

A proposal to dismantle normalcy in Indiana by providing a Strength-Based Individualized Learning Plan for Indianapolis Public School special education students and their families

Summary: Normalcy is an issue in most urban public school districts. This is especially the case for African American students labeled by the “Special Ed.” category.

Dismantling normalcy presents an unprecedented and truly transformational concept which can lead to the reduction of special education referrals and outcomes such as suspensions and expulsions.

The Strength-Based Individualized Learning Plan (S-BILP) was fashioned after looking deeply into the historical context of disability concept through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Critical Disability Studies so as to engage Disability Studies in Education.

This research exposed the consistent socio-political agenda that purposely leaves out race, gender, class, and strength-based views of humanity when developing special education policies.

In contrast to 19th and 20th century social constructs of disability and intelligence based on a deficit model of humanity, this proposal challenges the Indianapolis Public School (IPS) and the wider Hoosier community to discredit and abandon normalcy for the 21st century, leading the nation to an enlightened view of our human potential.

Dismantling normalcy reviews and validates the responses—problems, causes, and solutions to disproportionality. This attempt to “re-inventing disability” also presents its own solutions, while it challenges all stakeholders to go deeper into the causes through the use of Critical Race Theory. Deconstructing the concepts of disability and special education is needed to expose the relationship among disproportionality and past and current deficit models of certain students.

The purpose of a S-BILP is to determine the free and appropriate learning choices and goals for a special education student based on their uniqueness, interests, passions, needs, and wants towards self-actualization.

The goal of this initiative is to have an IPS policy where any student can have a strength-based ILP. In 2014, Vermont mandated that students in grades 7-12 each have a Personalized Learning Plan.

Finally, the proposal *per se* suggests a series of community-wide forums to unpack and re-conceptualize the social-political-cultural construct of normalcy and the associated schooling by-products: Special Education and the infamous label “LD.”

“By dismantling the myth of the typical, average, ordinary, or ‘standard’ child, we reveal ways in which educational practices actively contribute to creation of ‘normalcy’ and show the harmful effects that this can have on all citizens.”

~ S. Baglieri, L. Bejoian, A. Broderick, D. Connor & J. Valle from
”Disability Studies Unravels the Myth of the Normal Child”

Introduction

"Why is There Learning Disabilities? A Critical Analysis of the Birth of the Field in Its Social Context" can be viewed as the theme of "Re-inventing Disability." This foundational (1987) essay by Christine Sleeter deconstructs the social-political-cultural manipulatives used to reinforce and perpetuate disproportionalities in special education. What is vital, the essay's conclusions challenge the IPS Leadership Team to "revisit" Christine Sleeter's assertion that disability exists only as a socio-political construction, not an ontological reality. Confusing disability with reality is like confusing money with wealth, the map with the territory, or the word with the thing it stands in for.

Understanding why there are learning disabilities will help the IPS Leadership Team to "trouble" existing beliefs and practices not only within the district and state, but within the entire field of special education itself by: 1) placing disability and "normalcy" in its historical context; 2) considering social class and race in the construction of LD; and 3) fostering an open and continual dialogue among the community regarding what schools are for.

The challenge for our Leadership Team is to bring about an IPS policy that enables the creation of a fluid system where uniqueness and difference are "taken for granted" attributes of every child who enters an IPS classroom.

References

Sleeter, C. (1987). Why is there learning disabilities? A critical analysis of birth of the field in its social context. In T. S. Popkewicz (Ed.), *The formation of school subjects: The struggle for creating an American institution* (pp. 210-238). London: Falmer Press.

The following proposal is in two sections. It begins with an example of a Strength-Based Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). The auxiliary section of appendices aims to inform the conscience of the reader, and compliment and supplement the rationale for this transformative proposal.

A Strength-Based ILP for each IPS special education student

IPS teacher aide A: “The ISTEP tests are today. I am worried about Chester. He can’t subtract and he’s a very slow reader. And, he has a hard time paying attention. He’s going to do poorly and this will bring down our school’s test scores I know.”

IPS teacher aide B: “That’s not good. He has a lot of weaknesses. Hey, though... regarding Chester, what can he do?”

IPS teacher aide A: (pausing) ”Well, I... I never thought of that...”

What is an ILP?

- An ILP defines the individualized objectives of a child who has been found with a disability, as defined by the federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA).
- An ILP is intended to help children reach educational goals more easily than they otherwise would.
- An ILP in all cases must be tailored to the individual student's needs as identified by the ILP evaluation process, and must especially help teachers and related service providers (such as [para-professional educators](#)) understand the student's disability and how the disability affects the learning process.
- An ILP describes how the student learns, how the student best demonstrates that learning and what teachers and service providers will do to help the student learn more effectively.
- An ILP requires assessing students in all areas related to the known disabilities, simultaneously considering ability to access the general curriculum, considering how the disability affects the student’s learning, forming goals and objectives that correspond to the needs of the student, and choosing a placement in the “[least restrictive environment](#)” possible for the student.
- An ILP is mandated to be regularly maintained and updated up to the point of high school graduation, or prior to the 22nd birthday as long as a student qualifies for special education.

What is a Strength-Based ILP?: Free appropriate strength-based personalized learning plans

Current ILPs are response to a Special Education student’s ability to perform normal and basic academic tasks as required by the state standards to move through grade levels, or pass courses and be graduated. Since State standards apply to all students, some students get extra help and/or services to help make up for what they lack when compared to the standards.

“The purpose of a strength-based ILP is not to normalize them (students), but actualize them.” ~ Merry Juerling

Note that this effort to “normalize” Special Education students based on their needs as compared to the standard is a deficit model of the student: what she/he can’t do and so “needs” support to do to keep up with a “normal child.” Any identification or respect for the student’s “strengths” is done with the

intent to make the standardization (keeping up) process even easier and not as something to be recognized and developed in their own right for the sheer purpose actualizing the student's inherent potential. Finding and developing a student's uniqueness dissolves and renders non-existing, dysfunction-al, inappropriate, and useless any standards except the student's "personal best."

"The interrelated and largely synonymous concepts of average, typical, normal, and the ubiquitous 'ordinary' must be looked at with a critical eye that share the aim of claiming value in human diversity over standardization."

~ S. Baglieri, L. Bejoian, A. Broderick, D. Connor & J. Valle from "Disability Studies Unravels the Myth of the Normal Child"

As is required, high stakes standardized tests (ISTEP+) are the benchmark for all students and so for special education students. As far as public education goes, these tests set the benchmark for what is "normal" academically.

A strength-based ILP not only recognizes and develops what the student needs/lacks in order to keep up i.e., pass ISTEP+, but would also recognize and develop the student's strengths and potential self-actualization.

Customized Actualization Plan

In all cases the ILP must be tailored to the individual student's needs *and potential* as identified by the ILP evaluation process, and must especially help teachers and related service providers (such as para-professional educators) *to not only* understand the student's disability and how the disability affects the learning process, *but what the students strengths are so that teachers and service providers can help actualize the child's interests, passions, and uniqueness beyond curriculum requirements concerning subject matter.*

"The right of all children to learn and become productive citizens compels each employee of IPS to contribute to an environment conducive to learning and instruction through the appropriate methodologies so that all children will develop life skills and become self-actualized individuals."

~ "IPS Instructional Mission" found during the 2005 fall semester on a wall in the hallway just outside the main office at Northwest High School

What is Self-actualization?

"The final aim is not to know, but to be. There never was a more risky motto than: Know thyself. You've got to know yourself as far as possible, but not for the sake of knowing. You've got to know yourself so that you can at least be yourself. 'Be yourself' is the last motto." ~ John Edwards "*What We Steal from Children*" quoted from D. H. Lawrence

According to Abraham Maslow, self-actualization is a need human beings have just as they do for food, shelter, belongingness, and recognition.

