

IEP Development and implementation: Considering the Student, the Environment and the Academic Domain

Presenter: Hello everyone. We're going to begin now. Welcome to LD @school's third webinar. Funding for the production of this publication was provided by the Ministry of Education. Please note that the views expressed in the publication are the views of the recipient and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Education.

We're very excited to welcome our guest speakers, Dr. Todd Cunningham and Dr. Rhonda Martinussen, who will be speaking to us this afternoon about IEP Development and Implementation: Considering the Student, the Environment, and the Academic Domain. Just to let everyone know, all webinar participants except for the presenters have been muted for the remainder of the presentation although once Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Martinussen have finished their presentation we will be opening up the floor for questions.

Before we get started I'm going to help everyone acquaint themselves with the GoToWebinar control panel. If you don't see the full panel you should see an arrow, which you can click on to maximize the panel. This same button will minimize the panel during the presentation. Over the course of the presentation if you would like to ask any of the staff a question you may enter your text in the box at the bottom of the control panel and choose to send it to the staff from the drop down menu underneath. Finally, the hand raise button can be used to ask Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Martinussen a question at the end of their talk. If you raise your hand you will be un-muted so that you may personally ask the presenters your question.

After the webinar we will be sending out presentation slides as well as a link for a survey to let us know how you feel the webinar went. In approximately 2 weeks the webinar recording will be available and we will send out a link to all participants. All right, that takes care of all our housekeeping. Let's get started.

I'd like to first introduce Dr. Todd Cunningham. With his engaging presentation style weaving together research, compelling stories, and humour, Dr. Cunningham has empowered thousands of educators to support students who learn differently in their classrooms. Dr. Cunningham is a psychologist, supervised practice, currently teaching at the University of Toronto and provides academic intervention services. He completed his post-doctoral fellowship in the psychology department at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and obtained his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Toronto. His innovative research investigates the integration of assistive technology and learning strategies for children with learning difficulties due to a variety of reasons. A sought after public speaker and consultant, Dr. Cunningham has shared his expertise with parents, students, educators, school boards, and other professionals across Canada. In addition to hundreds of workshops, Dr. Cunningham has lectured, has guest lectured at universities, given keynote addresses, presented at educational and

research conferences and appeared on CBC several times. Dr. Cunningham was recently awarded a Bell Let's Talk Mental Health Grant to provide academic intervention support to northern Ontario communities through telepsychology.

I'd now like to introduce Dr. Rhonda Martinussen. Dr. Martinussen is currently an Associate Professor of Special Education and Adaptive Instruction at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study at the Ontario Institute for Studies and Education at the University of Toronto. She is interested in the nature of the overlap between inattention and learning difficulties in children and adolescence. She is currently conducting research on oral language proficiency and reading comprehension in use with and without attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. She is also highly interested in teacher professional development and teacher preparation in the fields of special education and literacy instruction.

And now I'm going to turn the present, the presentation over to Dr. Todd Cunningham and Rhonda Martinussen.

Speaker 1: Well thank you very much for having us here today. And so really what we want to do is not talk about how to write IEPs but really talk about some of the big things, some of the, sorry about that, there we go. Talk about some of the things that we're applying or thinking about and when to, when actually developing some of the questions that are kind of, that we often get about on how, how, what would we be thinking of in terms of IEP.

Speaker 2: So today's agenda includes a basic introduction to the individualized education plans and what is it. Then go through and talk about how important learning profiles are to this implementation of an IEP and how to teachers can use an IEP as a tool to promote learning curriculum access and achievement in students with learning disability. We'll talk about the various parts of the IEP and how they should connect to each other and we'll refocus on understanding the child's needs again but then link that into, to specific areas of accommodation, so instructional, environmental, and assessment. Then we'll have a, a short chat about some of the common issues that come up with accommodations and we'll discuss some of these in terms of the research that's been done and near the end we're going to talk about modifications in terms of, you know, when do you implement a modified program, what would it look like for a student with an LD and then we'll provide some characteristics of effective interventions with students of LD in that context and then rap it all up at the end.

Speaker 1: Yeah. So, again, we are talking about individuals with [inaudible] so we're really going to focus on this population and as you know, as we talked about several weeks ago, in, in talking about psychoeducational assessment, is the definition for learning disability used by the LDAO is one that shows a individual has to have the ability to learn. So that means that they have at least average to above average intelligence; however, there is a cognitive weakness or the way that their brain is wired that's making it hard for them to either take information in, to remember it, understand it, or express that information, so processing that information in a certain way. And a learning disability can impact more than just school. It's something that impacts friendships, work, self, it impacts self-esteem, it can be limiting. So it's not just a school-related disorder; however, over the, over the last fifty years of

research that we've been gathering we do know that when provided with the right type of strategies and interventions that these individuals are able to succeed. And so when we look at the IEP process then, the IEP is really a living document. It's a document that is, should be continuously being updating based on how a child is developing and based on, on what the new demands are in the school system, in the classroom. And what we see in terms of the IEP development and education program is that often it starts with just awesome teachers observing students within the classroom, seeing what their challenges are, seeing the things that they are good at, trying to start to address some of those challenges and when some of those challenges are not being addressed, really going to the broader school community, usually through an in-school team meeting to get some additional input. An IEP just becomes that formal document and that's really what you need to track, what are those, what are the things that we are doing that is able to help that student when we've identified some specific weaknesses. And the data that can go into the IEP to kind of help understand that student are from both the classroom teacher, it can be from parents. It can be from a student as well as other assessment avenues such as psychoeducational assessment, speech and language, OT, and so on. And as we're bringing this information together really what's getting developed is kind of a learning profile for that student. We're understanding first kind of the cognitive areas, how is their brain processing the information, social emotional, how are they feeling, but more specifically, and the area that really the IEP focuses in on is these main domains. The academic skills, reading, writing math, you know, being organized in classroom, taking notes, and also the order of output. And when we look at these academic skills it's never good enough to say the person has a reading problem. We have to really break it down. We have to take that kind of broad category and break it down to the individual skills that build up that category. So, if we say the person has a reading difficulty well, what the difficulty? Is it, are they unable to decode individual words? Do they not recognize words as a unit?

