

Secondary IEP Pilot Final Report June 17, 2004

Background

For the last 18 months, teachers throughout Delaware have participated in a pilot using a DOE-approved Secondary IEP form and process in middle and high school IEP meetings. During the initial pilot in the spring of 2003 and expanded pilot during the 2003-2004 school year, over 1800 IEP meetings have taken place using the pilot form. At least 180 teachers and educational diagnosticians in 15 school districts and one charter school have conducted these meetings. (for pilot data, see Attachment A)

The purpose of the pilot was to investigate the use in middle and high schools of an IEP process that focuses on post-school outcomes and designs the annual IEP to be geared toward the student-desired long-range goals. Components of the current state-adopted IEP form (Attachment C) were rearranged to follow the process identified below:

- Student's Desired Post-School Outcomes
- Present Level of Educational Performance (including PLEP related to post-school goals)
- Statement of Transition Service Needs (courses of study leading to post-school outcomes)
- Statement of Needed Transition Services
- Annual Goals
- Short-Term Objectives or Benchmarks

Pilot designers hoped to see increased student involvement in their educational planning and programming, more attention to gearing the high school experience on student-identified goals, and an increased involvement of parents and other stakeholders in supporting the students' transition. Also, by placing the transition components at the front of the IEP, the likelihood of a district being in compliance with transition requirements in IDEA '97 would be enhanced.

Training and materials were provided to staff from almost all Delaware school districts during this period on the new form and process. As schools and districts conducted IEP meetings, they were asked to provide personal feedback from their experience, along with feedback from other IEP team members. Participants were also asked to react to the usefulness of the supplemental materials (Attachment D) provided for the pilot. Along with written feedback from IEP meetings, a meeting was held on June 16, 2004 with teachers and other educators to reflect upon all the feedback and give their final recommendations to DDOE.

The following information is from schools that participated in the SY 2003-2004 expanded pilot and provided written feedback to DDOE during the spring of 2004.

2003-2004 Pilot Feedback

Each school participating in the pilot was asked to give feedback on the forms, the process, and provide personal thoughts on the experience. They compiled information other IEP team members, as well. The comments below are a summary of the participants' remarks from the returned forms.

Did there appear to be any variance in length of meeting using the revised form and transition-focused process?

-No (11)

Transition surveys require more prep time before mtg. with student.

Working w/parents/students getting ready to graduate in 1-3 yrs & no transition planning was done prior to this prog, IEP/transition mtgs. are lengthy.

-Yes (11)

Mtgs. lasted about 10 minutes longer.

It does take additional time to complete.

Transition IEP can take twice as long. If you add test review, mtg. can last over an hr.

Mtgs ran avg of 3-10 minutes longer as result of secondary IEP (2)

Made mtgs longer to minimal value.

All tried to divide & conquer. Had students complete pg. 2 as much as possible prior to mtgs so could input data.

Mtgs generally longer due to increased discussion with parents & staff re transition issues.

-More input from Transition Counselor.

-Faster slightly with new form/process.

-Mtgs. ran smoother, less jumping back & forth from goals to transition. More transition discussion took place at onset rather than hit or miss throughout mtg.

-Minimal, but well worth the little extra time.

What were staff comments on the new process and form focusing on outcomes, present levels of performance, including PLOP related to post-school outcomes?

-Redundant/repetitive (5)

Some info redundant; some not applicable

Little repetitive in 2 sections; one would work for discussions.

Where it is repetitive, consolidate those areas (pp.2-3).

Feeling of redundancy (middle of pg. 3 & bottom of pg 4).

-Not helpful for 8th grade students who are mostly mainstreamed. Geared more to functional life skills students who are getting ready to leave school.

-Teachers & Dean of Instruction liked focus on future rather than past year & learning about these aspects of the students in-depth.

-Much more clear for student. Helps student make vocational/self help decision when undecided.

-New form is more specific & offers more opportunity for student/parent input.

-Staff person seemed comfortable with the focus.

