

# Louisiana Believes

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Tools for Developing Communication Plans:  
Students with Unique Needs

# Objectives

By the end of this session participants will be able to:

- Identify specific groups of students who should have communication plans
- Describe how a communication plan should be used to develop individualized supports for students with unique communication needs
- Understand how the special education reporting system (SER) will support effective implementation of communication plans

# Communication Plan

A communication plan is a method for assuring the needs of a student who experiences communication barriers and is receiving special education or 504 services are met. The components of this plan should be included in a student's IEP or IAP as part of the overall plan for supporting the student's academic success.

# Student Population

While effectively addressing a student's ability to communicate is best practice for all students, students experiencing communication barriers as a result of their disability must have these needs addressed in their individualized education plan (IEP) or individualized accommodations plan (IAP). This includes students who are:

- classified as Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Deaf/Blind,
- have limited or no verbal skills, **or**
- have other significant impairments in the areas of [receptive](#) and/or [expressive](#) language, including but not limited to impairments in the areas of apraxia, articulation/phonology, fluency, pragmatics, or auditory processing.



# Student Example: Jennifer

**Student:** Jennifer

**Grade:** 5th

**Age:** 11

**Disability Classification:** Intellectual Disability (significant) with a secondary exceptionality of Orthopedic Impairment (diagnosed with cerebral palsy)

Jennifer has a friendly, outgoing personality and enjoys interaction with both peers and adults. She communicates via vocalizations, facial expressions, reaching/pointing, use of printed symbols, and use of a dynamic display communication device with 2 inch symbols arranged in 3x3 arrays. Jennifer uses pictures and picture symbols to respond academically, indicate choices, and express wants and needs. She typically responds to questions by selecting from an array of 2-4 choices. She requires extended time to communicate responses on all tasks. Jennifer is beginning to use a touch screen to access the computer and has been exposed to low tech voice output communication devices.

# Student Example: Johnny

**Student:** Johnny

**Grade:** Kindergarten

**Age:** 5

**Disability Classification:** Deaf/ Hard of Hearing

Johnny enjoys playing with other kids his age but is very shy when he first meets new people. He has been in an inclusive preschool classroom for two years and does not receive any therapy outside of what is provided through his IEP. Johnny was born deaf in both ears and had cochlear implant surgery as a baby. His current hearing age is comparable to a 4 year old and his language age is comparable to a 2 year old. Johnny's parents would like for him to use oral language as his mode of communication.

# Tools for Developing Communication Plans: Students with Unique Needs

The LDOE created this document to help IEP/IAP teams determine individualized student needs and necessary supports relative to communication and includes critical resources such as:

## Factors to Consider in Planning for Communication and Language Support

- Section I: Language and Communication Needs
- Section II: Opportunities for Communication
- Section II: Classroom Considerations

## Action Plan: Communication and Language Support

## Appendices

- Appendix A: Frequently Used Terms
- Appendix B: Resources for Families

# Planning

## Section I: Language and Communication Needs

- This section is intended to assist IEP/IAP teams in understanding **how** a student communicates (both receptively and expressively) across all environments.
- Attention is drawn to both the **mode** (the medium or channel in which a student communicates) and **language** a student uses.



# Activity Using Student Example

Using your student case study, work with your neighbor to complete section I of the communication plan.

# Planning

## Section II: Opportunities for Communication

- This section contains probing questions for the IEP/IAP team to address in gaining a clear understanding of the student's current communication status.
- **NOTE:** Included in this Section is a question (2a. & 2b) specific to students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

## Activity Using Student Example

Using your student case study, work with your neighbor to complete section II of the communication plan.

# Planning

## Section III: Classroom Considerations (page 4)

- This Section addresses strategies currently in place to support a student's engagement in the general education curriculum (in light of his/her communication support needs).
- Included are probing questions related to:
  - support for the student to engage in incidental learning opportunities
  - selection of symbol system for students who use symbols to communicate



## Activity Using Student Example

Using your student case study, work with your neighbor to complete section III of the communication plan.

# Action Plan: Communication and Language Support

- Focus on how the student will communicate with others and how others will communicate with the student
- Information in plan used to develop IEP/IAP which aligns with a student's communication support needs
- **NOTE:** Included on this page is a question (#7) applicable only to students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

# Activity Using Student Example

Using your student case study, work with your neighbor to complete the action plan and discuss how this information would help inform the development of the student's IEP or IAP.