When they read do they read [inaudible] or are they slow and choppy? And, do they even understand what they're reading? So we have to really breakdown these different concepts into their individual units. Because then, once we have those individual units, once we know what that specific academic skill or that weakness is, then we really can start to find things that are going to be able to help that individual out. And when you have an academic weakness really, again, and lots of research kind of talks about this, is that the best way to support that weakness is through the zone of proximal development. And, more important, when we're supporting a student, a student in general, we really have to think about the zone of proximal development because the key, in many cases, for a student to be in the classroom is so that they can access the regular curriculum. So that they can do the same work that their peers are doing; however, for students who have learning disabilities, often what happens is due to a specific academic skill weakness, due to the fact they may not be able to decode words or their a bad speller, or they don't know the times table, due to one of these specific skill deficits then that impedes their ability to do work that other students are able to do. For example, if we have a grade four class and, and the students were sitting around and they were all asked to have to read some passages out loud, if a student who has a reading disability was sitting in that class then the ability to ask them to read out loud, well, that's going to be too challenging for them because they're unable to read those individual words. The challenge is too great to be able to participate in that group activity. And so therefore that's going to cause a lot of anxiety in that student. Going to have a lot of anxiety. On the

other hand for a student, if the only thing they ever had to read was grade two literature and then they kind of progressed from grades four to grade five to grade six to grade seven and they're still just in grade two literature, cause that's kind of where their reading ability is, then that's also going to create a lot of boredom in the students. And we know if students feel bored or students feel very anxious then they're more likely to exit the school system over time. So the idea then is to really figure out how do we control for the level of challenge appropriately so we can keep students in that zone of proximal development so that they are able to learn the same things that their peers are able to learn, to participate in the [inaudible].

Speaker 2: So one model that has been described in many of the industry documents including Learning For All is that there's the broad principle Universal Design for Learning and that principle basically sets the stage for teachers to consider how the classroom, the lessons, the activities are designed so that barriers to learning are removed from the get go. So, for example, if you have a ramp to enter a building, it's actually very useful for many people. So of instead of designing a lesson and then afterwards having to retrofit it you can think ahead and plan the lessons so that you're taking into account the strengths of the students as well as addressing some of those barriers. Another approach, which is probably known in Ontario as a tiered approach and it's, it's often studied in the literature of the Responsive Intervention Approach, is one in which the, the teacher is using a formative assessment to determine whether the instruction that's being provided to a student or a group of students is working. And if, if there is no progress on the target outcome then there's reconsideration to say well, maybe I have to change something. What, what does this, what does this student need to be successful? And along with that is differentiated instruction in which the, the classroom teacher again, it's very, very much connected to UDL, is taking a look at how you may be able to differentiate the process of teaching, the product that the student is developing to show knowledge or success in an area and differentiation of all those various domains helps students again access the curriculum and show what they know. The evidence-based interventions are more targeted interventions that could include remediation or compensatory practices and sometimes, in fact, many students can benefit from both. So remediation would be, for example, direct instruction in how to engage in decoding strategies to boost word recognition, accuracy, and fluency, whereas a compensatory strategy would be a strategy that's used to help the student bypass or get around or not have that, that, that learning need as a barrier. And in many cases those would be listed under the broader context of accommodations but they may also include other, well related to assistive technology that also can be provided by [inaudible].

Speaker 1: And often what we see is we see the, the kind of top two levels here are things that are done more at the classroom level whereas the evidence-based is really that targeting a specific student. And so then in the IEP really we're kind of addressing that, that bottom level, is taking kind of the student's profile and what it is that marks their academic strengths and challenges, listing kind of the things that are needed to support that student so that the classroom teacher then can take, take those ideas and be able to implement them within the regular classroom. Now, we don't talk about remediation and compensatory within the IEP. The way that the IEP talks about these areas is in the broader idea of accommodations and modifications where accommodations are the things that we do to be able to

bypass those areas of challenge, the student continues to meet the same curriculum expectations and our accommodations falls into three different areas, the instruction, the environment, and through assessment.

Speaker 2: And I think it's really important to emphasize that, that when you're making accommodations and if that's the only thing that a student's receiving, they're working at the same exact curriculum expectations as their peers. It's just that in order to make sure that they can access them or share their knowledge that the accommodation is being provided. So it might be more time. If it was an environmental accommodation to allow the student to process the task so that they can get, gather all the information.

Speaker 1: Yeah, and often what we see is we see either lots of accommodations on IEPs or not enough, it's kind of tricky to know what is the level. And the resource guide, The IEP Resource Guide, published in 2004 by the Ministry of Ed is fantastic and they really talk about the whole development and give kind of some lists of some very common accommodations. But one of the problems that I think we often hear from parents and from teachers is yeah, it's great that we have this list of different accommodations here but, but how does that actually translate into what I need to do in the classroom or how does, how does my classroom teacher take that and be able to support my, that student? Because, in such as my [inaudible] time management. Yes, they're great instructional foundations but how does that actually fit that individual student? And we'll talk more about that in a minute, how, some of our ideas about how to go about doing that. On the other hand, in modification really is this idea of in our mind, I think modification needs to not just be seen as kind of just lowering the expectations for a student but really needs to be part of our remediation package. But in many cases I think modification or remediation should go hand in hand. What we're doing through a modification is saying okay, the student is unable to meet these current curriculum goals so we need to kind of develop a very targeted remediation intervention that is going to hit those specific academic skill weaknesses that a student's having and then over a given time period we should see change in that level. So a modification should not be something that a student has forever, especially for students with learning disabilities. A modification really should be brought in for a time period while we are specifically targeting a specific academic skill so that at the end of that remediation time or at the end of that modification time that skill level has developed sufficiently that now the student's better able to access the regular curriculum and that modification can be dropped.

Speaker 2: And I think it's particularly important when you're working with younger students because the, we also know that students tend to respond to interventions and remediations more easily when they're younger and so it's quite possible for that student to receive this instruction and catch up somewhat and then, at the same time, receive accommodations to help them access the information. So for example, if they're struggling with decoding, recognizing words, and they're reading at a grade two level but they're in grade five then you, you, you don't take away, you can combine grade five, let's say science content but the accommodation would be permitting that student to access that content and bypass the content issue.