- The intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately, of what the organism is.
- Our desire for self-fulfillment, namely, the tendency to become actualized in what we are potentially.
- The desire to become more and more of what one uniquely is.

THE STRENGTH-BASED INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING PLAN

Purpose

The purpose of this Strength-Based Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) document is to determine the next free and appropriate learning choices and goals for a student based on a student's interests, uniqueness, strengths, needs and wants towards a future happy, engaged, productive and well-balanced citizen.

As no one student learns at exactly the same rate/speed or in the same way as another student, the Plan of Individualized Learning Choices investigates where the student is currently and where he/she needs development in a reasonably and realistic manner. Instead of focusing on deficits implied by unethical one test high-stakes standardized testing that have been proven to be biased racially, economically and for special needs students and falsely labeling children, teachers and schools as "failing,"s focusing on deficits implied by social and/or political trends or focusing on implied deficits via standardization of academics achievements, the Village of a student and the student his/herself will spend more time working on interests, strengths and realistic developmental needs of the student.

Process

Who are Villagers?

Village members of a student include the student him/herself, student's parents or guardian, child care providers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, past and current teachers, mentor, religious leaders/mentors/teachers, social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or any other person who is involved with the student on a daily, weekly and/or monthly basis (Villagers).

Agreed Upon Development/Belief Models

To understand the impacts on a student's learning, Villagers must also understand the student's background. To understand a student's background, input from the student's "village" must be obtained. A student's background is greatly influenced by their parent or guardian's religious, social, political, economical, cultural and other backgrounds; however, as a student ages, the student may find other backgrounds in which they assimilate better because we all are individual human beings with different life experiences, have free will and therefore our beliefs may change from that of our parents. Varied backgrounds can have great effect, positively and negatively, on a student's learning and need to be considered in order to establish realistic and obtainable individualized learning choices for a student through establishing Agreed Upon Development/Belief Models in the areas of Academic, Psychological, Social/Emotional, Cultural, Religious, Political, Economical, Race, and Family. Villagers give input on

the Agreed Upon Development/Belief Models using the INPUT Gathering Form in addition to the individual student's unique interests, strengths and needs. The Villagers must define the Developmental/Beliefs Models at the initial Choice Meeting in which they will agree upon which model(s) will be used by the Villagers to assist with determination if individualized goals are met or not. Agreed upon Developmental/Belief Model(s) may be reviewed and/or changed during any Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) meeting.

INPUT

For the INPUT section, the goal is to gather input about the student's interests, strengths and development needs from the Villagers of the student for discussion at the ILP meeting. The Villagers are the student's subject matter experts and who know the student best, unlike a one time standardized test. Villagers are invited to participate in assisting the student towards self-actualization of their individual strengths by completing an INPUT Gathering Form and participating in an ILP meeting. The INPUT Gathering Form assists a student in acknowledging and defining their individual interests, strengths and needs that will be discussed at an ILP meeting and used to develop individualized goals for the student.

Participation

Minimally, the student, their parent or guardian and their General Education Teacher must complete a INPUT Gathering Form and participate in the ILP meeting with the student's Teacher of Record (TOR); however, the parent may complete the student's INPUT Gathering Form with the student should the student's maturity and/or ability level not be sufficient to do so. Additionally, should the parent/guardian refuse to participate, the student and General Education Teacher will complete their INPUT Gathering Form and the student's INPUT Gathering form with the student, then the TOR, General Education Teacher and student will conduct a ILP meeting. The General Education Teacher may complete the students INPUT Gathering Form with the student should the student's maturity and/or ability level not be sufficient to do so.

At ILP Meetings and again, the goal is to determine the next free and appropriate learning choices and goals for a student based on a student's interests, strengths, needs and wants towards a future happy, engaged, productive and well-balanced citizen by using the Village member's input via compilation by the TOR/parent, completing the ILP form and using the Goal Form to develop S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Track-able goals) based on the discussion at the ILP meeting

Before ILP Meetings

Forty-five (45) days prior to agreed upon ILP meeting date and time, Teacher of Record (TOR) will review the student's ILP Goal Progress form with the student and any person responsible for recording and providing documentation towards a student's goals. A parent may volunteer to assist the TOR in the responsibility of compiling the ILP Goal Progress information.

As soon as ILP Goal Progress form is completed and not later than thirty (30) days before an ILP meeting, the TOR will distribute the completed ILP Goal Progress form with blank INPUT Gathering forms to the villagers minimally to those on the past ILP and any other Villager who has worked with the student during the last year. If it is the first ILP, then the TOR will minimally distribute the INPUT Gathering form to the student, parent, the past Special Needs teacher and the past general education teachers of the student (with English and Math as the defaulting academic areas). The parent may forward to village members of the student inside or outside of the school setting with an invitation to participate. Distribution of the ILP Goal Progress form and INPUT Gathering forms optimally should be distributed with a due that must give ample time for Villagers to complete the form and return it to the TOR, but no less than 10 days to complete and return. The TOR will compile information from the INPUT Gathering forms and distributed to all Villagers at least 10 days before and ILP meeting so that all Villagers can review all INPUT prior to the meeting so that everyone is 'on the same page' when sitting down for the ILP meeting. A parent can volunteer to assist and work with the TOR towards compilation of input and distribution.

ILP Meeting

Upon sitting down for an ILP meeting, Villagers will determine the amount of time that all Villagers have to meet, determine a time keeper to let the group know how much time is left and determine a note taker. If no one volunteers to be a note taker, this responsibility is shared between the parent (if participating) and the TOR of which they can share and compare notes after the meeting. It is important to take diligent and accurate notes for ILP meetings so the notes can be referred back to for future ILP meetings and Villagers questions. If all of the ILP form is not completed before the ILP meeting time has expired, the Village should determine when they will meet again. If some of the Villagers do not have their availability with them, the TOR will be responsible in communicating and organizing a mutually agreed upon date and time to meet again.

The following is the order in which ILP meetings must be conducted:

1. Determine time keeper and note taker.
2. Review prior ILP Goal Progress or prior school academic data.

3. Determine (1st meeting) or review Agreed Upon Development/Belief Models.
- 4 Review INPUT Gathering compilation form and determine what information will be put into an individualized goal.
5. Complete remainder of ILP Meeting form.
6. Create individualized S.M.A.R.T. goals based on information from discussion of INPUT Gathering.

Outcome

While it is important for the student to consider the Villager's input concerning what the Villager's see as the student's interests, strengths and development needs towards the student's own self-actualization of their own strengths, it is more important to note that the student has a right to agree, to disagree, maybe agree, maybe disagree and to not have an opinion about any interest, strength and/or developmental need a Villager may have concerning him/herself. The Villagers have a responsibility in guiding the student towards self-actualization within their discussion during an ILP meeting.

The outcome of the ILP meeting is the development of S.M.A.R.T. goals that are individualized to the student. Whenever possible and depending upon the maturity of the student, the student is responsible to track their progress on their goals by compiling documentation of proof of achievement of the goals throughout the year and for calling a reconvening of the ILP meeting should they accomplish all of their goals prior to the next annual ILP meeting or are finding one or more of their goals to be unrealistic or unobtainable. The Village also has these same responsibilities at all times.

