

Shaping IEPs with Student Strengths

Presented by Andrea Beachnau





Rewriting the Story

From Deficits to Strengths

Today's Agenda

Understand Your Role in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process

Use the IEP Prep Worksheet

Explore Key Skill Areas

Advocate with Confidence

Who's At the Table? Why Your Voice Matters



- ✓ You – the parent
- ✓ Student (if appropriate)
- ✓ General Education Teacher
- ✓ Special Education Teacher/Provider
- ✓ Individual who can interpret evaluation results
- ✓ Representative of the Public Agency

Introduction to the IEP Prep Worksheet

My Child's Strengths and Needs Worksheet – IEP

Use this worksheet to record your thoughts about your child.

What works for my child: Three things my child has recently learned or a new activity they enjoy:

Three activities that my child is currently working on:

Three things my child is having trouble with:

Three things I would like my child to learn within the next year:

My Child's Strengths and Needs Worksheet – IEP

This worksheet covers the main areas of development that the IEP focuses on. It is also meant to help parents and caregivers collaborate with their child's team by preparing for meetings. Parents know their children best.

Skill Area	Strength(s)	Needs or Concerns	What I Hope For in 1 Year (Goals)
Academic Involvement and progress in the general education curriculum, or participation in age-appropriate activities for preschool			
Communication/Speech & Language Speech sounds, expressive and receptive language, social (pragmatic) communication, voice, fluency			
Social-Emotional/Behavioral Functions and triggers of behavior, mental health diagnoses, executive functioning, sensory processing			
Perception/Motor/Mobility Gross and fine motor coordination, visual motor, balance, and limb/body mobility			

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Functional Performance Skills not considered academic, such as dressing, eating, personal care, ability to follow routines, independent living skills			
Medical/Health Health, vision, hearing, allergies, or other physical/medical issues			
Secondary Transition Postsecondary education and/or training, employment, and independent living skills			

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What works for my child:

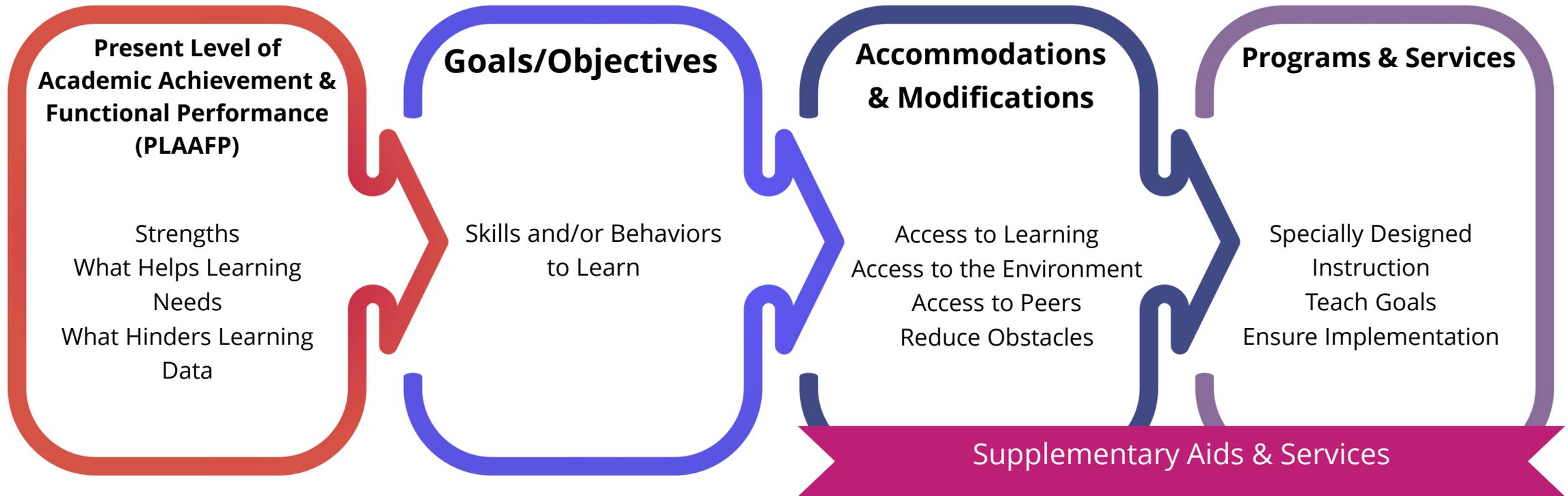
Activities my child likes best:

My child learns best when:

How my child's challenging behavior is best redirected:

