

Sharing staff responsibility for SEN in the Secondary School through the use of IEP Includer.

In this article [Gill Situnayake and Peter Tennant](#) describe an approach to individual education planning using Learning Platforms that seeks to increase the involvement of subject teachers in providing effective support for all learners in their classes.

The good news for SEN students in the Secondary School is that they can now benefit from a higher level of teacher awareness regarding their individual educational needs. Thanks to the increasing use of Learning Platforms, SEN support no longer has to be the prerogative of SENCOs alone but of every teacher who interacts/engages with the student. Specialist applications, such as IEP Includer, can be accessed via a Learning Platform, offering the school a structure to address this coordination issue. IEP Includer is designed to raise whole school awareness and ownership of special educational needs.

The SEN Code of Practice states that every teacher should provide for the special educational needs of the students in their classes. All students with statements of SEN and those supported at School Action Plus will have an individual education plan (IEP). These are intended to guide and support the teacher in meeting the educational needs of the student. The concept of raising awareness of individual needs through an IEP, be they reading difficulties or issues of health, behaviour or self esteem is a key feature both of the inclusive school and of personalised learning.

In a primary school this is often a straightforward process, as the SEN student will have a class teacher who can liaise directly with the SENCO in a relatively small organisation. However in a secondary school, communication by the SENCO with a larger number of subject teachers, and obtaining feedback on the performance of students in relation to their IEP targets, can be slow and time consuming. Involving all staff directly in the setting and evaluation of targets and strategies is often an unrealistic, but desirable objective. This communication issue has long been regarded as problematic with the SENCO producing IEPs which were then not effectively used by the subject teacher. This is understandable from the perspective of teachers who may teach x number of students/groups per week. IEP Includer acknowledges and seeks to address this issue, believing that meeting individual needs is highly advantageous and essential for the students' development and self esteem.

The development of IEP Includer in partnership with Shireland Collegiate Academy

The system has been developed in partnership with Shireland Collegiate Academy, Sandwell, West Midlands. Approximately 20% of the academy's students have special educational needs. IEP Includer went live in November 2007 when one representative from each department was trained. He/she then 'cascaded' their learning to his/her departmental colleagues. Staff usage and feedback to date has been extremely positive and encouraging.

IEP Includer supports the adoption of a consistent approach by all staff who teach the student. Each IEP has direct input and evaluation from every member of staff who teaches the student. Staff from each curriculum area use the system to set their own learning strategies and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. This data can be used by the SENCO to assess progress and refine targets.

IEP Includer can be used to support students who are struggling to engage educationally due to learning and/or behaviour issues. The individual needs of the student are clearly described to both parents and teachers who can then play a part in the creation and monitoring of an IEP. The IEP can be viewed electronically or in printed form. From this IEP is generated a briefer Action Plan which can be used by the teacher when lesson planning and in the classroom. The Action Plans of all students with IEPs in a teaching group can be viewed simultaneously. Students will have confidence that all teachers understand their particular difficulties and will approach these in the most appropriate way.

Staff feedback and evaluation regarding IEP Includer

A departmental representative feedback session was held at the end of the Summer Term, 2008. Staff have found the simplified Action Plan particularly useful on a day to day basis, reminding them to differentiate for the needs of pupils in their teaching groups. It has helped teachers to focus on students' individual needs when teaching and when planning and preparing the lesson.

Staff reported they were more able to keep students on task. Students responded to the strategies set and new ones could be implemented if necessary. Students could see where they needed to improve and when they did, it was clearly logged. IEP Includer was viewed as being a good tool for target setting. Targets have become much better communicated to all staff, including new staff, and it was easier to monitor progress.

IEP Includer has improved a whole school focus on SEN and behaviour management through a more effective information flow across the academy and department/whole school discussion regarding the individual needs of the students. It was reported that the enhanced level of communication would not have taken place easily without this system. IEP Includer improved organisation and was a good source of information for review.

IEP Includer is extremely user friendly in practice. However, we believe that IEP Includer is more than just an IT system. If fully supported by the school it has the potential to change practice and help staff to develop creative and appropriate interventions for students who are often excluded from full engagement with mainstream education. As such, IEP Includer fully supports the DCFS Secondary SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) initiative, promoting models of behaviour conducive to effective learning and achievement.

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