EVALUATING THE EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE INDIVIDUAL
EDUCATION PLANS: A CASE STUDY FROM A SOUTH TEXAS ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL

A Dissertation

by

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This dissertation meets the standards for scope and quality of
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and is hereby approved.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study based upon the theories of technology adoption and technology integration planning (TIP) with the focus on design and development was to understand design features that encourage effectiveness and efficiency for using online individual education plans (IEP) along with the online IEP lived experiences of administrators, teachers, and parents in a South Texas elementary school. The case for this study was an elementary school in a suburb of a South Texas metropolitan area. The school is in a school district with a total student enrollment greater than 100,000.

Findings included four major themes in terms of the participants lived experiences in using online IEPs:

- The online IEP facilitates a collaborative process in a data-driven manner with a single source of the record.

- The user experience (UX) is unpleasant and a difficult process to administer.

- The online IEP does not take advantage of software best practices.

- The solution enables better monitoring of student performance and success.

Key online IEP efficiency benefits include system accessibility and mobility, non-paper based (for the most part), form order consistency, and process simplicity. The online IEP adds value to help promote student success and informs parents of the status of goal achievement. Features for improvement include better reuse of information, easier printing and reporting of key data, automated goal progress calculations including percentage-based calculations, and better integration with ancillary systems. The findings informed software developers and educators

regarding features that would encourage broad adoption and facilitate personalized instruction

for learners within and beyond the disability community.

DEDICATION

I would be remiss if I did not thank those instrumental in supporting me through this long, and demanding dissertation research study. Words cannot justly demonstrate how grateful I am to my wife (Whitney) and my children who stood by me in my greatest time of need (all those long days and nights). I am extremely thankful to my committee chair (Dr. Cifuentes) and committee members (Dr. Gonzalez, Dr. Lucido, Dr. Brouillard) for providing great wisdom, guidance, and patience throughout this process. I am grateful to all the participants in this study and the time you dedicated to providing your lived experiences. Finally, I praise God for all the blessings He has provided me and for providing me the strength, through Christ, to finish the race (2 Timothy 4:7)!

To all the administrators and teachers who read this study, my heart goes out to you. Your tireless work ethic every day and night to make your students successful regardless of the obstacles you face inside and outside of the classroom does not go unnoticed. You are all God's soldiers bringing light to this world through education. When times are difficult and outlooks bleak, please know that you make a difference in the lives of your students; I would not have been able to accomplish this study without the hundreds of teachers who supported me my entire school life—your sacrifices bless us all!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Research has been conducted regarding the benefits of online individual education plans (IEPs) compared to a paper-based approach; however, there is limited research on the effectiveness and efficiencies of online IEPs or how online IEPs should be improved to reach a broader audience. Studies are needed to help identify features to be included in a solution and features that interfere with robust adoption (More & Hart, 2014).

IEPs were formally introduced in the 1970s with a primary focus on supporting students with learning disabilities regarding their specific education goals and requirements (The History of the IEP, n.d.). It was questioned in the early stages whether the IEP process could be effective to improve the learning success; but the key education practitioners, building upon the vision of John Dewey of developing programs to the unique needs to students, forged ahead (Schrag & The National Association of State Directors of Special Education [NASDSE], 1996). Some of the major issues and challenges with IEPs early on were shortcomings with IEP documentation including having a place to document content requirements, having a consistent and standard process that was followed throughout the planning and execution stages, and realizing positive outcomes by following the IEPs (Thomson, Rowan, & Wellington, 1995).

Much of the focus today is based on improving software to support the IEP process. Parents, teachers, administrators, and students still struggle with properly writing goals and objectives, not linking goals to defined curriculum and instruction strategies and assessment protocols, improperly monitoring achievement against stated vision or goals, and probably most critically a lack of parent involvement in developing the IEPs (Isaksson, Lindqvist, & Bergström, 2007).

Statement of Problem

The use of software and technology has been and continues to enable humans to innovate and improve activities, processes, and outcomes (Rodriguez, 2011). Society has advanced in many aspects of life because of technological advances. As business and industry leverage technology, hardware and software, the education industry lags behind in advancement compared to other industries because of poor adoption (Aldunate & Nussbaum, 2013). This is the case regarding the use of software to innovate the IEP process in that a number of providers have developed software to administer IEPs, but the adoption rate is slow (More & Hart, 2013). Why is the adoption rate slow? Is there an issue with the design of the current online IEP process and software that is preventing greater use of the technology? Is the IEP process just too cumbersome to support with technology or does the online IEP provide efficiencies and effectiveness for the IEP process?

Most school districts and systems have challenges to fulfill mandatory Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements (Schrag & NASDSE, 1996). Moreover, the use of electronic IEPs for students who do not have disabilities to support their learning goals and objectives is non-existent, leading educators to consider adopting the individualized planning for students beyond those with disabilities. Could these challenges be overcome through the use of technology or is technology part of the problem? Schrag and NASDSE (1996) went on to discuss that technology may indeed be a prohibiting factor to proper IEP adoption given the lack of individualized approaches that software often provides. Such discussions led to the following questions. Could IEP software be tailored to allow for a more expedited and robust method for IEP implementation? What are the areas of improvement that must be made to the software

features to enhance efficiency and effectiveness? This study focused on how the online IEP process and solution could be improved to meet parents' wishes and students' needs.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this case study was to understand design features that encouraged effectiveness and efficiency for using online IEPs along with the online IEP experiences of administrators, teachers, and parents in a South Texas elementary school. Many thought leaders, including Isaksson, Lindqvist, and Bergström (2007) have put forth a vision of the future indicating educational institutions need an online-based solution that guides document development, provides for document management, assesses easily, and includes parents in the process leading to broad adoption within and perhaps beyond the disability community of learners.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frameworks that guided this study included the theory of technology adoption (John, 2015) and technology integration planning (TIP; Roblyer & Doering, 2010). John (2015) discusses the roots of our knowledge about technology adoption as coming from human psychology and how technology adoption is primarily driven from the perceived usefulness of the technology. Meaning, if users perceive the technology will provide benefits, then they are more likely to adopt at a higher rate than when they do not believe it will benefit them. In addition, the unique users' self-beliefs and experiences have a significant effect on adoption rate (John, 2015). Factors such as education, past experiences with technology and autonomy weigh heavily on the adoption rate. Rogers (1962) initially developed the five stages of the adoption process in which an individual becomes aware of an innovation or transformational idea, but then must become persuaded before he or she accepts the change or

innovation. John (2015) supported the five-step process by Rogers (1962) but added that the acceptance or rejection decision by the technology user is based on the perceived benefits. The user is persuaded to adopt the solution because of the potential benefit. John (2015) highlighted other contributing factors for the accept decision; this is especially true with younger users. Blackburn (2011) discussed how specific individuals can act as change agents for technology adoption. The attitudes individuals bring to the work environment become contagious and others adopt them as they see peers utilizing the technology.

The study was also guided by the technology integration planning (TIP) model as a framework for technological, pedagogical, and content (TPACK) knowledge as defined by Roblyer and Doering (2010). Technology integration planning framed the research study's purpose of understanding key design features of online IEP software to provide insight for software designers, guide educators, and encourage adoption. The six phases of the TIP model by Roblyer and Doering (2010) provide a guide for how best to integrate technology into the curriculum to optimize learning. According to the model, technology integration depends upon understanding key features and functions of specific technologies to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of the technology in question. In the case of online IEPs, specific phases in the model are particularly relevant: Phase 2: Why should I use a technology-based method? Phase 5: Are essential conditions in place to support technology integration? and Phase 6: What worked well? What could be improved? These phases from the TIP model guided the primary research questions for this study by evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of online IEPs and identifying what design features would improve the current design. It was important to understand if online IEPs add value to the participants, confirm the accessibility of online IEPs

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as part of their lived experiences, and understand how well the current online IEPs are supporting

the participants' use cases along with key improvement ideas (Roblyer & Doering, 2010).

The results of this case study are identified design features needed to improve the

effectiveness and efficiencies of online IEPs and those features that interfere based on the

participants' current lived experiences. They are also meant to identify issues and key gaps with

online IEPs (Isaksson, Lindqvist & Bergström, 2007) to facilitate adoption and integration of

online IEPs in schools.

Research Questions

To identify better design features that encourage effectiveness and efficiency, the

researcher sought to understand the online IEP experiences of administrators, teachers, and

parents in a local South Texas elementary school.

The research questions addressed in a South Texas elementary school are:

1. What are the primary reasons elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents use online IEPs?

2. What are elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' lived experiences in using online IEPs?

3. What do elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents identify as primary characteristics of the current online IEP process that provide for efficiency?

4. What do elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents identify as primary characteristics of the current online IEP process that provide for effectiveness?

5. What features in the online IEP process would improve the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' lived experiences?

6. What features interfere with the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' motivations to complete the online IEP?

Definition of Terms

Special education automation software (SEAS)—A web-based assistive technology that was designed by special education teachers for the classroom. SEAS is made of several modules that allow districts to manage their forms management, timeline compliance, and special needs programs, including IEP management (SOESD - Special Education Homepage, 2017).

Independent software vendors (ISVs)—Organizations that make and sell software products that run on one or more computer hardware or operating system platforms (What is ISV (independent software vendor)? - Definition from WhatIs.com, 2017).

Efficiency—The accomplishment of or ability to accomplish a job with a minimum expenditure of time and effort (Efficiency, 2017).

Effectiveness—Producing the intended or expected result (Effectiveness, 2017).

Feature (software feature)—The functional characteristics of a software program or process (Software feature, 2017).

SWOT analysis—Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in goal creation (Staff, 2017).

RTI—Response to intervention, a multi-tier approach to early identification and support of students with learning or behavior needs (Gorski, 2017).

ARD—Admission, review, and dismissal (ARD); an opportunity for parents and educators to discuss and develop an education plan (Statewide Leadership for the Legal Framework Project Team, 2012).

UX—User experience; encompasses all aspects of the end user's interaction with software (UX, 2017).

BIP—behavior intervention plan; a plan based on the results of a functional behavioral assessment (Tucker, 2017).

LSSP—Licensed specialist in school psychology (TASP, 2017).

API—Application programming interface; used to integrate two disparate software applications (API, 2017).

Automated analytics calculations and predictive analytics—The ability to have the sytem automatically calculate key metrics and also predict future metric outcomes based on existing data, patterns, and prediction models (Beal, 2017).

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is that the insights garnered could be used to improve online IEP functionality and user adoption by school administrators. There is limited research in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of the online IEP, so the findings of this study may provide a foundation for additional research on the topic. In addition, if properly improved, general population students could benefit from similar functionality to manage their individual education plans. The noted design improvements could allow schools to reach the broader student population, not just students with learning disabilities in terms of documenting and continuously monitoring their IEPs (District Administration, 2012). Finally, many of the findings of this study could be applied to other educational software beyond the online IEP. The best practices concepts and design feature recommendations could benefit other educational software.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the nature of this study as a case in a single school, the insight garnered is limited to the lived IEP experiences of the participants, and therefore, may not represent the entire online IEP industry. Many of the participants had lived experiences beyond the current online IEP process for this specific case study, but obviously, that experience was not all encompassing representing the entire online IEP industry.

In addition, this specific case had an engaged parent population and did not have major socioeconomic issues. Therefore, the study was not able to investigate how low parent engagement or socioeconomic issues could impact online IEP adoption. This case is a single context and may not apply to other school contexts.

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation consists of five chapters that are outlined within this section. Chapter One summarizes the topic including the background, value, and challenges of IEP adoption. This chapter issues the statement of the problem as it relates to a lack of electronic-based IEP adoption and execution challenges that key stakeholders face in the IEP process. The research questions are documented in this chapter along with the terms frequently used for the readers' benefit, and the significance of this work to the education community at large. This chapter concludes with the limitations of the study.

Chapter Two is a review of the literature that has influenced this study and is relevant to the work intended. The purpose of this chapter is to provide context to the reader about the research that has been performed on and around the researcher's topic that helped guide this study.

Chapter Three is an explanation of the design of the study to address the research questions. This chapter sets forth the details of the participants, how the researcher accessed the participants and the survey instrument that was used. It includes the rationale for the methods, procedures followed, the data analysis, and how trustworthiness and rigor were ensured.

Chapter Four presents the qualitative data gathered to answer the research questions posed and the results of the data to illustrate the lived experiences of the participants.

Chapter Five begins by summarizing the study. This chapter tells how this study contributes to the theories of technology adoption (John, 2015) and TIP (Roblyer & Doering (2010) as well as to the body of research on online IEPs. Practical implications of the findings include suggestions for improvement of online IEPs by adding facilitative features and deleting features that interfere with effective and efficient processes. Finally, the researcher's recommendations for future research are made.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost three decades have passed since Landauer's 2020 prediction that most human cognitive tasks would be capably performed by machines (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2008). Not only has this prediction come true, but it is also rapidly advancing far from those expectations with the explosion of technology in all human tasks, not just cognitive tasks. Technology has permeated its way into every human activity; you cannot go shopping, see a doctor, take in a baseball game, take a family vacation, complete work deliverables, or take your significant other out on a date without experiencing technology of some sort (Santamaria, 2012). Software and technology have even found their way in the educational field at a growing pace over the last decade with great success focused on truly authentic educational tasks such as completing complex tasks, supporting the classroom curriculum, and engaging students across multiple disciplines (Valdez, 2005). The prediction by David House in 1965 regarding the pace of technology change in terms of computing power doubling every 18 months is a reality, and that pace vastly affects the education industry—although the technology advancement in the classroom may be taking longer compared to other industries and venues (Santamaria, 2012).

The inventory of technology in the classroom is staggering compared to what existed 20 years ago; most classrooms at this point are not just provided a single computer sitting on the teacher's desk. Rather, there are smart boards, mobile devices, tablets, automated lecture recorders, and streaming video in most classrooms (Lytle, 2011). Moreover, the technology market in education is growing at unprecedented rates. It has become an $8+ billion industry and is sustaining positive annual growth year after year (Richards & Struminger, 2013).

With the continued insurgence of for-profit institutions, charter schools, and alternative schooling options driving higher competition across schools and school systems, technology is becoming a true differentiator to attract the most talented students at all grade levels (Valdez,

2005). Couple this fierce market and competition with the recent successes obtained in classrooms by students leveraging technology in both classroom efficiency and performance measurement and one could see technology transforming how we teach and learn real-time (Lytle, 2011).

However, there are many opportunities and challenges currently facing educational institutions. Governing bodies across the United States are looking for more robust and standardized methods to measure and evaluate student performance; school districts are quickly reducing their dependency on paper-based operations and leaning more on digital curriculum, and increasingly students are bringing their own devices into the classroom expecting to be provided a service that can meet their unique device and learning styles (Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004; Richards & Struminger, 2013). School reformers recommend including all students in personalized systems of instruction (Reigeluth & Karnopp, 2013) Technologies are making such reforms possible. These challenges are daunting, to say the least, so it will be thought provoking to see how institutions evolve utilizing technology.

The Historical and Current Problem

The IEP was formally introduced in the 1970s with a primary focus on supporting students with learning disabilities regarding their specific education goals and requirements (Thurlow, 2009). The initial focus of the IEP was on finding a method to better support students with learning disabilities to achieve greater success and more positive outcomes. The IEP was meant to provide a method for students with learning disabilities to have the same opportunities in the classroom as their nondisabled peers (Thurlow, 2009). Given the human capital associated with this process, using IEPs for all students was not considered.

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In the infancy stages of IEPs, administrators questioned whether the IEP process could be effective to improve learning success, but the key practitioners building upon the vision of John Dewey of developing programs to meet the unique needs of students forged ahead (Schrag & The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), 1996). Some of the major issues and challenges with IEPs early on were shortcomings with documentation including having a place to document content requirements, having a consistent and standard process that was followed throughout the planning and execution stages, and realizing positive outcomes by following the IEPs (Thomson, Rowan, & Wellington, 1995).

These problems still linger approximately 25 years after Thomson et al. identified them (More & Hart, 2013). Parents, teachers, administrators, and students across school districts still struggle with adoption of IEPs, whether paper-based or online. In addition, there are major issues with IEPs including teachers who improperly write goals and objectives, not linking goals to defined curriculum and instruction strategies and assessment protocols, and improperly monitoring achievement against the stated vision or goals. Perhaps more critically, parents are often not involved in developing the IEPs (More & Hart, 2013).

Schrag and NASDSE asked if technology can overcome the challenges facing educators who want to use IEPs to serve both students with disabilities and those without disabilities, or if technology is part of the problem. They suggest that technology may indeed be a prohibiting factor to proper IEP adoption given the lack of individualized approaches that software often provides. They wonder if IEP software can be tailored to allow for a more expedited and robust method for IEP implementation.

