

Special Education Advocacy

Special Education Workshop: Creating a Vision Statement

Preparing Parents to Use the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as a
Tool for Their Child's Success



The Arc of Philadelphia

- Our Mission:
 - To advocate with and for all children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, to promote active citizenship, self-determination, and full inclusion



Vision Statement: What is it and why is it important for my child?

- A Vision Statement is a visual picture that describes your child now and in the future. It lets people know what your hopes and dreams are for your child.
- The intent of the IEP Vision Statement is to describe the students and the families hopes for the future. You want your input to be as specific as possible.
- The purpose is to represent high expectations and the dreams for the student in addition to addressing areas for transition starting at the age of 14, or earlier as determined by the IEP team.

Vision Statement Continued:

- This is the only place that long-term goals for your child are stated.
- The vision provides a common foundation for the student's family and the IEP team based upon the student's preferences, interests and long term goal(s).
- It helps the IEP team focus on the whole child including his/her strengths and needs in the long term.
- It serves as a guide for developing special education services and goals that will help a student throughout the remaining school years, and ultimately, life after graduation.



SNOW PARROTT

AGE 8

2ND GRADE

Believe in me.

I can do it!

VISION STATEMENT

We envision our daughter living an independent life. We want her to engage in activities with peers and be meaningfully included at school (>80%) to feel encouraged and challenged to succeed. We want her to be empowered to graduate high school and college, be productive and find gainful employment, and live a happy, meaningful life surrounded by love and friends.

STRENGTHS

- Social learner
- Loves peer attention & videos
- Eager to please peers & adults
- Feigns helplessness for attention
- Keenly aware of environment
- Mirrors others & is observant
- Visual learner
- Bright & quick to memorize
- Particular & orderly of things
- Inquisitive & talkative
- Determined & competitive
- Compassionate & sensitive
- Loves music, balls, games
- Athletic & lives for monkey bars

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Too many words or questions
- Facial expressions and eye contact with redirecting
- Negative talk and yelling
- Being rushed or forced
- Doing something for me
- Assuming I don't understand

WHAT WORKS

- Praise my achievements enthusiastically
- Attend specifically to desired behaviors
- Positively reinforce & use humor
- Offer social motivators, like a friend
- Ask me to help, or give me a challenge
- Visually break down all tasks & routines

WHAT I'M WORKING ON

- Conversational speech, full sentences
- Give directive, offer non-essential choice
- Counting on fingers for *next* activities
- Countdown from 5 for tough transitions
- Patience to wait my turn
- Typing, using a calculator, & reading

Examples for an Elementary Student:

- Sara's family wants to see her get her temper under control so that she can participate in more general education classes. We would also like to see her develop friendships with her peers both in school and in her neighborhood.
- Amanda's family would like to see her become toilet-trained with the collaboration of home and school.

Examples of an Elementary Student Continued:

- Janet and her family would like to see her improve in her reading.
- Jackie is a preschool who has difficulty with motor coordination, sensory integration, symbolic language, visual perception, fine motor and social skills delays. We would like to see Jackie demonstrate growth in all areas so that she is able to access her skills and apply them to her learning environment and generalize those skills from school to home and the community.

Vision Statement for Janet:

- We see Janet as a capable, compassionate, loving young woman with potential for success. With a positive reinforcement from her team in school we believe our daughter will develop academically and physically. If learning becomes an adventure, she will be a successful and enthusiastic life-long learner.
- Another area that is important for her overall development would be to strengthen her fine motor skills and handwriting, as well as develop age-appropriate social skills.

Janet's Vision Statement Continued:

- Over the course of her elementary school years, we see Janet improving her present levels of performance to reach challenging goals, have a positive self-image and confidence, and become aware of her value as a responsible member of the community.



ELLIE STAFFORD

AGE 5

KINDERGARTEN

Teach me to soar and I will
-Kelle Hampton

VISION STATEMENT

We envision our daughter living a life of choice. We envision her having relationships she feels are valuable. In her future we envision her doing work that she enjoys and that makes her feel productive. We envision our daughter living a happy and meaningful life surrounded by love and support.

STRENGTHS

- Visual learner
- Advanced Reader
- Knows ABC's and Letter Sounds
- Can count to 30
- Social and Kind
- Funny
- Smart
- Great Friend
- Fast Learner
- Excellent Memory

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

- Being Rushed
- Sudden Change in Activity
- Negative Talk
- Yelling
- Assuming I Don't Understand

I LOVE: My Parents, My Brothers Will and Luke, Taco Bell, Dancing and Rap Music.