Individualized Learning Plan Meeting

Student's Name: _____

Mutually Agreed Date of ILP meeting: _____

Mutually Agreed Time of ILP meeting: _____

Mutually Agreed Location of ILP meeting: _____

Attendees (The Village of the Student): *attached another sheet for additional attendees if needed*

Name	Relationship to Student (Parent/Guardian, Relative, General Education Teacher, Special Area Teacher(s), Principal, Social Worker, Resource Teacher, Religious Leader, Sibling, etc.)
	Student
	Parent/Guardian
	General Education Teacher

Time Keeper: _____

Note Taker(s): _____

ILP Goal Progress

If meeting for the first time, review prior academic progress and parent/guardian input. If this ILP meeting is not the first ILP meeting, review ILP Goal Progress and determine if goals were met or not. If not met, consider if unmet goal needs to be revised and/or copied to this ILP meeting's Goals section.

AGREED UPON DEVELOPMENT/BELIEF MODEL(S):

Academic:

Psychological:

Social/Emotional:

Cultural:

Religious:

Political:

Economical:

Race:

Family:

INPUT GATHERING FORM

Student: _____

Villager: _____

Return to TOR or parent: _____

Thank you for being part of _____ (student's name) Village. Please review the attached Individualized Learning Plan (ILP) Goal Progress before providing your input about the student below and return your INPUT Gathering Form by _____ (insert date). You may return it by: fax _____; email _____ or dropping it off or mailing to (insert address) _____.

See Sources Page - Discovering Your Strengths

Agreed upon Development/Belief Model(s)

Review from last most current Development/Belief Models and provide any updates or clarifications or, if not filled in, provide your input towards what you feel are the Development/Beliefs Model(s) of the student or his/her family.

Academic:

Psychological:

Social/Emotional:

Cultural:

Religious:

Political:

Economical:

Race:

Family:

INPUT GATHERING FORM

Student: _____

Villager: _____

Interests

Please list what you know to be, may be or you would like to see developed as (things you believe the student would be interested in if introduced) as the student's interests.

List Student's Interests	Know to be	May be	Would like to see developed

Strengths

Please lists what you know to be, may be or you would like to see developed as (things you believe the student would be good at in if introduced) as the student's strengths: (Attach another sheet of paper, if needed)

List Student's Strengths	Know to be	May be	Would like to see developed

DRAFT

INPUT GATHERING FORM

Student: _____

Villager: _____

Development Needs

Please lists what you know to be, may be or you believe are things the student needs to start working on or needs more development concerning as the student's Development Needs: (Attach another sheet of paper, if needed)

List Student's Development Needs	Know to be	May be	Would like to see developed

How do you believe the student learns best?

Narrative Input

Provide any written comments, concerns, encouragement, etc. concerning the student's interests, strengths, development needs or about the student that you feel may impact the student's learning.

DRAFT

INPUT GATHERING COMPILATION FORM

Student: _____

Agreed upon Development/Belief Model(s)

Academic:

Psychological:

Social/Emotional:

Cultural:

Religious:

Political:

Economical:

Race:

Family:

K = Know to be; M=May be; W=Would like to see developed

Student Individual Interests	<u>Student</u>	<u>General Education Teacher</u>	<u>Parent/Guardian</u>	<u>Special Ed. Teacher</u>	<u>Past Teacher</u>			<u>Student Acknowledgement</u>
								Yes No Maybe
								Yes No Maybe

								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe

DRAFT

INPUT GATHERING COMPILATION FORM

Student: _____

K = Know to be; M=May be; W=Would like to see developed

Student Individual Strengths	<u>Student</u>	<u>General Education Teacher</u>	<u>Parent/Guardian</u>	<u>Special Ed. Teacher</u>	<u>Past Teacher</u>		<u>Student Acknowledgement</u>
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe

K = Know to be; M=May be; W=Would like to see developed Student: _____

Student Individual Development Needs	<u>Student</u>	<u>General Education Teacher</u>	<u>Parent/Guardian</u>	<u>Special Ed. Teacher</u>	<u>Past Teacher</u>		<u>Student Acknowledgement</u>
							Yes No Maybe
							Yes No Maybe

								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe
								Yes	No	Maybe

DRAFT

INPUT GATHERING COMPILATION FORM

Student: _____

Compilation: How do you believe the student learns best?

Compilation: Narrative Input (leave off names and titles of who provided input. If individual wants to be recognized during ILP meeting, they may choose to do so)

Least Restrictive Environment(Deficit Model)/Most Appropriate Environment(Strength Model)

While the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) section is a federal mandate, the focus needs to be on the appropriate needs of the child first, then the federal mandate secondarily. The protection of the institution is not the focus, the focus must be what environment is most appropriate for the child to learn best as a special needs student is entitled to a free and appropriate education. The restrictiveness is only relative to the systems “norm,” not what is “norm” or “appropriate” for a child. Federal IDEA law states, “To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not disabled, and special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.” In addition, IDEA further states, “A State funding mechanism shall not result in placements that violate the requirements” of above satisfaction “and a State shall not use a funding mechanism by which the State distributes funds on the basis of the type of setting in which a child is served that will result in the failure to provide a child with a disability a free appropriate public education according to the unique needs of the child as described in the child's IEP”. The Indiana categories for LRE are: 1) Inside the general education class 80% or more of the day; 2) Inside the general education class less than 40% of the day; and, 3) In separate schools, residential facilities or homebound/hospital placements. The Village must determine the most appropriate environment for the student, then determine how (if it can) fit within the categories determined by Indiana Department of Education. If it cannot, then check the closest box and record the Villagers discussion in the ILP Notes.

In what environment does the student learn best?

Accommodations/Accountability

In this section, the Village of the student needs to focus on the strengths of the student, but will also identify the deficiencies of the system to provide an education for the student rather than looking at problems arising from political and social constructed deficiencies. There is no natural law that defines a deficiency. Every child naturally learns. The systems define deficiencies. It is the emphasis of a standardized system that creates deficiencies. The term “Developmentally Appropriate” still implies a definition of standardization. Remember students are individual human beings and all human beings learn at different paces and in different ways. It is not appropriate to think “What accommodations does the student need to fit into the standardized system?” for if the Village provides an accommodation for

the student to fit within the standardized system, they have failed the student in that the student will never fit or achieve the standard/norm on their own and it would be unethical to assume the student would achieve that standard or hold that student accountable to the standard.

How does the student learn best?

How does the current educational system fail to adapt to the needs of the student?

Do expectations exist from outside of the Village (i.e. local, state or federal mandates, standardized or other) that are not reasonable and/or not appropriate expectations of the student? If yes, list the expectation(s) and the Village discussion points concerning the unreasonableness and inappropriateness of each. (i.e. Physical Education standard accommodations for someone in a wheel chair; Sensory issues pertaining to clothing for ASD students and mandatory Student Uniform policy, if a student is not performing at grade level per their age, then they need to be appropriately placed in their grade level per their actual academic performance, determination of appropriate standardized assessments - see Guide to Opting Out Special Needs students on www.unitedoptout.com). Some unreasonable and inappropriate expectations may come up during discussion about ILP Goals and this section will need to be noted.

Does the student need any physical accommodations to learn? (i.e. hearing aids, assistive technology, wheelchair -elevator access, glasses, etc.)

Is there anything that the student needs that the Villagers are not able to provide at this time? What community resources will be contacted to fill this need, by which Villager and within how many days?

Special Considerations/Circumstances

Is the student's native language not English or not what is spoken at home? If yes, what language(s) does the student speak?

Does the child exhibit any behaviors that may impede their learning? If yes, a Behavioral Analysis must be completed and a date set for another ILP Meeting to document a Behavior Plan to attach to this ILP Meeting document. If a student is exhibiting any characteristics of Autism, then an ADIOS evaluation (multi-disciplinary team) evaluation, including a Neuro Psychologist, must be completed as well.

Who will conduct the Behavior Analysis and what are their qualifications (should be BACA certified)?

What date will the Behavior Analysis be completed?

Does the student exhibit any characteristics of Autism?

