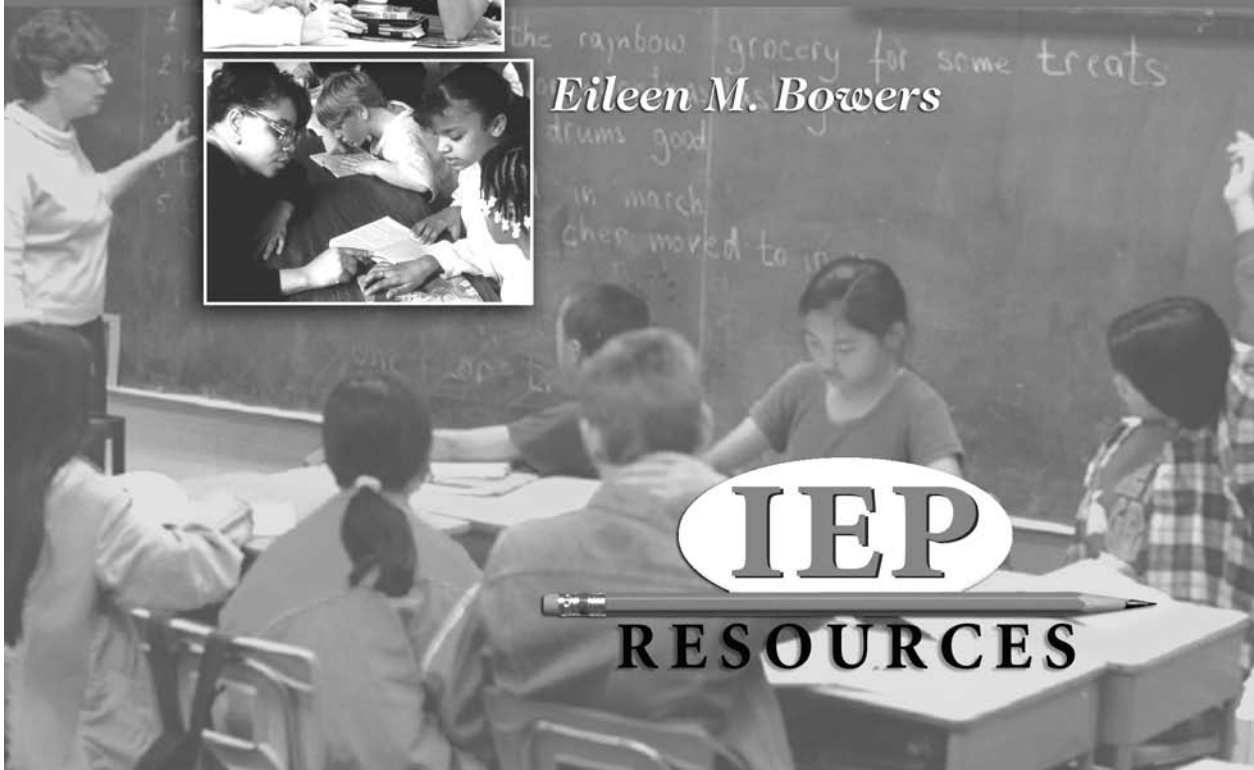




Practical Strategies *for* Middle School Inclusion

Eileen M. Bowers



IEP

RESOURCES

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How Do I Organize All This?

Academic Snapshot and Educational Prescriptions

Two of the biggest complaints in special education are the lack of documentation and of objectivity used in decision making. Administrators, parents and others are beginning to ask, “where is the data?” “Show me the evidence that brought you to this decision.” It’s understandable that special educators are somewhat subjective because we are trained to find individual differences in children and work around them. However, there is room to improve and learning how to document more thoroughly and in a more objective fashion would help us assist children more efficiently.

In an effort to accomplish these two goals, I have developed two forms to be used with each student, the Academic Snapshot and the Educational Prescription.

The first form to discuss is the Academic Snapshot. It has several useful purposes.

Academic Snapshot

The IEPs most states use are becoming more detailed all the time. Although this information is necessary, it's sometimes easier to have more basic data at your fingertips, that is, a "snapshot." The Academic Snapshot provides you with valuable information at a glance.

The second purpose it has is to provide the IEP team with each student's starting point each year, providing you with objective, measurable growth. Often times the receiving teacher will find this information on the IEP. My personal preference, however, is to obtain this information myself when the student comes to me in September. This form should be used to record student levels of academic functioning in reading, writing and math skills. This information is then documented on the Academic Snapshot in the beginning of the school year and again towards the end. Used in this manner, a teacher can objectively measure and illustrate growth that is clear and easy to see.

I have found the revised version of the Brigance Test of Basic Skills to be a user friendly tool in assessing these areas. The test is diagnostic in nature, lending itself to a specific breakdown of information outlining skills that the student has or has not mastered. The special education teacher can use this test in the early part of the school year, record the results on the Academic Snapshot and work from there. This pre-test gives the teacher the baseline data necessary to begin instruction. As the year draws to a close, the special educator administers this test again and records the results on the Academic Snapshot. She now has a beginning and an ending point with which she can measure growth. This test

has 2 forms which accommodate pre-and-post-test teaching. If all teachers dealing with the same children were using the same test, it would be even more valid. This consistency would allow for a fair and even measure of growth.