It is important to understand efficiency and effectiveness as we look further into the key challenges with online IEPs. Hubbell (2007) discussed how efficiency is the measuring stick for

how something operates; it links three key elements: strategy, effective delivery, and quality. Relating to the software arena, the online IEP must have a sound strategy, be delivered in a manner that is easiest for the user, and be produced in high quality (More & Hart, 2013). Effectiveness is a bit different from efficiency as it is best defined as whether the application is working and producing the results as intended, which include minimizing logic mistakes in the software, ensuring reliable output and deliverables from the application, and being comprehensive in terms of the software functions (Amoroso & Cheney, 1991).

The birth of the IEP process dates back to the 1970s, which is also when technology and personal computers started being used to support educational processes (Campbell-Kelly & Aspray, 2009; Thurlow, 2009). Schrag and NASDSE (1996) described how in the 1980s Enell (1983) took the initial IEP vision and developed the first guide for completing an IEP in a structured manner offering a checklist approach for elements that needed to be completed such as goals and review meetings, and they pointed out how he continued to look at ways for refining the process and turned to a computer system for assistance in facilitating the completion of IEPs by parents, teachers, and administrators. In addition to Enell's work, Schrag and NASDSE (1996) highlight how Davis (1984) and Kellogg (1984) supported the initial birth of computer system-based IEPs and performed studies to determine whether there was a positive effect in the classroom for students with computerized IEPs. Their findings concluded that there was indeed cost efficiency, time savings, and positive feedback from teachers regarding how technology streamlined the IEP process (Schrag & NASDSE, 1996). Hoehle (1984) concluded that a technology-based expert IEP system provided as good or better service to key IEP stakeholders, administrators, teachers, and parents as locally recognized experts. One very significant study highlighted by Schrag and NASDSE (1996) included the work by Kellogg (1984) where the

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study compared manually-operated IEP processes to computer-assisted IEP processes supported

by technology. The study surveyed 12 Massachusetts school districts and found that the

computer-assisted IEPs were less costly, took less time to create and administer, and resulted in

more satisfied participants of the IEP process. Leveraging the conclusions of these studies, it

became apparent that technology may enhance the IEP process and framework for students,

parents, teachers, and administrators (Schrag & NASDSE, 1996).

Schrag and NASDSE (1996) highlight four major phases of research performed by Smith

as it pertains to IEPs:

- phase 1—normative phase, a description of the law by authors and researchers;

- phase 2—analytic phase, a description of stakeholder and team perceptions;

- phase 3—technology-reaction phase, an overview on IEP systems; and

- phase 4—IEP refinement and options, a description of needed enhancements.

In their study, they discuss phase 3 and how researchers used this period to move away

from the spirit of IEP policy to address how technology could be leveraged to reduce execution

of the IEP process. One interesting finding is that the growth rate of IEP technology may have

contributed to the failures of educators, specifically within the special education practice, to

embrace the proper approach and processes inherent in IEP design. In other words, the

technology provided significant misguidance to educators, enabling a less comprehensive IEP

process. Sanches-Ferreira, Lopes-dos-Santos, Alves, Santos & Silveira-Maia (2013) also

indicated the need for teacher training and development on the IEP process and managing the

ongoing IEP process including setting and measuring goals, facilitating status meetings, and

quantifying improvement opportunities. The need to support education practitioners and provide

assistance may be an ongoing catalyst for continued technology expansion in the IEP space. In

fact, the software provider that can support the practitioners best through very intuitive software may reap market share rewards compared to their competition and be in the best position to enhance the technology (Brown, Johnson, & Warlick, 1995).

Most recently, More and Hart (2013, 2014) studied the use of commercial software and/or templates for online IEPs to determine their effectiveness and challenges of supporting the IEP process. This includes the value-added functionality provided by online IEPs when using an electronic goal bank to make goals more individualized and, thus, meet the specific needs of students. More and Hart (2014) mentioned the need for software to ensure student goals and objectives are SMAART—an acronym for the goals being: specific to the student, easily measurable, accurate, achievable, realistic, and timely. Putnam and Kingsley (2009) have continually conducted research on how technology is becoming extensively engrained in the classroom curriculum and instruction, but More and Hart (2014) indicated that no studies to date have empirically evaluated the effects online IEPs could have on student success including the general student population, which is a major gap in the current research.

Benefits to Online IEPs Over Paper-Based IEPs

Research has been performed regarding the benefits of online IEPs; More and Hart (2013) discussed the benefits of transparency for all IEP stakeholders in that everyone involved in the process has access to required information without needing to stumble over misplaced and outdated paper copies. Online IEPs streamline the data entry process while making sure users of the system are complying with all required laws and policies. An analogy to this could be how users leverage tax software to complete their annual tax returns. Instead of needing to worry about all the tax laws, annual changes and updates to the tax code, taxpayers rely on software to ensure compliance through the standard use of the solution. In addition, along with a more

efficient data entry approach, online IEPs provide for robust analytics and reporting capabilities to quantifiably measure and track daily performance against stated goals (Schrag & NASDSE, 1996).

The use of electronic portfolios during the IEP process is another major benefit achieved with online IEPs (Glor-Scheib & Telthorster, 2006). This benefit allows students to be part of the IEP process and have some control of their learning plans. Glor-Scheib and Telthorster (2006) also discussed scrapbooks to capture students' yearly achievements that when coupled with online IEPs could serve as ongoing work benchmarks to help guide future education practitioners on the school deliverables needed from each student. These scrapbooks could be stored in the online IEP software for each student. Vannest's (2011) research provided insight on how online IEPs enable teachers to spend less time in monitoring and preparation activities and more time with actual classroom instruction while letting software support IEP teams with key forms, status reports, and key analysis via charts and graphs. Vannest (2011) also pointed toward the massive market for home schooled students and how software is providing key functionality to support daily behavior report cards (DBRC), and suggested that the amount of paperwork involved in the IEP process is still growing at high rates even though IDEA (2004) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) have strongly recommended documentation reduction. The challenge of using software to eliminate paper-based operations and for users to wean themselves off being dependent on paper is ongoing.

Key benefits and features that must be maintained now and in the future include: local, state, and federal government compliance forms, reports, and documentation; built-in calendar features that integrate with other software calendars to ensure stakeholders can properly schedule key events and be reminded about their occurrences; Medicaid forms for proper reimbursement

of key services; language options (e.g., Spanish, especially in the southern part of the United States); and built-in training, which may well be the biggest hurdle to overcome to ensure widespread adoption of online IEPs (Serfass & Peterson, 2007). The cost of software must be reasonable; most software providers offer a per-student price, but it should be appraised properly to demonstrate significant value for the required investment. As with all cloud-based software, ongoing and regularly scheduled upgrades and enhancements are vital. Upgrades should be made such that the user does not encounter downtime or degradation of online service and key service level agreements. Uptime must be consistent (Serfass & Peterson, 2007).

It is important to revisit the value online IEPs provide over paper-based IEPs at a high level. At the heart of the value are three factors (Serfass & Peterson, 2007): student success derived from each IEP approach, financial costs to execute each IEP approach, and time to execute each IEP approach. There is limited research that has addressed these unique factors to date with Serfass and Peterson (2007) indicating that only two studies since 1992 were written on the value of computerized IEP programs. They also refer to Edds' findings that the average special education teacher spends on average one day in five, 20% of work time, completing paperwork. They have identified over 19 special education assistance programs (SEAP), but they could not validate any claims by the ISVs regarding time or cost savings.

Government Influence on Online IEPs

According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA; 2016), the foundation of most IEP government policy and legislation is found in three major federal statutes: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504, 1973), and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 1974). Although each of these legal acts is separate and distinct, they do provide

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an overall purpose and objective of protecting individuals and providing them with equal rights to education (ASHA, 2016).

The primary legislation driver of IEPs is IDEA, a federal law enacted in 1990 and reauthorized in 1997 and 2004. The purpose of IDEA is to protect the rights of students with disabilities by ensuring that everyone receives a free appropriate public education (FAPE) regardless of ability (Turnbull, Huerta, Stowe, Weldon, & Schrandt, 2009). Not only does IDEA provide the right to FAPE to students with disabilities; it also provides for additional support services and safeguards (Turnbull et al., 2009).

IDEA 2004 guarantees four basic rights to students with disabilities (Hancock, 2009):

- free and appropriate education,

- education in a defined least restrictive environment (LRE),

- supplementary aids and services to support a student's learning plan, and

- assessments periodically to monitor progress.

To ensure these rights are met, IDEA demands each student has an IEP for their learning approach and that there is due process and/or parent or guardian oversight (Hancock, 2009).

The 2004 reauthorization to IDEA provided for greater improvements in the IEP process and for how IEPs should be administered and updated (Klotz, NCSP, & Nealis, 2005). Specifically, there was a focus within the legislation to reduce the paperwork requirements of IEPs while still ensuring FAPE goals are met (Klotz, NCSP, & Nealis, 2005). The amendments evaluated NCLB legislation to see how action could be taken to leverage more technology in the IEP process (Klotz, NCSP & Nealis, 2005). Special education funding is still problematic for states, as Congress is only providing approximately 15% of the promised budget needed to support stated mandates outlined in IDEA (Hancock, 2009).

Technology Emergence in IEPs

The 2004 amendments to IDEA served as a significant catalyst of change for how IEPs would be created, administered, and updated (Gartin, 2005). One of the major calls to action within the legislation was the reduction of paperwork requirements of IEPs while at the same time ensuring that FAPE goals are met (Gartin, 2005). The amendments also evaluated the NCLB legislation and took action to align better with the policy of leveraging technology to support the IEP process (Gartin, 2005). These major policy actions set off a series of events that would truly change modern IEPs in terms of technology use. The private market would, in turn, respond in the years following with a number of software providers entering the market to focus on online IEPs. IEP independent software vendors (ISVs) that offer centralized web-based data management, a repository of goals to be utilized and customized in the IEP process, appointment and meeting scheduling features, progress status reports on recent work, and key meeting forms for all stakeholders include e-IEP Pro, Adori[TM] (formerly Case-e), Illuminate Special Education, ESPED, Class Bridge IEP Program, SEAS IEP, Enrich® IEP, Exceed/IEP, netlEP[TM], Sped Track [TM], and TIENET® SECM (More & Hart, 2013).

Key Online IEP Challenges

There is substantial and overwhelming evidence regarding the benefits of online IEPs (More & Hart, 2013); which begs the question: are there any challenges? Berge, Muilenburg, and Haneghan (2002) conducted research on barriers to adoption of technology to support educational processes, and they came to two key conclusions. The first conclusion was that organizations adopt technology across a maturity process—meaning that most organizations encounter significant barriers early on and as they mature in terms of technology adoption those barriers lessen. Berge, Muilenburg, and Haneghan (2002) indicated it was quite common for

organizations to encounter formidable obstacles. Second, the barriers that organizations

encounter change as they mature across the adoption spectrum. Many of the obstacles identified

exist with online IEPs, especially concerning organizational change or the ability for faculty to

adopt the change. The lack of technical expertise by teachers and parents has led to slow

adoption and a lack of support for teachers and parents. Many stakeholders are often threatened

by technology, which has led to poor adoption; typically, older generation employees are the

most threatened (Bouck, Flanagan, Miller & Bassette, 2012). Additional key challenges include

tailoring to unique needs of students, dealing with security issues, and increasing usability of the

solution, which all drive poor adoption. In addition, the construction and maintenance of IEPs is

an ongoing challenge in that most IEPs still do not have the level of quality for addressing the

unique learners' needs, especially in terms of providing best practices (Shriner, Carty, Rose,

Shogren, Kim, & Trach, 2013).

More and Hart (2013) discussed a few challenges yet to be overcome. Users often find it

very difficult to have proper discussions with IEP stakeholders while having to complete the

required software forms. They pointed out how difficult it is to be interactive in IEP sessions

while maintaining the integrity of the solution. Some other major obstacles identified by More

and Hart (2013) included the system not being user-friendly, teachers not being technology

literate, stakeholders lacking proper understanding about the IEP process, and often that the

software would not allow users to customize goals.

Ertmer, Addison, Lane, Ross, and Woods (1999) discussed technology adoption in terms

of extrinsic and intrinsic barriers, and they contended that many obstacles could be overcome

through a change of school culture. The attitudes of teachers toward technology dramatically

affect adoption. Those with positive viewpoints that believe technology enables greater student

success and a more productive classroom will adopt and embrace technology more rapidly than those who do not.

As with all cloud-based software, sound security is a minimum requirement. Vannest (2011) emphasized that data security must exist to include proper user authentication and password utilization, data encryption for all transfers of data, firewall-protected hosted environments, and compliance with Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). One of the biggest fears and deterrents to more wide-scaled adoption is insecurity of information within IEP systems. The way the data are maintained in data centers, encrypted over the web, and disseminated to unique users must be maintained at the highest levels of security.

Serfass and Peterson (2007) discussed a number of items that need to be addressed when adopting online IEPs. The first is where users' data are housed and managed and who oversees the data that exist within the system. This is not the data used as part of the core product, but rather the information that is completed by users as part of utilizing the system, often coined as master or transaction data. They also echo the comments of Vannest (2011) that the data must be secure, backed up properly, and properly transferred from the server over the web to the user's device in a secure manner, including mobile devices. Ensuring the online IEP has robust features will be a major differentiator in the software market (Serfass & Peterson, 2007).

CHAPTER III: METHODS

To better understand design features that encourage effectiveness, efficiency, and adoption, the researcher sought to understand the experiences of administrators, teachers, and parents in a local South Texas elementary school that had already adopted online IEPs for students with disabilities.

Guiding Questions

The research questions addressed in a South Texas elementary school (case study) were:

1. What are the reasons elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents use online IEPs?

2. What are elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' lived experiences in using online IEPs?

3. What do elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents identify as primary characteristics of the current online IEP process that provide for efficiency?

4. What do elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents identify as primary characteristics of the current online IEP process that provide for effectiveness?

5. What features in the online IEP process would improve the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' lived experiences?

6. What features interfere with the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' motivations to complete the online IEP?

Research Methodology

Methodological Framework

A qualitative case study methodological framework approach based upon the design and development paradigm as outlined by Richey and Klein (2007) was utilized for this case. The design and development paradigm is helpful in guiding the creation of a technology product or

tool that requires an emphasis on user adoption for success (Richey & Klein, 2007). Richey (1994) specifically defined this framework as the systematic study of design and products such as software that must meet a standard of quality and effectiveness. Nieveen and van den Akker (1999) leveraged this paradigm for evaluating technology tools' development to optimize the instructional design. Along with Driscoll (1984), they discussed the use of the paradigm to evaluate the final product(s) to include software products such as online IEPs and how the final product evaluation can be referred as a total system evaluation.

The design and development paradigm was used for this study for the following reasons. This research paradigm is exceptionally useful for technology-related issues and was employed in this case study as we assessed the effectiveness and efficiencies of online IEPs (Richey & Klein, 2007). More specifically, the design and development paradigm supports emerging technology and based on the previous literature review, online IEP technology is still maturing from a features perspective and could benefit from enchanced design (Richey & Klein, 2007). In addition, this research paradigm has a practical use for workplace settings and environments that support the need to evaluate online IEPs utilized in schools. Finally, the design and development research paradigm has great application in qualitative studies (Richey & Klein, 2007). Design and development research informs the design of technology tools applied to the purpose of this case study (Richey & Klein, 2007).

This research employed a qualitative case study approach for a few key reasons. First, findings from qualitative case studies can be leveraged with a small number of cases (Cronin, 2014). Second, as Cronin indicated (2014), qualitative case study research evaluates real life scenarios and provides insight on everyday activity, and this aligns well with the purpose of this study. Third, the qualitative case study approach provides for the ability to identify unique

phenomena or hone in on a single issue or best practice that could be valuable when assessing a program (Cronin, 2014).

The case for this study was a public elementary school in South Texas. The school had employed online IEPs for 5+ years and had administrators, teachers, and parents in the school with experience in creating and utilizing IEPs for students. The public elementary school offered a pre-K to 5th-grade curriculum, had approximately 375 students, and had a student-teacher ratio of approximately 15:1.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected from a variety of stakeholders (Yin, 2013) to include administrators, teachers, and parents. It was particularly important to select teachers who were initially engaged in developing student portfolios or the initial online IEP deliverable, as this provided for the full experience of the online IEP process to gather the greatest insight and not just a participant involved in a small portion of the process. Participants were selected from a public elementary school within a South Texas school district. The participant makeup included three teachers, three administrators, and three parents, nine participants total. I worked with the school administrative office to select the administrators, teachers, and parents according to the following criteria: depth of experience using online IEPs, willingness to share insight freely, and competency of using online IEPs. The participants in this study all had experience with online IEPs greater than five years; all had four-year college degrees, and all had been in the education industry longer than seven years with 75% of the participants being female and causation—25% were Hispanic.