If yes, who will be on the multi-disciplinary team to conduct the ADIOS evaluation and what are their qualifications?

What date will the ADIOS evaluation be completed?

When will the Villagers meet to document a Behavior Plan?

What the input and data does not show/tell about this student?

Any pertinent historical information concerning the student would be documented here as well as any current information concerning the student that has not already been documented and may effect his/her learning.

Services and other Provisions

What services does this student **and his/her family (including any member of the student's Village)** need for the student to be successful in obtaining his/her goals? What about the student does any of the Village feel they need more information/knowledge? Is there a disability, type of assessment or

Development Model/Belief that a Villager feels they need more knowledge? (Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities and their Parents, Psychologist, Psychiatric, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, Reading Tutor, Math Tutor, Speech Therapy, Financial Literacy, Political Literacy, Social Literacy, Disability Literacy, etc.) For each service, list how much time in minutes such service will be provided, list the frequency of each service (one time, weekly or monthly) and list who will provide the services.

Written Notes and other Relevant Factors - Minutes of Case Conference Committee Meeting

This section is where ILP Meeting conversations, conflicts, discussions, debates and resolutions are to be documented for any and all areas of the ILP meeting **ILP Goal form** - to be used for each ILP Goal.

Student: _____

Time Period: _____ (date) to _____ (date)

NEED FOR A GOAL

Before writing a goal, determine why a goal needs to be written. Is there something that this goal supports that the student, in the obtainment of the goal, needs to be a productive , engaged and happy citizen? If not, consider if the goal is even needed.

Was this goal from the Village's input on the student's:

___ Interests Input ___ Strengths Input ___ Development Needs Input ___ How
the student learns best Input ___ Narrative Input ___ Other Input

Specify: _____

Why is this goal needed? What does it support that the student needs?

Give this goal a Goal Title: _____

(use brief description of goals like "reading comprehension", "homework", "interpersonal skills", etc.)

CREATE/REVISE ILP GOAL

Create, or revise current, ILP Goal to obtain a Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Trackable/Timely Individualized Learning Plan Goal for the student:

ILP Goal:

S.M.A.R.T.-NESS OF GOAL

SPECIFIC

What specific standards and/or expectations does this goal relate to? Is the goal written to clearly name these standards/expectations?? What subject area (i.e. Spelling, Math, Reading comprehension, behavior) does this goal relate to?

MEASURABLE

Current/Initial Value _____ Current/Initial Date _____

Target Value _____ Target Date _____

Frequency of Data/Document Collection _____ (daily, weekly, monthly, 2 x's per month, 9 week grading period, 4 1/4 week grading period, semester, etc.)

Metric/Measurement of obtainment: _____ (average, progress two stages forward, less than 10 incidents per semester,

How will the child's learning be assessed? How will the goal be measured (yes/no, average percentage over time)?

ILP Goal form - to be used for each ILP Goal

Student: _____ Time Period: _____ (date) to _____
_____ (date)

How many and what specific data points or documents over the time frame above would provide the Village with realistic and reliable proof of the student obtaining their goal (Method/Instrumentation for Measuring Progress and Progress Monitory Design)? What are the appropriate and ethical measurements of learning expectations for this student? (Per the testing profession's own Joint

Standards, ethical standards, using only one assessment/test to assess a child's learning is unethical.) How will the student be ethically measured towards their obtainment of their goals?

What is the student's current level of accomplishment? If unknown, consideration must be given and documentation done concerning why the Village is developing a goal for the student without even knowing the current level and how they come to a decision on what goal level expectation is set for the student.

ATTAINABLE

What are the student's current levels of performance/achievement? What are the expectations of the student? Is the expectation obtainable for the student compared to the student's current level of performance, current knowledge, current skills and current abilities? If not, the expectation of the student needs to be revised so that it is attainable and so the Village does not set up the student for failure.

REALISTIC

Were any of these standards/expectations in the SPECIFIC area for this goal identified in the Accommodations section as unobtainable or inappropriate for the student? If yes, then consideration whether this goal needs to be written must be made.

TRACK-ABLE/TIMELY

When thinking about whether a goal is track-able and timely, one must also think about whether the documents, data points or other items are, in-themselves, S.M.A.R.T. For example, requiring a teacher to provide daily spelling tests to a student, requiring the student, the teacher and the parent to track those daily tests on a spreadsheet or other document and for each of them to figure out the average, mean, median and mode for all spelling tests per 4 1/2 week grading period, 9 week grading period, semester and annually would not be a S.M.A.R.T. decision concerning the documents being tracked or the timing of that data/documents.

How many data points/documents will the Village need to accurately and ethically assess whether a student achieves a goal?

Who is going to be responsible for tracking the data or documents? Whenever possible and to contribute towards the student's self-actualization, the student needs to be responsible for this tracking; however, the TOR is responsible for making sure the adult responsible for tracking it as well completes the tracking and maintains an annual file for each goal.

ILP Goal Progress Compilation form

Student: _____

Time Frame: _____ date to _____ date

<u>As determined by 1st or last ILP meeting</u>	<u>Compiled by TOR, with assistance from parent, if applicable</u>	<u>To be determined by individual Village members based on provided information and discussed at next ILP meeting.</u>	
<u>Goal Title</u>	<u>Data, documents or other information pertaining to progress on ILP Goal</u>	<u>Was goal met?</u>	<u>If goal was not met, are other resources needed and does this goal need to be continued or discontinued?</u>

SOURCES PAGE

Discovering Your Strengths

Books:

What Color is Your Parachute?

Developmental and Belief Models:

Psychological – Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Myer’s Brigg’s MBTI Personality Types, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs

DSM <http://www.dsm5.org/about/Pages/Default.aspx> , Johari Window (<http://kevan.org/johari>, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johari_window), Christopher

Peterson and Martin Seligman's Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification <http://www.meaningandhappiness.com/psychology-research/list-of-personal-strengths.html>,

Religious - Atheist, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Native America

Cultural - Germanic, Hispanic, Indian, Burmese, Mexican, Italian, Russian, Native American Indian, Spanish, global Hip Hop youth culture, and many others

Standardized Tests (warning, per the testing profession's own ethical standards, Joint Standards, it is unethical to use the result of only one standardized assessment/test to evaluate a person):

Accucess, ISTAR, IMAP, IREAD, ISTEP, ECA, PSAT, SAT, ACT

Standardized Testing: “Past and Present: Eugenics, Standardized Tests, and the Hoosier Connection” by John Harris Loflin <http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Past-present-Eugenics-standardized-tests-the-politics-of-school-reform-Hoosier-connections-challenges.pdf>

Websites:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Identify-Your-Strengths-and-Weaknesses>

<http://www.peterursbender.com/quiz/swtable.html>

<http://www.joyfuldays.com/personal-strengths/>

<http://www.thehappinessinstitute.com/freeproducts/docs/The%20Happiness%20Institute's%20Signature%20Strengths%20List.pdf>

A proposal to dismantle normalcy in Indiana by providing a Strength-Based Individualized Learning Plan for Indianapolis Public School special education students and their families

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APPENDIX A

Critical Theory and Critical Disability Studies

Critical theory

Critical theory is a school of thought stressing the reflective assessment and critique of society and culture by applying knowledge from the social sciences and humanities. Critical theory maintains that “ideology” is the principal obstacle to human liberation.

Critical theory intends to deconstruct concepts, issues, paradigms by “unpacking” the philosophical-political-economic-social underpinnings (the agendas behind these topics) by “reading in between the lines” through simply asking *cui bono?*: who benefits?

An ideology is a set of ideas (a world view) proposed by the dominant culture to all members of a society via socialization, i.e. “schooling.” With respect to America, see Toni Morrison’s concept of the “Master Narrative.”

