The 10 Best Kept Secrets of IEP/504/RTI Plans: *Navigating Your Child's Support Plan Effectively*

Matthew Wanzenberg, Ph.D.
Chief Consultant, Wanzenberg & Associates

Presentation to Hinsdale Central Parent Teacher Organization
November 13, 2014
Hinsdale Central High School Community Room

The 10 Best Kept Secrets of IEP/504/RTI Plans: *Navigating Your Child's Support Plan Effectively*

This presentation will be available for view and download at IEPGuardians.org under "HCPTO" after 11/14/14

Background on Wanzenberg & Associates

Wanzenberg & Associates

Matthew Wanzenberg, Ph.D.

Wanzenberg & Associates	Office 630 545 0234
386 Pennsylvania Ave	Fax 630 545 0234
Suite 3SW	Mobile 630 926 6385
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137	www.IEPGuardians.org

- Educational consultancy founded in 2008
- Administrative, research, and instructional background
- Advocacy support for learning needs
- Strategy and consultation on supports for unique learners
- Executive functioning skills coaching
- Enhanced case management for students
- College admissions support and guidance
- Individualized, skill based and content-area interventions
- Collaboration with schools, caregivers, health care providers
- Emphasis on transition planning for all students

A word on my point of view...

I've looked at clouds from both sides now,
from up and down, and still somehow
it's cloud illusions I recall.
I really don't know clouds at all.

Both Sides, Now
Joni Mitchell, 1969

The 10 Best Kept Secrets of IEP/504/RTI Plans:
Navigating Your Child's Support Plan Effectively

- How things work in the broad domain of school support, is often "clear as mud."

- Why is this a popular topic in my outreach to students and families?
    - Former students and families who have stayed in touch
    - Students who have "rounded back" to me for support
    - Seeking out success stories and actively seeking information that contributed to their success.
    - Same patterns repeated over and over again
- How effective supports get to a student doesn't always seem intuitive to the layperson (e.g., evidence based need, "wait to fail").

Number One:
Appreciate the need for informal meetings/communication with school staff.

- Informal meetings preserve meaningful access to critical information about your child's performance.
- Keep any informal meetings with staff targeted, brief, and collegial.
- Set realistic goals for the timeframe and context of the meeting. Confirm this upfront with the participant if appropriate.
- Avoid inadvertently make informal meetings formal by "mission creep".

Number One:
Appreciate the need for informal meetings/communication with school staff (CONTINUED).

- Avoid lengthy and detailed diatribes that are destined to be filed away or marginalized.
- Keep your observations as objective as possible and succinctly pose the questions you need answered.
- Understand the scope and context of the person you are meeting with.
  - Do they have the information I need?
  - Are they in a position to respond to deeper questions?
  - Does the level of detail I am requesting require more time than is allotted?
- Should important information be shared in an informal setting, round back with a follow up email identifying the salient points. Encourage the recipient to clarify these points if not accurate.
- Above all, work hard to preserve the relationship you have with staff, even when your frustrations are growing.

Number Two:
If you expect a response for increased intervention, evaluation, or a specific action, MAKE THE REQUEST FORMAL.

Dare I hit "send"? Email was simpler before it became discoverable.

- Avoid copying educational staff/administration who are not directly involved in the decision.
- Date the request: most school offices have "date received" stamps; leave with a stamped copy.
- Avoid digital methods as <u>chief/sole</u> form of this type of correspondence (email, fax, text etc.). This is fine for backup or speed of issuance, but always issue a hard copy to all addressees.
- Request clarification on timeline and follow up on next steps. Mark your calendar for follow up!
- Keep your correspondence clear, targeted, and objective.
- If you are particularly frustrated, have someone you trust read it over for tone and message: be open to their feedback!

Number Three:
Know the difference between accommodations and modifications!

Accommodations are provisions made in how a student accesses and demonstrates learning. These do not <u>substantially</u> change the instructional level, the content or the performance criteria. The changes are made in order to provide a student <u>equal access</u> to learning and equal opportunity to demonstrate what is known.