Speaker 1: And so over time I think, Rhonda that's what you're saying, we see a change between the balance between modification and accommodations. Earlier on modifications work better, we get more bang for our buck, and as the student increases then we don't necessarily always have the sufficient amount of time, especially in secondary, to do modifications and then really the accommodations come into play. It really, they go together and based on the individual student when they're developing this is kind of trying to figure out what that, that right package is.

Speaker 2: And some students choose alternative programs too. If their performance requires a significant shift in the secondary system.

Speaker 1: Right, yeah. So let's look at the instructional point areas of accommodations.

Speaker 2: So instructional accommodations really are adjustments in how instruction is provided to enable the student to learn and to progress through the curriculum. And it's important to realize that much of the selection around the accommodation or the instructional strategy is looking at what does this child need to be successful. It really has to be focussed. So, for example, you know, the questions that often come up, there's this long list of instructional accommodations. Do you use them all? If you select, you know, the certain number do you, how do you implement them? Can you use them with other students? And, and since this comes down to essentially a two-step accommodation, you have to make it fairly concise.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: The first one is you have to identify the accommodations that address the specific, student's specific learning challenges.

So if we think back to Todd's [inaudible] there it's, it's really going deep down because the accommodation, it might be okay, it's the ability to take notes from the board. It's not [inaudible]. Or it could be hampered by the ability to focus and receptive language to understand. So in that case you would select an accommodation that would help that student with that particular challenge. And then the second piece, and we're kind of adopting this from Dr. Nancy Hutchinson's text, she talks about, you know, looking at the demands of the classroom and it's very similar to [inaudible]. So as the student is progressing through the grades both the developmental challenges change so, you know, expectations in grade three are not the same for grade six or grade seven in terms of independent work and [inaudible] and so the accommodations constantly have to be tuned to fit, to help the student in the context that they're in. So the teacher's pedagogy may even be different from year to year depending on the, the type of instructional demands that are made and also the curriculum, how the curriculum is changing.

Speaker 1: Yeah. So, so to give kind of a concrete example then, if we were saying, let's go back to our grade four student. Our grade four student is sitting in class and we give him a worksheet to be able to do, well, because of his learning profile, because of decoding, word reading, and fluency are primary

areas of weakness for him and impair their comprehension, then because of these weaknesses it's going to get a whole bunch of different domains and that worksheet is going to become very problematic because he's not going to be able to read the worksheet. Or they may, might be asking that individual to have to learn some work from reading a textbook at home or maybe a word problem that they're asked to do. And so all this basic core academic skill weakness is going to impact a whole bunch of different things that we do within the classroom and being able to impair their learning. And then, we then, so we have some accommodations that can be able to help those. And, and some of the common accommodations to help out with some basic reading difficulties are like having a peer read to them, having, or having a computer read out loud or having the text already recorded ahead of time, or providing the text ahead of time so that they can go home and use any of those accommodations or another accommodation to be able to ensure that they have access to that knowledge. So because of this basic academic skill weakness then these tasks become very problematic for that student. They're not going to be necessarily able to learn from these or participate in these tasks. The level of challenge has suddenly become too great and the idea, that is use of that accommodation, one of these accommodations, to kind of hold back on that level of challenge.

Speaker 2: Right and so here's just a, you know, for example, if you're doing text to speech I think your critical thing is that it also requires practice and as Todd's own research has shown you really have to think about the pacing and the speed at which the voice reads the text. So, again, there's almost tuning within the accommodation itself as well to make sure that each is working the way that it should but also getting feedback from the student, particularly with, you know, some of the older students. They can provide input into how all of this is working or whether-

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: There are adjustments that need to be made.

Speaker 1: I'm always surprised as to how in tune they often are though, the things that they find difficult and things that they find actually do help. They're very, very insightful individuals. I mean--

Speaker 2: So, so just to give you an idea—I want to go over the curriculum. So we know that as students progress, for example, math curriculum becomes even more complex because basic skills, for example, addition, subtraction, multiplication now have to be applied to more complex types of problems when you are into intermediate settings. In a classroom you can have differences in how, you know, the seating arrangements are. Teacher knowledge could be, in terms of the, the types of accommodations that they're typically used for example- and ones that also they're familiar with that also takes pedagogy. So, for example, some teachers may, you know, use more of one type of approach than another. Maybe there's more of an emphasis on collaborative learning in one classroom versus another and also different types of student engagement models, whether they're working in one on one or in pairs or if there's independent work. And each of those types of, of contextual factors has to be taken into account because what you're doing is you're considering those contextual factors along with the student's profile and what you know about that student's needs and their, you know, everything.

So, for example, how they work in collaborative groups, what, what could be the barrier if they have a receptive language difficulty and they're trying to follow along in a group? So how would you accommodate that? So each, for each time the accommodation is used and it's a new setting you're really trying to tune that accommodation to that setting given the student's needs.

Speaker 1: Right. Yeah and so we go back to that grade four student again. In grade four, because of his decoding difficulties, he's unable to do the worksheet that's given. So maybe the teacher's pedagogy is, yeah, we're doing collaborative learning in class. So the accommodation then really becomes peer reader, you know. One of his peers is a stronger reader and ahead of time it's working, it's worked out that this student will do the majority of the reading for the small group. That way it's a bypass the student continues to engage; however, as the student gets older and the, let's say the grade seven teacher doesn't have the same pedagogy and, and again, a worksheet is given well this time maybe text to speech is more appropriate for that student because now they can engage in the book. But then we go, well that student actually has seen that text to speech, that assistive technology is kind of being, as I found in my research as what we call the flight of stupidity, it's singling me out. I don't want to use something that other individuals aren't using. So my engagement might be very low when it comes to using this technology so, again, I'm going to have to tune my accommodations. So maybe instead of using an audio recording and providing the work ahead of time so they can use the text to speech when other people, other students aren't seeing them so that they again, can engage in the process. So, again, it's just not, you know, just having that list of accommodations doesn't necessarily give us enough information and is that ongoing experimentation and, and perspective. Exactly.