Research Site

The research site for this study was an elementary school in a suburb of a South Texas metropolitan area. Herzog (2005) stated that the interview location for a case study methodology

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"plays a vital role in constructing reality, serving simultaneously as both cultural product and producer" (p. 25). Therefore, one should not choose a location based on convenience and comfort, but rather on how the location affects the social impact of the study. It is important that case study observations occur in a setting that would allow them true insight into the topic being studied, as the interview location contributes to constructing reality and creating the appropriate culture (Herzog, 2005). For this reason, the actual public elementary school or work location was the best location for the study, as it is the best place to observe IEP use. IEP use includes the initial creation of the IEP and ongoing updates and enhancements to the IEP by all stakeholders—teachers, administrators, and parents, over a period of time (Glor-Scheib & Telthorster, 2006).

The elementary school was outside a South Texas metropolitan area in a suburb and part of a school district with a total student enrollment greater than 100,000. The elementary school had been in operation over 50 years, enrolled over 350 students, and had a student-teacher ratio less than 15:1. The school served grades K-5. From a student demographic perspective, the school was approximately 46% Hispanic, 43% Caucasian, 9% other with a 55 to 45% male to female ratio. The number of students participating in a free or reduced-lunch program was less than 20%.

Participant Description

There were nine participants included in this study comprised of three teachers, three administrators, and three parents. Teacher #1 was a female with 18 years of teaching experience, has worked with the case school for nine years, and has been engaged with the IEP process for nine years. Teacher #2 was a female with eight years of teaching experience, has worked with the case school for seven years, and has been engaged with the IEP process for eight years. Teacher #3 was a female with four years of teaching experience, has worked with the case school

for three years, and has been engaged with the IEP process for four years. Administrator #1 was a female with 40 years of education experience, was a teacher for seven years, and has been an administrator for 33 years. She has worked with the IEP process for over twenty years. Administator #2 was a male with 40 years of education experience, was a teacher for nine years and an administrator for 31 years. He has worked with the IEP process for over 20 years. Administrator #3 was a female with 38 years of education experience, was a teacher for 27 years in both elementary and secondary grade levels, and an administrator for 11 years. She has worked for the case study school for six years and has over 25 years of experience working with the IEP process. Parent #1 was a female, has been engaged with education for 24 years, and has over eight years of experience with the online IEP process as a parent. Parent # 2 was a female, and has been engaged with the IEP process for four years as a parent. Parent #3 was a female, has been engaged with education for over 15 years, has over six years of parenting experience in the IEP process, and recently moved into the case school last year to benefit from the school's IEP services.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

There were three primary data sources for this study: one-on-one interviews, an observation of an IEP meeting where participants utilized the online IEP, and my personal journal documenting my experiences at the research site. Primary data are often face-to-face interviews and observations within the studied environment of the participants (Wahyuni, 2012). The key element that a researcher must be concerned with is triangulation in that you need to collect data from multiple sources so that the researcher can increase the quality and robustness of his or her findings (Patton, 2002).

The first data source was one-on-one interviews where each participant was asked the research study questions and supplemental questions based on the participant responses. My

approach to data collection for this data source was to conduct in-depth, open-ended interviews ranging from 30 to 60 minutes in duration, record the sessions, and then transcribe the recordings for coding (Gonzalez & Gonzalez, 2004).

The second data source was IEP process observation notes taken while I silently participated in IEP meeting(s) to observe participants using the online IEP solution in a group setting. In preparation for the observation, I put together a SWOT (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis guide (Goh, Tang, Lam, & Gao, 2006) used for notetaking. In addition, I had a section of notetaking space for each participant group (i.e., administrator, teacher, and parent) to write notes. I observed an IEP development meeting to gain a better understanding of how the participants completed and maintained IEPs. The key objective of the observations was to document the lived experiences of the participants (Gonzalez & Gonzalez, 2004). I was silent during the process but asked participants to answer clarifying observation questions once the IEP meeting had concluded. My observation protocol for the second data source was to perform group observations of the working engagement of an IEP group (a team comprising an administrator, teacher, and parent), as this provided proper insight. I documented my findings in an observation journal that was segregated by key topical areas: efficiencies identified, effectiveness identified, features to improve, and features to interfere. It was important to visit the observation site ahead of the observation to acquaint myself with the location. In addition, it was important to separate the objective observations from my interpretation of the observation, so I had sections to document each observation in my journal. It was important to document exactly what was being done step-by-step in hopes discovering or confirming insight. I leveraged my computer to take notes (in Microsoft Word) with a supporting handwritten notepad as needed (Spradley, 1980).

The third and final data source was the personal journal that I kept throughout the process of this study. I captured my experiences with the study in a Microsoft Word document including participant engagement, committee engagement, study challenges, findings and outcomes, and future opportunities related to the study.

The data collection procedure for this study was as follows. I made four trips to the elementary school to collect and gather the data for this case study. Throughout the study, I kept a journal detailing my thoughts on each trip and the encountered experience. The first step was that I worked with the assistant principal of the school to set up interviews with the participants. The interviews took place over three separate visits. For each interview, I leveraged an audio recording device to record the conversation while also taking additional notes on my laptop leveraging my interview protocol as shown in Appendix A. Once the interviews were completed for that specific visit I wrote down my personal lived experiences in a journal. For observation, I silently participated in an IEP online meeting taking notes of my observations. Following the observation, I wrote down my personal lived experiences in a journal. Once I finished the onsite visits, I transcribed the audio recordings and prepared them for coding by uploading each transcript into a software application meant to analyze qualitative data.

Data Analysis

This study leveraged thematic coding to analyze the narrative data—the participant interviews, observations, and personal journal narratives. The narratives were uploaded into Dedoose, a cloud-based application used for qualitative research analysis and formatted for coding after importing the files. The narratives were coded across a theme spectrum with the intention of finding supporting phenomena insights at both a macro and micro level (Gonzalez & Gonzalez, 2004). Leveraging qualitative analysis software, I loaded the transcripts from the interviews, observations, and journal into the solution and assigned a code (category or small

description) to a section of the transcript to summarize that section (Saldana, 2009). Once the codes were identified, I developed themes from the codes and grouped them into mini-conclusions that focused on the participants' lived experiences, why they used an online IEP, key design and development features that made the online IEP process efficient and effective, features that improved the online IEP process, and features that interfered with the participants' motivations to complete the online IEP.

Once the initial coding work was completed (see Appendix C), I developed themes based upon the coding exercise. The themes were grouped into conclusions that supported the research questions as detailed in Chapter 4. These conclusions were primarily focused on the main design and development features that the participants indicated would improve or interfere with the efficiency and effectiveness of online IEPs. This method was very effective for this specific case study that focused on adoption of online IEPs (Saldana, 2009). The thematic coding approach provided additional insight into the participants' perspectives and helped with triangulation of the data.

From a culture and experience perspective in terms of using online IEPs, the school has been using online IEP solutions for more than five years and have four special education teachers and one special education instructional assistant who lead the online IEP process. The administration participants described the parent participants as very active and supportive of the online IEP process.

The majority of participants were female, and all participants had earned at least a bachelor's degree. The interviews lasted approximately 35-45 minutes and covered the participants' lived experiences in answer to the research questions.

Finally, it was important for me to share my past experiences and personal assumptions to provide the reader more insight into my mindset. I had very limited knowledge of the IEP process coming into this case study, have never actually been through it prior to this case study, but have a bias from my wife who actively participates in RTI and IEP sessions as a licensed dyslexia therapist. I also have a bias toward software as it relates to the education industry and believe software could be better leveraged in this industry to increase student success similar to what is being done in other industries within both the private and public sectors.

The codes identified through categorization of the data units for the study are as follows: (a) performs assessment, (b) elementary school, (c) oversight and conformance, (d) limited software access, (e) limited parent involvement, (f) data driven process, (g) individual goals for each student, (h) unique process, (i) full parent engagement, (j) complex software process—not user-friendly, (k) inconsistent report formats—data, (l) missing functionality, (m) not flexible enough—cannot tailor, (n) paper-based, (o) older student involvement, (p) remote software access and use, (q) one source of the record, (r) online access, (s) multiple use cases, (t) supports the end to end process, (u) very efficient process, (v) supports mobile users, (w) scale to support multiple students with limited resources, (x) consistent organization, (y) forces use of paper, (z) ineffective for student success, (aa) not well organized, (bb) real-time access during instruction, (cc) instant goal updates, (dd) holds team accountable, (ee) continuous assessment, (ff) poor uptime, (gg) complex for teachers and/or administrators, (hh) forces rework, (ii) collaborative process, (jj) poor customer and parent experience, (kk) embarrassing for user, (ll) very inefficient process, (mm) printing or reporting issues, (nn) fairly user-friendly, (oo) fairly effective, (pp) greater student involvement could be helpful, (qq) fairly inefficient, (rr) needs better tracking of goals, (ss) tailored to needs, (tt) supports government policy requirements, (uu) enables errors,

(vv) reuses past information, (ww) does not reuse information, (xx) should have greater parent involvement, (yy) drives student ownership, (zz) very tedious and overwhelming process, and (aaa) reports progress.

I identified and uncovered the following themes and patterns based on a logical grouping of the codes from the study: (a) facilitates a single data source, collaborative process, (b) unpleasant user experience and difficult process to administer, (c) does not take advantage software best practices, (d) facilitates monitoring of student performance and success, (e) supports key entities, (f) negative feedback, and (g) positive feedback.

I grouped the codes into the appropriate themes. Table 1 provides an overview of the data units identified per code throughout the analysis and how each code aligned to the themes. In addition, Table 2 provides a brief description of each code (category).

Table 1

Codes (Categories) Assigned by Themes of the Study

Theme and Code (Category) Assignment	Units
Theme I) Facilitates a single data source, collaborative process	158
- Collaborative process	30
- Individual goals for each student	20
- Data-driven process	19
- Online access	14
- Remote software access and use	13
- One source of the record	13
- Supports the end to end process	13
- Supports mobile users	12
- Full parent engagement	6
- Older student involvement	6
- Tailored to needs	4
- Unique process	3
- Drives student ownership	2
- Real-time access during instruction	1
- Consistent organization	1
- Reuses past information	1
Theme II) Unpleasant user experience and difficult process to administer	109
- Complex software process - not user-friendly	30

- Very tedious and overwhelming process	28
- Complex for teachers and/or administrators	16
- Forces rework	8
- Poor customer and parent experience	8
- Fairly user-friendly	8
- Poor uptime	6
- Embarrassing for user	5
Theme III) Does not take advantage software best practices	133
- Limited parent involvement	22
- Limited software access	22
- Missing functionality	20
- Not well organized	15
- Performs assessment	12
- Paper-based	9
- Inconsistent report formats data	8
- Printing or reporting issues	8
- Forces use of paper	6
- Not flexible enough - cannot tailor	5
- Doesn't reuse information	4
- Enables errors	2
Theme IV) Facilitates monitoring of student performance and success	53
- Instant goal updates	13
- Continuous assessment	12
- Oversight and conformance	10
- Needs better tracking of goals	7
- Greater student involvement could be helpful	6
- Scale to support multiple students with limited resources	3
- Reports progress	2
Theme V) Supports key entities	7
- Elementary school	4
- Supports government policy requirements	3
Theme VI) Negative feedback	32
- Fairly inefficient	18
- Very inefficient process	12
- Ineffective for student success	1
- Should have greater parent involvement	1
Theme VII) Positive feedback	18
- Very efficient process	7
- Fairly effective	5
- Multiple use cases	4
- Holds team accountable	2

Table 2

Codes (Categories) Brief Definitions

Code (Category) Brief Definition

Theme I) Facilitates a single data source, collaborative process
- Collaborative process—A process that includes all stakeholders as part of the process
- Individual goals for each student—Goals that are unique to each student
- Data driven process—A process that leverages data to establish goals and measure
    performance
- Online access—Provides access to the IEP in a online (non paper-based) manner
- Remote software access and use—The ability to access and use the software outside the
    school
- One source of the record—A system that provides a single source for all required information
- Supports the end to end process—Comprehensive support of the entire process
- Supports mobile users—Supports users with mobile devices outside the school
- Full parent engagement—Parents who are fully engaged in the IEP process
- Older student involvement—Involvement of students in secondary grades
- Tailored to needs—The information is tailored to each students needs
- Unique process—A process that is very fluid and not consistent
- Drives student ownership—Students take more personal ownership of their actions
- Real-time access during instruction—Having access to the IEP during classroom instruction
- Consistent organization—Provides for a consistent user experience across the software screens
- Reuses past information—Reuses the same information across multiple software screens

Theme II) Unpleasant user experience and difficult process to administer
- Complex software process that is not user-friendly—The software is difficult to use
- Very tedious and overwhelming process—Very complex and cumbersome process
- Complex for teachers and/or administrators—Difficult to use by teachers and/or
    administrators
- Forces rework—Requires users to reenter information and rework deliverables
- Poor customer and parent experience—A poor user experience
- Fairly user-friendly—A decent user experience
- Poor uptime—System that is not online and cannot be accessed or utilized; software freezing
- Embarrassing for user—The user was embarrassed due to the online IEP process

Theme III) Does not take advantage software best practices
- Limited parent involvement—Parents minimally engaged in the process
- Limited software access—Does not access the software often
- Missing functionality—Gaps in key software functions
- Not well organized—Very difficult to navigate and understand where you are in the software
- Performs assessment—Allows for student performance assessments
- Paper-based—Output printed on paper
- Inconsistent report formats data—Report formats that differ across the application
- Printing or reporting issues—Trouble with printing and reporting output
- Forces use of paper—Process that requires paper output
- Not flexible enough - cannot tailor—Cannot tailor the IEP to the unique student needs
- Doesn't reuse information—Does not reuses the same information across multiple software

screens
- Enables errors—Enables human errors that must be corrected
Theme IV) Facilitates monitoring of student performance and success
    - Instant goal updates—Enables the updating of goals instantly
    - Continuous assessment—Provides for continues assessment of student performance
    - Oversight and conformance—Governs the IEP process and ensures consistency
    - Needs better tracking of goals—Gaps in the current tracking of goal achievement
    - Greater student involvement could be helpful—Would like to see greater student involvement
      in the process
    - Scale to support multiple students with limited resources—Able to support students with
      limited teachers numbers.
    - Reports progress—Provides for a status update on goal progression
Theme V) Supports key entities
    - Elementary school—Associated with an elementary school
    - Supports government policy requirements—The online IEP supports government policy and
      requirements
Theme VI) Negative feedback
    - Fairly inefficient—Minimally inefficient
    - Very inefficient process—Not a efficient process
    - Ineffective for student success—Does not enable student success
    - Should have greater parent involvement—Needs greater parent engagement in the process
Theme VII) Positive feedback
    - Very efficient process—Extremely lean and efficient process
    - Fairly effective—A process that is effective
    - Multiple use cases—Can support multiple use cases such as IEP, 504, and student portfolios.
    - Holds team accountable—Provides governances and oversight of the online IEP team

Trustworthiness and Rigor

For qualitative research, trustworthiness and rigor are the most difficult objectives to

achieve as there are no uniform standards, and it is nearly impossible to create standards given

the numerous approaches taken (Kline, 2008). Golafshani (2003) discussed how it is critical to

evaluate the trustworthiness of a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted how researchers

need to enlighten readers on the participants and settings of the study so that the readers can

make their own interpretation of the researcher and findings. Moreover, they discussed how

important it is for the researcher to thoroughly outline and follow a data collection process that

provides the reader with confidence in the study. Member checking was employed during the

data collection stage to ensure the data were consistent with participants' intended views and

ensured trustworthiness. Member checking is a technique where the researcher consistently has participants review the data collected by the researcher (Krefting, 1991). In addition to member checking, I triangulated the data and analyses cross-referencing the participants' one-on-one interviews. I triangulated the data by comparing the interview and personal journal narratives of the three separate visits and compared the interview data across the three different types of participants: teachers, administration, and parents. Once the analysis was completed, I triangulated the analysis across the various types of participants to ensure proper quality.

Data Management

Leveraging the coding and theme analysis functions within the Dedoose cloud-based software, summaries were developed based on the coding and themes. The case summaries provided micro-level context into the narrative insight from the administrators, teachers, and parents. The case summaries informed the researcher of answers to the research questions and were prepared across the three data sources: 1:1 participant interviews, IEP process observation, and personal journal. The summaries are included in Chapter 4 under the appropriate research question.

