Deconstructing IEP Activity

Purpose: The below IEP format provides classroom staff and families with information on *what* to teach, *where* to teach, and *how* to teach young children with significant disabilities in inclusive classrooms.In addition, teachers sometimes "inherit" IEPs from other teachers or from other educational staff who develop IEPs. As such teachers sometimes "deconstruct" the IEP in order to make sense of what they need to teacher, where they need to teach it, and how they need to teach it. The steps for "deconstructing" an IEP objective are relatively easy and are listed below. Following the steps are examples from "real" IEPs that have been deconstructed.

- ***Step 1:*** Determine the critical skill of the objective.

Critical skills are defined as behaviors that are required for participation in activities. They are not activities, nor are they materials. Critical skills can be embedded into a variety of daily activities.

- ***Step 2:*** Rewrite the objective so it is measurable and meaningful.

Occasionally, objectives are written too narrowly which precludes the teacher from teaching across activities (e.g., "child will use a pincer grasp to pick up raisins"). In this step, the teacher writes the objective in a broad way, not specifying specific materials, or situations under which the skill will be taught. For example, Child will grasp objects/materials using his thumb and forefinger. Further, there are times when objectives do not contain antecedents, measurable behaviors, and criteria that will allow teams to monitor a child's performance.

- ***Step 3:*** Identify **sample** activities in which the skill can be taught.

This provides the context for teaching the critical skill. The activities listed are not meant to be an exhaustive list of every opportunity for teaching the skills. Rather they are intended to be examples that sample a variety of environments and activities.

- ***Step 4:*** Identify adaptations for teaching the skills.

This is the "specially designed instruction" component of the IEP. Teachers should identify instruction adaptations, environmental adaptations, materials, technology, etc. that are needed for teaching a specific skill.

For each of the "problematic" objectives below, identify the critical skill (there may be more than one) associated with the objective. Next, write a measurable and meaningful objective designed to help a child acquire, strengthen, or maintain the critical skills. Then, identify at least three daily activities in which you and other team members might address the critical skill. Lastly, brainstorm adaptations that may be necessary for a child with more significant delays/disabilities.

Example #1:
The student will answer yes/no questions about what he wants to eat/drink at meal time 80% of the time.

Problem: This objective is too restrictive. Answering yes/no questions is something that can be done through many activities, not just at lunch about food and drink. Further, 80% of the time requires that data be collected continuously because the parameters have not been specified.

Alternate:

- **Critical skill(s):** Answering yes/no questions

- **Measurable objective:** During a variety of daily activities, and when asked a yes/no question by an adult or peer, the child will answer yes/no by verbally saying "yes" or "no," 2 out of 3 questions presented each day for 3 consecutive days.

- **Sample activities:**
  * Circle – who to sit next to
  * Snack – what to eat/drink
  * Playground – what piece of equipment to play on
  * Art – what art medium to use

Example #2:
The student will cut out a square and circle by staying on the outline shape independently 2 out of 3 tries.

Problem: Cutting is not a critical skill since it is not something that can be embedded across daily activities and routines. The critical skill is the development of fine motor skills such as grasping and manipulating objects with both hands.

Alternate:

- ***Critical skill(s):** Manipulating a variety of objects to (a) complete daily activities such as feeding and dressing, (b) participate in daily activities such as free play and circle time, and (c) play/use with objects found in the environment such as books, puzzles, and art supplies.
- **Measurable objective:** Once a day, for two weeks, during at least three different daily activities that require use of two hands, child will independently use one hand to hold or steady an object while the other hand manipulates the object or performs a movement
- **Sample activities:**
  * Art – using scissors to make a collage, painting a picture
  * Dramatic play - opening and closing an oven mitt to retrieve items from an "oven," tying strings to an apron, stirring a pot of soup, dressing dolls
  * Reading center – opening and closing a puppet's mouth to tell a story, turning the pages of a book
  * Block area – stacking blocks or Duplos

Example #3:

Given a 5-10 interlocking puzzle of a familiar objects and a teacher model of task completion, the student will complete the puzzle independently within 2 minutes on 9/10 occasions.

Problem: Working a puzzle is an activity that involves many different skills (manipulating small objects, matching, attending) The teacher needs to identify what they want the child to learn by working the puzzle in order to correctly write the IEP objective. The puzzle is not the outcome; learning a skill associated with working the puzzle is the outcome.

Alternate:

- **Critical skill(s):** Problem solving (matching things that fit together)
- **Measurable objective:** During a variety of daily activities at home and at school, the child will match objects that fit together on each opportunity provided for three consecutive days.
- **Sample activities:**
  * Block center – fitting together legos in a pattern to make a building structure
  * Manipulates center – working an inlaid puzzle
  * Dramatic play – setting a table by following outlines on a placemat for utensils, cookware, etc.

Example #4:

Child will be involved in group activities by participating in circle and small group activities.

Problem: Participation can be many different behaviors (e.g., listening, watching, following directions, answering questions). A child can also participate in inappropriate ways (throwing a tantrum, talking out of turn, taking peers' toys). They can appear to be participating and that not be the case. The teacher needs to specifically identify what skills they wish the child to learn/practice/use during large group activities.

Alternate:

- **Critical skill(s):** Attending to an activity – involving looking in the direction of the teacher or other children or manipulating objects associated with activity in a way that sustains the child's attention or in a manner intended by the teacher or manufacturer.
- **Measurable objective:** During three different activities, the child will attend to a task by looking at persons/materials associated with the task, or by manipulating materials associated with the task for majority of the activity. For example, if the activity lasts 10 minutes, the child should look at persons/materials associated with the task or use materials for more than 5 minutes (does not have to be consecutive) each day for 3 consecutive days.
- **Sample activities:**
  * Large group –during story reading and retelling
  * Small group – manipulating objects to plant seeds

Example #5:
The student will string 51" beads.

Problem: Similar to the "puzzle" objective, stringing beads results in having to use many different skills. The teacher needs to identify the outcome they want the child to achieve by stringing beads and then identify other contexts in which the child can practice learning the skill.

Alternate:

- **Critical skill(s):** Sequencing items in a pattern or a physical attribute (large to small, by color, by shape)
- **Measurable objective:** During a variety of daily activities, the child will sequence objects associated with the activity by size, color, or shape each day for 3 days.
- **Sample activities:**
  * Block area – following a pattern of block shapes to make a block structure
  * Art area – following a color pattern to make a necklace out of different colored pasta shells.
  * Science center – sequencing shells from largest to smallest

Example #6:
The student will demonstrate progress toward gross motor skills by walking forward, backward, and sideways on a standard balance beam.

Problem: There are few, if any, opportunities during daily activities to walk backwards, sideways, or on a balance beam. Therefore these are not critical skills.

Alternate:

- **Critical skill(s):** Balance for walking without support
- **Measurable objective:** At home, school, and the community, the child will walk with one hand support for 15 feet across 2 different surfaces (e.g., grass, carpet, tile), once a day for two weeks
- **Sample activities:**
  * Playground: walking across grass get to the playground
  * Gross Motor room: walking on gymnasium mats to get to riding toys
  * Classroom: walking from circle time carpet area to tile floors in snack area
  * Home: walking from cement outside to grass area to play on swing set