<http://feministteacher.com/2010/04/13/exposing-the-master-narrative-teaching-toni-morrison-the-bluest-eye/>

Another example is an allegory for contemporary experience in a heavily commercialized, media-driven society, especially in developed countries termed the “Matrix.” Here we see what most experience as reality which is nothing more than culture--the pervasive water in which we all live yet few experience otherwise. “A fish out of water” knows the difference between who they are and what is a socially and culturally constructed “identity.”

One of the more viable tools of a critical consciousness is Critical Race Theory (CRT), an academic discipline focused upon the application of critical theory by closely examining society and culture to expose any racial component when race, law, and power intersect in daily interactions. Along with Critical Women’s Studies, Critical Media Studies, and even Critical Development Studies, there are Schools of Critical Studies at universities around the globe.

What is pertinent to us is Critical Disability Studies

Historically, disability has been viewed as personal misfortune preferably to be prevented and definitely to be cured. It privileges “normalcy” over the “abnormal,” presumes able-bodied norms are inevitable, and values economic productivity as an essential aspect of personhood.

In contrast, a critical study of disability adopts a version of the social model based on these principles:

- disability is a social construct, not the inevitable consequence of “impairment,”
- disability is best characterized as a complex interrelationship among
 - impairment,
 - individual response to impairment, and
 - the social environment in which this all takes place.

Any social disadvantage such as labeling, discrimination, or segregation experienced by so-called “disabled” people is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal (together, the “social”) environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of “normalcy” (Hosking, 2008).

In our case, critical disability studies will be a form of enabling self-reflective knowledge (self-critique/-criticism) involving both understanding and theoretical explanation to reduce entrapment in our very own systems of beliefs, terminology, and policies which may limit the IPS Special Education Division. Some folks call Critical Theory "a gadfly of other systems."

“The primary (focus of Critical Studies) have centered on race, class, and gender. All but absent from the multicultural, feminist, and critical studies of schooling are serious analyses of the subjugation experienced by students tagged with disability labels. No other culturally recognized group of students experiences a similar mass level of deterministic segregation, tracking, and systematic social devaluation.”

~ Kliever & Fitzgerald, “Disability, Schooling and the Artifacts of Colonialism”

In order to unpack “disability” we must look at history. Indeed, in the past there was a wide variety living organisms. Regarding humans, some persons had one arm or leg, most others two. Most could hear, see, and touch. There was a variety of abilities and multiple intelligences spread throughout the human continuum. Folks came in a variety of sizes and colors. This begs the question: when did the idea of “disability” appear and why?

According to Kliever & Fitzgerald (2001), IPS can trace the origin of disability segregation to the advent of Western colonialism and the development of a symbiotic relationship between cultural and racial oppression, and the oppression of people with disabilities. Current national, state, and IPS Special Education Division policies are a lasting vestige of a colonial ideology of power, wealth, religion, and science stretching back 500 years to the end of the Middle Ages. This was when oppressive hierarchies of human worth—typologies developed to solidify and objectify the notion of “difference as defect” were used as an excuse to kill, torture, subjugate, and exploit the colonized peoples of the Americas and Africa.

References

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http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fass/events/disabilityconference_archive/2008/papers/hosking2008.pdf
- Kliever, K. & Fitzgerald, L. (2001). Disability, Schooling and the Artifacts of Colonialism. *Teachers College Record*. 103(3), 450-470.

APPENDIX B

Special Education and the Mis-education of African American Children: A Call to Action--A Position Paper of The Association of Black Psychologists

Institutional Racism: A systemic factor regarding special education and the mis-education of African American children

When the issue of disproportionality is viewed with a critical eye, one that is attuned to the socio-political history of African-descended people in this country, the connection with institutional racism becomes readily apparent. America is profoundly organized by race, with the dominant group (Whites)

utilizing various instruments of hegemony to maintain power and racial privilege. Education is one such instrument. Knowledge is power, as one's potential or abilities in life are maximized with education. Withholding, limiting access to, or decreasing the quality of education has been one of America's built-in racist tendencies against people of African descent and a primary tool of White supremacy.

Consider the historical background of education in this country: it includes legal proscriptions against African American literacy and longstanding separate and unequal educational opportunities (Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Powers, et al., 2004). The attitudinal climate – in the popular culture and the scientific community – has been one that presumed intellectual inferiority of African people (and others of non-European descent). The negative attitudinal climate is supplemented by a disenfranchised political context and a history of economic impoverishment and *hyper-ghettoization* (Khalifa, 2010), in which people of African descent have been concentrated in poor, disadvantaged, inner-city neighborhoods. This is often done by design through structured inequalities and discriminatory practices intended to preserve White suburbs, such as redlining and the construction of highways to divide and isolate Black neighborhoods (e.g., Birmingham, Alabama's 1926 racial zoning law). These neighborhoods are often characterized by an underserved student population with scarce educational resources (e.g., textbooks, computers, fully credentialed teachers, advanced courses, etc.) and dilapidated facilities.

Several authors have spotlighted the structured inequalities inherent to America's education system and recommended systemic change. Coutinho and Oswald (2000) underscored the importance of the historical context at local and national levels, and called for effective advocacy to correct these socio-political contexts.

Powers, et al. (2004) traced the history of disproportionate special education placement in California, particularly after the historic *Larry P.* case that outlawed the use of IQ tests for African American children in special education placement. More than twenty years after the use of such tests was outlawed, disproportionality continued due to the violation of the spirit of the *Larry P.* ruling in numerous policies and practices of the California Board of Education (Powers, et al., 2004). Similarly, Daniels (1998) showed how the disproportionality of African Americans in special education included both gifted and remedial programs.

Robinson (2003) concluded that innocent children were being punished for the —sins of a society that has been unable--or unwilling--to conquer the problems of structured inequalities. The pernicious educational effects of these structured inequalities have been shown for other minority groups (e.g., Ward, 2010) and in international settings (e.g., Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2008 reviewed comparable situations in the United Kingdom).

Contemporary institutional racism in schooling is subtle, as opposed to the blatant racism during the —separate but equal era of segregation. White privilege and racism contribute to and maintain disproportionality in special education through its impact on educational resource allocation (i.e., insufficient funding for schools attended primarily by African American students), culturally inappropriate and unresponsive curricula and pedagogy, and inadequate teacher preparation (Blanchett, 2006). Additionally, there is an undercurrent of disregard for landmark legal cases that uncovered and documented systemic bias and discrimination in the special education system.

Institutional racism in education is alive and well in the 21st century and is the proximate cause of educational inequality (Fuller, 1969). Whether overt or subtle, intentional or unintentional, school

systems are tools for maintaining the status quo, which systematically relegates people of African descent to a subordinate group status.

Amos Wilson has done much to confront and deconstruct the role that White supremacy and racism play in the disproportionate placement of Black children in special education. In examining the sociopolitical context of education, Wilson (1992) asserted that Africans in America have been subjected to special education since enslavement. He posited that Africans were specially educated for the same reasons then as they are now: the education of Africans in America has always revolved around the education for servitude. That is, the main purpose of educating Black children was preparing them to serve White people and their primary interest: maintaining White power as the central power of the world. Wilson identified this as one of several--European constants that have characterized the relationship between Whites and African-descended people throughout history.

Although the face of education of African peoples has changed, the power relations and European intentions that shape it remain constant. Wilson (1993) illuminated this in a seminal lecture on special education. He explained that education (through the seasoning process) that focused on building docile, loyal, and diligent slaves and other patterns of behavior considered essential for the survival of the slavery economy has changed; so too has--separate but equal schools that perpetuated notions of Black inferiority and low self-esteem among Black children. However, education ultimately remains a means of preparing Africans in America to maximize profits for Whites and establishing patterns of behavior considered essential for Whites' survival and dominance. Today, it manifests as the push for Black students to stay in school and attend college ultimately for the purpose of--getting a good job in a White-dominated society and aiding the capitalist economy.

