Where the Rubber Hits the Road

Integrating Strength-Based Strategies into a Student’s IEP in the Brave New World of the Common Core

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Common Core State Standards

- Strength-Based Learning Strategies
  - Student Interests
  - Alternative Means of Expression
  - Alternative Texts
- Assistive Technologies/UDL
- Enhanced Human Resources
- Positive Environmental Modifications
- Positive Role Models
Strength-Based IEPs

• Be comprehensive when initially stating child’s strengths
• Build the language of strengths into the instructional objectives themselves
  • Strength-Based Strategies
  • Assistive Technologies/UDL
  • Enhanced Human Resources
  • Positive Environmental Modifications
Example 1

Deficit-Based Objective:

By March. 20xx, when discussing a story, Jason will answer 4 out of 10 "why" and "how" questions in a mixed question probe.

Strength-Based Objective:

By March. 20xx, when discussing a story, Jason will answer 4 out of 10 “why” and “how” questions in reference to a preferred activity such as a three-dimensional structure he has just built.
Example 2

Deficit-Based Objective:

In 12 months, Timmy will follow 2-step directions, 1 time per observation period, across 5 consecutive group times.

Strength-Based Objective:

In 12 months, Timmy will follow 2-step directions that are necessary for engaging in a favorite activity such as playing an interactive video game, 1 time per observation period, across 5 consecutive group times.
Example 3

**Deficit-Based Objective:**

By November 1, 20XX, when given a verbal direction by an adult, Robin will begin to comply with the direction within 10 seconds.

**Strength-Based Objective:**

By November 1, 20XX, when given a verbal direction (by an adult with whom he has a positive relationship) which concerns a self-chosen activity such as a favorite board game he is playing, Robin will begin to comply with the direction within 10 seconds.
Example 4

Deficit-Based Objective:

In 12 months, while at school, Bobbie will use the toilet independently when necessary for a period of at least 3 weeks without an accident.

Strength-Based Objective:

In 12 months, while at school, Bobbie will use the toilet independently when necessary for a period of at least 3 weeks without an accident. He is allowed to take along a favorite stuffed animal if he wants and use a modified “rocket ship” toilet seat with hand grips if he wishes.
First, Success

1) **To the student:** Tell us about some of your successes this year. (If appropriate, add: What have you done well and what has worked well for you? What's been happening to make you successful?)

2) **To the parent:** What successes have you seen your child enjoy this year? (If appropriate add: tell us about what's been happening to help make your child successful?)

3) **To the teachers and specialists:** What successes have you seen for [the student]? (If appropriate, add: Tell us about what's been happening to help make him/her successful?)

4) **To the group:** What suggestions or changes can you think of to make [the student]'s program work even better?
Second, Goals

5) To the student:
* What do you think you’d most love to do when you grow up? (Or: What is your goal in life [or after school]?)

And

* What do you think you’ll need to do to get to do what you love most [or to get to your goal]? 

And

* What have you done so far to get to do what you love most [or to move toward your goal]?

6) To the group: What kinds of support and help can you provide to make [the student]'s program work toward the goals he/she's set for him/herself?

Source: Peter Kozik, doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University, June 2008. Used with permission of author.
Jason has demonstrated particular strengths in the visual-spatial area. He creates three-dimensional structures using wooden blocks and related construction materials that are sophisticated for his age, showing excellent organization. For example, he recently built what he called a ‘space age rocket ship to Mars.’” He also enjoys coloring, painting, collage, and drawing. When given a choice during the day, he will generally be found either drawing or building with blocks. He is also very interested in machines. We have observed Jason in our “engineering center” taking apart simple machines with a screw driver and putting them back together again.
He seems to have a very detailed imagination. He often volunteers what he is imagining, such as the time when he told us about an imaginary village made of marshmallows that caught on fire, and instead of panicking, the townspeople celebrated by having a marshmallow roast. He shows good storytelling skills when he is using his imaginative abilities. His mother reports that when Jason is working with materials that he enjoys (e.g. block building, drawing etc.), he can become quite absorbed in the activity even for hours at a time. He also has a bit of the teacher in him and has been observed in preschool instructing peers in how to build a castle as tall as possible.
References

“’Application [of Common Core Standards] to Students with Disabilities,”


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