Three things that motivate my child:

Connecting the Worksheet to the IEP



Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

IEP Prep Worksheet Page 1

What's Working

- Brings them joy
- Recent success
- Builds confidence
- Helps them focus

What's Being Practiced

- Trying at home
- Practicing at school
- Needs reminders
- Working hard on

What's Hard

- Causes frustration
- Needs extra help
- Triggers stress
- Avoids or resists

What's Next

- Next big step
- More independence
- Social growth
- Everyday life skill

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Worksheet Example: Emma & Math

What's Working

- Add & subtract w/o regrouping
- Math games apps on tablet
- Manipulatives & number lines

What's Hard

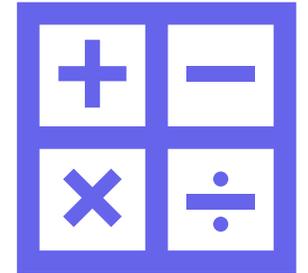
- Knowing when to regroup
- Lining up numbers in columns
- Solving word problems with steps

What's Being Practiced

- Adding w/regrouping using blocks
- Borrowing in subtraction w/help
- Checking work w/calculator

What's Next

- Use base-ten blocks for regrouping
- Practice regrouping w/money at home
- Build confidence w/small regrouping problems



IEP Prep Worksheet Pages 2-3

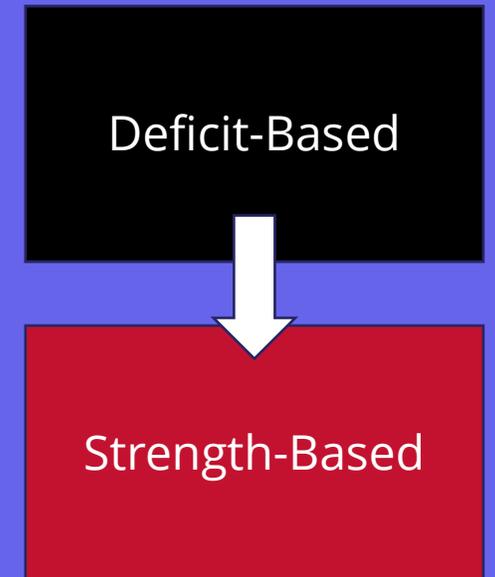
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Academics: Learning Through Curiosity & Growth

Name: Aaliyah **Age:** 8 years old **Grade:** 2nd **Eligibility:** Specific Learning Disability (Reading)

PLAAFP:

- Struggles with decoding
- Avoids reading

Goal:

- Read 2nd-grade passages

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Curious & verbal
- Loves science, drawing & nature videos
- Needs support decoding & reading independently

Goal:

- Read & discuss science texts

Accommodations & Modifications:

- Themed books
 - Choice
- Shared reading
- Science projects

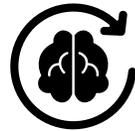
Activity: Shifting Words, Shifting Mindsets

Problem-Focused (Deficits)

Slow



Disengaged



Defiant



Chatty



Solution-Focused (Strengths)

Careful, thoughtful, intentional, steady,
detail-oriented, learns at own pace

Motivated by relevance, self-directed,
has strong interests, purpose-driven

Holds strong beliefs, bold, determined,
self-advocate

Enthusiastic, expressive, has a lot to share,
enjoys communicating

Communication: Expressing Ideas & Connecting with Others

Name: Jamal **Age:** 13 years old **Grade:** 7th **Eligibility:** Speech & Language Impairment

***Primary Mode of Communication:** Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC) Device

PLAAFP:

- Limited verbal speech
- Struggles with peer interaction

Goal:

- Answer verbally

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Creative & expressive
- Loves humor, art, & trivia
 - Uses AAC device
- Needs support in social interactions

Goal:

- Start 1 peer interaction daily

Accommodations & Modifications:

- AAC updates
- Peer phrases
- Scheduled group time

Social-Emotional: Building Relationships & Self-Regulation

Name: Zari **Age:** 15 years old **Grade:** 9th **Eligibility:** Speech & Language Impairment

PLAAFP:

- Avoids group activities
- Withdrawal

Goal:

- Reduce avoidance by 50%

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Thoughtful & creative
 - Loves, animals, photography, & nature
- Needs support with groups & transitions

Goal:

- Join 1 group activity daily.