Ethics and Reciprocity

To ensure proper ethics and oversight for this study, I submitted an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and received approval from the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi IRB. From a reciprocity perspective, it was important to find a way to provide a positive motivational incentive for participants in this study. I provided participants a small dollar gift card. In addition, I reviewed my findings with their current online IEP software provider so that they could use the feedback to improve the experiences of the participants.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The purpose of this case study was to better understand design features that encouraged effectiveness, efficiency, and adoption of online IEPs. This chapter provides answers to the individual research questions. The data were derived from one-on-one interviews with participants, an observation of the IEP process, and the analysis of a personal journal. The interviews and observations produced over 500 data units contained in 80 pages of transcripts.

Research Question One: What are the Reasons Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents use Online IEPs?

Increased Capacity and Scalability

One of the primary reasons why the elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents use online IEPs is to build their capacity to support the significant number of students requiring online IEPs; this was a comment that was both shared by the teachers and administrators. The elementary school in my study is part of a very large district serving over 100,000 students and to support that significant number of students the district must derive greater efficiencies. This would include leveraging technology including online IEPs. One of the administrative participants said that online IEPs are helpful for "transitioning of students that move from campus to campus, and making sure our kids get what they need ensure a flawless and seamless transition for kids." The online IEP also helps the school scale to meet the high population demands, which they could not support if they were using a paper-based approach, "many times, an ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) can be 40+ pages and the online IEP allows us to organize and properly work with the general teacher to execute the plan."

Remote and Mobile Access

Several participants including all the teachers indicated that the online IEP provides significant benefit for remote and mobile access. It allows teachers and special education staff to

work outside of school hours and update the online IEP in real-time so that others can see those changes before assessment meetings. The ARD process is extremely taxing and tedious, so the participants have adopted the online IEP to streamline the process and allow for more efficient management of support.

Collaboration

Collaboration was another key reason for the online IEP adoption, and was one of the results identified. The current online IEP support model for the school requires that key stakeholders go into the plan to update a student's performance against goals in real time. One of the administrative participants indicated, "The special education teachers and the general education teachers do communicate. They have to communicate as far as levels, goals, strengths, [and] needs." The tool enables this collaboration. Prior to an annual review, brief review, or a new evaluation, the team uses the solution to come together on the plan for student success. "Sometimes, a general education teacher might have to input response to intervention (RTI) information," to start the services for a student. All the teachers indicated that the school also uses the online IEP to help collaborate with parents (and eventually students as they get older). One teacher specifically indicated, "we want to be able to communicate to that parent beforehand, and then let them know who's going to be part of that meeting so that they come in comfortable. So, that we can be partners in educating their child and helping them grow." One of the administrators made a comment about the unity and collaboration that existed and was enabled with the online IEP, "It's that marriage that they have with each other to make sure the child's getting what they need."

The collaboration result was also something I documented extensively in my personal journal based on observations for each trip. The team-based instructional approach was quite apparent across the school.

Single Soure of Record

The school and school district's model to utilize the online IEP process is driven from a team-based collaborative model where a team comprised of several different employees across various roles, such as "central office, campus member, principal, licensed psychologist, special education specialist, and teacher" need to have the same information regarding the current support plan and status for each student. The instructional model is one where all team members must have the same insight to support the student more consistently. One of the administrators highlighted how the online IEP provides a "one-stop-shop where we can access it at any time." Having a single source of the record for all information related to a student's IEP is extremely important and was a result identified in this study. All of the administrators and two of the teachers mentioned this as a key reason that they utilize online IEPs, "It's all housed on the IEP. . . . We use it because it houses everything." It is the one-stop-shop for all.

Research Question Two: What are Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Lived Experiences in using Online IEPs?

The lived experiences of the participants in using the online IEPs vary somewhat as indicated in the packed code cloud analysis below. The insights provided by the participants were based upon their extensive online IEP experience, as documented in my personal journal. As I analyzed the codes, the following four major results emerged in terms of the participants lived experiences in using online IEPs:

- The software facilitates a collaborative process in a data-driven manner with a single source of the record.
- The UX is unpleasant and a difficult process to administer.
- The online IEP does not take advantage of software best practices.

- The solution enables better monitoring of student performance and success than does the paper-based approach.

Collaborative, Data-Driven Process with a Single Source of the Record

There were many comments from administrators and teachers concerning how the online IEP facilitates a collaborative process in a data-driven manner with a single source of the record. It was apparent in this case that unity, collaboration, and a team instructional delivery approach played a major role in how stakeholders leveraged the online IEP. Measuring student success in a data-driven manner was paramount, and the online IEP enabled this to occur. One of the teacher participants mentioned that the online IEP allowed all stakeholders to better understand a student's progress toward each goal:

> There's so much data collection whenever you have a goal. . . . That's the whole purpose of a goal. It's measurable, and you can't judge or evaluate whether a student's making progress unless you know this is their goal and how they progressed. . . . You have it right there in the online IEP.

The online IEP allows for continuous improvement of instruction focused on goal achievement. It was commented by a teacher, "We have to set up something very prescriptive and progress-monitor to see if it's working, and if we're not seeing progress, obviously, our plan's not right, and we need to go back and revisit." If the recommended approach to achieve the goal is not working, the data analysis within the online IEP helps confirm this so that the team can alter the approach for achieving the stated goal.

Both administrators and teachers valued the online IEP's affordance of providing one student record with all information pertaining to a student's needs housed in one shareable and accessible space. All stakeholders have access to the online IEP whether it is a special education teacher, principal, general teacher, or school psychologist. All data collected throughout the

process is entered into the online IEP so that key progress reports can be created to measure performance. This would not be possible if not for the single record. Moreover, an administrator commented that having all the information in a single place reduces risk and worries, "There's no worry of whether or not everything is there, if the kid has a BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan), a copy of the functional behavioral is there, everything is there. It's a one-stop-shop where we can access it at any time."

Unpleasant UX (User Experience)

The second result regarding UX is somewhat troubling in that most participants, particularly the teachers, recognized that the user experience of the online IEP could have been better and this allowed for a less than optimized administration process. The term tedious was used extensively throughout the interviews. Now it is important to note that the IEP process (in general) is a very burdensome and tedious process according to the participants, and the online IEP did not help much with easing this burden. The administrators did not see the UX as tremendously troubling, but all the teacher participants did. The teachers use of the online IEP was significantly greater than the administrators so they felt the UX issues much more as a result. A few of the comments by the teachers included: "There's so many boxes and checks that you may miss something. There's too many options," "I mean, of course the information you have to put into it isn't the easiest," "I feel like sometimes we're repeating ourselves and it makes it kind of longer."

Another example of the UX is that you often need to enter data multiple times. One of the teacher participants commented:

For example, there's a summary section for parents where you document everything, but then you get to the end and then there's a deliberations section. Well, the deliberations is

your summary. It repeats what was in the deliberations section. I think some of it can be streamlined to where you don't feel like you're repeating yourself over and over.

A key result was that the software solution needed to be simplified and the information reused throughout the IEP process so that teachers did not need to reenter information repeatedly.

Flexibility was a major point that supports the improvement needed in the UX. One example of this lack of flexibility was noted in the following teacher participant's comments:

It's not kid-friendly—it's not. . . . I wish you could tailor it per student, per situation. I wish you could say, I need these pieces. We've had parents comment when their kids are initially coming into the program, and they're seeing it for the first time, and they're having to sign, they're like, 'Oh, my gosh. This is like buying a house.'"

Another viewpoint focused on how the information could be better laid out in the UX:

I don't know that I would describe it as fluff, but I think that it's a lot of information; I think the information could maybe be delivered in a different way that isn't such a heavy file for the parents to have.

It seems the information and UX needed to be more concise and tailored to the student. Many teacher and administrator participants commented how there was a lot of information in each student's IEP that should not have been included because it didn't apply:

A lot of the information, I think, doesn't necessarily need to be in there for every student. . . . We have to manually take out the pieces that we need to work effectively with that child, and we still do the paper.

Lack of Software Best Practices

The third emergent result within the narrative on the lived experiences of the participants is focused on better leveraging of software best practices. Some of the negative comments from two of the teachers and an administrator were about relying on paper throughout the process or

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even the software forcing the need for paper, encountering printing issues, having the system not

refresh properly when updates are made, and not optimizing data entry. Diving deeper into the

paper usage comments, most teacher participants had difficulty printing and commented that

they wished paper was not required. Comments included, "A lot of times when you go to print

the report, you have to refresh it a million times," "We give them [parents] paper copies. It's not

electronic," and "You might have a kindergarten student who qualifies for speech, but other

areas of support [outside of speech requirement] must print with it." This said, many of the

administrator participants recalled the world prior to the online IEP when only paper was used,

and the online IEP was heartily welcomed:

> I remember working in various districts and I remember all of the paperwork that had to
>
> be done. . . . When I arrived to this school, I was blown away with the efficiency and
>
> amazed at how everything is at your fingertips. . . . I've been quite impressed.
>
> The online IEP program used in this case is definitely challenged with system updates

and when an educator or parent wants to print reports. One teacher participant commented:

> So where the issue comes is when you want to print the reports, or if you want to save
>
> them. It almost always says "working" like a little tab will come up that says the system
>
> is processing for a good amount of time, and you have to hit refresh, refresh and then it'll
>
> finally move to a "ready" status. . . . It takes a long time to process.

Another teacher mentioned how much time is wasted waiting for the system to refresh:

> So, at the end of the meeting you have to make sort of a bundled copy of everything that
>
> you went over, and then you click on it, and then you print it. So, a lot of times once you
>
> upload the report, you're not able to open it right away, and it's almost actually every

time. You have to hit refresh to get it to pull up, but sometimes you have to hit it a bunch

of times and then sometimes you have to recreate the report, which makes it very taxing.

Improved Student Success Monitoring

The final result determined from the narratives is focused on how the solution enabled

better monitoring of student performance and success. In the minds of most of the participants,

this was the most important element. The supporting comments centered on the instant update of

goals, continuous assessment, reporting progress, oversight, and consistency. The online IEP

allowed for continuous monitoring of goals. Some of the administrative and teacher participants'

comments included:

> We communicate to the parents. . . . This is the goal. We said . . . this is a goal that was
>
> communicated to you in the ARD. Then we let them know that they either need to
>
> continue with the goal, they're making progress, they're not making any progress, and
>
> then we may have to go back and revisit. I think it makes a huge difference.

The online IEP facilitates goal management:

> We show their goals that are in the IEP different ways. . . . We graph them. . . . We do
>
> have the goal setting, and we do have the goal review. We're using the goals straight
>
> from the IEP

and finally:

> We have to set up something very prescriptive and progress-monitor to see if it's working,
>
> and if we're not seeing progress, obviously, our plan's not right, and we need to go back
>
> and revisit. . . . The online IEP was developed based on an evaluation that identified
>
> where the child was weak, and it's basically their plan so that we can see progress with
>
> this child.

The packed code cloud analysis, from the coding process for the participant interviews, is shown in Figure 1 (see below).

Figure 1. Packed code cloud analysis from participant interviews.

Research Question Three: What do Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents Identify as Primary Characteristics of the Current Online IEP Process that Provide for Efficiency?

Several participants highlighted examples of how their online IEP process provided efficiency. The major results identified for efficiency included accessibility and mobility, non-paper-based (for the most part), form order consistency, and simplicity.

Accessibility and Mobility

In terms of accessibility and mobility, this was the most often referenced example of efficiency for participants. It has become apparent that the teachers in this case study pour all their effort into supporting students during school hours and are required to work afterhours on non-student facing activities, and the online IEP provides the ability for access off campus. For

example, teacher and administrative participants stated the following, "It's easier to edit, to manage. . . . You can work from it at home,"

> I like the accessibility. I like that it's online," "I like to be able to access it from home if I
>
> need to. . . . Say I'm at home and I get an email from a parent or a question asking
>
> anything. I can access that at home too. Then it's also nice because being that it's online,
>
> I can access it anywhere from the school.

This is very key, as the participants indicated that they were able to have access to the online IEP at anytime, anywhere and this allowed them to support parents and students better. It is apparent that the process is still cumbersome with the following teacher participant comment, "There's honestly not a lot of time to complete an entire ARD in 45 minutes. So, a lot of times I'm working on them at home when my kids go to sleep," but the teachers in this case study go the extra mile for students and having access at home enables this to occur. A few of the administrator participants in this case study also service other campuses, and they would not be able to properly support as many students as they do without the online IEP being accessible anywhere, anytime.

Non-Paper Based

There were many comments on the efficiency gains because of the IEP process being online-based versus paper-based. One participant made a comment as an administrator and parent:

> I feel like it's streamlined [the online IEP] and I'm also the parent of a special education
>
> child, so I feel like it's such . . . knowing all the people that are involved with my son, I
>
> think, 'Wow. How would this process happen without the online IEP?' And, because
>
> [my child has] a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, he has a speech therapist on
>
> campus, his music therapist is based out of another building, and his adaptive PE teacher

is mobile throughout the district. . . . They can get on anywhere, and we can be on a

conference call, and that person could be in his IEP as we're sitting down having his

ARD.

This comment truly shows how students are supported in a robust team approach, in this case,

study and more importantly how critical it is for the school to be using an online IEP to

coordinate all the necessary student support activities. Another administrator participant echoed

these comments:

I feel like it's very efficient. As an administrator, I sit in on many ARDs, and I can tell

you that a lot of times, ARD involves the LSSP [licensed specialist in school psychology].

It involves the speech therapist. It involves the special education teacher. All of them at

one given time can be on the system doing pieces in their portion.

It became apparent that the IEP process and mandates to fulfill legislative requirements are quite

complex and challenging and that the online IEP is critical to meeting all stakeholder needs. One

of the parent participants summarized the feelings of many with the following statement, "Wow.

How would this process happen without the online IEP?"

Form Order Consistency

In terms of consistency in the order of content in the form, participants shared that it was

important that the online IEP had a consistent process because it helped the participants become

more comfortable in using the solution, which in turn drove greater efficiency. Comments

supporting this from the administrative participants included:

The other benefit of it is the sequence of the IEP . . . we know screen number four is this,

screen number five is this. So, if we have a question about the child's functional

behavior assessment, they know exactly where to go . . . if there's a question in the

middle of the ARD, there's no scrolling and looking and looking.

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In addition, the online IEP does leverage data from screen to screen. So, if you are completing the IEP, the solution minimizes the need to reenter the same information more than once although this benefit is not 100% throughout the system.

Simplicity

The simplicity result is definitely a difficult one to discuss. The teacher participants provided narrative that simplicity does contribute to the efficiency of the online IEP, but it is important to understand how tedious and cumbersome the IEP requirements and mandates are to fulfill. One teacher participant described the online IEP as "easy to edit, to manage." Another teacher participant echoed this comment as follows: "It's easy to use; you go through, and you check some boxes and you, write your goals. I think there's the ease of it, but at the same time, it's almost cookie-cutter. And you become very comfortable [using it]." Another teacher participant mentioned, "other than the printing issue, I would say that it's fairly efficient, because like I said, it's pretty user-friendly. And I like having the accessibility of it." Another administrator comment compared their online IEP solution to another stating, "I've seen online IEPs from other states, and where it's not the 26 or 32 page ARD. It's a 7- to 12-page document because they're only using what's applicable for that student."

Research Question Four: What Do Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents Identify as Primary Characteristics of the Current Online IEP Process that Provide for Effectiveness?

In terms of effectiveness, the measuring stick from the administrator and teacher participants was two-fold. Does the online IEP add value to help promote student success and does the online IEP inform parents of the status of goal achievement?

Continuous Goal Progress Monitoring

Comments from parents supporting this include: "You have parents who are very vocal, and you have some who are not, [the online IEP] makes that part easy . . . it is effective—it gets the job done." In another comment:

The online IEP solution lets us know that [the student] either needs to continue with the goal as they're making progress, or they're not making any progress and then we may have to go back and revisit. I think it makes a huge difference.

The online IEP allows them to monitor progress continually, which was theme identified in the study. The school must report progress just prior to the halfway mark of a nine-week session, and they are able to confirm, "How's this child doing? So we're constantly monitoring the goals." Moreover, it allows the school to quickly change paths if the current approach is not working, "We have to set up something very prescriptive and progress-monitor to see if it's working, and if we're not seeing progress, obviously, our plan's not right and we need to go back and revisit." The teachers also commented on how the drop down capability for setting goals was extremely valuable, as it allowed them to scale support for many students while still offering the capability to uniquely tailor objectives for each student, "Oh, as teachers, you love the dropdown because it makes your life easier . . . and, really, it's individualized."

