we did manage to do contextual inquiries with were eager to contribute and were great resources. There is still potential for some more objective CIs as we wait to hear from an alumni coordinator with Teach for America who has made the group's request to conduct CIs known to several teachers in the area.

<u>Common Themes:</u>

The I aspect in IEP (Individual) is incredibly difficult to implement, we heard across the board that although a good tool, IEPs more often than not fall short of feeling truly meaningful. There is a stigma felt by parents and students around the

IEP process that can make them reluctant to engage with it. There are many resources, but the vast landscape can make it hard to know which are most applicable to a specific student. The socioeconomic environment the school is located in can have an impact on the quality of IEP services. The annual IEP meeting can be challenging to schedule because of the number of people required to converge. Parent support groups are seen as a valuable resource. Parents expressed feelings of frustration and being overwhelmed. It seems to take a lot of parent involvement to ensure the student gets the services they need. Lots of paper shuffling with little results. More check-ins would be nice throughout the year. The current progress report system fails to provide meaningful feedback to parents and students about student progress or which learning targets the child still needs to acquire to achieve the goal. Some parents would like weekly to monthly reporting on progress. There is a need for more efficient communication between members of the IEP team. There are three levels of granularity in IEP progress goals, objectives, and task. Creating goals that are easy for teachers to track and implement though a task analysis level view is more beneficial to parents and students. Students are often times unaware of the goals their IEP's are trying to achieve or of the accommodation they can received to assist them. Maintaining a students motivation to learn is hugely important. Overall a wealth of tasks was revealed from the inquiries.

Task Analysis Questions:

1. Who is going to use the design?
   a. Parents, teachers, students
2. What tasks do they now perform?
   a. Parents
      i. Keeps track of their child's IEP on their own through use of a binder or notebook so that they can make decisions about what changes should be made or to ensure new teachers can be caught up.
      ii. Parent tracks child's other personal information that may affect the child's education i.e. health and wellness, outside of school supports, extracurricular activities etc.
      iii. Actively reaches out to teachers and gets involved with child's education.
      iv. Asks child about what teachers they worked with to see if services are being provided.
      v. Take no action from feeling too overwhelmed.
   b. Students
      i. Attends IEP meetings and listens to what the "authorities" are saying.
      ii. Participates in classroom instruction with varying degrees of involvement.
      iii. Research their disabilities and how they impact them.
      iv. Learn about and use their accommodations.
   c. Teachers
      i. Track student's academic progress.
      ii. Inform parents of student performance by rating the progress towards a goal every trimester and occasionally talking directly with parents.
      iii. IEP teacher creates and stores IEP in IEP online along with all IEP progress reports.
3. What tasks are desired?
   a. Parents
      i. A digitized means of accessing and presenting all of their child's IEP information.
      ii. A "parent friendly" version of IEP paperwork without legal jargon.

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IEP paperwork in multiple different languages.
A simple summary about the available programs and benefits that are available to their child.
Useful information about their child's goal progress
Confirmation that services are being provided
Access to a database of goals with corresponding objective and task analysis views of their child's goals so they can better understand and assist their child in what they need to learn
Help student learn to advocate for themselves and understand their disability and accommodations

b. Students
   i. Better understanding of goals and what "achieving" them means.
   ii. Understand that there is no negative stigma around IEPs/ or learn how to cope with the stigma.
   iii. Understanding their disability and how it manifests itself.
   iv. Understanding and utilizing their accommodations

c. Teachers
   i. Track student's academic progress in a non time consuming manner
   ii. Easy interpretation of old IEP plans (ex. what worked, what didn't?)
   iii. Inform parents of student performance in a non time consuming way
   iv. Track student use of their accommodations
   v. teaching strategies employed and minutes of service per goal
   vi. Access to a database of goals with corresponding objective and task analysis views of student goals to set teaching objectives/lesson plans.
   vii. Help student learn to advocate for themselves and understand their disability and accommodations
   viii. Address the stigma of SPED in their classroom so all learners feel safe.

4. How are the tasks learned?
   a. Parents
      i. Trial-and-error. Undergoing the IEP several times is an iterative process that forces them to understand what's working and what's not.
   b. Teachers
      i. Protocols for dealing with IEPs
   c. Students
      i. Approval of teacher and/or parent

5. Where are the tasks performed?
   a. Classroom
   b. Home

6. What is the relationship between the person and data?
   a. Parents
      i. The relationship around IEP goals is often shallow and stigmatized.
      ii. Track their child's progress with the IEP goals.
      iii. Understand available resources for their child and the legal options they have.
   b. Students
      i. Understand what IEPs are and how it relates to them.

        ii.   Track their own progress with the goals they currently have.

        iii.   Also often fraught with anxiety.

   c.   Teachers

        i.   Understand how to give progress report.

        ii.   Understand what teaching strategies/ services are working.

        iii.   Feelings of being overwhelmed with all the other duties associated with teaching.

7.   What other tools does the person have?

These are some tools that we know currently exist, but that does not mean they are being used by stakeholders.

   a.   iPad Tools

        i.   myIEPmeeting

        ii.   IEPPal (mainly for teachers)

   b.   Website Tools

        i.   Parents Helping Parents IEP Prep Tool

        ii.   Educationmodified.com

8.   How do people communicate with each other?

        i.   Paper documents are mainly transferred between schools. Schools don't reach out to previous school to discuss past IEP meetings. Relies on parent to know everything that has transpired and let the current school know.

        ii.   Annual Meetings

        iii. Phone, In-Person

        iv. Sometimes email

9.   How often are the tasks performed?

The official meeting is annual and then the teacher and school administration often have a plan for tracking goals (whether it is is actually followed or not). The task frequency ranges from daily - yearly depending on the task.

10.   What are the time constraints on the tasks?

Classroom environments are very busy and it can be difficult for teachers to dedicate time to tracking IEP goals in the moment. Current annual meeting puts pressure on stakeholders to plan a year's worth of services. Due to poor communications often teachers do not know that they are responsible to deliver specific specially designed instructions and therefore none is delivered.

11.   What happens when things go wrong?

Students and parents suffer, delays in EIP services for students, student do not progress toward their academic goals, students give up on their education, the complaint process is equally daunting for parents.