-Response was positive. Most teachers believe that this gives more complete picture of student goals and what needs to be accomplished in terms of transition by grad.

-This form encourages the team to focus on student goals for future and to prepare-Great sequence that helps establish long-term goals, followed by strengths & needs. After this, short-term goals are more easily agreed upon.

-Overall, liked focus on after school goals, but hard to focus on transition when so much energy is focused within bldg. on what happens here and now with DSTP and NCLB.

-Confusing, not necessary and hard to determine for 7th graders.

-Wasn't informed of which sections to fill out. Some staff filled out one section while others filled out others.

-Helpful planning activities for level 4.

-Helpful to focus on outcomes, etc related to post-school outcomes prior to development of IEP objectives.

-Revised form helps focus on desired outcomes & look at skills & supports appropriate for long-term goals to guide short-term objectives.

-There needs to be more time doing pilot to get comfortable with form.

-Definitely! The staff comments, especially from the high school, felt the meeting really meant something more than in the past.

-Great idea! Seemed to flow with the IEP and made sense.

- Liked having agency info addressed on IEP (staff & parents)
- Unnecessarily lengthy.
- Most feel more transition-based IEP to be more realistic.
- I think the form is useful, though it focuses more on strategies for spec. ed students not in functional curric.
- Previously used same info but needed to tear old IEP form apart and present in order needed, which was not sequential.
- Some components seem out of order. Not enough room for accommodations.
- More paperwork.
- Placement of strengths & concerns with accommodations between jobs & job training & student desired post-HS outcomes is misplaced.
- Contact with students was nice. Form made sense.
- Some commented that when used to new form, it would be easier to use within the IEP mtg. All staff I spoke with feel revised form makes sense and is important to discuss transition info first in the IEP process.
- Concept is great. The difficulty for middle school is that most of the services and options are available at the high school.
- Like the idea, but it's hard to complete as a middle school (services & goal needs to match high school). Not as familiar with high school options.
- Yes. We all like new form because we can follow it sequentially. It also has all important info needed for planning student's future.
- Staff spent more time planning with student.

Were you able to get feedback from parents, students, other school staff, guests?

- Liked more focus on transition area, including increased discussion before & during IEP mtg.
- Used Parent Survey w/all 25 parents (grades 6-8). Some were confused at first, but they liked the focus.
- Yes. Students, parents, guests & other school staff were receptive & participative with sharing of knowledge & methods or strategies to assist students with their needs.
- Students & parents feel supported in transition.
- Not directly, but I believe parents feel students are becoming more involved in setting goals/making decisions as to where & what they want to do after HS.
- Some parents felt it was too early to ask about jobs/living situations. Many students didn't have clue what they wanted to do following HS.
- Parents/students are pleased with focus & appreciate opportunities discussed at IEP mtgs.
- Not formally but parents of 8th graders, like their children, are not often focused on life after HS.
- Parents appreciated being asked to fill out form. Seemed to make them feel more part of process.
- Kids weren't interested for most part. Parents did not return forms. Most school staff thought it not relevant for 8th grade mildly handicapped students. Reg. ed. students don't get this.
- During some mtgs parents were very confused about several new pgs involving child's outcomes.
- Yes through surveys, comments at IEP mtg., etc.
- More discussion re post-HS outcomes. Discussion of transition issues for our severely involved students caused parents considerable concern.
- Administrators at DAP fully support transition driven IEP.
- Most parents agreed it takes longer but discussions were very relevant.
- Students enjoyed the questions. Students and parents enjoyed 4-year plan included.
- Students like the involvement and questions.
- Many parents felt the form gave a purpose to their child's educational experience.

Project Materials

Guidelines and Examples

- Staff appreciated guidelines & examples & used these docs to help complete IEPs.
- Guidelines & Examples were well received and helpful (8).
- Student interview using pages 2-3 of IEP as guide should suffice.
- Will await return. Students love being interviewed within the example documents.
- Supplemental materials were not widely shared with staff at this building.
- They have been included on reference docs many times-Resource book/materials were wonderful. They give quality information to new teachers and prod us older teachers with some new ideas.
- Supplemental materials provided summary sheet to utilize at IEP mtgs. Training provided for new teachers @ mentoring mtg. & administrative designees at designee mtgs.