Accommodations & Modifications:

- Visual schedule
- Countdown timers
 - Calming tools
 - Themed tasks

Motor: Coordinated Movement & Physical Confidence

Name: Liam **Age:** 4 years old **Grade:** Preschool **Eligibility:** Early Childhood Developmental Delay

PLAAFP:

- Avoids fine motor tasks
- Struggles with grasping

Goal:

- 5 pre-writing strokes

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Imaginative & playful
- Loves building, music & rhythm, & pretend play
- Needs support with fine motor tasks and grasping

Goal:

- Stack blocks & draw to music

Accommodations & Modifications:

- Checklists
- Building toys
- Easy-grip tools

Activity: Shifting Words, Shifting Mindsets 2

Problem-Focused (Deficits)

Clumsy



Lost



Impulsive



Withdrawn



Solution-Focused (Strengths)

Adventurous, eager to explore, building balance, active and energetic

Exploring options, open-minded, flexible, on a journey of self-discovery

Spontaneous, energetic, quick to act, enthusiastic, innovative

Reflective, thoughtful, self-aware, careful, observant, thinks before speaking

Functional: Thriving in Daily Routines & Independence

Name: Emily **Age:** 10 years old **Grade:** 5th **Eligibility:** Cognitive Impairment

PLAAFP:

- Struggles with winter clothes & transition to and from recess
- Often requires adult prompts

Goal:

- Winter clothes on and off independently 4/5 days

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Motivated & creative
- Loves fashion & bright colors
 - Follows routines
 - Enjoys independence
- Needs support with winter clothes and recess transitions

Goal:

- Use visual checklist to dress & transition \leq 1 prompt

Accommodations & Modifications:

- Picture checklist
- Consistent routine
- Fading prompts
 - Labeled bins

Medical: Understanding & Supporting Health Needs

Name: Carlos **Age:** 7 years old **Grade:** 1st **Eligibility:** Other Health Impairment
IEP Support in an **Extracurricular Activity

PLAAFP:

- Struggles to check blood sugar
- Needs adult prompts

Goal:

- Check daily before lunch

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Energetic & curious
- Loves soccer, charts, & health facts
- Needs support with blood sugar

Goal:

- Spot symptoms & ask for break/snack

Accommodations & Modifications:

- Sports charts & stickers
 - Health videos
 - Adult modeling

Postsecondary: Exploring Interests & Planning for the Future

Name: Tiana **Age:** 17 years old **Grade:** 12th **Eligibility:** Autism Spectrum Disorder

PLAAFP:

- Struggles with planning
- Limited career awareness

Goal:

- Identify two options

Deficit-Based

VS

Strength-Based

PLAAFP:

- Social & organized
- Loves event planning, playlists, & digital design
- Needs support with planning and career options

Goal:

- Explore 3 job options & decision-making

Accommodations & Modifications

- Visual tools
- Career videos
- Hands-on event planning

Activity: Shifting Words, Shifting Mindsets 3

Problem-Focused (Deficits)

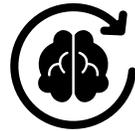
Off-Topic



Dependent



Frustrated



Disorganized



Solution-Focused (Strengths)

Creative thinker, idea sharer, sees connections, imaginative, interest-driven

Collaborative, team-oriented, relationship-focused, works with others, values support, seeks guidance

Persistent, determined, motivated to improve, problem-solver, driven by structure or standards

Flexible, adaptable, big-picture thinker, creative planner, resourceful

IEP Prep Worksheet Page 4

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What Works

Reflections...

Learning Moments
Routines/Tools
Responds to Well

Favorite Activities

Reflections...

Free Time Choice
Makes Smile
Talks About a Lot

Helps Learn

Reflections...

Most Successful
Environment
Home Supports

Redirects Behavior

Reflections...

Helps Calm Down
Triggers/Signals
Home Supports

What Motivates

Reflections...

Works Hard For
Rewards
Excited/Engaged

Example: Supporting the Whole Child



Mario - Age 8, 3rd Grade

Whole Child IEP Goal

Mario will finish a superhero-themed obstacle course with 3 steps (like crawling, balancing, jumping) to build body control. He will do this with 90% accuracy in 4 out of 5 trials.

Whole Child IEP Accommodations

- Superhero-themed games & puzzles
- Music for focus/calming
- Clear, step-by-step directions
- Choice of movement/calming tools
- Peer pairing for team tasks
- Praise effort (stickers, helper jobs)
- Breaks with music/puzzles

Prepare with Purpose

Reflect, Gather, Share

Ask Questions for Understanding

Lead with Curiosity & Strength

Share Your Voice

Your Perspective Matters

Collaborate with Confidence

You Belong at the Table

Advocating with Confidence



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We are here to support you!

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In collaboration with



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