They generalize to settings other than public school (college, workplace, community).
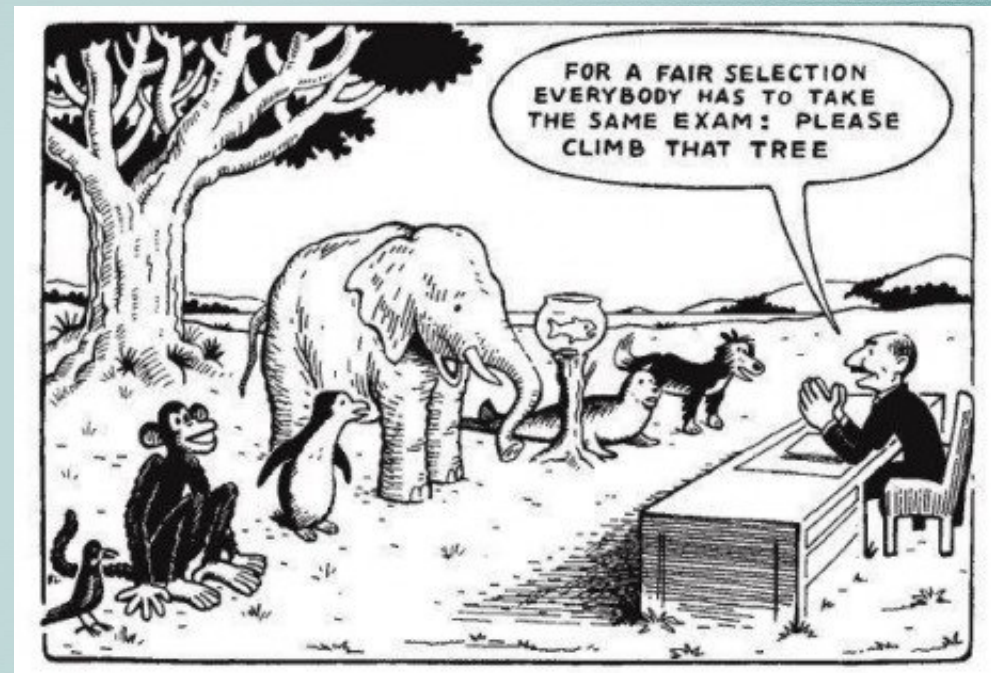
FOR A FAIR SELECTION EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE CLIMB THAT TREE

Number Three:
Know the difference between accommodations and modifications! (CONTINUED)

Pacing: extending/adjusting time; allowing frequent breaks; varying activity often

Environment: leaving class for academic assistance (e.g., RIP); preferential seating; altering physical room arrangement; defining limits (physical/behavioral); reducing/minimizing distractions (visual, auditory, both); cooling off period

Presentation of Material: emphasizing teaching approach (visual, auditory, tactile, multi); limited opportunities for individualizing/small group instruction; taping lectures for replay; demonstrating/modeling; using manipulatives/hands-on activities; pre-teaching vocabulary; utilizing advance organizers; providing visual cues.

Materials and Equipment: taping texts; highlighting material; supplementing material/laminating material; note taking assistance/copies from others; typing teacher's material rather than using handwriting on board; color overlays; using calculator, computer, word processor;

Grading: giving credit for projects; giving credit for class participation; extra credit where appropriate

Assignments: giving directions in small, distinct steps; allowing copying from paper/book; using written back-up for oral directions; adjusting length of assignment; changing format of assignment (matching, multiple choice, fill-in-blank, etc.); breaking assignment into series of smaller assignments; reducing paper/pencil tasks; reading directions/assignments to students; giving oral/visual cues or prompts; allowing recording/dictated/typed answers; maintaining assignment notebook; avoiding penalizing for spelling errors on every paper.

Reinforcement and Follow-Through: using positive reinforcement; using concrete reinforcement; checking often for understanding/review; providing peer tutoring; requesting parent reinforcement; having student repeat/ explain the directions; making/using vocabulary files; teaching study skills; using study sheets/guides; reinforcing long-term assignment timelines; repeating review/drill; using behavioral contracts/check cards; giving weekly progress reports; providing before and/or after school tutoring; conferring with student (daily, bi-weekly, weekly, etc.).