Parent Survey

- Had NONE returned from parents, - strong statement as to how parents feel about it.
- Parent transition survey confused many parents to point where they did not answer all questions.
- Some questions are redundant. Takes lot of time. Might be hard for some parents to read.
- parent transition survey-guidelines were distributed. Feedback was negligible. Our feeling is that if parents are being supported by staff, MOST do not take time to read additional info.
- Staff didn't like Parent Transition Survey and questions asked. Suggestions were to revise length & content.
- Parents were confused about survey questions and felt there were too many questions.
- Parents seemed ok with it.
- A few parents saw no purpose in Transition Survey.
- Parent Transition Survey needs revision.
- Colleagues felt there were redundant parts & parent survey awkward because of some not pertaining to their kids.

Recommendations

Form/Process

Overall

- At Dover Air Middle, I deal w/6-8th graders. I'm using same IEP for all students regardless of age. That way it's one less thing for me to keep track of. I don't have to worry about kids who are "old" or "Young" for their grade. Also gets all kids talking about future goals/plans and thinking of independence & self-advocacy. Works for me.
- I would like to see Transition-Driven IEP incorporated into our schools from middle school up. More training should be offered to those not familiar with pilot. Additional information should be given on available agencies.
- (1) Recommend use statewide. (2) inservice districts to show them pp. 2-4 documents, & (3) their benefit to students. (4) Nationwide exposure for DE as trend setter to help kids make choices about their potential/future.
- Continue with the new form.
- Really like IEP form. Transition counselor works with students prior to mtg. IEP makes sense & pulls things together. This helps students become more active in IEP process.
- DOE should continue to do whatever possible to streamline IEP process. My experience has been with more people involved in writing doc. It has taken much longer to complete.
- Students who follow reg. ed. curric. & schedule should not have all this paperwork since non-handicapped students don't have it. It serves only to take staff time away from doing work with or for students. IEP has gotten unwieldy and needs to be shortened, not lengthened.
- Did 27 11th to 12th grade IEPs using new form. Worked well.
- Implement use of Transition Driven IEP-Adopt new form/process.
- "Full-blown" Transition in middle school is difficult. Availability of services is limited in grade 8.
- Transition information should be done when students get to high school. Potentially beneficial for student, but needs to be implemented, discussed and planned by school offering the services.
- The next step I would like to see DDOE take is a forward step. Let's make this pilot a reality! I really feel that this pilot will help things go smoothly in IEP meetings.

Training

- Create workshop to educate students and parents on how to effectively make transition decisions.
- Strongly recommend having training for all staff who use transition-driven IEP. At very least should all be provided with cheat sheet to help explain each new section of IEP. Also do not understand why all teachers in all grades need to fill out all sections of new IEP. Not all sections apply to all students in all grades.
- Our staff would appreciate opportunity for inservice training. Time constraints make scheduling this difficult, however ccs of handouts of train. were made & given to appropriate staff.
- Provide ongoing training to staff re transition issues and information.

Materials

- Guidelines, examples & surveys should be dispersed to schools
- Transition Survey should be shorter.
- Implement revised Parent Trans. Survey, suggest times when should meet with students that would not detract from content area, time to meet with students to complete surveys, to provide copy of examples & guidelines for student and brainstorm with parents.

Pilot Review Committee Feedback and Recommendations

On June 16, a committee of special education teachers, transition specialists, and district special education administrators met with DDOE staff (See Attachment C) to review the written feedback from around the state, give their personal feedback, and make final recommendations to the Department. The findings of the committee were:

Time Factor

The group stated that, for the most part, meetings did not take more time than the current IEP meetings. Beginning the meeting with the student post-school goals changed the nature of the conversation, not necessarily making it longer. One committee member commented that what happened in his cases was that “less time was focused on the deficits”.