This education for servitude, as a--European constant, can be observed throughout the African Diaspora. In discussing the educational system within continental Africa, Chinweizu (2010) asserted:

no conscious campaign has been made to change the colonial character of our education....we still produce Black Africans who are fascinated with European ways, who are mindlessly obedient servants of Europe; who are filled with inferiority complexes; who are culturally de-Africanized, Europhile and Afrophobic, just like those produced by colonial schools Furthermore, our neo-colonial education does not teach us how to face the perils of today; does not teach us to create our own future; does not prepare us to face the perils of the future (pp.4, 7).

Chinweizu, like Wilson, pointed out that a primary focus of colonial education was producing clerks and auxiliaries for the colonizers, rather than providing creative economic producers of necessary goods and services for the Africans themselves. Despite so-called liberation, many African countries are still plagued with the psychological residue of colonialism through educational systems entrenched with neo-colonial values and intentions.

An historical and diasporic analysis of the political and economical function of educating African peoples is an essential first step in understanding the problem of disproportionality in special education placement in the United States. If the problem is not situated in the right global-political context, attempts to solve it will be misguided.

Consider this: Wilson's tenant that the basic function of education for African descended people is to prepare them for servitude to Whites, has led to his critical analysis of how this --European constant has

managed to survive for so long in the United States. Wilson (1993) asserted that changes in the physical manifestations of education serve to deceive African peoples. These changes create the illusion of progress, restore hope in the idea that their lot in life as African Americans is changing, and move the definition of the problem away from the social and political system, to the individual.

As a result, Wilson proclaimed that Africans in the U.S. no longer demand social/political change, demand a change in power relations, or engage in revolution. They are urged to take their child to the doctor to have medicine prescribed when problems with school success arise. Wilson (1993) referred to this as the *medicalization of behavior*, in which learning and conduct problems are seen as the expression of medical problems, categorized with apparently morally-neutral labels, and used to maintain the status quo. This strategy has helped to maintain an education of servitude for African descended children in the U.S., and must be understood as a present-day permutation of age-old intentions aligned with White domination and institutional racism.

Finally, Wilson (1993) asserted that schools in the United States are generally not designed for African descended children or based on their psychology. Consequently, a discontinuity exists between the philosophy and methods of teaching and the true psychology and intentions of African peoples. Thus, the problem of disproportionality in special education is generated by the very nature, structure and intention of the schools themselves. We must remember Wilson's assertions when embarking on efforts to resolve this problem, and not continue to be deceived by surface-level solutions that do little to dismantle power relations and confront the longstanding intentions of those in power.

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APPENDIX C

Hoosier contributions to the 20th century deficit model of humanity

As reviewed by Kliwer & Fitzgerald (2001), the term Eugenics, the racist and handicappist science of “better breeding,” was coined in 1883 by evolutionist Francis Galton—Darwin’s cousin and pioneer of statistical measurement. He’s especially known for the math concept of “average.” Galton wanted to prove genetic inheritability, as well as *measurability*, of literally all human characteristics, capacities, and behaviors. This developed into what is considered normal/abnormal or the concept of *normalcy*.

Eugenics (scientific racism) merged social Darwinism, genetics, statistics, and eventually psychometrics to purportedly demonstrate in objective, medical fashion the defectiveness of particular *types* of human beings. Hence, eugenics (racial hygiene) solidified the presumed link of defectiveness between the so-called “feebleminded” and races of people other than that of white Western Europeans.

In 1907, Indiana legalized *normalcy* in the form of the world’s first Eugenics Law. Sterilization of “genetic” defectives became so viable here the Nazis termed their forced sterilization program, “the Indiana Procedure.” See www.newswithviews.com/NWO/newworld17.htm

This view of certain groups continues to rear its head over 100 years later. As reported in 2014, Indiana ranks the 8th worst for state for Black children regarding its ability to prepare them for educational and financial success. See “Race for Results: Building a Pathway to Opportunity for All Children.” <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-RaceforResults-2014.pdf>

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APPENDIX D

The invention of Special Education: Circumventing Brown

It is no coincidence that the concept of Special Education was popularized in the 1950s during the Brown vs. Board era. Looking back, we can see the beginning of disproportionate placement of students of color in Special Education programs as a way of perpetuating segregation (Blanchett, 2009). We can trace some of the origins of the core problem of over-representation by exposing the underbelly of the relationship of Special Education and re-segregation in the first years following the Brown decision (Ferri & Conner, 2005).

In the 1950s as schools integrated, a sharp rise in the use of standardized tests occurred. Based on rigid and narrow ideas of academic ability, these exams identified and created groups of students deviating from the normal/average student. Fitting students into “normal” modes became a goal of education. Learning differences were transformed into deficits.

“Legal mandates paved the way for children to be physically present in the same schools, but special education identification practices became the way to ensure that they were not in the same classrooms.”
~ Dr. Wanda J. Blanchett

Since most educators were challenged by this diversity of students, separate classes based on ability made teaching easier. Over time, special education became identified as a space to put children who were difficult to teach. Yet, because of biased notions of race and ability, these separate “special” classes were increasingly populated by minorities.

The “new” segregation: the use of “ability,” not color

Special education permitted forms of racial segregation under the guise of “disability.” As education researchers Ferri and Connor (2005) revealed, as the practice of legally dividing students in schools according to racial “difference” was being challenged, dividing students according to “disability” gained greater acceptance.

Ferri and Conner view race and ability as socially constructed rather than a biological characteristic. Yet, most of society’s understanding of desegregation and learning ability is based on assumptions and perceptions of Black and disabled people as essentially inferior. Such stereotypes are deeply entrenched in our cultural imagination through distorted portrayals in books, media, and film.

Compared to public debate over racial segregation, exclusion based on disability made sense to many, becoming a more socially accepted and normal category for certain students. Racially diverse schools simply re-segregated via special education (Evans & Loflin, 2010a; 2010b).

With the above information, it can be argued that Special Education is a *political* not an educational concept. As a consequence, we can now view, with an informed consciousness, the possibilities that Special Education is a flawed concept without merit or integrity.

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APPENDIX E

The invention of Learning Disabilities: Circumventing Brown vs. Board while fighting the Cold War and perpetuating the myth of white intellectual superiority

learning disability *n.* a disorder, as dyslexia, usually affecting school-age children of normal or above-normal intelligence characterized by difficulty of the basic cognitive and psychological processes involved in using language such as understanding or using spoken or written language, or performing mathematical calculations. Such organically-based disabilities are thought to be related to impairment or slowed development of perceptual motor skills. Learning disabilities are not caused by low intelligence, emotional disturbance, or physical impairment (blindness). Origins: 1955-1960 era.

Why learning disabilities exist

Christine Sleeter (1987) asserts that the disability category of learning disability (LD) is not an educational idea, but arose as a political concept conceived and formed in the heightened political context of the US Cold War with international communism. In response to governmental, military, and economic pressures to ensure America's continued dominance and supremacy in the world, educational standards were raised.

Sleeter shows us that LD was a part of a social-political ideology also springing from the 1950s zeitgeist concerning the “proper” social function of schooling, what the “normal” person should be like, and what the “good” US economy, the “good” culture and society should be like.

As the higher standards were enforced, not all students were successful. As would be expected, society, schools, and families started to meet this educational challenge. One major response was the social construction and maintenance of a new category of disabilities called learning disability. The term came to describe the seeming unexplained difficulty a child of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills.