Speaker 2: What's the perspective of the student? And also the teachers.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: I think knowing, you know, how is this going to work given my context, given my classroom? And together, a very much a collaborative effort to make sure that the student is able to, for example in this case, access the test.

Speaker 1: And one thing we've often talked about is wouldn't it be great to have, you know, after the IEP having an explanation for what are all these accommodations and then have like a teacher's log of some sort where the teachers actually are providing feedback to the next teacher so that they can see what has worked for the student and what has, what, what hasn't worked.

Speaker 2: And eventually, I mean this is kind of extending this into the secondary system, but we know that when students with a learning disability are going on to post-secondary education they become their own advocates.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: So in secondary schools also helping the youth become an advocate for what they need. And that, that whole process of self-determination and self-efficacy is something that can be also embedded in the transition plan.

Speaker 1: Yeah. So when we look at. Oh, I'm sorry, go ahead. So, when we look at student engagement too, it's the idea that there's a lot more that takes place than just necessarily a student- or around a student's kind of willingness or not willingness to do the work. So, again, level of challenge meaning the work is too difficult and the accommodation that we're providing then is also challenging because they have not necessarily figured out how to, how to use it. So I'll use [inaudible] as an example. Often I see now students are provided computer to read out loud to them and they're in that, you know, a couple days before they have to do a test and they'll say, hey use this computer to read the test questions out loud to you and, and it's overwhelming because they haven't had sufficient challenge.

Speaker 2: Well it's like everything else, you need practice.

Speaker 1: Yeah. So that's a big one. Academic self-concept, the way that I view myself as a learner is really important and we'll talk more about that in a second. General mental health, anxiety, and depression have huge impacts on an individual's ability to learn information. I feel very anxious about it and my executive functioning and working memory capacity is quite low so I literally just can't take in information because I am really too anxious as well as the ideal purpose. Why am I actually doing this? Well, there's a lot of things that hit on student engagement. In terms of the LD population, again, we often see this academic self-concept as being one of these things major things that often gets into the area of engagement.

Speaker 2: So in another analysis that was conducted looking at students with LD versus non-LD students and focusing on self-concept, they found that the students with LD tended to have lower perceptions of their, they reported less, lower levels of self-concept and you can see the number is, particularly in academic, so eighty-nine percent versus twenty percent in the social domain. So you can see that this, this, this ability to be, you know, to look at yourself and, particularly the academic domain, and have very positive feelings is something that many students with LD seem to be struggling with.

Speaker 1: Yeah, and so you go, okay, so if I view myself as a bad student because I have all these elements I can't learn and now you're telling me to do something differently, here, here's this accommodation that is going to help you, then they just might not buy into that and so therefore it does take some tuning, it does take some gradual training around that accommodation, so that the student begins to see the purposes of it and also begins to see how it begins to actually impact them.

Speaker 2: And actually so the other thing is that when you think of how to, how to help a student to understand whether or not something's working for them, part of it is we have to help them attribute, to look at what, like if they used it what happened? Did, were they more successful? Did the task seem easier or more difficult? And so part of this is really, you know, that feedback is a critical component of

learning and so we can foster self-reflective feedback--As well as look at external objective feedback like, for example, how did you do on that test?

Speaker 1: And I think part of that is this kind of idea of actually taking them through a process of learning a new accommodation or learning how to use a certain learning strategy and this has kind of been modified from Graham's work on self-regulated— Thank you. That's all right, yes. And the whole idea is at first when introducing a new accommodation or a new learning strategy you have to develop the background knowledge. Why is this important for you as a student to use this accommodation? One of the things that I always find amazing, especially around test accommodations for high school students, is their willingness not to go down to the special ed room to take their tests. Because, again, they don't want to look different. There, there's a sense of wanting to be the same that gets in there or a sense of oh if I do that then it's some form of cheating. So it's really helping them sit down and talk about that learning profile, here's your learning profile and here are the things that, why this accommodation really works for you. So then you discuss it, you model it, you help them memorize the steps involved in doing the accommodation or the learning strategy. You support them as they're actually doing it and that's what, what a lot of people are saying is this idea of immediate feedback has to be happening so that they understand what's going on as well as this idea of a student, you know, to self-reflect on their own performance and being able to say yes this helped and then also in time will lead to independent performance.

Speaker 2: And, just as an aside, that, that, that list of strategies is also shown with the reference to the [inaudible] you think we're not just supporting their content knowledge or, you know, but we have to think about, part of, part of learning is having good academic enablers, being able to have the metacognitive and the cognitive strategies to say I have to, let's say, study for this test. What's a strategy I can use? Why would I use it? How is it important? And the same thing this

Presenter: Sorry, we're having some technical difficulties. We're in the midst of resolving it. Just one moment please.

Speaker 2: doing great and another teacher is teaching it through [inaudible]. Each of those different test scenarios could affect how, the type of accommodation that might be provided and the type of support that might be needed. For example also, the science, in one class much of the science is taken through kind of a, using research to look at online and print resources to the, I think inquiry-

Presenter: Todd, Rhonda?

Speaker 1: Yes.

Speaker 2: Yes.

Presenter: We lost you for a while so would you mind backing up a bit?

Speaker 1: Oh, okay. So how long have we been gone for?

Presenter: Okay. I remember seeing this slide.

Speaker 1: Okay. Did you hear us talk about the slide?

Presenter: Just at the end.

Speaker 1: Oh.

Speaker 1: So you just lost us at the end of, so basically.

Presenter: Yes.

Speaker 1: So, the summary of this is that for students who often use an accommodation we have to first help them to know why it's important to them. We have to be able to model it successfully to them and we also have to ensure that they are getting feedback around the use of that accommodation so they need to actually see growth in their own ability and the resulting of that is that it will finally have, they will start to internalize that and start to use that accommodation on their own, which will have a by-product of actually impacting the student's academic self-concept. So if I do something differently and that results in me actually doing better on that task then I'm more likely to do that again in the future and that's also going to make me feel good about myself. And the main thing that why this is really important is because it is the teaching of the accommodations and it's the teaching of the learning strategies that are going to be essential for these students who have learning disabilities to not only exceed in school, in high school, or elementary, high school but also in post-secondary education and now in the workforce as well. So it's really important to help to develop this sense of I need to seek out accommodations and experiment with accommodations and to find the ones that are going to work for me so that later in life I have that skill set that I can fall back on when things get a little bit more challenging.