More upfront preparation would be required to increase student involvement. If this were not done, the meeting very possibly would take longer.

They also commented that there is a normal learning curve that probably accounted for the increased time that pilot participants experienced. “After the learning curve issue was resolved, the flow of the meeting kicked in”, according to one committee member.

Another variable mentioned was that there were various levels of staff proficiency and efficiency that dictated the length of the meeting.

Process/Layout/Format

There was concern at the meeting about the apparent redundancy of one section of the form, and the committee made recommendations to remedy that concern. They also made similar recommendations found by pilot participants in their feedback. That information has been gathered, and a revised form has been sent to the committee members.

Supplemental Materials

The Guidelines and Examples Guide received excellent comments from the committee members. They stated that if pilot participants had used this document more that some issues from the pilot would have been avoided.

There were some concerns about the Parent Survey. They made recommendations for possible changes to the survey, but unanimously agreed that it is very important to provide parents with this type of information prior to IEP meetings. Parent knowledge and involvement, they stated, is critical to successful educational planning for students.

Final Recommendations

After discussing the above areas, the group unanimously agreed that DDOE should proceed with making the pilot secondary IEP form a state-adopted form, with certain revisions specified during the meeting. This very well may require putting the changes in the IEP form into regulations. DDOE should identify and complete the work to have this form and process used statewide during the coming school year. While going through the steps to make this happen, DDOE should permit the districts to continue using the pilot form with the latest revisions.

The committee also recommended that the Guidelines and Examples document be kept as an important tool for IEP teams, and that a new Parent Transition Survey be developed and disseminated to schools on disk, so that they can customize it to meet their individual needs. Further, significant training to schools, families and students should be conducted over the course of the 2004-2005 school year.

ATTACHMENT A

2003-2004 Pilot Data

Materials

DDOE-Approved Pilot IEP Form
Guidelines and Examples for a Transition-driven IEP
Student Strengths and Weaknesses Worksheet
Parent Transition Survey
Transition-Driven IEP Technical Assistance Guide
Feedback Form

Initial Pilot Data Spring 2003

Districts Participating

New Castle County Vocational-Technical SD	Brandywine SD
Christina SD	Appoquinimink SD
Milford SD	Smyrna SD
Indian River SD	Cape Henlopen SD

Total Districts: 8
Total # of IEP Meetings: 87
Total # of staff: 22

Expanded Pilot 2003-2004 School Year

Districts/Schools Returning Feedback Forms

Caesar Rodney SD	Postlethwait MS, CRHS, Charlton, DAFB MS, Fifer MS
Capital SD	Central MS, Dover HS, Kent ILC, KCCS
Cape Henlopen SD	Cape HS, including 9 th Gr. Campus
Christina	DAP
Indian River SD	Richard Allen, Sussex Central MS, Selbyville MS
Lake Forest SD	Lake Forest HS
Newark Charter School	
Polytech HS	
Red Clay SD	First State School
Seaford SD	Seaford MS
Woodbridge SD	Woodbridge MS/HS

Total Districts/Charters: 11 **
Total Schools: 34 **

**NCCVT high schools used the pilot form in all IEP meetings during the current year, and stated that their feedback from the previous year's pilot would be the same.
Other school districts did use the form in meetings but did not return feedback forms.

Total # of IEP meetings: 1416+
Total # of school staff providing feedback: 158+

ATTACHMENT B

Pilot Review Committee Members

Rachel Burwell	Cape Henlopen SD
Jack Pallace	Woodbridge SD
Sharon DiGirolamo	Sussex Central MS, Indian River SD
Beth Siemanowski	Polytech SD
Beth Nobbs	Brandywine SD
Kathie Herel	Parent Information Center
Martha Toomey	DDOE
Brian Touchette	DDOE
Mark Chamberlin	DDOE
Regina Greenwald	DDOE
George Tilson	TransCen, Inc. (facilitator)