# Appendix A: Frequently Used Terms

- These are terms related to communication issues for students with unique or complex communication needs (terms which may be unfamiliar to some IEP/IAP team members).
- Multiple terms on pages 2-5 are bookmarked to the definition of the term within Appendix A.



# SER Enhancements

- Changes have been made in SER to guide IEP teams in the development of communication plans and communication goals for certain students.
- For students identified as having unique or complex communication needs, SER will require that a communication plan be developed and at least one communication goal be included in the IEP.

## Resource within SER

- The *Tools for Developing Communication Plans* will be available in SER as a resource for IEP teams to use in developing communication plans for students who have unique or complex communication needs. The information gained in this process can then be used to formulate an appropriate communication goal(s) for the student.

## General Student Information



Include strengths; parental concerns; evaluation results; academic, developmental, and functional needs; statewide assessment results; progress or lack of expected progress in general education curriculum; and consideration of special factors: behavior, language needs for limited English proficient, instruction in and use of braille, communication needs, assistive technology devices and services, and health needs.

**Directions: Check "Yes or "N/A" for both questions.**

Does the student have limited or no verbal skills?

Yes  N/A

Does the student have other significant impairments in areas of receptive and/or expressive language, including but not limited to impairments in the areas of apraxia, articulation/phonology, fluency, pragmatics, or auditory processing?

Yes  N/A

- In order to effectively plan for this student's unique communication support needs and facilitate his/her academic progress,
  - In the General Student Information drop down list, the "Communication" item with self-populate.
  - The "Communication Needs of Child" section must be completed.
  - A communication plan must be developed for this student. "The Tools for Developing Communication Plans" is an optional resource for IEP teams to use in developing plans. A fillable for is located XXXXX.
  - At least 1 communication related goal must be included in the instructional pages of the IEP.

**General Information About Student:**

**Strengths:**

# Printable PDF:

Include strengths; parental concerns; evaluation results; academic, developmental, and functional needs; statewide assessment results; progress or lack of expected progress in general education curriculum; and consideration of special factors: behavior, language needs for limited English proficient, instruction in and use of braille, communication needs, assistive technology devices and services, and health needs.

**Directions: Check "Yes" or "N/A" for both questions.**

Does the student have limited or no verbal skills?

Yes  No

Does the student have other significant impairment in the areas of receptive and/or expressive language, including but not limited to impairments in the areas of apraxia, articulation/phonology, fluency, pragmatics, or auditory processing.

Yes  No

- In order to effectively plan for this student's unique communication support needs and facilitate his/her academic progress,
  - In the General Student Information drop down list, the "Communication" item will self-populate.
  - The "Communication Needs of Child" section must be completed.
  - A communication plan must be developed for this student. "The Tools for Developing Communication Plans" is an optional resource for IEP teams to use in developing plans. A fillable form is located XXXXX.
  - At least 1 communication related goal must be included in the instructional pages of the IEP.

General Information  
about the Student:

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Strengths:

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# New SER Business Rules

- G164: "Communication" must be checked if the student has a Hearing Impairment-Deafness, Hearing Impairment-Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blindness exceptionality, or if "Yes" is selected for limited verbal skills or other significant impairments.
- G165: "Communication Needs of Child" must be completed if the student has a Hearing Impairment-Deafness, Hearing Impairment-Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blindness exceptionality, or if "Yes" is selected for limited verbal skills or other significant impairments.
- L128: "Communication Plan" is required if the student has a Hearing Impairment-Deafness, Hearing Impairment-Hard of Hearing, or Deaf-Blindness exceptionality, or if "Yes" is selected for limited verbal skills or other significant impairments.
- A business rule for "At least 1 communication related goal must be included in the instructional pages of the IEP" is not needed because it already will fall under rule I014: The Educational Need(s) entered do not match those selected on General Student Information.

# Considerations for Training IEP Teams

- Consider what type of guidance IEP Teams may need relative to these changes in SER:
  - How will IEP teams be informed of (and prepared for) these changes in SER?
  - Consider the type of training/support IEP team members might need in order to answer these questions posed in SER:
    - Does the student have limited or no verbal skills?
    - Does the student have other significant impairments in the areas of receptive and/or expressive language, including but not limited to impairments in the areas of apraxia, articulation/phonology, fluency, pragmatics, or auditory processing?
  - Will there be an individual at the school or district level who can help IEP teams in responding appropriately to these questions?

## Next Steps

The updated version of the Tools for Creating Effective Communication Plans is located on the LDOE website and in SER.

Contact [specialeducation@la.gov](mailto:specialeducation@la.gov) with any additional questions.