Again, the focus of effectiveness is based on whether the school and parents see goal achievement. The online IEP is, "developed based on an evaluation that identified where the child was weak, and it's basically their plan, so that we can see progress with this child." The online IEP greatly impacts the effectiveness of the overall program; it is central to ensuring student success. The administrator participants believed that the online IEP enabled continued improvement in student success. One administrative participant summed it up as follows:

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I think it's because all year long we're doing interventions, trying to see whether we can

get some significant progress going for this child, see if we can get an improvement in a

certain area, say it's reading. Tier 1, we have an RTI process. So, Tier 1, those are

interventions that are typically done in the classroom with the teacher. Tier 2, we might

add something in addition that's more specific to that child. When they get to Tier 3, and

usually there's a pretty good timeframe in between that. Tier 3 is where they might get

pulled out to go to a specialist like a math specialist, or reading specialist. If after a pretty

good amount of time, say six to nine weeks, we're not seeing any improvement, we might

come together to a meeting and say, "Hey, maybe it's this or that. . . ." We ask the

parents, "Do you want to think about testing or what do you think about it?" We go over

all the data, and that's when we make determinations all based on the online IEP; it

actually ensures effectiveness with this continuous monitoring approach.

The online IEP is also very effective at keeping parents informed of the current status.

One parent participant commented, "From a parent's perspective, you want to see their grades.

You want to see how they're doing on their goals and the online IEP facilitates this happening."

The online IEP is very effective at providing parents a status of their child's grades and goal

achievement:

They can see their grades, and it's their individual report on progress. . . . It's unique in

that parents can go in and say, "How is my child doing on their goals?" "Oh, the last

time they had a goal check was three weeks ago. Here is the progress that has or has not

been made.

Informing Parents

The special education teachers can proactively provide parents information to keep them

abreast. One special education teacher commented, "It is effective. . . . You can work on pieces

of it, and you can create draft reports and email them to the parents a PDF copy." Being able to have parents understand the progress of their child is a huge measurement of effectiveness.

Increased Capacity and Scalability

One of the primary reasons why the elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents view the online IEP as effective is that it enables them to support a significant number of students requiring online IEPs. It fosters a team-based collaborative model where a team is comprised of several different roles. One teacher indicated that online IEPs facilitate teamwork among the "central office, campus member, principal, licensed psychologist, special education specialist, and teacher" who all need to be coordinated in terms of the current support plan and status for each student. In addition, the online IEP provides significant benefits for remote and mobile access, as it allows teachers and special educational staff to work outside of school hours and update the online IEP real-time so that others can see those changes before assessment meetings. Finally, the online IEP provides a single source of the record for all information related to a student's IEP, which is crucial.

Research Question Five: What Features in the Online IEP Process would Improve the Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Lived Experiences?

Several features in the online IEP process would improve the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' lived experiences. The top features identified by the participants were: better reuse of information, easier printing and reporting of key reports, automated goal progress calculations including percentage-based calculations, and better integration with ancillary systems.

Reuse of Information

In terms of better reuse of information, teacher participants continually discussed how tedious the online IEP process is and how if the solution could reuse previously entered information it would simplify the process. For instance, one teacher participant mentioned:

> It's tedious, and it's very likely that you have errors. . . . I definitely review and check it but, sometimes, when you're reviewing the document it never fails—I always have a year wrong or some common piece of data . . . I just do not get why it doesn't flow through screen to screen.

Another teacher participant mentioned issues with transporting of goals:

> It [the online IEP] does not transport any of the goals. . . . Why does it not go through the whole ARD? We're manually entering the dates in different places. It populates in some places. It does not go to the goals. It does not go to your behavior intervention plan. It does not go to your prior written notice. It goes to certain areas, but it does not go throughout the entire ARD. The room for error and for you to get an email that says, "Hey, you need to input a correction," is there.

This causes additional rework for a team already stretched.

The reuse of information issue also extends when teacher and administrator participants are working with draft copies of the online IEP and need to update the status of the document. One teacher participant commented:

> I have to go in and change that child's document to a draft document. When it's changed to a draft document, information is erased, and I must reenter the information again. . . . It does not transfer certain things. It does not transfer the child's present levels of performance, and it does not transfer their goals. Those are the two main things, and there are others.

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This is a major design flaw that needs to be corrected.

Easier Printing and Reporting

Printing and reporting were of major concern for most teacher participants in this case study. There were many issues with printing the IEP for personal or parent consumption. A few of the specific examples raised include singling out the unique action for a student's action plan:

When I click speech-only for a student's requirements, the report brings up seven screens not related to speech versus bringing up a screen for just speech . . . you might have a kindergarten student who qualifies for speech, but everything's going to print with it.

The responsiveness of the actual printing function is extremely poor as well as mentioned by many teacher participants, "Sometimes you have to hit refresh once, and it works . . . but sometimes you have to click it multiple times, or like I said, recreate whatever report you're making," and:

Anytime you create any kind of report whether it's an ARD, a full ARD, a report card, a notice, anything like that, you create the report, you click on "Create Reports" select whatever you want to create, and then it uploads into a reporting system. The issue then comes when you want to print the report(s), or if you want to save it. It almost always states a progress of "Working," and you have to constantly hit refresh, refresh, refresh and then it'll finally state a "Ready" progress.

Teachers and administrators both indicated that this could be very embarrassing in front of parents. One teacher participant provided the following example:

At the end of the meeting you have to produce a bundled copy of everything that you went over, and then you click on it to print it. Once you upload the report, you're not able to open it right away, and it's almost actually every time. You have to hit refresh to

get it to pull up, but sometimes you have to hit refresh a bunch of times and then

sometimes you have to recreate the report.

The teachers and administrators mentioned how embarrassing this was when it happened in front

of parents or students, "A lot of times when you go to print the report, you have to refresh it a

million times. . . . You kind of just nervously say, 'I'm sorry. It's not me. It's the program'"

A related problem is how complex the reporting is in front of parents. An administrative

participant provided the following example:

> There are way too many options in the system and you are not allowed to focus on the
>
> unique questions pertaining to a student. . . . You might enter "not applicable" to a
>
> question, and you're going through it with the parent, and you say, "Oh, that doesn't
>
> apply to your child. That doesn't apply. . . ." And to me as a parent, that's very
>
> overwhelming because you're sitting there and you're like, "Wait, wait, wait," especially
>
> if you're new to the process.

One parent commented that the process is similar to a house closing: "just overwhelming."

Automated Goal Calculation

Automated goal progress calculations including percentage-based calculations were

discussed at length during the interviews. To the participants of this case, this was a top priority

given how focused they were concerning student success, goal monitoring, and achievement.

Some teacher participants commented how beneficial it would be to have the achievement

percentages automatically calculate for you:

> If we could just enter obtainment information, and then the program could figure out that
>
> percentage and comment for us, I mean I think that would be really nice . . . and then just
>
> for a student to see progression, or for that matter regression, if that happens, I think that
>
> would help with documentation for us to have that just in the system.

Two teacher partidipants spoke to the current manual process today, "It's basically us old school with a calculator, figuring it out. If that was part of the system, especially on that progress report feature, that would be nice." Another remarked:

> From my standpoint, as far as tracking the goals, I would find it really convenient if there was some sort of way that the program could help us as special education teachers to track their goals more efficiently with percentages, things like that.

Finally:

> If your goal is to do math word problems with a average of 75% accuracy, I must manually average everything and have to physically, on the calculator, do a formula . . . It's not like a report card where the computer does it for you . . . we're putting in the numbers, we're averaging, and then we have to do this other formula with the percentage set by the goal.

This is such a manual effort, and when multiplying this type of effort by every child, this requires support that places a huge burden on the team.

The teacher participants discussed how goals were often erased when one updated the status of the document as part of entering key calculations:

> I have to go in and change that child's document to a draft document. When it's changed to a draft document it erases key information. . . . It does not transfer certain things. It does not transfer the child's present levels of performance; it does not transfer their goals.

The ability to progress a document across the lifecycle of stages without losing what you entered is vital.

System Integration

Finally, integration with ancillary systems was highlighted as a feature that could provide great benefit to the online IEP process. One example of this is how you should be able to import

dates from one system to another, "The whole importing the dates from one system to another, I don't get when you put, 'The IEP is effective from 12/7/2016 to 12/7/2017.'" Why that date does not flow across all systems?" Integration with the ARD and other district systems was paramount to the administrator, teacher, and parent participants; one administrator stated that very little of the information from the ARD or district system flowed to or from the online IEP and that it required too much double entry of information. One of the parent participants indicated how important it would be to have the students information flow across required systems so that parents would have the correct information.

Research Question Six: What Features Interfere with the Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Motivations to Complete the Online IEP?

The consensus regarding features that interfere with the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' motivations to complete the online IEP included the tedious process and the issues with system performance. Many of these factors were mentioned previously, but it is important to readdress them for this specific question.

Tedius Process

As noted, the IEP process, in general, has been tedious, confused parents, and required excessive work for the teachers and administrators to execute the process. These categories support the negative feedback theme. A few of the teacher comments included, "There's so many boxes and checks that you may miss something, there's too many options," "I mean of course the information you have to put into it isn't the easiest" and "I feel like sometimes, we're repeating ourselves and it makes it kind of longer." It is this type of insight that detered them from wanting to use the online IEP, as the solution should be more streamlined in terms of data entry. Many teacher participants mentioned how often they needed to work at home to keep up, "A lot of times I'm working on [IEPs] at home when my kids go to sleep." It was apparent how

hard the team worked to ensure student success, as they sacrificed personal time at home to support a process that could be more efficient and effective.

System Performance

System performance was also a deterrent for the participants. One teacher participant stated:

The issue then comes when you want to print the report(s), or if you want to save it. It almost always states a progress of "working," and you have to constantly hit refresh, refresh, refresh and then it'll finally state a "ready" progress.

As mentioned before, the continual issues with needing to refresh screens, restart the program, and reenter work was extremely discouraging. As stated by a teacher participant:

I have to go in and change that child's document to a draft document. When it's changed to a draft document information is erased, and I must reenter the information again. . . . It does not transfer certain things. It does not transfer the child's present levels of performance, and it does not transfer their goals.

This requires just a great deal of rework on everyone's part.

Unexpected Results

One key item that was prevalent in the interviews, but not directly associated with the research questions, themes, or categories was the level of participation from parents using the online IEP. There was mixed feedback in this area in that the teachers and administrators believed that parents should have greater access within the online IEP solution to be more engaged in the process and others thought that less access was more appropriate, as they thought parents should be more "informed" of the process versus "fully active."

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations drawn, describes how these findings add to the existing technology adoption theories, and explains how these findings add to the existing literature on electronic-based IEPs. Finally, implications for practice and future research are suggested.

Summary of Findings

Research Question One: What are the Reasons Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents use Online IEPs?

The primary reasons why the elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents used online IEPs in the case is that it enabled them to scale up to support a significant number of students requiring online IEPs. It fostered a team-based collaborative model where a team comprised of several different roles, such as "central office, campus member, principal, licensed psychologist, special education specialist, and teacher" needed to be in close cooperation in terms of the current support plan and status for each student. In addition, the online IEP provided significant benefits for remote and mobile access, as it allowed teachers and special educational staff to work outside of school hours and update the online IEP real-time so that others could see those changes before assessment meetings. Finally, the online IEP provided a single record for all information related to a student's IEP.

Research Question Two: What are Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Lived Experiences in using Online IEPs?

Four major themes emerged in terms of the participants' lived experiences in using online IEPs. First, the software facilitated a collaborative process in a data-driven manner with a single source of the record. Second, the UX was unpleasant and a difficult process to administer. Third, the online IEP did not take advantage of software best practices. Fourth, the solution enabled better monitoring of student performance and success than did the paper-based approach.

Research Question Three: What do elementary school administrators, teachers, and parents identify as primary characteristics of the current online IEP process that provide for efficiency?

Several participants highlighted examples of how their online IEP process provided efficiency. The major categories identified for efficiency include accessibility and mobility, non-paper-based (for the most part), form order consistency, and simplicity.

Research Question Four: What do Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents Identify as Primary Characteristics of the Current Online IEP Process that Provide for Effectiveness?

In terms of effectiveness, the measuring instrument from the participants was two-fold. The online IEP added value to help promote student success by measuring performance against objectives and informed parents of the status of goal achievement against the plan.

Research Question Five: What Features in the Online IEP Process would improve the Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Lived Experiences?

Several features in the online IEP process would improve the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' lived experiences. The top features identified by the participants were better reuse of information, easier printing and reporting of key reports, automated goal progress calculations including percentage-based calculations, and better integration with ancillary systems.

Research Question Six: What Features Interfere with the Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Motivations to Complete the Online IEP?

There was a consensus on the features that interfered with the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' motivations to complete the online IEP. The features included the tedious process to complete the online IEP and the issues with system performance. Participants indicated that the IEP process was cumbersome.

Contribution to Theory

The roots of knowledge about technology adoption are that it primarily has been driven by the perceived usefulness of the technology (John, 2015). If the user perceives the technology will provide benefits, then the adoption rate will be higher than when he or she does not feel it will have benefit. Findings in this case study supported this theory, as the analysis revealed a favorable perception of the technology by the participants and willingness to adopt. Of course, there are many areas for improvement with the online IEP, but in terms of how the online IEP software supports the current cumbersome and complex IEP process, the participants viewed the technology favorably because of the perceived benefits. The following statement from a participant summarized it best, "I remember all of the paperwork that had to be done; I'm blown away with the efficiency, everything is at your fingertips—I've been quite impressed."

In addition, the unique users' self-beliefs and experiences have a significant effect on adoption rate (John, 2015). Factors such as education, past experiences with technology, and autonomy affect the adoption rate. This perspective by John was supported by this case study. Many of the participants had previous experience using paper-based online IEPs and a perspective that was appreciative of the online IEP approach. In addition, all participants had at least a four-year college degree and had used technology in the past. Therefore, this supported John's (2015) comments that education and experiences with technology affected the participants' adoption of the online IEP process. In fact, these users understood the value of technology and offered insights to improve their technology solution beyond the current level of adoption.

Contribution to the Literature

There is limited extant research on the effectiveness and efficiencies of online IEPs or how online IEPs should be improved to reach a far broader audience. This study provided insights into the design features and functions of online IEPs required to promote student success and positive parent engagement in the process. Software providers should leverage the insights provided here to enhance their solution designs, features, and functions to continue to improve the end user experience. Major focus areas should be: increasing the functionality to support a more mobile user community, continuing to strive for a paperless process, and driving complexity out of the process with simplified transactions. In addition, software providers need to address the current gaps in the online IEP including the use of best practice designs to support reuse of information, more responsive system performance, the use of modern analytics and calculations for key pieces of data, and leveraging more open API standards to integrate more easily with other software being run in schools.

Limitations of the Study

Because of the nature of this study as a case in a single school, the insight garnered was limited to the lived IEP experiences of the participants and, therefore, may not represent the entire online IEP industry. Many of the participants had lived experiences beyond the current online IEP process for this specific case study, but obviously, that experience was not all encompassing representing the entire online IEP industry.

In addition, this specific case had an engaged parent population and did not have major socioeconomic issues. Therefore, the study was not able to investigate how low parent engagement or socioeconomic issues could impact online IEP adoption. This case is a single context and may not apply to other school contexts.

Implications for Practice

The implications of this study are that educators need to maintain a continuous improvement mindset when evaluating the online IEP solution working with the software providers to support existing government policies. Software designers and developers can vastly improve the ease of use to the point where it is no longer a burdensome process and, in fact, it is so easy to utilize that students have some sort of educational plan that would carry forward with them as they progress through school to offer teachers insight on how students learn, what challenges they need to overcome, and how best to instruct them. What was learned in this study can be used to facilitate design of robust software that serves all students and adoption and implementation of such software by school administrators.

By streamlining the IEP process, every student might have his or her personalized learning plan updated from grade to grade to highlight how educators can support student success. As teachers learn how to best engage a student, an online system would allow schools to pass that information on to future teachers of that student so that they could optimize learning. If we can truly design the online IEP process in a way that is not burdensome, we could scale capacity for teachers and make their lives easier to support all general students with a learning plan.

If the recommendations identified in this study are implemented, it would afford administrators the opportunity to assess the potential of deploying IEPs for all students, not just those with disabilities. Administrators would need to continue to work with ISVs to streamline their software that supports the IEP process. If major strides could be made in terms of software efficiency and effectiveness, it would allow schools to support the broader student population

with online IEPs to establish individual goals and learning profiles for all students resulting in an optimized learning experience.

This study has identified a number of online IEP software designs that should be deployed into future software releases. The major features include a complete online paperless experience, a collaborative portal for parents to communicate with administrators and teachers, mobile capabilities to provide all users the ability to utilize the software from tablets and smart phones, open API standards to integrate online IEPs more easily with ancillary educational systems, automatic goal calculations based on student progress against the documented goals, and a more organized user experience that simplifies the online IEP process. The features identified above will positively affect the experience for all users: administrators, teachers, and parents, which should result in greater adoption.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Research Question One: What are the Reasons Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents use Online IEPs?