Next, the form shows professionals the learning modalities and discrepancies of each student. From there it is easy to develop accommodations and modifications that help fill in gaps for weak areas of struggling students. Then an individual curriculum can be developed. Once the Academic Snapshot is completed, the Educational Prescription becomes an easy fix. For example, if the student is entering the sixth grade and is proven to be functioning on a fourth grade silent reading comprehension level but a sixth grade listening comprehension level, then it's advantageous for the teacher to provide him with as much oral reading opportunities as possible. This could be accomplished by having the teacher or another student read it to him, providing him with a book on tape, etc. At the same time, you could encourage him to follow along while listening to the reading in an effort to help build his sight vocabulary. By implementing this strategy, you allow the student an opportunity to comprehend the material by channeling it through his strong learning modality and at the same time to strengthen his weak modality.

Finally, when it is complete, it's easy to see where the child is functioning, and what his strengths and weaknesses are. It's reasonable to assume that if a student is functioning two or more years below grade level, he will have difficulty working

within the general curriculum even with lengthy modifications. This gives the IEP team the objective data needed to make an educated decision on the best possible placement for this child. Depending on where he is functioning, maybe an inclusion classroom on a grade level or two below would be a good placement option, or possibly a resource room. The options are as varied as the team is creative. This Academic Snapshot gives the team the information needed to make this reliable decision.

Academic Snapshot

Name _____

Date _____

READING				
Sil. Read. Comp.	Listen. Comp.	Vocab. Comp.	Oral Read (text)	Oral Read (list)

MATH				
Grade Level	Word Problem	Whole # Comp.	Decimal Comp.	Fraction Comp.

ENGLISH		
Spelling Level	Sentence Writing Level	Paragraph Writing

Other Information PROFICIENCY		
Exempt/Not Exempt	Areas Not Tested	Modifications

The Educational Prescription

As a sixth grade special educator it has always amazed me that our students have existed within the school district for as long as five years or more prior to entering Middle School and teachers prior to me have figured out how they learn best and what they can and can't do within the general curriculum. Unfortunately, they have no easy means of sharing this information with the receiving teacher. Hence, the Educational Prescription. Rather than force each teacher every year to take five to six weeks to figure out how best to work with this child, why not pass recommended accommodations and modifications on from year to year? That's where the form title comes from; it's a description of a learning prescription that has proven successful for this student in the past. When the receiving teacher gets this student, she will receive the IEP along with the Educational Prescription.

Those who know our students the best are their parents. Each special educator should speak with the parent of each student in the beginning of the year. At that time, ask them for information about their child that helps you assist her better. For example, maybe they will tell you their daughter is not a very good writer, but loves to listen to people read or tell stories to her. This tells you that her auditory skills are strong. Possibly, in addition to oral reading, you could assist the student and her parents with putting her spelling or vocabulary words on tape so she could access her strong learning channel to learn necessary curriculum. Our parents are our best source of information for our students. They were their child's first teacher, and have watched her grow and develop. They know what has worked well in the past and what has not. Tap into this source of information and document that information on the Educational Prescription.

This form also serves as a form of documentation to justify, or explain, decisions. For example, some states have statewide proficiency tests that are administered over a series of varied grades. In some states, student school diplomas hinge on the success rate of this test. In addition, most states are encouraging teachers to have special education students take these tests. And in many cases, special education students have proven to be successful with this assessment. However, some states have left room for them to take these tests but allow them to be exempt from the accountability of passing if they have been receiving considerable modifications to their daily curriculum. Remember, a modification is a significant change made to the curriculum, and different from an accommodation. When viewing the Educational Prescription, if there are only a few modifications suggested, the child may not need to be exempt. If, however, their curriculum contains many modifications, holding them accountable for this test without offering the same modifications would not be reasonable. The Educational Prescription is a tool that demonstrates what modifications are being administered and to what degree they are being delivered.

Educational Prescription

Present Levels of Performance	Sub/Act	Goal	Objective	Accommodations

Student _____ Parents _____ Date/Grade _____ Phone # _____

Status	Modifications	Status	Areas of Concern	Points of Interest	Consultation

How Do I Organize All This Information?

Next I will take you through the paper trail of one student, Jimmy Smith (not his name). The information pertaining to this student has not been changed in any way.

The first step to the process is to use an assessment tool. I prefer the Brigance Test of Basic Skills, to complete the **Academic Snapshot** in September. Once this is completed, you can fill in the **Educational Prescription**. Admittedly, it is lengthy, but after you have completed it in September, it doesn't have to be done again. This form becomes your guide to assist in helping the child surmount his learning disabilities. These strategies help him progress from where he is presently functioning to grade level, or close to it. You will refer to this form often throughout the year. At times you may feel it is necessary to discontinue a strategy. That can be inserted in the "status" column. This form is a wealth of information and can be shared with his teachers that follow you.