WHAT WORKS FOR ME

- Patience
- Peer Modeling
- Schedule and Routines
- First/Then Visuals
- Picture Cues for Tasks
- Believe in My Abilities
- Praise Me For My Achievements
- Warn Me About Transitions

WHAT I'M WORKING ON

- Talking in Sentences
- Fine Motor Skills, like Writing, Cutting Paper and Coloring!
- Gross Motor Skills, like Running!
- Following Directions
- Conversational Speech

Vision Statement for Charlie:

- Our vision for Charlie is to see him become more independent both in academics and classroom supports. Charlie's strengths will continue to improve but we also feel it is important to expand on areas of needs.
- We would like to see Charlie develop appropriate social skills with both adults and peers at school and generalize those skills across all settings.
- Success for Charlie is being mindful of his grades, and learning to be independent at school, home and in the community.

Examples for a High School Student:

- Jack hopes to be competitively employed in a retail or office setting upon graduation in a job such as cashiering or data entry. One of Jack's goals is to live in an apartment with a roommate. To help him with this goal it would be important for Jack to learn budgeting and balancing a checkbook.
- Melissa plans to attend the local community college in pursuit of a degree in early childhood development. She loves her job at the local daycare center and is held in high regard by her employer. One of her goals is to live in an apartment with support and is currently on a waiting list.

Vision Statement for Scott:

- Scott's ability to articulate thoughts verbally is excellent and we would like him to be able to organize his thoughts and strengthen his writing to a higher level
- Our goal is to see Scott working independently by his junior year with the ability to pursue advanced placement classes.
- Scott has many interests and would like to participate in sports, musicals, and a choral group.
- Since Scott was young his dream has been to be a physician or a veterinarian. He is aware that he needs to attend a competitive four college.

Additional Examples:

- For grade three, we expect Nicole to be reading and writing at grade level as measured by testing in the spring. With appropriate support and evidence based interventions we expect Nicole to achieve this goal. One important measure of success is that she will be at or above grade level every year supported by standardized testing.
- A vision statement should focus on your child's IEP including those results as confirmed by testing and data, not just teacher observations or wishful thinking. The above is an example of how your expectations, combined with an understanding of what the school should do, can improve your child's chances of getting an appropriate education

Focus for Vision Statements:

A vision statement should focus on:

- Your child's IEP
 - Making data-based decision from goals that are quantifiable, measurable and data driven.
 - Confirmation from testing and data
 - This does not include observations of data
 - Does not include wishful thinking.

Our Vision for Nikki McCabe

Dreams...

Holding Nikki in my arms as a baby, my head was filled with images I had already developed for my daughter's future. I went through the list of events that would never happen as I had imagined them – my daughter's first words, her first day at school, high school graduation, college, marriage, and her own children. The simplest expectations for my second child have shattered. Thinking all of those things is very painful for me. However, I have to remember that those were MY DREAMS, NOT HERS. Nikki will have dreams of her own. They may not be like those of other children, but they will be her dreams, just the same. I would like to help Nikki understand and embrace her differences. I picture looking at a rainbow, in awe of it magnificence and use of color. I would never presume to make any changes, to soften the hues, or to enhance the curve. In this same vein, I can call my daughter and all children as rainbows, each one different and unique, and so I must appreciate her for who she is.



Gifts...

Dag Hammarskjold once said, "We all come to earth with sealed orders". I think that Nikki has her orders, her gifts to share and her mark to make. On a daily bases, she offers the gifts of love, humor, compassion, and dedication. Nikki's gifts may never be quantified, may never earn money or win awards, but her gifts are trophies just the same. She will learn to do things, although she will have to work harder than most kids to reach those milestones. Also, we have to slow down and allow her extra time. Beyond that, she will learn if given the opportunity.

Our Vision for Nikki McCabe

Strengths and Weaknesses:

Strengths...

She has many strengths, she is a loving child who appreciates praise much like us all. She has a wonderful sense of humor and it's very contagious. Also, she has much energy and persistence in all that she does.... if understood; it could be harnessed and used in a positive way. Her smile, even when doing something wrong, makes it difficult to scold her. Her laughter is a trademark unique to Nikki alone. She is unique and has many positive strengths, We know.....because we see it each and every day.

Nikki has exceptional problem-solving skills which allow her to be successful in many areas. For example, she is able to navigate the internet with little assistance, she saves video clips on the hard drive of the computer and has recently learned, after watching her father, how to burn those clips on CD-ROM's. Nikki enjoys taking pictures on her camera as well as creating videos of her family which she independently upload on the computer. She enjoys playing video games on the Wii, PlayStation or her Gameboy and her favorite games are Spyro and Legend of Zelda which were originally purchased for her father.