Participants in this case study used online IEPs because they allowed the school to scale capacity to support a significant number of students who must be served by the IEP process. They fostered a team-based collaborative model for a team comprised of people with different roles in the educational lives of students. They provided significant benefit for remote and mobile access as they allow teachers and special educational staff to work outside of school hours and update the online IEP in real-time. Finally, the online IEP provided a single record for all information related to a student's IEP. Findings indicated that benefits of online IEPs over paper-based IEPs include: ease of shared understanding, communication, and collaboration among administrators, teachers, and parents; one single source of the record that is secure as you do not have multiple paper copies to worry about; ability to better scale capacity to support a

greater number of students with limited resources; and the ability to calculate progress on goals for each student automatically.

However, given participants' concerns regarding access, schools should evaluate the level of parent and student access in the online IEP software to determine if greater or less access is required. There was mixed feedback on parent access across all participants. So, it would make sense that each school serve each student on a case-by-case basis until more research is conducted to identify potential best practices. In addition, given the advantages of online IEPs over paper-based IEPs, those schools and school districts that are still using paper to support their IEP process should consider adopting an online IEP solution to support the process better.

Research Question Two: What are Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Lived Experiences in using Online IEPs?

The lived experiences of the participants in using the online IEPs vary somewhat as indicated in the packed code cloud analysis, which resulted in identification of the following four themes: the online IEP facilitates a collaborative process in a data-driven manner with a single record for each student, the UX is unpleasant, and the process is difficult to administer, the online IEP does not take advantage of software best practices, and the solution enables better monitoring of student performance and success.

To address issues raised by participants in this study, I suggest that the online IEP continue focusing on driving a collaborative process and being the single record. In the business sector, many large companies struggle with managing multiple sources of data and have difficulty in reporting accurate data in a timely fashion. The online IEP is established as the central repository for all information, and this should remain in place for as long as possible.

The unpleasant UX may be explained by the online IEP user interface that is well behind current leading software systems. A new interface created with more powerful programming and

coding standards that support required processes is needed to support better the monitoring of

student performance and success. Additional functionality built in the online IEP would

facilitate users creating, monitoring, reporting, and graphing goals for students. In addition, it is

time for the online IEP to make it easier to calculate the progress of the document goals so that

users do not need to enter them manually.

Research Question Three: What do Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents
Identify as Primary Characteristics of the Current Online IEP Process that Provide for
Efficiency?

The major categories identified by administrators, teachers, and parents for efficiency

included—accessibility and mobility, computer or non-paper-based, for the most part, form order

consistency, and simplicity.

Research Question Four: What do Elementary School Administrators, Teachers, and Parents
Identify as Primary Characteristics of the Current Online IEP Process that Provide for
Effectiveness?

In terms of effectiveness, the measuring instrument from the participants was two-fold.

The online IEP added value to help promote student success and informed parents of the status of

goal achievement. I suggest continual data collection for all participants of the online IEP

process on the effectiveness of the solution to monitor how well the school is supporting the

needs of the student and parents. As the millennial generation moved into parenthood, they will

mandate the need to be more engaged online to oversee their children's educational experiences.

So, it will be important to discuss how we can provide greater access and control of each child's

educational experiences via the online IEP.

Research Question Five: What Features in the Online IEP Process would Improve the
Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Lived Experiences?

Several features in the online IEP process would improve the elementary school

administrators', teachers', and parents' experiences. The top features identified by the

participants were—better reuse of information; easier printing and reporting of key reports; automated goal progress calculations, including percentage-based calculations; and better integration with ancillary systems. My recommendation is for the IEP program developer to make a concerted effort at redesigning the online IEP to address these extremely important gaps in the software. I would recommend the online IEP software industry explore best design practices outside their industry to leading business software companies, such as tax return software organizations, for how they address reusing information year-after-year and for continual screens in multi-step activity, calculating goals and percentages with leading analytics, and promoting a more open and modern API to integrate more easily with other software being run in schools. To help with greater parent engagement, I would recommend providing them read-only mobile access so that they could see the progress of their child's performance against documented objectives. It would also be effective to have a collaborative function within the online IEP where parents could continually communicate with the teacher and administration on key matters such as goal refinement, objective obtainment status, and service needs. I documented in my personal journal how engaged parents were at the school as evinced by their attendance at the school's class holiday parties. If we could offer parents a way to connect online with administrators and teachers, they would find the collaboration extremely beneficial.

Research Question Six: What Features Interfere with the Elementary School Administrators', Teachers', and Parents' Motivations to Complete the Online IEP?

Participants indicated a consensus on the features that interfere with the elementary school administrators', teachers', and parents' motivations to complete the online IEP. The features included the tedious process to complete the online IEP and the issues with system performance. To correct this issue, I would recommend assembling educators and process improvement specialists to redesign the online IEP environment for ease of use. A simplified

IEP process will lead to a more simplified online IEP user experience. The software can only do so much in terms of improving efficiencies of a cumbersome process.

In addition, I would identify ways to rewrite the online IEP software to optimize performance better, reduce delays, and efficiently refresh screens. It may make sense to leverage a different, in-memory database that can support both the IEP transaction processes and the form and reporting analytics from a single in-memory, columnar database. This would dramatically improve performance, provide a platform to enhance the UX, and allow mobile users to experience minimal lag with the software.

Recommendations for Future Research

We now have insight into the design features that encourage effectiveness and efficiency for using online IEPs. A useful next step for research would be to explore how automated analytics calculations and predictive analytics could be utilized to strengthen the online IEP goal management functionality in a more automated fashion. In what manner would administrators and teachers utilize automated goal calculations and predictive analytics to enhance progress monitoring? Future research could analyze the viability of automatically calculating objective progress so that teachers would not have to manually enter the calculations, and determine whether predictive analytics could be utilized to forecast student success based on the existing data set and patterns.

To help drive greater efficiency of the online IEP process, it may be beneficial to have the educational community examine the overarching IEP process and the legislative mandates driving the complexity in the process. Educators and process improvement specialists need to recommend to government agencies ways to simplify the IEP process. A simplified IEP process would lead to a more simplified online IEP user experience, which would improve adoption. The

IEP software can only provide so much gain in terms of improving the efficiencies of a cumbersome process. By combining a great process with great technology, we may open the possibilities of providing all students with an IEP as schools could expand their capacity. A more simplied IEP process may lead to driving greater adoption for general students to benefit with individualized plans and objectives.

In addition, it is critical that the online IEP expand its ability to integrate with core educational applications to reduce data entry across all the systems to support student success. Insight on what systems should be seamlessly integrated with the online IEP would allow software providers to address these gaps and, in turn, provide greater efficiency and effectiveness of the online IEP process to teachers, administrators, and parents.

Finally, additional research needs to be conducted on the role parents and older students take in the IEP process. Would greater access by the parent with the online IEP process improve student success? Would more or less engagement of parents in the IEP process benefit children and the educational process? In addition, how would adoption be impacted by low socioeconomic conditions or poor parent engagement? Would the adoption for online IEPs be deterred from these or similar challenges?

Concluding Statement

The collaborative instructional model of the school for this case study provided insight into the online IEP process and its administration. There is a saying that it takes a village to raise a child. It also takes a village to teach a child, and all the staff involved in this case study work very hard for each and every student. IEPs facilitate individualized service to students making it easier for teachers to serve their students well. Effective and efficient processes are critical. It is hoped that in the future, this investigation will contribute to design and development of IEP

software that will support the success of all students by working on the areas identified as

needing to be addressed.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Participant _____   Date   _____

School   _____   Grade Level   _____

Observer   _____

General Questions:

- For what reasons are you using online IEPs?

- What are the participants' lived experiences in using online IEPs?

- How efficient is the current online IEP process?

- How effective is the current online IEP process?

- What features in the online IEP process would improve the participants' lived

  experiences?

- What features interfere with the participants' motivations to complete the online IEP?

- What are some gaps to the current online IEP that make the process inefficient?

- What areas of improvement would you suggest for the online IEP process?

Administrator Specific Questions:

- Describe the online IEP adoption experiences across the school?

- Describe how online IEPs make the work of your teachers more productive?

- What aspects of the online IEP should be improved to achieve greater productivity and

  student success rates?

- How do you see stakeholder involvement of the online IEP process?

- How has the online IEP helped your academic success rates?

Teacher Specific Questions:

- How should students be engaged in the learning plan process and use of online IEP?

- How has the online IEP improved your classroom productivity?

- How has online IEPs made your responsibilities easier and more burdensome?

Parent Specific Questions:

- How should parents collaborate with schools during the online IEP process?

- What are current deficiencies in the online IEP process?

- What is the best method for engaging students (children) in the online IEP process?

Interview Memos

<to be captured>

Appendix B

Observation Notes—IEP Meeting

Strengths

- Team Collaboration

- Comprehensiveness

- Parent Involvement

Weaknesses

- Paper based

- System was way too complex and

  poorly organized

- System not intuitive

Opportunities

- Many, complete system redesign

- Better organization, more user friendly

- Reuse of information and goals from

  past

- Goal calculator

- Need to use HTML5 and best practice

  UI / UX

Threats

- Training and the IT experience of users

- Keeping up with policies / procedures

Observation Memos

A lot of screens, not well organized, there are 99 screens, regular ARD 31 screens for normal ARD but not all apply. Student information, blue has data, yellow does not, there are no marked required fields.

They went through the draft with the parent and updated based on the parent's comments. There are way too much data on each screen, it wasn't projected, it was printed as a draft versus using the system to show it from the system

Had a development center where you expanded the assessment that was printed. It brought up a word processor (which was good). The transition section was included but not needed. Would be great to have the system automatically eliminate unnecessary screens.

The system design does not follow natural movements and not close to current design best practices. Training is tough; there is no intuitiveness to the software. It has a ton of features, but is not organized at all. The print out is not well organized either nor does it match the data flow of the system. It was hard for the parents to understand what pages represented what in the printout. Good way to select an individual student. You can also select the different documents from a single place (progress report, versus ARD). The speech therapist was involved and had a separated section. There was a goal consolidator and you must click on each goal. Each student had a status I noticed on the drop downs (active, dismissed).

The student had both an active ARD and a new draft ARD. The draft ARD did not import in previous goals; they had to rewrite every single goal. There were seven goals and it was extremely tedious. There was an issue with dates in that a date was wrong and it forced a ton of rework by the teacher. The team had to start from scratch on a few goals. The teacher had to go back and forth into separate records.

Solid list on the accommodations for the classroom and testing. The LPAS section was well organized but not needed again for this ARD. There is a complete list of all the support services offered although it could have been better laid out. Very hard to see what screen you are on - way too many words. This particular solution was not built on best practices. It is hard to

view all the detailed text for each section. It took the teacher three hours to complete the draft but she was experienced; most teachers take five to six hours. It covers all items that need to be addressed and was comprehensive.

The summary page was a good highlight but again very hard to consume. The checklist on the discussions with the parents was a good check list. The prior written notice (that was provided at the ARD for some reason) was way too complex; just too much / overkill. The matching of proposed action to a reason why was poorly laid out.   Screen pages just not intuitive, you do not know you are at the end.   The log out timer was weird, but I understand if you are going to class. There was a great link to the district policies and resources web page for the ARD and online IEP. District training could be better.

eStar Series is the system.

Appendix C

Coded Transcripts

Interview 1

Interviewer: We're here with Interviewee and Interviewee oversees the IEP process from a psychology perspective and helps do the assessment, I think. Right?

Interviewee: That's correct.

Interviewer: For the school.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So, I think for the first question here, let's talk... Just your overall impression of the IEP process and kind of what you see.

Interviewee: Well, I think it's a very fluid process. It's based on... It originally starts after the evaluation that I do and I work with them on helping to develop goals based on things that I observed or through data, through the formal assessment data from the evaluation. I help them develop some goals for the child, but it's very fluid. So we kind of... It's monitored and if something were to change and say the child went ahead and mastered a goal for the IEP, we could come back to ARD and change that goal. Multiple people are supposed to be monitoring those IEPs, so that they are always carried out. And that's one of the things that I do is make sure on the campus, I go around and make sure that IEPs are being followed, not in a formal way, but an informal way.

Interviewer: So, as you see things, how do you close that loop in terms of your observations in the classroom as you're going around and monitoring to taking that next step of actually updating goals or talking to the stakeholders or whatever, how does that work?

Interviewee: I never go in and update anything myself. That's not for me to do. It's open lines of communication between the school psychologist and the special education department. I

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just make sure that the teacher understands the IEP in the classroom and if I see something, I'll make sure to talk to the special ed coordinator.

Interviewer: Okay, as you think about... Obviously, you're seeing a lot of paper right now. And you probably when you do the assessment and you write that written assessment, does that assessment go anywhere? Does it stay paper-based? Does it go into that ARD or go into the online IEP... Does somebody do that?

Interviewee: It goes into the... It's called the ESped program and it's archived there. In addition, there's a paper copy that's given to the parents at the meeting.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you foresee... Different people have access here for the IEP, you've got... Really, it's the special education folks, the people that we've already interviewed that actually are taking your assessment and they are updating it with the goals and then they're reviewing that with the parents and then handing the parents a printed copy and stuff like that.

Interviewee: That's right. We go through it at the ARD. The beginning of the ARD... Well, before we actually start with the ARD, which ARD stands for Admission, Review and Dismissal, I go over for the ARD committee's benefit. I go over my evaluation. Prior to that, I've already done that with the parent, but for the ARD committee, I go over the evaluation, maybe not into such detail as I did privately with the parent, but I go over it generally. Once I'm finished reviewing my assessment data, then we move into the ARD and that's where everything has gone over as far as, okay, we've accepted the evaluation and we've accepted the disability, and now we're moving forward to talking about moving this child into special education. They go over the goals, the IEP goals, they go over services, what kind of support they're gonna provide, and all of that yes, is copied and given to the parent with the copy of my report.

Interviewer: Okay, so let's talk about that process. When you think about that process, and you think about the ESped. So, ESped is where they actually have a goals library and they actually go through and they update the goals and they actually probably put those services that you're talking about in there. If you had to describe your job function, and how potentially software could be used to make it better. So, think about the current process, what do you think could be done to make the current process better with software? Is there anything?

Interviewee: Well, as far as for me, I know that on the ESped files for the ARD, there's a lot of confusion on pagination.

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

Interviewee: It's kind of laborious and trying to go over it with a parent, I know that our special ed coordinators are very well versed in it and they'll have a copy, a draft copy for the parent and they'll be looking online. It doesn't always match up to what the pagination is on the hard copy, which makes it really tedious trying to go through that. Makes it a little hard to do. From my end, in my reports, I think it works really well. I think the most difficult part of all that is just having to scan, email and upload it afterwards with signatures. So probably those signatures you can do online would be very helpful because then we wouldn't have to go through that process.

Interviewer: And you're talking about the signatures of not only yourself but obviously your parents and...

Interviewee: Everybody that's there.

Interviewer: Everybody that's in the ARD, right?

Interviewee: That's correct.

Interviewer: So electronic symmetries would be great.

Interviewee: They would be great because right now we make copies for the parents, then we have to go scan and then upload it. Email it to ourself and then upload it. Which doesn't sound like it's that big of a deal but when you do numerous ARDs a day and there's all these people at the copier, it does get tedious.

Interviewer: How many ARDs do you typically do?

Interviewee: It depends, in the Spring, we do two or three a day.

Interviewer: Wow, okay.

Interviewee: The Spring is our biggest time so yeah.

Interviewer: Why is that by the way?

Interviewee: I think it's because all year long we're doing interventions, trying to see whether we can get some significant progress going for this child, see if we can get an improvement in a certain area, say it's reading. Tier 1, we have an RTI process. So Tier 1, those are interventions that are typically done in the classroom with the teacher. Tier 2, we might add something in addition that's more specific to that child. When they get to Tier 3, and usually there's a pretty good timeframe in between that. Tier 3 is where they might get pulled out to go to a specialist like a math specialist, or reading specialist. And if after a pretty good amount of time, say six to nine weeks, we're not seeing any improvement, we might come together to a meeting and say, "Hey, maybe it's... " We ask the parents, "Do you wanna think about testing or what do you think about it?" And we go over all the data and that's when we make determinations.

Interviewer: And if you think about it, they've had that chance to do that process in the Fall because they're new to that grade or whatever that achievement level and so it's giving you a chance to see if it works and then do that assessment and that's why you're...

Interviewee: That's why the Spring is so busy.