Educators and other professionals who worked with children portrayed the creation of LD as an educational development which was part of an historic pattern of “progress.” LD was a combination of scientific research on neurological impairment and parental pressure in the late 1950s which led to development of programs for children with an organically-based disorder “whose [learning] needs [were] finally recognized [by society] and met” (Skrtic & McCall, 2010).

Sleeter sees the creation of LD differently

Using a historical lens, she argues that the real reason the category emerged was for a social-political purpose: to rationalize why White middle-class children were failing to meet the new standards and to differentiate and protect them from lower class and minority children.

As asserted in Sleeter (1987), “LD” was a policy “cloaked” in the ideology of individual differences and biological determinism, thus making it appear “scientifically sound” even when it actually reflected “made-up differences” among children.

After *Brown*

In the years following the *Brown* decision, a new education climate developed when the socially invented “mild disabilities” category became educational policy. Implementation caused new associations around the intersection of race, culture, socio-economic status, gender, and “perceived” ability to be increased.

Through the lens of LD, children with this disability usually have average or above average intelligence. Difficulties in school are caused by differences in how a child's brain works; they do poorly because their brains just process information differently. Such socially constructed definitions of “mild disabilities” began to “normalize” students with LD among educators and society, presenting them as a unique and talented heterogeneous group of learners who “struggle in school.”

By using the LD diagnosis to portray certain white middle- and upper-class students as smart and creative--though due to the “mildly” disabling effects of their unique brain functioning and processing were failing to meet the new standards--enabled the myth of white middle-class intellectual supremacy (Leonardo & Broderick, 2011) to be ensured and protected (Blanchett. 2010).

Integrated schools with segregated classrooms

Indeed, LD was a diagnosis of the learning problems in the classroom for any student. Nonetheless, Blanchett's (2010) data show middle- and upper-class white students with LD receive different experiences. White students got accommodations and modifications within the general education classroom setting while students of color with the same labels are educated in self-contained settings. *Brown* was circumvented as segregation re-emerged.

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Other definitions of learning disability

- How "learning disability" is described by the National Center for Learning Disabilities: <http://www.ncld.org>. A learning disability (LD) is a neurological disorder that affects the brain's ability to receive, process, store and respond to information. The term learning disability is used to describe the seeming unexplained difficulty a person of at least average intelligence has in acquiring basic academic skills. These skills are essential for success at school and work, and for coping with life in general. LD is not a single disorder. It is a term that refers to a group of disorders.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, [mental retardation is characterized \(www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/IntellectualDisability.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/IntellectualDisability.pdf) both by a significantly below-average score on a test of mental ability or intelligence and by limitations in the ability to function in areas of daily life, such as communication, self-care, and getting along in social situations and school activities. Mental retardation is sometimes referred to as a cognitive or intellectual disability.

Children with mental retardation can and do learn new skills, but they develop more slowly than children with average intelligence and adaptive skills. There are different degrees of mental retardation, ranging from mild to profound. A person's level of mental retardation can be defined by their intelligence quotient (IQ), or by the types and amount of support th

- [The AAMR Definition of Mental Retardation www.aamr.org](http://www.aamr.org)
Mental retardation is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18.

APPENDIX F

Can we have a Strength-Based ILP for all students? Vermont's on the right track!

In 2014, the Vermont Department of Education not only switched from the traditional deficit model IEP for Special Ed students to policy mandating personalized learning plans for all 6-12 graders. These family/student developed IEPs are not based on what students cannot do—that is according to the state's concept of “normalcy” manifested through Vermont standards of development and academic progress. Each is based on the uniqueness, interests, passions, and goals of the child.

<http://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/PLP-Presentation-6.29.16.pdf>

Practicing the Vermont Personalized Learning Plan process

The VDOE outlines how a school develops, initiates, and monitors Personalized Learning Plans, identifying the steps that a school might take to build a comprehensive system for full implementation of PLPS. The rationale for each step and associated Guiding Questions for Discussion are designed to stimulate conversations and engage faculty and staff in the varied aspects of planning for a thoughtful approach to PLPs.

Vermont PLP Pathways Webinar #1 - September 22, 2016

View the first PLP Pathways webinar of the 2016-2017 school year. Elements of the personal learning framework, initial PLP implementation, and the evolution of personalized learning in Vermont are discussed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8TRSNAoJ4s>

APPENDIX G

Providing IPS families options to pharmaceutical medication as a prescription for children who do not conform to conventional academic and behavioral norms

One important outcome of a strength-based ILP would be providing families with options to pharmaceutical medication if their child/children have so-called behavior problems such as “sitting disability.”

Those on the Leadership Team are each aware that an entire sub-culture of federal programs, private specialists, professional literature, and laboratory research now provides explanations of school failure. As a result, children themselves are branded with a bewildering array of pseudo-scientific stigmatizing labels, prescribed drugs or behavior modification, and yet are inevitably sentenced to what some call the “Twilight Zone of Special Ed.”

Situated in the shadow of Eli Lilly, our IPS Special Education Division must challenge this now common “prescription” especially in the light of educational options to drugs and a “concert” of critiques of the limitations and drawbacks of medicating young children.

Do learning problems have biological origins?

The controversy over ADHD is a reflection of the issue's complexity. Many of the children in IPS labeled with ADHD have nothing wrong with them at all. The trouble lies in school environments that fail to support their unique needs and natures. Other labeled IPS children exhibit early learning difficulties that are not a disease, not organic in origin, but are caused by forcing academics on them before they are ready, willing, and able to invest themselves in the learning process.

One school's non-pharmaceutical response to children who do not conform to conventional academic and behavioral norms

To date, the majority of books about ADHD have been written by pediatricians and psychologists. Yet, what if the subject is seen from another vantage point--that of a teacher with thirty years worth of highly instructive experience (Mercogliano, 2003) in a privately funded, freedom-based urban educational alternative for children (2-14) known as the Albany (NY) Free School (AFS)?

“The absence of schools that won't drug kids is testimony to the marketing genius of the pharmaceutical industry and the eagerness of the education system to control children by any means necessary.”

~ Chris Mercogliano

The school's independent status permits experimentation with different educational strategies. This means AFS is a “lab” for developing ways to help children who do not conform to conventional academic and behavioral norms to

- relax,
- focus,
- modulate emotional expression,
- make responsible choices,
- appreciate themselves/others, and
- forge lasting friendship

When student have problems in these areas they are likely assigned medical labels and prescribed bio-psychiatric drugs.

Usually about half of AFS's enrollments are children who have had serious academic and/or behavioral problems in their previous schools. Many parents seek AFS because of concern over the negative effects labeling and drugging have on their kids and have heard that we maintain a strict policy against labeling or drugging even the most trying child. The school's success with children who for whatever reason don't fit into conventional school settings can be traced to a set of four core principles.

1. Every child has his or her own unique developmental trajectory. It is of little importance whether a student learns to read by 3 or 10, because we know that different children are ready to learn different things at different times.
2. A school must be a community--the real, not the euphemistic kind--where the children have a say in its governance and are encouraged to work out their differences among themselves whenever possible. True communities are inclusive by nature and entrust *all* of their members with responsibility for the well-being of the whole. Cooperation is valued over competition, and no one is left behind.

3. A child's emotional health is of paramount importance in school. Happy children are ready learners and are intrinsically sociable. Or as Joseph Chilton Pearce, author of *The Magical Child and Evolution's End* so aptly puts it, "The head will follow the heart every time."
4. All children need to be loved and touched, especially children who are struggling to establish their footing in the world. They need validation and permission to be themselves, not carrot-and-stick prodding. They need warm special attention, not cold special classifications.