Speaker 2: So, very briefly, we have two different scenarios and we just illustrate that teachers may teach the same subjects in slightly different ways and so, for example, in scenario one science is being taught where there's considerable amounts of note taking and research that the student is undertaking using online and print resources. In the second scenario science is being taught using a textbook with lectures and independent projects. They have different demands for self-regulation. They have different demands for independent work in terms of having to acquire information from a print source, and so the accommodations in each may be the same for the most part but there might be some unique ones because the classroom content varies.

Speaker 1: Right. So in terms of the environment then, one of the big things that we often see is, you know, a student should have appropriate, or not appropriate seating but preferential seating. I remember one student that I just was working with, he had preferential seating being interpreted that

he could choose where he wanted to sit. The student had severe executive function difficulties in which that he was very disorganized and where he decided to sit in the class was the very back row at the desk beside the door to the room because he liked being able to monitor what was going on outside. So as he sat there one of, he was very distracted but one of the comments from the teacher was he was never getting any of his work done. He never wrote down, he never handed in any of the homework. He always seemed to not know when tests were and when talking about it he goes well I can't even see the black board from where I'm sitting because there's a pillar in the way. So we were like, oh. So, clearly just allowing the student to choose their seat was not a very good solution because they chose very poorly.

Speaker 2: And so preferential seating in the, in the, actually in the research has been shown to be one of the more ambiguous accommodations so it's important to really be specific about what that means that you're choosing that as potentially an environmental accommodation and then asking the student about, you know, what, what they find most helpful. It's still important because it could be that some students are more sensitive to noise than others, some students are more sensitive to, you know, they would prefer to be close, and also it's your feedbacks. If you find that with, you know, with a younger student that when they're sitting closer and they can get more immediate feedback from you that is proving to be a helpful thing. Then that's good to communicate and explain that as a rationale for why, you know, this seating change has been [inaudible].

Speaker 1: So again, we need a lot more [inaudible] than just simply stating what it is. And again, and in the end most of this stuff when we look at assessment comes [inaudible] as well.

Speaker 2: So when we look at what we're measuring this, it's an interesting thing cause as a researcher we, we discuss this all the time, cause we know that if we, if we give a measure, we give an assessment, it's actually measuring a bunch of things other than what we want. So essentially there's the true knowledge it's measuring and then it's all the other things that could be going on, for example, how much effort someone puts into it. If this is a math test whether they wrote the answer down correctly, whether they processed, they made a processing error and so they accidentally didn't put down what they thought they put down or they made an error, for instance, in how they took in the information and so they answered the problem but not the problem that was written. And, and so some of these things, not all of them, are ones that we can change and so the closer together the true knowledge of this student with our assessment score than, than the knowledge that's actually, for example, if you measure math problem solving with a student who has significant word reading difficulties, chances are that that score is going to be heavily influenced by the barrier of not being able to read the words or, for example, vocabulary problems rather than their ability to solve math problems. And so that's what we really have to look at when we are thinking of assessment foundations. So we think it's [inaudible] and this, I think, was a wonderful contribution from Ketterlin-Geller and Crawford where they were doing a study looking at how to help understand, you know, the types of accommodations that students can receive. So, for example, they basically said that you need to ask three things. What are the demands of the test? What are the skills being tested? And then, what skills are needed to show knowledge of the skills? So, for example, the first column has every big skill that, that a math problem might require.

The student has to read it, they have to actually understand the words in the text, they have to retrieve the steps to solve the math problem, they have to actually understand the concept of the math problem and then, you know, present, explain what the results are and then somehow communicate their answer whether it's by, you know, writing it down or sharing it orally. But the only thing that's being actually tested in this particular, what the teacher wants to know is do they understand the concept and can they explain the result. Everything else is an access point. The ability to read the words, understand the vocabulary are things that we can accommodate for because they're not the target skill that's being assessed and I think this was a really useful way that these authors described how to kind of go through this process. So the first step if you're, you know, if you're kind of wondering oh, what can I do, is to make a list of the tasks—to look at the task and then figure out, circle which are the one that I really want to assess and do, and then what are the ones that might, the student might not show their knowledge because these particular prerequisite skills aren't solid.

Speaker 1: Right. And, and then what happens is over time the they'll [inaudible] or what you're actually targeting may change or definitely will change based on what the curriculum is, is asking. So, you know, in grade three, teaching multiplication is the main thing that you're, you know, you're, you're targeting. So therefore you wouldn't use a calculator or a multiplication table to deal with this. Yeah, because that accommodation would basically cancel out what you are trying to test; however, in grade six when they're doing, you know, fractions or something and they still need to know multiplication well now, if the student still does not know their multiplication tables well that is just a processing difficulty. So, again, it's an access. We're not necessarily measuring their ability to do the fraction what we're actually measuring is their ability to do multiplication. So at that time the, the recommendation, you know, a calculator or a, a multiplication chart might be very helpful.

Speaker 2: Right because they, you, they can use that to show their knowledge of fractions.

Speaker 1: Right, exactly, as they, as they move on. And then the other big one that I often find is, especially students who have retrieval difficulties, especially [inaudible] weaknesses and retrieval there is formulas are very problematic. So in, in secondary school giving reference sheets to those formulas is very beneficial for those individuals because, again, it's, what we're trying to get at is do you know what's the right formula to use? Do you know how to implement that formula to be able to solve a problem? Not do you—can you memorize stuff?

