

12 SMART IEPs

"If you're not sure where you're going, you're liable to end up someplace else. If you don't know where you're going, the best made maps won't help you get there."

—Robert Mager, psychologist, writer, educator

Strategies: Ask Questions (the Columbo Strategy)

Use the Columbo Strategy. Ask questions —“5 Ws + H + E” questions. (Who, What, Why, Where, When, How, and Explain.) Tell the school staff that you are confused. You want to ask a stupid question. (Do you see why we call this the “Columbo Strategy?”)

What is Johnny doing? How often? When? Ask more questions. Listen attentively to the answers. If you use “5 Ws + H + E” questions skillfully, you may be able to help school personnel shift from reporting their feelings and beliefs to reporting their observations. facts and observations.

From the team members’ comments, you can make a list of behaviors. What behaviors will they observe? Who will observe these behaviors? When? How often? As you continue to ask questions, the team members will make statements that describe observable behavior—circumstantial evidence.

Finally, his The teacher says, “Johnny pinches his classmates at least two times an hour.” Good! Now you have data. You have Johnny’s present levels of performance in pinching to use as a starting point.

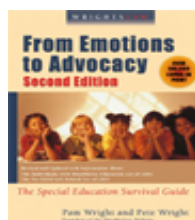
You ask, “What change in Johnny’s pinching behavior do we seek?”

The teacher may say, “Johnny should never pinch anyone.” While this may be true, you need a baseline starting point before you can develop a goal and measure improved behavior.

After some discussion, the team formulates this goal: “During the next two weeks, Johnny will pinch classmates no more than once every two hours.” Now you have a goal that allows you to measure changes in Johnny’s pinching behavior.

Anticipate resistance from educators if you criticize abstract goals and request observable goals and objectives. When you encounter resistance, use this strategy suggested by Dr. Mager.

Ask the resistant person to describe the child’s negative, undesirable observable behaviors. Make a list of these negative observable behaviors that need to be changed. When you finish your list, turn the list around and use the list to describe desired positive behaviors. These positive behaviors are “circumstantial evidence” that can be used to determine that the goal has been reached



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Chapter 12. SMART IEPs