In conclusion

The Leadership Team now has a template upon which to build a program for families who would choose, if provided, a non-pharmaceutical IPS option when their child is diagnosed as unable to conform to conventional academic and behavioral norms.

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APPENDIX H

Successful Intelligence: Capitalize on strengths; compensate for weaknesses

What does it mean to be smart?

A powerful addition to making a strength-based ILP viable is Robert Sternberg's concept of successful intelligence.

"When we expanded range of abilities we test for, would also expand the range of students we identify smart."
~ Robert Sternberg

A Yale study, based on the premise that intelligence has analytical, creative, and practical aspects, shows that if schools start valuing all three they may find that thousands of kids are smarter than they think.

"Successful intelligence is the kind of intelligence used to achieve important goals. People who succeed, whether by their own standards or by other people's, are those who have managed to acquire, develop, and apply a full range of intellectual skills, rather than merely relying on the inert intelligence that schools so value. These individuals may or may not succeed on conventional test, but they have something in common that is much more important than high test scores. They know their strengths; they know their weaknesses. They capitalize on their strengths; they compensate for or correct their weaknesses. That's it."
~ Robert Sternberg

Three key elements of successful intelligence:

- *Analytical*--mental steps or "components" we use to solve problems. Analytical intelligence encompasses the ability to think abstractly and process information effectively. Persons high on this dimension are able to think critically and analytically. Analytical intelligence emphasizes

effectiveness in information processing and is characterized by high test scores and high I.Q. scores.

- *Creative*--use experience in ways that foster insights. Creative intelligence includes the ability to formulate new ideas, to combine seemingly unrelated facts or information. It emphasizes insight and the ability to invent new solutions and is overlooked by test scores.
- *Practical*--the ability to read and adapt to the contexts of everyday of life. Practical intelligence covers the ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions and to shape the environment so as to maximize one's strengths and compensate for one's weaknesses. It emphasizes intelligence in a practical sense. Persons high on this dimension quickly recognize what factors influence success on various tasks and are adept at both adapting to and shaping their environment so that they can accomplish various goals. Practical intelligence is not reflected in test scores.

“Find out what you do well and more of it; find out what you don't well control it.”

~ Don Clifton & Paula Nelson, authors, *Soar with Your Strengths: A Simple Yet Revolutionary Philosophy of Business and Management*

Successfully intelligent people:

- actively seek out, and later become, role models
- question assumptions and encourage others to do so
- allow themselves and others to make mistakes
- take sensible risks and encourage others to do the same
- seek out for themselves and others tasks that allow for creativity
- actively define/redefine problems--help others to do so
- seek rewards for, and themselves reward, creativity
- allow themselves and others the time to think creatively
- tolerate ambiguity and encourage tolerance of ambiguity in others
- understand the obstacles creative people must face and overcome
- are willing to grow
- recognize the importance of the person-environment fit

Successfully intelligent people:

- don't wait for problems to hit them over the head. They recognize their existence before they get out of hand and begin the process of solving them.
- define problems correctly and thereby solve those problems that really confront them, rather than extraneous ones. In this way, the same problems don't keep coming back into their lives. They also make the effort to decide which problems are worth solving, in the first place, and which aren't.
- carefully formulate strategies for problem solving. In particular, they focus on long-range planning rather than rushing in and then later having to rethink their strategies.

- represent information about a problem as accurately as possible, with a focus on how they can use that information effectively.
- think carefully about allocating resources, for both the short term and the long term. They consider the risk-reward ratios and then choose allocations that they believe will maximize their return.
- do not always make the correct decisions, but they monitor and evaluate their decisions and then correct their errors as they discover them.

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APPENDIX I

“One-Size-Fits-All” as the source of problems in society

There are 30 public schools in Israel where the purpose of each is to help students discover and develop their uniqueness through strength-based models. This approach is called “Democratic Education.” (See www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIECircdLGs)

Democratic Education: Strength-based IEPs for all IPS students

At the 2006 (14th) International Democratic Education Conference in Sydney, Australia (Loflin, 2006), Yaacov Hecht of the Institute for Democratic Education (<http://www.c2city.org/en/about-ide/>) argued that the source of problems in society is the one-size-fits-all “square” we all must fit into. This is by schools where we are told, if you want to learn, you have to come inside the square. We judge everyone by the square. We are asked, “Why are you outside of the square?” This, he said, is the danger of school.

The role of standardized tests Hecht says is to keep us in the square. He predicted an era of global testing would arise to promote world standards. He sees this as no more than the creation of a culture of competition, power, and money: a “Coca Cola” culture which turns individual cultures into one global culture.

In traditional approaches to standardized testing, learning disabilities are dismissed and every grade level has a fixed standard of achievement. In democratic self-managed learning approaches, testing is not standardized, thus unique learning abilities are recognized and each person has unique areas of strengths and development.

Using Democratic Education to Enable Self-Actualization

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Hecht noted that presently only around 20% of the population self-actualizes, yet everyone can be excellent, especially if we let a child in school choose the area they wish to develop. These are the questions we ask our children to encourage self-actualization:

- What is your uniqueness?
- What do you bring?

“A democratic culture guards the equal right of every person for self-actualization.”

~ Yaacov Hecht

To have a democratic culture we must:

- Recognize the fact of “the different”-- difference is beautiful.
- Accept the fact that we do not own the truth.
- Recognize that “the different” is also a part of the *status quo*.
- Recognize the importance of self-criticism as a constructive tool for growth.
- Disburse democratic education outside school borders--to businesses, government agencies, social/community, and civic organizations.

According to Hecht, the current problem regarding sustainability is that we do not know how to deal with difference, but why?

- We only see ourselves.
- We only see the world from our perspective.
- We want everyone to be like us.
- We want to expand ourselves, and our point of view everywhere.

Thus, the goal of education for sustainability must be to reduce negative aggression and violence by:

- A democratic school culture fostering closer relationships between adults and children.
- Looking for the uniqueness of every child.
- Providing a place for it to develop.
- Bringing this to the attention of the community and celebrating.

This is an opportunity to move from a society based on democratic procedures to one fostering a democratic culture. This ethos of principles gives each person a right to know and express their uniqueness, and so a way each can become capable of the following:

- Recognizing the uniqueness of every other member of society.
- Understanding that difference and/or uniqueness do not pose a threat, but are rather an opportunity for the individual and the community as a whole.
- Understanding the importance of supporting others in their quest to find uniqueness.
- Recognizing that the integration of differences guarantees a world that chooses construction over destruction.

An Education City Enables Diversity, Uniqueness, Excellence and Self-Actualization

An “Education City” is a city where citizens choose to position education at the head of their priorities (<http://www.c2city.org/en/what-is-an-education-city/>). In such a city, education is not what happens during certain hours and in certain places, it is the essence of the city itself. The vision of a “culture of learning” is driven by the belief that individual development and self-fulfillment through education improves the general quality of life for everyone.

Pluralistic Learning

Yaacov also suggests “pluralistic learning,” an education acknowledging uniqueness: each person is different with both weak and strong attributes, talents, and abilities.

“Democratic education is self-managed learning.”

~ Yaacov Hecht

Excellence Centers in an Education City

An Education City would manifest through collaboration among community, government, and education organizations which would promote “Excellence Centers” outside of school representing a variety of intelligences, interests, occupations/careers, etc. Here, urban students could see what they are passionate about learning and doing. They could begin intense personal study and/or find adults who have the skills, interests, or careers they desire. The city could provide adults storefronts, places in strip malls or studios for individuals to pursue their passions. Here, adults could develop and/or share their own interests with the community and the world. This would be the first of many steps a community takes to support and develop the personal passion(s), uniqueness, and self-actualization of its citizens.

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