Interviewer: Okay, good. What would... Here's a good question. If they were going to have you start putting your assessment in the online IEP. Okay? Just imagine a world where that would happen, maybe. You do your assessment and instead of... Somehow your assessment is entered into the IEP and then the goals fall right behind that, that you put up there. What would in your mind maybe interfere, demotivate you from wanting to do that?

Interviewee: I think that people could fall into a trap of allowing that to be their only format and them not personalizing it as much as they should, because as it is, we have some dropdowns, and templates are available. But what's really important on an assessment, if I were a parent that's what I'd want, is for it to be very personalized and it should be.

Interviewer: Yes, awesome. I think that's really... Oh, here's one. Think about your parents. How do you think... 'Cause right now you're currently handing them paper copies. And you're actually doing a briefing with them ahead of the ARD and stuff like that. How do you think the parents should be more involved in this process and what are some improvements there? In having getting them involved, maybe even the students as they get older. I know there's a level of maturity students have to go through, but talk about how could they be better involved in the process, one. And then, how could software enable that to happen?

Interviewee: Well, they're actually... Parents are supposed to be involved throughout the intervention process and we try to make sure that we all use the same verbiage so that if a teacher calls to say, "Your child's in the RTI process," that we all use the same term so that they don't misunderstand what's going on. But what could be, I guess, helpful if we were to talk about computer programs, is to somehow have them linked up to that so they could see where the child is and maybe see the data points. Because one of the things that I look at, I'm a very visual person and one of the things that I look at on the RTI is the graphs, it's really neat. They might

put in, say 10 grades, that they're working on a specific goal and they put in 10 grades and then it will graph it out. So that I can quickly look and see whether there's any progress or whether we're flat lining. I think it'd be super helpful for the parents if they saw those things constantly during the process to where we don't come to a Tier 3 meeting and they go, "Oh, now we have to look at all this. We've never been exposed to it, we've just talked to someone about it on the phone." That would be interesting because I think they would feel more involved. And I think it would be easier for them to understand if they had some visual data to look at.

Interviewer: Yes. And I think that, that data gives them factual information kinda... You know what I mean? That they can just say, "I see where we are." Right?

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: That's very good insight.

Interviewee: Well, it's kinda like my daughter does the Think Through Math, and when I get to go in there in Think Through Math and I'm looking over her shoulder and I get to see her progress on what she's mastered so far. That's really good information for me.

Interviewer: That's good. Anything else you'd like to improve with this whole process, or the approach at all at this point now that you haven't discussed already? Anything else that comes to mind? Or talk about students too. Talk about your students. Talk about how the students could be engaged. You talked about the parents seeing it. I guess there's a point in time where you'd want the students to have that same type of information, so they can kind of track their own progress, would that be helpful you think, or no?

Interviewee: No, I think it would be. I think as students get older here, fourth, fifth graders, of course. And I've been on the high school campuses where I think it'd be very helpful for them to see some of those graphed out.

Interviewer: True, that the progress and progress against those goals. What are your goals and how are you progressing against them, right?

Interviewee: And maybe they can be instrumental in helping develop some of the goals.

Interviewer: Very good.

Interviewee: Kids for the most part it's interesting, even little ones, when I pull them in to evaluate them, they're very well aware of what the weaknesses are and what they need to work on. And they'll tell me, before I ever say anything they'll tell me, "Oh I know that I'm having trouble with reading." They know which areas, and then as they get older, they'll be even more precise and say, "I just can't seem to... I sound out the word, I sound out each sound, but I can't put it together." They're very clear about where their weaknesses are. If there was a way for them to be more interactive in that, to where they felt they were helping to develop things for themselves, I think they'd... I don't know, I just think that it would encourage them, they would empower them somehow.

Interviewer: That was very helpful. I'm going ahead and stop. That's okay?

Interviewee: Sure.

Interview 2

Interviewer: Alright. We're here.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Thank you, Ms. Interviewee. Appreciate it.

Interviewee: No, no problem.

Interviewer: Okay. So, to start out, talk about the reason for the school, and school district maybe using Online IEPs.

Interviewee: Well, one of the main reasons why I believe Northside being... This is my eighth year in Northside District. I believe the big thing was the fact that we're such a large

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district with about 105,000 students and the transitioning of students that move from campus to campus and making sure our kids get what they need to make sure we have a flawless and seamless transition for kids. But also, it's just a way that any time we're looking at a child's IEP, whether it's a central office staff member, whether it's a campus member, a teacher that services that child, a licensed school psychologist, whoever the case may be, we can get access to that from any remote location that we're located. And that it's not this paper trail, there's no worry of whether or not everything is there in it, if the kid has a BIP, a copy of the functional behaviorals, so, everything is there. It's a one-stop-shop where we can access it at any time.

Interviewer: Great. Awesome. And what are your experiences in using the Online IEP?

Interviewee: I don't technically get in and input any data into or any information into IEP. That is all done by our special ed staff, our school psychologist, anybody that had direct contact with that student, whether it's in teaching, evaluating them, doing progress monitoring, updating goals, putting percentages, they're in there. I, as an administrator, can access it if I have questions but I'm gonna be honest with you, I don't access it much because I go to the people who know it front hand. The coordinator and I can go to them being I'm here on campus, I can access the file, but I really don't input it. As an administrator though, I use the other side of ESPED which is for Section 504.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: That, I do everything on there. I do the consent, I do the receipt of parent rights, the procedure rights. I write the plans, the individual accommodation plans, everything. So, there's two sides to ESPED that I have access to both but I really don't get in... I don't put anything into IEPs but I can access them as the administrator.

Interviewer: You take it out?

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Interviewer: As you think about the current process, there's two words we have here that we're... The purpose of the study here is to look at the effectiveness and the efficiency of the Online IEP process. When you think about efficiency, are you doing things smartly? Is it very streamlined, things of that nature? Looking at the Online IEP process holistically, from your view point, how efficient is it?

Interviewee: I feel like it's very efficient. As an administrator, I sit in on many ARDs, and I can tell you that a lot of times, ARD involves the LSSP, it involves the speech therapist, it involves the special ed teacher and all of 'em at one given time can be on the system doing pieces in their portion. One of the drawbacks is sometimes, if they're trying to go into the same screen, if one is already in there, the other can't access it. So that would be one thing but that doesn't happen very often because we're aware of that, so we don't try to get into it at the same time. You know?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: But I feel like it's streamlined and I'm also the parent of a special ed child. So I feel like it's such... And knowing all the people that are involved with my son, I think, "Wow. How would this process happen without the Online IEP?" Because he's got physical therapist, an occupational therapist located at Reddix. He's got his speech therapist on campus, his music therapist is based out of another building, he's adaptive PE teacher is mobile throughout the district. They can get on anywhere and we can be on a conference call and that person could be in his IEP as we're sitting down having his ARD.

Interviewer: And they can touch many more students that way because it can be remote, right? Because they've got other campuses...

Interviewee: Oh, absolutely.

Interviewer: You don't have one for every student, at least the specialists, right? So they are able to spread their wings, right?

Interviewee: And spread out, yeah. Like the adaptive PE teacher probably has anywhere from 10 to 15 campuses that she services that she is mobile.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: And so, she can get on anytime and look at his goals, and I've had it happen where there was a discussion on one of his adaptive PE goals and the adaptive PE teacher couldn't be at the ARD, but was able to be contacted where she was and able to pull it up, talk about it, change. We revised the goal right there on the spot so...

Interviewer: Good.

Interviewee: It's been a while since I've taught in another district but everything was a paper trail and it was a mess.

Interviewer: That's good. And in terms of... And we say when it is a mess, I bet things could be multiple copies, you don't have the right copy.

Interviewee: Pieces missing.

Interviewer: Pieces missing. Yup.

Interviewee: And the other benefit of it is the sequence of the IEP. Our staff and the same with 504 is we know screen number four is this, screen number five is this. So, if we have a question about the child's functional behavior assessment, they know exactly where to go. So, if there's a question in the middle of the ARD, there's no scrolling and looking and looking. It's like go here and there it is.

Interviewer: Good. Awesome. As you look at now the term "effective", meaning is it getting the job done? Does it do what it's intended to do? How would you assess the Online IEP process with that?

Interviewee: I still think that teachers are more comfortable, we're more comfortable with having that paper copy. So, when I think of effective, I think of effective and how it helps us with the student. And so, I think still what we do is, we know we take out the pieces that we need to work effectively with that child, and we still do the paper. We'll have their goal there, the data collection is still paper. So, it's effective in that it houses everything, but how effective is it in that actual effectiveness with a child, I still think that that's still the labor that the teachers still do to have it right there with them. Because it's just not good to have that open and with them while they're working with the child. That's when I think of effective. 'Cause I'm thinking of it as an administrator, not so much as the teacher. You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah, but...

Interviewee: I don't know if that makes sense to you or not.

Interviewer: It does, but let's go on. So, when you think about... 'Cause the teacher there is trying... So, talk a bit more about it being there with the teacher while they're working with the child, how it just doesn't make sense. How would you... Give me some examples of that.

Interviewee: Well, for example, if the child is learning disabled in the area of reading and they have a reading goal for reading comprehension but they're also LD in the area of math, and they have a specific goal for math calculation, math fluency, problem-solving, well, those are multiple pieces of the IEP. It's just to me, it's more effective to pull that piece out of the IEP and sit with the student as you're working with them and you have those right there, and you're not trying to access and go back and forth. Does that make sense?

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Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Interviewee: Yeah. Because there's so much data collection whenever you have a goal. That's the whole purpose of a goal. It's measurable and you can't judge or evaluate whether a student's making progress unless you know, "Okay. This is their goal," and if they have multiple goals, and you're working with this student almost... 'cause you're the collab teacher in that class all day long. You have to have it right there.

Interviewer: What's great about this is, this will be great as we go into interviewing the teachers because this is a great question for them. How could the Online IEP be better used by them to help achieve that goal for that student? Because that's what you're talking about here, right? They can't pull out what that goal is, and how we want to measure it, so they can teach towards that goal, right? It's hard to pull... It's just in multiple bases and stuff like that.

Interviewee: Right, right. Well, because it's all housed on the IEP. You can print a whole copy of the IEP, but with our situation being a collab support setup, the special ed teacher's right there with the general ed teacher. So, they're their voice for that child, and they work so well. It's that marriage that they have with each other to make sure the child's getting what they need.

Interviewer: Okay. As you look at the software, the Online IEP, what features would improve your ability to use it? What would you say, "Man, I wish it did this. I wish it did that"?

Interviewee: Oh, it's hard for me to say for the IEP 'cause I don't get in. I can tell you from my experience on the Section 504 which a lot of the screens are the same...

Interviewer: Are the same.

Interviewee: Is I think sometimes, a lot of it's repetitive. So I think sometimes I feel like I'm repeating myself. For example, there's a section information for parents outside agencies where you document everything, but then you get to the end and then there's deliberations. Well,

the deliberations is your summary, signatures obtained, the meeting was adjourned, but I think some of it can be streamlined to where you don't feel like you're repeating yourself over and over.

Interviewer: It's like they ask the same questions, or they ask for information, the same information over and over again.

Interviewee: Right. Right, and I think too, a lot of the ARD paperwork that comes up in the system is, there's so much of it that I know we have to go over it just because it's a legal thing. Like the whole section on assistive technology. You still have to review it with the parent even though you know that child doesn't need assistive technology, but it's a check and balance system because you don't want anything to ever come back legally and say, "Well, the school didn't offer this," or "The school didn't talk about this." You know?

Interviewer: Yep.

Interviewee: But I would say I feel like sometimes, we're repeating ourselves and it makes it kinda longer.

Interviewer: Yep. It needs to be a little more efficient. Yep. Same question, what areas or improvement would you... I think that's what you just mentioned, right?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Not make it so repetitive. Make it more streamlined, I think, is what it is. Yeah. How does the Online IEPs make work for your specialist and your teachers more productive? Does it make them more productive? How so?

Interviewee: Well, because an IEP is just that. It's an individual education plan. It was developed based on an evaluation that identified where the child was weak, and it's basically their plan, so that we can see progress with this child. So, I think it holds us accountable for what's going on with that child. We can't just identify what's wrong and keep doing what we're

doing. We have to set up something very prescriptive and progress monitor to see if it's working, and if we're not seeing progress, obviously, our plan's not right and we need to go back and revisit.

Interviewer: In terms of the progress monitoring, how is that? Do you feel like you can easily see that progress within the Online IEP, how they're obtaining those goals? Do you feel like it's robust enough? Is there any areas of improvement in that area that you'd like to see?

Interviewee: No, because we have to report three and a half weeks, four weeks in to the nine weeks, "How's this child doing?" So we're constantly monitoring the goals.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And then, not only that, we communicate to the parents, "This is the goal we said. This is a goal that was communicated to you in the ARD." And then we let them know that they either need to continue with the goal, they're making progress, they're not making any progress, and then we may have to go back and revisit. I think it makes a huge difference. And I think that the special ed teachers work very closely with their general ed teachers to ensure that we're collecting that data. Because we can't continue to do these interventions and not know if it's working, 'cause then what's going to happen at the end of nine weeks is we may have a child that didn't make any progress.

Interviewer: Right.

Interviewee: Well, if we would have done little checks along the way...

Interviewer: It's critical. It's critical.

Interviewee: Oh yeah, it's huge.

Interviewer: Okay. We talk about parents, I know the parents get a paper copy of things. How do you feel, in terms of the reaching out and engaging the parents, how do you feel the online IEP performs?

Interviewee: The parents don't have any knowledge of what that IEP looks like as far as on the computer.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: It's just what you said. They get the paper copy. During the ARD, the teacher does walk through it and is on the computer, utilizing it to go through. They explain it after they print it out, "This section. This section". But as far as do they have access? Can they... ", no.

Interviewer: Would you want them, or do you think that's...

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: That's not a good thing, right?

Interviewee: No. I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Yeah. Why is that? Just because...

Interviewee: Because I think we're the educators and I think we're the ones with the knowledge and the expertise on determining interventions, percentages, goals, what do we need to do to progress monitor? I just think that that's our job.

Interviewer: Yep.

Interviewee: That's our job.

Interviewer: And do you feel like parents are engaged though, empowered and stuff, to at least be participating through this process?

Interviewee: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. And I think we do a great job. For example, if we evaluate a new student, and I don't know if Ms. Marmer shared this, but prior to even going into the ARD, Ms. Marmer, our school psychologist, she calls the parents prior to the ARD to do a test interpretation so that parents are coming in to the ARD and they're not question... They're not confronted with "Your child has this, this and this." They come into the meeting already knowing this is what was identified. So, it helps them in that process understand, "Okay, I know we're going to be looking at reading. These are some possible goals that we're going to... " You know what I mean?

Interviewer: Yeah. You said a term there that was really interesting. It was like, "Test... "

Interviewee: Test interpretation.

Interviewer: Test interpretation, right. I like that. That's a great word.

Interviewee: Yeah. For some parents to accept that their child has a learning disability or an emotional disturbance or something like that, that is not news that we want to deliver in front of a table full of people. We want to be able to communicate to that parent before hand, and then let 'em know who's going to be part of that meeting so that they come in comfortable. So that we can be partners in educating their child and helping them grow.

Interviewer: That's good. Talk about students then. How should the students be engaged on the Online IEP? I know that maybe when they're younger or maybe not, but as they get older, what's your perspective on that?

Interviewee: I think as they get older, one of the things, and they've talked about this in meetings with us at the high school level, even on 504's, they like to bring the kids in and make them part of the process. Now, do they have the parent, do they have access? No. But I think as they get older, the secondary level, I know in the case of 504's is they like to hear what the kids have to say. What do you think about this goal? How do you feel about it? And they do get input from the kids and make 'em part of that process. I am going to tell you, when we transition our fifth graders to middle school, and we do the transition ARD, often times we will call the student in, and we introduce them to the campus coordinator of the school that they're going to. Their case manager comes over and we let 'em know, "This is who your case manager's gonna be. We're gonna continue to work on this, that, and the other." So, we somewhat make 'em part of it by communicating and trying to help them with that transition, because I like to say at this level we're like the incubator, and then when we send them off to middle school, it's a whole new ball game. So, we try to transition 'em carefully and delicately, because many of our students that are here, we've had 'em since kinder. And so for us to send them off to a school with 2000 kids, it worries us. And their needs and things so we try really hard on the transition for our kids.

Interviewer: Good. What else? Anything else that comes to mind that you think would be important to share?