Testing Adaptations: reading test verbatim to student (in person or recorded); shortening length of test; changing test format (essay vs. fill-in blank vs. multiple choice, etc.); adjusting time for test completion; permitting oral answers; scribing test answers for student; permitting open book/notes exams; permitting testing in isolated/different location.

ALL STUDENTS

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
(who need no special services)

SECTION 504
(need accommodations)

IDEA
(need modifications)

Modifications: Substantial changes in **_what_** a student is expected to learn and demonstrate.

These changes are made to provide a student the opportunity to participate meaningfully and productively in learning experience and environments.

Modifications include changes in instruction level, content, and/or performance criteria. When provided on a daily basis, these approaches are generally reserved for students with identified learning needs who are eligible for special education.

They typically require a dedicated team member to develop, implement, and monitor the modification.

Modifications may not naturally generalize beyond highly supportive environments.

Number Three:
Know the difference between accommodations and modifications! (CONTINUED)

Pacing: omitting assignments that require timed situation, restriction of certain types of assignments

Presentation of Subject Matter: utilizing specialized curriculum written at a lower level of understanding (may requires consultation with certified staff member with training in special education)

Materials and Equipment/Assistive Technology: adapting or simplifying texts for lower level of understanding; modifying content areas by simplifying vocabulary, concepts and principles.

Grading: modifying weights of examinations and assignments; deviation from general education standard.

Assignments: lowering reading level of assignment; adapting worksheets, packets with simplified vocabulary.

Testing Adaptations: reducing reading level of test; substantial reductions in volume of test; adapting assessment for cognitive level.

Number Four: Technology does not ALWAYS make things better: Resistance is common, and sometimes simple adaptations are the most effective.

"As all of you know, not all technology is created equal. This computer goes to the gifted class."
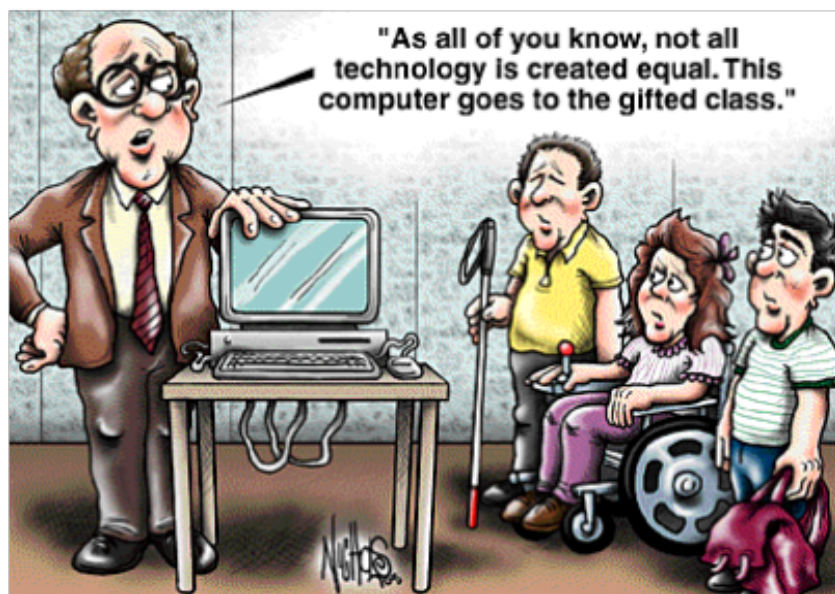
- My teaching experience serving students with physical disabilities (school with 92% FRL).

- From IDEA: "In general.--The term `assistive technology device' means **any** item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

- Includes evaluating, purchasing, selecting/customizing, coordinating, and training (for both family and team).

- May include Hi Tech, Lo Tech, or No Tech. (i.e. AT doesn't always require batteries or a microchip)

- The fundamental question of the appropriateness of technology comes down to "access to the least restrictive environment".

- From a resource perspective, the actual purchase of the item may not be the most expensive outlay. Training and updating is essential.