Nikki has great imitation skills, both good and bad. This summer we attended a closing program for a vacation bible school at a friends' church where Nikki requested to sit with the other children. She participated in the song motions by following the video model and our friends were impressed as it looked as if she had practiced all week with the other children. We believe Nikki is definitely a visual learner.

Our Vision for Nikki McCabe

Weaknesses...

She doesn't have the ability to understand that some people can be untrustworthy; the ability to conceive that not everyone will have her best interest at heart; and the ability to conceive that some people make decisions that are self-beneficial. She has the label of autism; a brain that works differently, people in her life need to see her beyond the "label".

Reading is an area where Nikki seems to have difficulty. We have used various methodologies since kindergarten in addition to adjusting her Specifically Designed Instruction with little luck or improvement in retention and fluency. Nikki desires to read and understand written word and will even ask us how to spell words that she doesn't know as well as point out words she recognizes in the community. We feel that reading and also comprehension is not only important but needs to be considered one of the top priorities as we feel it affects almost every facet of life now which will have a negative impact on her future.

Due to her limited expressive and receptive language it affects her ability to socialize with peers and in the community is another area of weakness for Nikki. She has a strong interest and desire to interact but just doesn't know how to do it appropriately and needs to be provided guidance and taught.

We are teaching Nikki basic self-help skills such as laundry and showering to allow her to be more independent. Nikki will be taught new skills in this area as current ones are mastered to independence.

Imitation, while considered a strength of Nikki's is also a weakness as she will imitate negative behaviors whether they can be seen on television, movies, in her community or by her peers.

Our Vision for Nikki McCabe

Home Environment:

Nikki lives at home with her sister, father and mother. Our biggest fears are that she will be placed in a residential institution (much like my sister) after our death. As a family, we work very hard with Nikki to ensure her communication expands and her behavior is appropriate. We always take the time to explain the different things that we see to Nikki for incidental teaching. We consider these skills to be a priority in our lives.

Educational Environment:

Nikki has been educated at Milagre Kids School since September 2007 which is located in Lansdale, PA. Milagre Kids School has created an individualized program for Nikki based upon her needs and teaching style. As a team, we learn from each other on what works and what doesn't with regard to educating Nikki and ask for help in area's where she is struggling. Without this Nikki will not be successful now or life beyond twenty-one.

Community Environment:

We as a family do a lot in the community. We do not allow Nikki's disability nor do we allow the community to dictate what she can and cannot do. I find the public, as a whole, needs to be educated about our children. We are currently looking to have Nikki volunteer, per Dr. Cavaioulos' recommendation, at a local food pantry to provide her with skills to work in the community in addition to providing her with opportunities to socialize with others in our community.

Relationships/Friendships:

We would like for Nikki to develop and maintain relationships with extended family, neighborhood children and typical peers in her community. Nikki is not a shy child who needs coaxing to play. However, much like her father, she takes the time to observe what other children are doing before she jumps in. Nikki continues to show that she is interested in developing friendships however she lacks the ability to socially interact appropriately and needs to be taught.

Our Vision for Nikki McCabe

Prioritization:

The main area's that will ensure Nikki's success in all of the above is "reading, comprehension, language, socialization with peers/community and self-help". She must always be given the opportunity to verbally express herself. Be given the opportunity to spontaneously communicate her wants and needs in complete sentences. Nikki can not only be taught to echo information but should we should also teach across the verbal operants. Although Nikki's language is improving she is still severely delayed when compared to her peers. Her receptive language is higher than her expressive but she requires guidance and prompting to successfully interact socially with her peers. We are always looking for ways to help Nikki be successful, in all areas, which could assist in her ability to grow.

Also, social and communication deficits must be intensively addressed for Nikki. The ability to successfully interact socially is a pre-requisite to succeed as an adult. Also, we need to be clear in our directions; pick your battles with her and keep in mind that consistency is the key to success.

Preparing for life beyond 21:

To sum it up, we believe it is important to focus on Nikki's language, socialization, self-help in addition to reading and comprehension skills, teaching Nikki how to appropriately interact with her peers as well as members of the community, as well as teaching Nikki to be independent in basic life skills such as taking showers, preparing meals, laundry as well as keeping her room neat and cleaning up after herself. Reading as well as comprehension is also very important as that holds the key to success, in all areas of life, now and in the future. With Dr. Cavaiuolos' guidance we feel it is important for Nikki to start getting involved with the community, through volunteer work, so that she has an opportunity to experience various types of employment which will help us determine her interests regarding employment options. Later on we hope to discuss community living options for Nikki.