Speaker 2: Yeah. So, actually we've kind of talked a little bit about this. But the thing is that you're, you're looking at, in executive function difficulties, so executive function are basically things like working memory, inventory control, the types of things that help you do goal-directed behaviour. And it's often associated with problems with attention control. So the student might make a lot of careless errors or forget the formulas or miss key words in questions. And so, so then you think okay, what accommodations does this particular child need to reduce the impact of the EF difficulties on their math. There might be a prompt to check your, check for mistakes. There might be a list of formulas that the student would, like as you said, choose, if they receive key words they could be taught a strategy to help them identify the key words and questions when you highlight them and so that kind of limits the, or, or

actually, for some students, it might be important for the teacher just to underline a key word. Because it depends on whether you're assessing their ability to pick out the key words or to solve the problem.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: So common issues with accommodations. We've talked about ambiguous wording. So you really want to be clear about what it is. Whether it actually targets the student need. So if the student actually has problems with math problem solving because of issues with their conceptual understanding of math and problem solving, giving a calculator or having a multiplication table wouldn't necessarily be the type of accommodation you want to give and that's why on that diagram where the, the math. Math is another area where you can really break it down into is it a computation skill? Is it a more conceptual issue? Is it problem solving? Is it fluency versus accuracy? And all of those things have slightly different implications for how you would accommodate.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: You might have too few provided, they're not well linked. So, for example, you'd like to make sure that any instruction on assessment accommodations are connected so that you're not giving one but they can't really learn because they never had that part of learning, and vice versa.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: And I think that one of the bigger ones is not considering what the goal of the assessment is. So the question of well can this be, can I give this accommodation or this assessment? The first thing you have to ask is what am I actually trying to assess.

Speaker 1: Right.

Speaker 2: And then the final one is whether monitoring and effectiveness, so we know that, you know, accommodations can be looked at in various ways. So, for example, you know, with and without the accommodation do you see a change in performance? With and without accommodation does the student find it easier or more difficult to complete the task? Do they complete them more often, you know, do they get their homework done when they have the accommodations. And so those are all questions that can be asked to make sure that you're, you're over time you're selecting with the student the accommodations that are most effective and most useful for that student.

Speaker 1: And then, and that you're tuning that skill to really ensure that it, it is a needed skill. So, that's accommodations. Another area that we'll talk about very briefly is the area of modification. And, again, I really stress the, when we talk about modification really the image that needs to be in our mind is of a really, a really good remediation program that's going to take place. So in that we really have to specify what is the skill set, what is the academic skill weakness that we are going to hone in and be able to, to target? Because we do have a lot of really good evidence-based remediation programs out there.

But different programs target different specific skills. So it's important to kind of review what our, our evidence-based remediation programs out there, what is the skill weakness that that student has that we can make that best fit? And in the area of literacy, things such as the [inaudible] reading, Power Up, Balanced Literacy Diet, IRIS, there are a lot of really good websites and resources out there that we can be able to access to be able to find out what we need to do to be able to target. So we need to first identify what the specific weakness is. We have to then get that program that's going to target that specific area and then we really need to continue to assess our, our growth of that skill. It's not good enough just to say, okay, now we're going to do this for the next, you know, four or five months. We really have to go in and continuously monitor that skill development because we need to know is what we're providing actually working or is it not. And one other thing that we can use is what we call curriculum baseline measures. And if you Google curriculum baseline measures you can often find a lot of the DIEBELS. What was that one that you showed?

Speaker 2: Oh, the Easy C.

Speaker 1: Easy C. There's a lot of good websites out there that kind of have curriculum baseline measures and the way that a curriculum baseline measure works is it's often kind of a one minute snapshot of a specific academic skill. And the reason that we're going to give these snapshots on a regular basis is to try and measure growth. So we have two students here. We always give them a baseline before we start off our specific intervention to be able to see what, what is the current performance. So if we look at number of words read correctly in a minute, maybe a measure that we're doing to [inaudible] and we can see they're very low. We start our intervention and then over time what we see is first child one, oh, there's really no development happening here so we change our intervention. So we look at the intervention protocol and we, we tweak that protocol to be able to maybe increase the intensity or specificity and then so we do that and oh, wow, we've, we've got some gains happening. [inaudible] finally moving. And, again, we might have to change it to get more gains to, to, to continue to increase. Child two, straight from the beginning starts to make some good gains. We say, hey, can we get some even better gains? We tweak this, the protocol a bit. Well we're getting better gains. Tweak it again and we see more amazing gains over time. So we're constantly getting information back from the student to be able to assess is it working? Because we might see a student completely flat lining and that might be because either, A, I as a teacher am doing something wrong or, B, this is the wrong intervention for this student. And I want to get that information sooner than later so that I don't let the poor student sit there for the next, you know, six months not actually seeing a lot of skill development.

Speaker 2: And actually, even when you're doing, like I, we just done a study like this and it turned out that it was really minor tweaks that really made the difference. It was, for example, how much repetition or cumulative review was being provided or, for example, certain skills weren't being mastered and so we kept on going on that path then it got more and more frustrating because the baseline, the prerequisite skills weren't there so there was innovative ways to think okay, can we play a game, can we do this, can we do that, all targeting the same skill but to keep that student having enough practice. So some students are going to need more practice but, again, it's not great if you're just sitting

there giving them a worksheet. It's, it's like thinking about how can I have this student, you know, either review these skills and then teach a new skill and move forward and these are all, kind of, you know, you think of core principles. It's exclusive, it's, it's, it's targeting the skill that's—

Presenter: We apologize for the technical difficulties once again. We are working to resolve this as soon as possible.

Speaker 2: [inaudible] how are we going to teach it and we talked about methods. So we're basically just talking about how different elements in the modified [inaudible].

Presenter: Rhonda?

Speaker 2: Yes?

Presenter: We lost you again after student monitoring slide.

Speaker 1: Okay, so we.

Speaker 2: How much did you get of that?

Presenter: Well I think we were, we got towards the end of it.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Okay, well.

Speaker 1: So let's just jump onto to this section then.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Perfect.