Number Four: Technology does not ALWAYS make things better: Resistance is common, and sometimes simple adaptations are the most effective. (CONTINUED)

- Some reasons students resist technology:
  - Lack of training, training model tedious
  - Students don't want to appear different
  - Students feel like technology is an unfair advantage, particularly for resilient learners who have learned to adapt to the conventions of the traditional classroom
  - Students with technology feel they have to work harder or even slower than other kids their age on the same assignments.
  - Negative history
  - Emerging awareness of need and needed remedy

Number Five: The key to advocating effectively is sometimes to be dispassionate and data driven.

"My grades could be better if the school had a data driven, evidence based curriculum in the classroom."

- Feel comfortable requesting data, because school are required to collect it and make decisions based on the body of data.
- For students under RTI, progress monitoring is guided by data driven decisions… Asking what the data tells us is an important question for the team.
- Do you know what Tier (1-3) your child is monitored?
- **FROM ISBE**: The frequency of progress monitoring is determined by the level of intensity of interventions. Students receiving supplemental (strategic) interventions (Tier 2) should be monitored at least twice per month. Students receiving intensive interventions (Tier 3) should be monitored at least weekly.
- **FROM FEDS**: RTI is not a replacement for responsibilities under Child Find.

Number Six: Good teams work together to discuss the strategic fading of supports as the setting and demands change.

- Families and teams must constantly evaluate the balance between the _sustainability of a support_ and the supports _readably accessible/available_ in the "hand off" transition to the next setting.
- 5th grade/8th grade/11th grade are critical times to press this discussion.
- I observe the paradox of pulling a historically effective support that cannot be duplicated in the next setting.
- Ethical dilemmas in fading supports: "notified trials" to show treatment effect.
- Practical dilemmas in the race to secure accommodations on third party standardized assessment (e.g., ACT, College Board [AP, PSAT, and SAT]).
- Critical to understand how rights and responsibilities change over time, under each level of entitlement (504, IEP, RTI).

Number Seven: Keep an eye on executive functioning deficits as students hedge towards graduation. Interventions and support are available in and out of school.

- Executive functions are the "brain's CEO": analyzing, planning, organizing, activating, adjusting to meet external demands.
- My observations: success in higher education highly dependent on the development of these habits.
- Time management is among the biggest of needs for my "otherwise qualified" college bound kiddos.
- The "dark side" of supports that don't generalize to the next setting.
- Most of my college bound students know little about how a high school and college schedule differ.
- Building resiliency for snags and "gray areas"
- Awareness of learning profile and where more "wrapping" is needed.

Number Seven: Keep an eye on executive functioning deficits as students hedge towards graduation. Interventions and support are available in and out of school. (CONTINUED)

COMMON DOMAINS OF EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Inhibition: the ability to stop a behavior at the appropriate time

Shift: moving from one activity to another and adapting to various academic demands in a reasonable time

Emotional Control: modulation of emotional responses by bringing rational thought and coping strategies to the situation

Initiation: the ability to begin a task independently; generating ideas, responses, problem solving strategies

Planning/Organization: the ability to manage current and future demands, including time and task management

Organization of Materials: imposing order on school materials and storage spaces

Self-monitoring: soliciting a student's participation in the examination and evaluation of his/her own progress

Self-Awareness: assisting a student with an accurate and functional picture of her strengths and needs as a student with a disability

Number Seven: Keep an eye on executive functioning deficits as students hedge towards graduation. Interventions and support are available in and out of school. (CONTINUED)

The Executive Function Mantra at W&A:

1.)**FORECAST**: Planning ahead to ensure an accurate understanding of the upcoming demands

2.) **PRIORITIZE**: Once we know what is coming at you, what sequence do we need to establish to address the most essential tasks?

3.) **BUDGET**: Now that we know what comes first, how much time, energy, and attention will it require to do effectively?

4.) **ACTIVATE**: Execute the task, as planned.

5.) **ENHANCE**: Did you meet the demand? What went right here? What can we improve upon?

Number Eight: Offer a written "parent/student vision statement" for your team's benefit.