Our Vision for Nikki McCabe

Being a parent...

We have a vested interest in our daughter. We know Nikki better than any expert could. We know what she responds to, what she likes and dislikes, how to handle behaviors as they arise and how to teach her. It is important for us to concentrate on what our daughter can do while still challenging her to do what no one else expects her to do. Our expectations for Nikki are high and achievable. As parents', we work with autism 24 hours a day/7 days a week. We don't get to go home at the end of the day and relax...We are still working with Nikki. We live day-by-day with our daughter in which there is no crystal ball that tells us her future. We work with her today to make tomorrow better, hoping that her future will be a life of independence so that she will be able to live a productive life on her own with little to no supports/supervision. We only ask that you take the time and look past the disability and see Nikki for the young lady she has become.

We respectfully request that this portrait of Nikki be included in the written record of Nikki's IEP and of this meeting as part of our parent input.

Activity: Create your Child's Vision Statement

Tips to keep in mind:

- The younger the child the broader the vision should be
- The vision statement should be child/student focused with the student participating to the maximum extent possible in the Least Restrictive Setting.
- Try to use as many descriptive words as possible. For example grow, learn, improve, develop participate, contribute, independence, maximize and so forth.
- Try to keep it one one page and remember to add a date in the footnotes noting when you made a revision.

Create Your Child's Vision Statement Cont':

- Consider starting your child's vision statement with "This is our vision for life after school.....and it includes.....".
- Also add at the end of the document that you would like it added to your child's educational records.
- Consider all parts of the community – home, work, church, recreation, personal enrichment, peers, friends, family.
- It will take time to capture all of the details about your child but once it is done, you will only need to revise it annually.
- Consider adding and updating your child's picture annually.

Create Your Child's Vision Statement Cont':

- Feel free to talk to other parents and professionals who know your child for additional input.
- Other points to consider:
 - Interests and favorite things to do at home and in the community
 - Students strengths, gifts and talents
 - How can we reinforce the child interests?
 - Family strengths and supports (consider family, extended family, neighborhood and church.

Create Your Child's Vision Statement Cont':

- Where do you feel your child will need supports (home/community and/or school) after graduation?
- Where do you feel your child can be independent (home/community and/or school) after graduation?
- What are your child's interests in the community and also post graduation regarding employment.
- Remember your child is entitled to participate in the Least Restrictive environment

Considerations for your Vision Statement

- Begin thinking about your child's future at an early age. You may only be considering the future one year at a time at this point, but even that is important. Realize that the vision statement will need to be updated each year as your child changes and reaches goals.
- The vision statement should inform the school of your expectations. Be sure to brainstorm with your Team about appropriate goals for your child and be realistic.
- Use independent testing, if possible, to confirm what your child is capable of. Don't just rely on school testing or teacher input for information.

Considerations for your Vision Statement

- If your child is ready, be sure to have a discussion with him or her about dreams and aspirations. It is important for parents and children to have dreams for the future and talk about what a child is most interested in.
- Have your child help with writing his or her own vision statement, if possible.
- The vision statement is closely linked to postgraduate transition planning. Be sure to include information about possible college, vocational school, employment, and independent living by the ninth grade IEP.



STUDENT VISION STATEMENT

For:

Tips for getting started

- The younger the child, the broader the vision will be.
- Should be child/student focused, with student participating to the maximum extent possible.
- Should contain action words such as contribute, maximize, participate, experience, learn, grow, improve, develop, etc.
- There is no minimum or maximum length and articles online will say anything from 12 words to 50 words. I'd say no more than 1 page.
- I would submit this as part of your parental concerns, and start your concerns with "This is our vision for life after school... and it includes..."
- Consider all parts of community – home, work, church, recreation, personal enrichment, etc.
- The first time will be the most amount of work. Then it will be revised and updated annually.

Other tips you picked up from reading or talking to other parents:

Student's name, age, placement, residence

Interests, favorite things to do in community

Student's strengths, gifts and talents

What motivates me?

Family strengths and supports



STUDENT VISION STATEMENT

Where do I want to go? What do I want to do?

Together the student and parents should construct the vision statement for the student. It should be strengths and interests-based, and be a vision of the future for the student. Student participates to their maximum ability possible. Practice a few phrases here or on another sheet of paper.

What is our vision?

Conclusion

- The Vision Statement is the first step to becoming engaged with the child's IEP
- Join us for Part 2, where we will be discussing the first steps to approaching a child's IEP with our Vision Statements

Thank you!



part of the SpArc Philadelphia
family of organizations

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