Speaker 2: So at this point we're just trying to finish up with-

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: an example of the second part of an IEP for many students is the modifications. And if we take a modified program we have to state what the annual program goal is first. So, for example, in this case we would want the student who's working at a grade three level by the end of the year to be moving up and we might have a, you know, a fairly reasonable goal that you're able to read grade four text at an independent level with accuracy and fluency. And they're given a specific benchmark in terms of curriculum base measure because we know that corresponds to the, the normative rate that would

be expected by the end of grade four. Then to reach that goal we've identified learning expectations. So, for example, they're going to, in first term read grade four level passages at ninety-four words correct per minute, which is a fall benchmark and how we're going to get there is we look at research like the papers by [inaudible] and colleagues and the review on, by Boardman and colleagues on effective instruction for adolescents, which is actually [inaudible]. And we know that we have to be explicit about how to decode words. We have to think about what they know. Well, phonics, letter sound correspondences, word analysis, syllable types, and whether they can recognize high frequency prefixes and suffixes because that's what's been shown to make a difference. And then to help with fluency we want repeated reading of grade three level texts because we want them to be at a more comfortable level to get their fluency up and then gradually, as we move into the second term, we're still teaching the same strategies but we have higher expectations for the type of text the student is working on and we're going to continue to work at an independent level to build fluency. And then our assessment method, we specify that we'll be using in this case a curriculum based measured reading but it could be another type of assessment and the core thing is that you're actually specifying growth. You're moving the student. We want them to try to catch up. And we're using explicit or evidence based, in this case we know that explicit instruction and these types of things is what will work to meet that goal.

Speaker 1: So in the end it really comes back to this idea we have to know the student. We have to know where those specific key areas of weaknesses are so we can specifically develop intervention either through accommodation or through remediation to specifically target that goal and then be able to tailor that to the demands of both the classroom, the student, and the environment that they are in.

Speaker 2: Which is essentially what Dr. Hutchinson talks about. I find that this is so helpful. You're accounting for the student's strengths and needs. You're thinking about, you know, the classroom and how it's set up and the kind of context it is. You're creating then the program for the student that includes the adaptations or, in this case it would be accommodations, of the IEP as well as potential modifications if there, if the, you're catching up [inaudible]. And you're considering multiple points of view including the student's. How is this working for the student? Especially in secondary school because you have to think about well what, what will help them be more, how will they advocate, how will they consider the use of this accommodation in terms of you know stigma, et cetera. And then you have to make sure that you actually teach the accommodations to the students and then figure out does it work and does it match everyone's needs.

Speaker 1: Thank you very much.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

Presenter: Well thank you so much Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Martinussen for presenting such an interesting topic to us all today. We thank you for your patience as well while we were having some technical difficulties. So if anyone has any questions please click the raise hand button on your control panel or type a question into the chat box on your dashboard. So, we do have one question here. So, I'll provide some context. So the biggest issue at the high school I work for is students who have IEPs and

not wanting to work with the learning support teacher and or student support, student support teacher because they would be seen as different due to certain stigmas. They are reluctant to use assistive technology that would definitely support their achievement. How do we get students comfortable with their exceptionality so that they take advantage of those supports?

Speaker 1: You mean the students? This goes back to the idea of the students' academic self-concept and when academic skill self-concept is very low then students are very reluctant to do anything that is seen as being different than what their peers are, are doing. And so a lot of that is working with the student to first understand their learning profile and work through with them what are, more than just saying I look different or I just don't want to do it, but really give a good understanding of why they don't want to do that accommodation. So, first you have to help them understand their strengths and weaknesses cause often these students don't recognize that they have any strengths. They, it's many times I work with a lot of learning disabled students who just say that they're stupid when, in fact, you have to go through the definition and say no, you're actually average or above average, and if I actually showed you on the normal curve where you're at, you're actually doing really well in terms of your overall intelligence. So it's really healthy first to build up those students' strengths or knowledge about what those strengths are so that they, then we can start to get some [inaudible]. They have to realize that there is something that they, they're able to do. Then it is providing them that knowledge about why this specific accommodation is important. And often what I do is I just limit it to one accommodation and if a student's not willing to buy in I don't try to give them other accommodations we just go to one. [inaudible] to buy into one accommodation. What is the, and that accommodation often addresses what is the most, what area of school is most challenging for you at this time? So have the student identify what is the area that is most challenging for you at this time and then you're just going to help and guide that conversation a bit. Once that's identified then we kind of work together to come up with what is the accommodation that's going to help. Again, sometimes by just telling the student what to do they're not likely to do it but if you involve them in an ongoing discussion where they can give input about what that accommodation should be then they often show more invested interest into actually trying that. And this is something that doesn't happen in one, you know, one meeting. It's often multiple conversations with the student to help to get them to buy in and really to focus on what, what that first accommodation is going to be. And if they have success on that accommodation then it's likely that they'll try one more and then it grows.

Presenter: Okay, great. So there's a more general question here. So, which students require an IEP?

Speaker 2: Well usually they're, so formally the Ministry of Education [inaudible] their documents, they talk about individualized education plans having, they must be prepared for students who have been formally identified as exceptional-

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: according to an IPRC. So when the IPRC is done, the IPRC Committee identifies the student as exceptional and recommends the placement and then from that the IEP is developed. There are also

a number of students who have received an IEP who have not been formally identified but they are showing challenges that the, that could be supported with accommodations and in that case an IEP would be provided as well.

Speaker 1: Again, I want to see the IEP as kind of the, kind of, a bit of the manual or list of instructions of what is, what is needed to kind of start to support the student. And the idea is, you know, if one teacher is having some difficulties with identifying some challenges students have, they develop some ideas [inaudible] so the next year the next teacher can get those ideas and start, immediately starting to support that student where the last teacher left off. So for me I think IEPs are great, they should be a communication tool that allows for teacher after teacher after teacher to see what is working so that this student can be learning at their optimal level in my classroom. And, again, it should be a living document. It should be continuously being updated and changed as the next teacher kind of sees what has worked and what hasn't worked for them.

Presenter: Okay, great. Now we have someone who will ask you personally. We have a question from Nicole Parerra.

Speaker 3: Hi. Good afternoon. I'm just curious. So, I have a daughter, she's seven. She went through an education assessment through a psychologist. She was deemed to have a learning disability and memory retention primarily from putting it to working memory to long-term memory. She just has difficulties with symbolic recognition so the letters, the numbers and obviously building them out into then her words and her sentences and struggles with the reading piece of it. Originally we assumed that it was potentially to do with her age. She was a premature baby. She did do speech therapy. She went through some developmental [inaudible] she's a December thirty-first baby so she's the youngest child in the classroom as well. So we weren't sure whether it was a maturity thing and she just needed to catch up on what she was learning. But overall I guess, now we're at this stage. We've brought forth because we went through through the assessment. There was not a time yet when the school would fund it for you because I guess it needed to get to a certain age and she's really only ending now grade two as it is. I guess what responsibility did they have to installing an IEP and kind of following through with it from an education standpoint? Most of us that-and what I guess for me where, if you have any suggestion, for me to use because I'm not confident that it's going to be able to give her enough support for what I want and is there any tutoring sessions outside of this or organizations that you might suggest that we use as part of the school system?