- Ask for the document to be integrated into the record under "parent comments."
- Provide 24 hours in advance (or more) for your team to reflect upon the document.
- Directive: if your team was to change dramatically tomorrow, what key points does a new team need to know about what you value as essential to your child's success? What has been more or less successful over the course of your journey?
- Specificity and brevity are key.
- Identify 1, 3, and 5 year goals for your child.
- Document your concerns and specific requests for the team to consider.
- Have team leader repeat back all or portions if needed.

Number Nine: Work diligently to refine a realistic post-secondary goal based on measurable data.
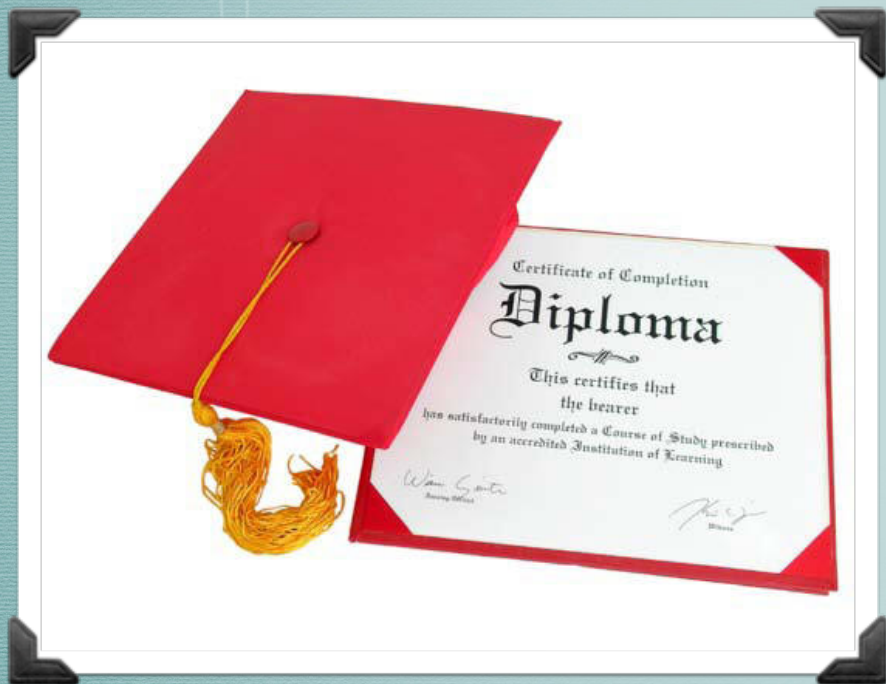
- This is an enormous conundrum for many of my post-high school clients, and the source of much angst for families hedging into the final stages of public school.

- The post secondary goal (beginning at age 14 1/2 in the IEP) typically begins broad, and ideally is refined each year towards a practical and individualized.

- I have strong opinions that all students with disabilities (regardless of severity) need early and meaningful exposure to the world of work before they graduate.

- Inquire and observe supports and services that are available in the next setting to "reality test" them.

- Never wait for the last IEP meeting to refine the goal.

- Genuinely assess what intra and extra curricular supports contribute to your child's success towards this goal, and ask yourself, "is this sustainable?" If not, ask yourself "what resources will be required to get the young adult what they need?"

Number Ten: Cross train for the marathon, not the sprint.

- Parent networking is the most restorative resource available to the parent of a special learner.

- Learning how to budget your time and energy in this journey is essential.

- Understand that learning <u>how,</u> <u>what,</u> and <u>when</u> to compromise, is essential to the successful long-term plan for a special learner. There will certainly be a subset of "non-negotiables" that are core to your vision of your child.

- Always be prepared to adjust your expectations as your child grows.

- Understanding how to begin generalize the unique understanding you have of your child to the diverse staff that will be supporting him/her.

In closing...

Contact information

Matthew Wanzenberg, Ph.D.

Wanzenberg & Associates
386 Pennsylvania Ave
Suite 3SW
Glen Ellyn IL 60137

www.IEPGuardians.org

(work) 630-545-0234
(fax) 888-271-0887
(mobile) 630-926-6385