After the Educational Prescription you will find a two-page explanation of the accommodations and modifications I selected. This should help you in analyzing data on individual students.

Next you will find a second copy of the September Academic Snapshot followed immediately by the Snapshot taken in March. This will assist you in seeing a "before and after picture" of the student's accomplishments in sixth grade.

And finally, I have inserted a copy of the first page of this student's IEP. As you can see, these present levels of performance are recorded directly from the March Snapshot. It's impossible to "standardize" this procedure. My intention here is to show you how to create this paper trail. Due to the individual nature of our business, this procedure can only be customized to fit the needs of individual students.

Lastly, I have included a blank copy of the Academic Snapshot and the Educational Prescription. Feel free to copy and use these in your classroom.

Academic Snapshot

Jimmy Smith (L.D.)

Sept, 2003

Name		Date		
READING				
Sil. Read. Comp.	Listen. Comp.	Vocab. Comp.	Oral Read (text)	Oral Read (list)
Mastered 4th Functioning 5th	Mastered 5th w/100% Functioning 6th	Mastered 3rd Functioning 4th Gr.		
MATH				
Grade Level	Word Problem	Whole # Comp.	Decimal Comp.	Fraction Comp.
Mastered 4th Gr. Functioning 5th Gr.	Mastered 5th Gr. Functioning 6th Gr.	Had difficulty w/3D X3D & Long division	Could not +, -, x, ÷ Decimals	Could not +, -, x, ÷ Fractions
Other Information ENGLISH				
Spelling Level	Sentence Writing Level	Paragraph Writing		
Mastered 4th Gr. Functioning 5th Gr.	Mastered 4th Gr. Functioning 5th Gr.	No Reference made in IEP.		
PROFICIENCY				
Exempt/Not Exempt	Areas Not Tested	Modifications		
All area's tested				

Practical Strategies for Middle School Inclusion

Educational Prescription

Present Levels of Performance	Sub/Act	Goal	Objective	Accommodations
Silent Reading – functioning 5th grade Listening Comprehension – functioning 6th grade Vocabulary Comprehension –	Reading	Demonstrate	- inferring, details, main idea and cause/effect - reading vocab. - participate in class answering questions.	- Cooperative Learning - Oral Reading
Grade Level – functioning 5th Word Problem – functioning 6th Could not -X 3D 3D. -do long div., no skill w/ fractions or Decimals.	Math	None stated on IEP		- Correct mistakes w/ calculator. Initially try w/o calculator.
Spelling Level – functioning 5th grade Sentence Writing – functioning 5th grade.	English	- to complete classroom writing assignments.	- write neatly w/correct spelling, punc., grammar. - write para. - pass spelling tests	- Written spelling tests - color code spelling words - words on tape
- Inability or unwillingness to complete assignments. - Receives failing grades for incomplete work.	Vocational	Demonstrate strategies for completing all assignments.	- use an assignment book - stay organized w/folders	- assignment initial program - home school communication - locker organization
	Social studies and Science			- develop study guide - skeletal set of notes - vocabulary words on tape

Student _____ Parents _____ Date/Grade _____ Phone # _____

Status	Modifications	Status	Areas of Concern	Points of Interest	Consultation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alter expectations - Context clues for vocabulary - Draw main idea 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak phonic decoding skills - Overwhelmed by large amounts of print 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Likes cars & racing - Likes to draw 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP - Mom
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calculation sheets (wean off slowly) - Mastery learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't know multiplication facts - Refuses to complete homework 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mom - Mom
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide starter sentence - Teacher/student create outline - Alter expectations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Writing well below grade level - Poor spelling, word usage, capitalization - Writes simple short sentences routinely 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP - IEP - IEP
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty completing work - Communication skills average - Developing attitude/behaviors that are interfering w/school 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IEP & Mom - IEP - IEP & Mom
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guided worksheets - Read & explain tests - Structure tests - Context clues for vocabulary - Use notes during tests 				

Why Choose These Specific Accommodations/Modifications for Jimmy Smith?

Reading

Cooperative Learning – adds a "social" component to reading.

Oral Reading – Jimmy's listening comprehension is stronger than his silent reading comprehension.

Alter Expectations – initially Jimmy needs to experience success. Expectations can be raised once Jimmy believes he can do the work successfully.

Context Clues for Vocabulary – Jimmy's vocabulary comprehension is far below grade level. Memorizing words is not working for him. Putting words in context may assist in understanding meaning.

Draw Main Idea – to strengthen the silent reading level, Jimmy needs to be taught how to "draw" the story in his mind's eye. This strategy may help.

Math

Calculation Sheets – Jimmy had been refusing to complete homework. These sheets may make the work more manageable. Wean off as time goes by.

Mastery Learning – This will assist Jimmy in learning from his mistakes. It also demonstrates to him that his success is important to his teacher, as well as to himself.

English

Written Spelling Tests – Jimmy needs to be able to identify the correct spelling of a word. Visually memorizing how to spell words has not worked for Jimmy in the past.