Speaker 1: So there's a lot there and I'm not going to be able to give very specific recommendations without seeing a lot of other, the assessment details. I guess, but the thing to say is any parent can, once you have a reasonable understanding that there is concern, especially if you have an assessment, is you can write your school principal and ask for an IPRC meeting, an individual placement and review committee meeting. And that begins a process where the school has to then respond and has to set up that meeting. So that's your kind of, your ticket into the door to start to get the people around the table to, to help generate some ideas. And out of that, especially if you have the assessment completed, out of that will come the, some recommendations and if your child is recognized as an exceptional student

then they must develop the IEP at that point. So if there is a reluctance to start the IEP process then your mechanism to ensure that that there's, that starts up is writing in and requesting the IPRC meeting. Outside of that, then, you know, in terms of tutors and stuff like that it depends where you are. Yeah.

Speaker 2: There are a number of different organizations that, I think that would be something that probably the LDAO, you know--

Speaker 1: Chapter for your area.

Speaker 2: in your area can help you with.

Speaker 1: And then other sites like [inaudible] websites really good around literacy stuff, you know, I think as the development of the LD@school website comes up, you know, we're going to see more and more resources there that are going [inaudible]. But often your local LDAO chapter is a, is a good place to start. As, and if you're working with a psychologist asking the psychologist, you know, what resources do they know for your community.

Presenter: Great, thank you. We have another question here. We are excited about creating student profiles for students with IEP. How quickly can we get a copy of the profile map?

Speaker 1: As fast as the, the organizers today can send it out. Or, another place you can grab it, if you want to grab today offline, if you go to learndifferent.org, learn different as one word .org there is a copy of it sitting there.

Presenter: Okay, great. So I'm going to ask one last question. So I teach students with LDs in grade nine and ten who have issues with self-esteem, self-regulation, and self-advocacy. How would I involve them in setting IEP objectives for the social, emotional areas?

Speaker 2: Well, I think, I think again with that age group you're working with, [inaudible] to help them reflect on what it is they want and what, and part of what, you know, they're going to buy into, the social emotional objectives if they understand why they're important. And, you know, what the if they need them how that's going to help them out a little bit. So I think it's really having a conversation with the students and, again, as Todd said earlier it's not exactly a [inaudible] process but it's starting off also small and saying ok what is one thing we can work on? What do you think would be really helpful and then let's plan it together.

Speaker 1: Yeah, yeah, and yeah, it's that ongoing conversation because, again, most often what I find when we provide accommodations to the student we tell them well you should go down [inaudible] testing in Mrs. [inaudible] class because it's a special ed room. And there's not a discussion about why that is actually going to be beneficial to them. And so therefore they go no, I don't want to do that because, hey, I don't look silly getting up and leaving the classroom to do that. So there's backing up and really providing what we call, you know, that kind of psychoeducational for that student. Helping

them understand their learning profile, helping them understand why this is important for them and then ensuring, and this is really important, when they do buy into the accommodation, ensuring that that accommodation results in some success. Because if we give accommodation and it, and it doesn't work then the likelihood that they're gonna come back again to try it is very low. So it's really important to make sure that you're intervening a bit to ensure that that accommodation is [inaudible].

Speaker 2: And, and, with, I, some of my work focuses on youth with ADHD-- and so from a self-regulation and self-advocacy perspective, I was kind of guesstimating at that time, so part of it is also helping them deal with the self-regulation demands by thinking about, for example, if it's organization, you know, here are approaches that you can use and we're going to like, there might be a checklist. But I'm going to help you over the first week use it and then gradually you're going to use it. So we can, we can still do kind of the gradual release of responsibility model even though the students are older but in a more, kind of, you know, co-supportive way rather than us checking up on you. To help them see that if they're engaging in this type of self-regulation maybe, and they're using, let's say a certain tool or a certain strategy, that that's going to result in let's say having, you know, better marks because they're homework was turned in time-

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: or their budget got done. Or it's even sitting down and saying okay, you've got a project. This is a real challenge for many people so let's break it down into some of the steps. How long do you think it'll take you to do this? So what happens if we put that deadline and you come talk to me? So it's, it's really kind of trying to integrate those two things. The metacognitive, the kind of the overarching self-regulation piece with also the, the more maybe specific accommodation--.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: around assistive technology for example.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And then that's the whole idea of gradual responsibility to the student and if they need it.

Speaker 2: And I hope that helps.

Presenter: Yes, great answer. All right. Okay. Just. That's all the time we have for today. We're going to end our question and answers session at this time. If you have any further questions please email us at info@LDatschool.ca and we will ensure all of your questions get answered.

Before you go I have a brief message from the LD@school team. It is with great pride that we present the First Annual Educator's Institute on Demystifying Learning Disabilities in the Classroom. As a delegate attending the Educator's Institute we will provide, you will be provided with new perspectives and knowledge in the field of LDs based on current research and practical information on effective

assessment and instructional strategies including technology. All Ontario educators who work hands on with students with LDs are encouraged to attend. For more information about this event please visit our event website using the link displayed on this slide. Don't forget to take advantage of the early bird pricing, which ends on May thirty-first.

If you would like to be kept up to date about our events such as our free webinars please subscribe to LD@school's biweekly newsletter. You can do this on the LD@school home page by entering your email in the sign up box located on the bottom of the page.

Once again, I'd like to thank Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Martinussen for their presentation and I'd also like to thank all of our participants for joining us. Don't forget that we will be sending out presentation slides as well as a short survey following today's webinar. We would really appreciate your taking the time to fill out the survey so we can use this information when conducting future webinars. Also, remember that we will be sending out a link to this recorded webinar in approximately two weeks. Thanks again for joining us and have a great day.