



FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Frequently Asked Questions About Creating a Vision Statement

“The vision statement focuses the Team on the future of the student. The Team steps back from the here and now to take a broader, long-range perspective as it looks to where this student is headed in the future. Developing the vision statement helps the Team balance between the immediate concerns and the hopes and dreams for the future. Teams must remember the ultimate goal for all students with disabilities is independence and productive lives.”

-IEP Process Guide, Massachusetts Department of Education, 2001

Do you experience the "FEAR FACTOR" when trying to put into words your vision for your child with a disability?

When writing your child's vision statement for the IEP you, like many parents, may experience the "FEAR FACTOR"! Fear of the unknown? Fear of reaching too high? Although wanting to think creatively and progressively, we, as parents, sometimes get sidetracked by the "disability". We must focus on our child's abilities and dream new dreams.

Your vision will be filled with high expectations so that your child will be provided opportunities that allow him/her the dignity to try, the opportunity to reach for the stars and the dignity to succeed or fail just like everyone else. You may find it challenging to express your and your child's vision to others who see closed doors where you see open windows. Do not let this hold you back.

What could happen if the "Fear Factor" prevents me from explaining our vision to school staff?

- ❖ Without a vision you can end up in a place that you don't recognize! a place that was not part of what you expected.
- ❖ Your child's vision could be written by professionals who have an understanding of the disability characteristics but do not have a full understanding of how the disability affects your child
- ❖ If the vision is written only by the professionals it may not match your outcome expectations for your child's future.

Does our Vision have to be "Realistic?"

Dare to Dream! The important piece about vision is that it is a description that draws a picture of what your child's desired outcomes will be for the future. Is it realistic? Is it really possible? Children, teens and young adults will discover their passion, interests, skills and preferences along the way. School is a time of self discovery for all children, with and without disabilities.

Let not our NEED determine OUR DREAM;

But let our DREAMS DETERMINE our NEED

--Colleen Tomke

Think back to when you were 10, 12, 16 or 17. What did you want to do? Was it realistic for you? Are you doing that? Most would answer “no!” Remember that your family’s vision should not be viewed as binding. Your vision can change and mature over time as your child’s interests change and mature.

As a parent what do I bring to the vision?

- ❖ A rich history and unique perspective
- ❖ A life time of support for your child
- ❖ A deep understanding of the nature of the disability.
- ❖ The passion of your child’s heart and how that might translate into outcomes for the future.

Why is our vision important to the process of developing an Individual Education Program (IEP)?

Your vision should guide the Team throughout the entire IEP development process in order to create a program that will bring your child closer to that vision in a meaningful way. This includes the planning of your child’s schedule at school and choice of classes, as well as the planning of supports and services for access to academic and non-academic activities.

How do I develop a vision for my young child going from Early Intervention to the Public School?”

When your child is only 3 or 4 years old you are asked; “What is your vision?” The question can be very confusing because you may be just learning about the disability and how the disability will impact your child’s learning and communication style. Think about what you would like to see your child being able to do five years from now. Keep in mind that important skills to build at this age are in the areas of communication and social/emotional development.

How do I develop a vision for my child entering elementary school?

As your child enters elementary school your vision may list a desire to gain the skills needed to be successful in academic and social environments. If your child is provided the supports to gain knowledge of facts and figures along with a successful communication style with their same age peers, he/she will be well on their way to a full and meaningful life after school.

How do I develop a vision for my child entering middle school?

As your child prepares to enter middle school you may want to take some time to summarize your journey thus far. Asking your child and yourself, “What have we learned about his/her learning style, talents, and interests?” Does your child understand how the disability impacts learning or assessments? Would middle school be a time to explore that further?

How do I support my child in developing their vision when entering high school?

Upon reaching high school the vision focus should largely be planned and voiced by your student. This will be a fluid process if they have been included in your vision planning from the start. All students entering high school begin to think about their future and what it will look like. Your child may ask themselves: Where will I live? Will I attend college? Where will I work? Who will help support me? What kind of community membership and or activities will I participate? What will I do for fun?

Your child is beginning to identify their passions, interests, learning style and preferences based on life experiences. In high school your child's success will depend on his/her ability to explain these to teachers, friends and future employers.

What law supports vision with high expectations for individuals with disabilities?

Individuals with Disability Education Act or **IDEA 2004** H.R. 1350 Subpart 4 Sec.682 (c) (1) states:

Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring quality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

IDEA 2004 Proposed Rules Subpart A Sec. 300.1 (a) continues by saying:

"...To ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living..."

How can our "Vision" be weaved through the entire IEP?

- **IEP page 1** Student Strengths and Key Evaluation Results Summary. This is a great opportunity to share your child's interest, preferences and personal accomplishments.
- **IEP page 1** Vision Statement is designed by you and or your child. It is a description of what the desired outcome for the future can hold. It is written with high expectations with the hope of fruition.
- **IEP page 2** Present Levels of Education Performance A: General Curriculum. Think of how your child is accessing the general education curriculum and how the general curriculum can support the designed vision outcome. Share accommodations that can be used in a variety of settings.
- **IEP page 3** Present Levels of Education Performance B: Other Educational Needs. Check all considerations that could support the vision outcome. Be sure to look at extra curricular activities, nonacademic activities, behavior needs, travel training or other related services.
- **IEP page 4** Current Performance Levels/Measurable Annual Goals. Think about the **skills** your child needs to build in order to achieve the goals set in their vision and how your child could be supported through the measurable goals in the least restrictive environment.
- **IEP page 5** Service Delivery: Make sure the service delivery page reflects the support services and personnel expertise that is imperative for a positive vision outcome for your child.
- **IEP page 6** Schedule Modification: Does your child's vision outcome require a shorter school day, longer day, shorter school year or longer year?
- **IEP page 7** State or District-Wide Assessment: How will your child take standardized tests including MCAS? Your child can take MCAS three ways; without accommodations, with accommodations or through a portfolio of your child's best work.
- **IEP page 8** Additional Information: Any part of the vision outcome that was not supported in another part of the IEP document can be added here. i.e.: Assistive Technology, Common planning time, Communication log ...

How can related services support our vision?

Your **Vision** can be supported throughout the IEP and it can be embraced in **related services** (IEP page 3). For example: related services can support "friendships" which could translate into social pragmatic groups, social skills support and extended day services (IEP page 6).

Listed below are other related services that are supported by the law and could be incorporated into a vision and supported by the school:

Parent Training	In Home Training
Speech/Language Pathology	Occupational Therapy
Physical Therapy	Music Therapy
Counseling Services	Medical Services (diagnostic & evaluation purposes only)
Audiological Services	Vision Therapy
Psychological Services	Recreation (including therapeutic)
Adapted Physical Education	Rehabilitation Counseling Services
School Nurse Services	Art Therapy
Social Work Services in School	Transportation Services
Early Identification	
Orientation and Mobility	

Can we change our vision?

Visions are living, breathing statements that can take on many forms throughout the years. The important thing is to create a meaningful vision with high expectations for success!

Where can I get more information on how to develop our vision into reality?

<http://www.fulllifeahead.org/>

<http://www.ric.edu/uap/publications/MAPS.pdf>

<http://www.inclusion.com/maps.html>

http://www.communityinclusion.org/publications/fulltext/mti_guide/mti-html/index.html

<http://www.youthhood.org/youthhood/index.asp>

<http://www.inclusion.com/>

<http://www.ncset.org/publications/essentialtools/teams/default.asp>