

STRENGTH-BASED COLLECTIVE

BRIEF: SPECIAL EDUCATION EDITION



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ENHANCING IEPs THROUGH STRENGTH-BASED APPROACHES

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) have traditionally been used to address educational challenges. Strength-based IEPs offer a refreshing perspective that also amplifies each student's unique strengths and abilities. See below for key components of strength-based IEPs.

- ▶ **Holistic Evaluations.** Embrace a wider lens by integrating qualitative insights during assessments, capturing the full student experience.
 - Example.** When assessing reading, recognize moments where students apply unique strategies that could serve as strengths, such as connecting stories to personal experiences.
 - Action.** Use assessment tools that highlight both challenges and strengths, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of each student.
- ▶ **Strength-Based Goal Setting.** Set goals that not only address challenges but also leverage students' inherent strengths.
 - Example.** If a student excels in visual processing, set a goal that encourages them to create visual project summaries or presentations.
 - Action.** During IEP meetings, discuss and set goals that align with each student's strengths, ensuring they feel empowered in their learning journey.
- ▶ **Collaborative IEP Development.** IEP creation benefits from multiple perspectives. Engage all stakeholders for a comprehensive understanding of the student.
 - Example.** In an IEP meeting, a teacher or parent might highlight a student's knack for puzzles, suggesting strong problem-solving skills.
 - Action.** Incorporate insights from parents and teachers to ensure the plan aligns with recognized strengths and real-world observations.
- ▶ **Diversity and Inclusion.** An inclusive IEP recognizes and values the diverse strengths students bring to the table.
 - Example.** For bilingual students, their ability to navigate multiple languages is a significant strength.
 - Action.** Engage with families to learn about cultural and linguistic strengths and incorporate these insights into the IEP.

CALL TO ACTION

- ✓ Re-evaluate your assessment tools. Are they capturing the full range of a student's abilities?
- ✓ Collaborate with your team to learn how to better integrate students' strengths into lessons.
- ✓ Engage parents and caregivers regularly for invaluable insights and perspectives.



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