Interviewee: This whole IEP and the online thing, for me 'cause this is my 24th year in public education, I remember working in various districts and I remember all of the paperwork that had to be done. And even prior to me taking some time off to take care of my own special needs son, and getting hired in Northside and coming in, how blown away I was of the efficiency and just, I felt like while everything is just so, it's at your fingertips. And I've been quite impressed. I can tell you also, the district does a great job of taking input from any stakeholders

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that are involved with the ESPED program to get feedback of what they feel would help. And they've done that with 504 and they've made screen changes, they've made changes to drop-down menus. They take a lot of feedback from those of us that use it day-to-day on what can make it better and more efficient. So, it's not like we were just given this thing and said, "Do it." We're constantly getting updates on how things change, and also, it has to adapt to what TEA is telling us as far as what's an allowable accommodation. We're going through that change right now.

Interviewee: We're starting to learn about new allowable and accommodations that were allowed last year are not gonna be allowed this year. So, that's gonna be a change on there as well. There used to be the [] _____ STARR-A, there's no more STARR-A so that part's gonna go away. So, it's ever-changing, but the district does a great job of keeping us updated. We have ESPED updates. Our special ed coordinators at their meetings get updates. Our district person, I don't know if you've heard her name, Beth Poss?

Interviewer: No.

Interviewee: P-O-S-S.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: She's the one, she's our main contact for ESPED in the district, and she is unbelievable.

Interviewer: I may wanna talk with her.

Interviewee: Oh, she's unbelievable. She's housed out of central office, but she's the main person.

Interviewer: Okay. What I may do is get introduced to her 'cause I think that would be really good.

Interviewee: And I had mentioned it to her. She was here last year because we don't just do 504 and ARDs and IEPs on ESPED. We do our ERTI tracking. We also do our LPAC for bilingual and our bilingual decline students. It's all on that system. So, it's just, it's awesome. I have to go in there for LPAC and I have to go in there for 504, are my main duties as the administrator. Like I said, I do have access to all the ARD stuff as well. But I don't actually input anything in there. But I had mentioned to her last year 'cause she was here for a LPAC training. We let her use our computer lab and I mentioned that you were doing a thing on online. 'Cause I asked her, I said, "Who's not doing online anymore?" She said, "I don't think there's very many people that aren't doing online."

Interviewer: I think she'd be really good in terms of, well offline, I'll get her name from you and maybe you can e-mail, introduce me, or something like that?

Interviewee: Yeah, and I could try to call her.

Interviewer: That would be great.

Interviewee: I can absolutely.

Interviewer: 'Cause I think she'll have great perspective on it, from a district level too.

Interviewee: Yeah. She's wonderful, she's wonderful, yeah.

Interviewer: Fantastic. Anything else?

Interviewee: No, I think that's it.

Interview 3

Interviewer: So this is my first interview with Interviewee.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: Thank you for allowing me to do this, by the way.

Interviewee: Of course. Thanks for interviewing me.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: So I'll start with some general questions, and then we'll move into more specific questions and stuff.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Can you maybe describe your role at the school, as an initial question?

Interviewee: Sure. So I'm a special education teacher, and our campus practices the collaborative initiative, which is basically we try to put as many special education students in the general ed setting as we can. So pretty much a very good percentage of our special education students are in the classroom all day. And so, my role is to go into the classroom and service those special ed students in their general ed setting.

Interviewer: That's great. And how many in this [] _____ school do you have? Is it just yourself? Are you supporting all of K through five?

Interviewee: No, we actually have four special education teachers, one of them is self-contained, she has the behavior unit. So she does not generally go to the classrooms. And then we have one Special Education IA.

Interviewer: Okay, good. And you're using online IEPs today.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you describe which one you're using?

Interviewee: Sure, we use eSped.

Interviewer: Okay... It's eSped, special education, right? Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. E and then S-P-E-D, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And what would be the reasons why you use the online IEP in your mind?

Interviewee: I think I enjoy using an online IEP service, just personally, because I like to be able to access it from home if I need to. Because in a teaching day, even though you have a 45 minute conference, there's honestly not a lot of time to complete an entire ARD in 45 minutes, so a lot of times I'm working on them at home when my kids go to sleep. And so I enjoy that access, too. And then also, say I'm at home and I get an email from a parent or a question asking anything, I can access that at home too. And then it's also nice because being that it's online, I can access it anywhere from the school.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: So it's easy to take. So with ARDs for example, we just take our laptops to the ARD and it's a working document always, so I like it.

Interviewer: And, just out of curiosity, can you also... You say you use your laptop, can you use a mobile device, or tablet, too? Or have you ever tried that at all?

Interviewee: I have used my mobile device or an iPad to read something off the IEP online, but I've never actually typed into it, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yep, got it. Okay, so describe your experiences with it, kind of your lived experiences. So as you think about using it at home, or using it when you go to an ARD, talk a little bit about your feedback, give feedback on the software.

Interviewee: Just on the program itself?

Interviewer: Uh-huh. And the process, if you want to. Just delineate so I can actually document the process versus the program, yep.

Interviewee: Okay. Well I guess just talking about the program first, it's fairly user-friendly, I think once you get to know... Northside has us go to a training, all the special ed teachers, specifically for eSped. And the Director is awesome, I think Beth Poss is her name. She

really shows you how to do it, she's always very helpful. However the program itself, sometimes... So you use the program to type up your deliberations and everything else in the ARD, the ARDs pretty much done when you go to your meeting, but the deliberations you obviously don't type until you're at the actual meeting. And a lot of times when you go to print the report, you have to refresh it a million times. And then there's been times when it's kicked you out in a meeting, and that can be fairly stressful and embarrassing when you have a parent, especially if the ARDs not going well. Or if you've already been there for say, two and a half hours, and then you're having to take an extra 10 minutes to print, that's frustrating.

Interviewer: Because what you would do is at the end of the meeting you are giving them a deliverable at the end of that meeting of the ARD stuff?

Interviewee: Yes. So at the end of the meeting you have to make sort of bundled copy of everything that you went over, and then you click on it, and then you print it. So a lot of times once you upload the report, you're not able to open it right away, and it's almost actually every time. You have to hit refresh to get it to pull up, but sometimes you have to hit it a bunch of times and then sometimes you have to recreate the report, which makes it...

Interviewer: That's embarrassing, especially when a parent is...

Interviewee: Yes. And then you kind of just nervously say, "I'm sorry, it's not me, it's the program." And then everyone who's familiar with the program is like, "Ah, it's eSped." [chuckle] And then I know there's been times that I've heard other people using it were able just... And this has actually happened to me before too, where I'm actually creating an ARD, or typing up an IEP, and it'll just...

Interviewer: Just freeze on you?

Interviewee: Yes, yeah. And so that's frustrating, especially when you have a lot to write, and that doesn't happen as frequently as the refreshing problem, but it does happen.

Interviewer: How often do you think it happens?

Interviewee: The freezing?

Interviewer: Yes. Once a month, once a week?

Interviewee: Maybe monthly, it's kind of hard to say because I only do ARDs about once a month. So I don't have a very good...

Interviewer: So it's almost one time every time. [chuckle]

Interviewee: Yeah, maybe.

Interviewer: How many ARDs are you doing?

Interviewee: Honestly, on my caseload of students I believe I have about six or so students on my caseload, and so it's one per year, but it generally ends up being more than that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: But beside from the ARDs though, there's also every nine weeks we have to do the IEP progress reports, and...

Interviewer: Every nine weeks?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: That's State, I think, mandated? Or no?

Interviewee: I don't know if that's State or Northside, but I mean it's just concurrent with the report cards, the actual report cards. So, for elementary school, they get report cards every nine weeks.

Interviewer: Okay. And the teachers are involved... I mean who's all involved on the nine week progress reports?

Interviewee: It's just data that we collect as the special education teachers, and then we have to upload our data into eSped, and then we create progress reports.

Interviewer: Okay. And how is that process different? In terms of being efficient and effective, would you say... That initial creation, obviously, is pretty labor-intensive, and there's a lot of information you're planning, you're doing with the parent, right? But on the every nine week status report, is it a little more efficient? Would you say...

Interviewee: The program?

Interviewer: Yeah, are you still seeing issues with the program on those reports stuff?

Interviewee: With the program, anytime you create a report, whether it be a...

[background conversation]

Interviewee: So, anytime you create any kind of report in eSped, whether it's an ARD, a full ARD, a report card, a notice, anything like that, you create the report, you click on "Create Reports" select whatever you wanna create, and then it uploads into a report system. And so where the issue comes is when you wanna print the reports, or if you wanna save them or whatever. It almost always says "Working" like a little tab will come up that says 'working'. And you have to hit refresh, refresh and then it'll say "Ready."

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And so sometimes you have to hit refresh once, and it works.

Interviewer: Holy cow.

Interviewee: Yeah. But sometimes you have to click it multiple times, or like I said, recreate whatever report you're making.

Interviewer: Do you know... And this is getting a little technical, but the software that you use, it's loaded on your laptop, obviously, but is it accessing a server that's being managed by Northside? Like, are the servers...

Interviewee: ESped?

Interviewer: Yes. Or is it actually being managed by the software program somewhere else? Do you know?

Interviewee: I mean, I don't know, but I would assume somewhere else if I can use it from home, right? Or not necessarily?

Interviewer: Well, you still access it, it could still be here. You know what I'll do, is I'll look online to see...

Interviewee: Okay. I wanna say probably not Northside, but I could be wrong.

Interviewer: Okay, got it.

Interviewee: But yeah, you're right, that's more technical than I would know. [chuckle]

Interviewer: Good. Okay, so when we define the term 'efficient', okay, and when you think about a program being efficient... Like if you think about shopping at home for Christmas for your kids, or whatever, going on Amazon and checking out and stuff, and buying and browsing stuff, we're accustomed... You seem like a pretty savvy IT person in terms of that, that's pretty efficient process, right? I mean you don't have to go out to the store and everything. How would you describe the efficiency of the online IEP overall? Are there a lot of things that... And go back to maybe other software programs you've used to compare it. And it doesn't have to be school-related, other than the print issue that you talked about.

Interviewee: I mean other than the printing issue, I would say that it's fairly efficient, because like I said, it's pretty user-friendly. And I like having the accessibility of it.

Interviewer: When you say user-friendly, is the screen... Would it be similar to what you would see in... Like on Amazon, or a website at home where you're just surfing, or buying, or shopping or something like that, is it pretty modern user front-end?

Interviewee: I mean yeah, it's pretty much page to page, next, previous, save, continue. I mean of course the information you have to put into it isn't the easiest, but I don't think that that's the program's fault, I think that's...

Interviewer: The information you have to put in there, you're saying?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So, talk about that a bit more.

Interviewee: Well, I mean just like there's a lot of yes or no questions about the students, then there's different checkboxes, and things like that that can be kind of tedious. But like I said, I don't think that has anything to do with the program.

Interviewer: And do you have to... I do my taxes, and I do them... I use tax software every year and stuff, and so if I am doing it for the next year, it sucks in the information from the previous year, so I don't have to fill in a lot of things, so I don't start from scratch. As you have students that go from year to year, does their information carry over to the next year for your ARD and for your status reports? Or do you have to manually complete all that? It carries it forward? Okay.

Interviewee: Yes, it does, which is nice.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. So, that'd be great from an effective perspective, okay.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: And then, in terms of being effective, meaning as you look at the task at hand that you have to do as a special ed teacher, does it do the job for you? If you think about the

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objective of students' success and making sure the student has what they need from a learning

tool perspective, and everything they need to do for support, do you feel like the software is

supporting that mission in your mission as a teacher?

Interviewee: I mean I don't really know that the software supports the student, I think it's

more for coming up with guidelines as to how you're going to educate the student. But I mean as

far as... I mean the student really doesn't have an accessibility to the IEP program, eSped.

Interviewer: Okay. Parents do?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: So parents don't have access to it?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: No, and actually when we give them copies at the ARD, at their annual

ARD, we give them paper copies, it's not electronic.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel there's a gap with that? Or do you think that's okay? I

mean what's your perspective on... Obviously students, getting student access is difficult until

maybe they get to a certain age, but parents throughout, do you think the tool could embrace

collaboration better? And do you think there's possibilities for improvement around that?

Interviewee: You mean for the parents and the students to have access to their IEP

online?

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Interviewee: I mean I think that going into where we are, I think certainly them being

able to access electronically would be handy because, for example, they could access their

student's grades online.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: So if they would wanna access of that copy, yes, but I wouldn't want them to have access to change anything in it, because that's something that a whole ARD community has to agree upon, it's not just the parent. But I mean as far as them having accessibility so see their goals, and...

Interviewer: View only and stuff, to see the goals and stuff?

Interviewee: Yes, goals, those kinds of things, and maybe the deliberations, things that we talked about. Then I would say yeah, that would be helpful. And then maybe, like you said, for students in high school when they get older...

Interviewer: Yeah, take more ownership?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: So in terms of the features you'd like to see, obviously you've talked a little bit about printing capability could be better, you talked about uploading, downloading could be better, you mentioned the checking of different boxes, maybe, finding a better way to actually... When you have to check little tedious boxes and things of that nature, I can imagine there's a way to streamline that, perhaps.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Interviewee: No, I mean I think when you're looking at it as a parent, I will say it's a lot to look at, 'cause like when they get their copy of the full ARD, for example, just a basic ARD with a student without any kind of behavior accommodations, things like that, it's probably over 20 pages. And if you're not schooled, obviously, which most parents aren't, because why would you be, on that process, I do think it's a lot to read and look at. But like I said, I don't know that

that's the program's fault, or if it's what we need to include, I don't know. But do I think it could be more user-friendly for parents as far as reading it? Yes. Because honestly, if I didn't know anything about special education, I would have a hard time comprehending it all, especially 20 pages. I mean to be honest, I don't really know that parents... Except for the ones that are really on the ball, I don't really know that they look at that ever, after they leave the meeting...

Interviewer: Interesting.

Interviewee: The entire file, because I mean its, like I said, it's 20 plus pages, that's a lot to look at.

Interviewer: That is, it's like a dictionary, almost.

Interviewee: Yes. And a lot of the information, I think, doesn't necessarily need to be in there for every student.

Interviewer: It's almost like standard material that... We have this term in business called "boiler plate" meaning it's gotta be in there, but it's not unique to the student or the situation, and it's fluff, almost, in a way. Is that how you would describe some of that? Or no?

Interviewee: I don't know that I would describe it as fluff, but I think that it's a lot of information, that I think could maybe be given in a different way that isn't such a heavy file for the parents to have.

Interviewer: What different way? Do you have ideas on that, or no?

Interviewee: Not really, [chuckle] I'm not sure. But like I said, it's a lot to look at.

Interviewer: Do the teachers here... Is it just the special ed teachers that have access to the software? Or do all teachers do?

Interviewee: Actually, all the teachers use eSped, but not necessarily for... We all have a different way of looking at it, I suppose, if that's...

Interviewer: Okay, a view? Access, maybe different...

Interviewee: Yes, access, yes. There you go. Yeah, so special ed teachers, we have access to different screens than the general ed teachers do, because, like for example, the way we do the process for getting a child into special education, sometimes a general education teacher might have to input some RTI information, response intervention informations for students, but that's different than what we use.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And then when we finish an ARD, we do what's called... We have a program called CMS that we use, and we upload the child's IEP to CMS for the teachers to have access to.

Interviewer: Okay, so that's more of a content measurement system, is what that stands for? CMS?

Interviewee: Yeah, curriculum management system, I believe. Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so all deliverables eventually go up to that curriculum management system?

Interviewee: Yeah, just the IEP, not the entire ARD. Just the IEP, which would be the goals, if they have a behavior intervention plan, but we actually... And this is where I guess that uploading comes up again, we have to upload what's called a CMS upload, and then we save it, and then we upload it into CMS.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: So they don't actually have access to eSped, per se, to see the IEP, but they do have access to the IEP through CMS.

Interviewer: Okay. So they would have things... They use eSped to complete an application, or some type of information, so that they can actually have a review with you and your team, as a general teacher. And then they'll see the IEP in the CMS once you're completed with your work, right?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Are they involved in the ARD? Are they involved in the process?

Interviewee: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: Okay, so they're here, they're present and stuff?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. They just don't enter anything in there, they are just there to provide support, verbal support, to support with the teacher, collaboration... I mean with the parents?

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay.

Interviewee: Yes, they don't actually type anything into eSped.

Interviewer: Okay. So once they do that initial application, that's all... They're hands-off with eSped, with the programming, and then it's all on you then to help?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And in terms of the principals, are they the same way? Or do they have a different access view?

Interviewee: Yes, I think they have a different access view. I'm not sure what theirs is, to be honest, you'd have to ask them. But yes, I think that they probably have more access than we do. [chuckle] If I had to guess.

Interviewer: Okay. But they would not typically type in it? I mean the process really, in the end, is teacher submits app for you to review to see is it required, and then you get through that process, you'd go through the ARD, you complete the IEP, and then you provide the parent the information that you're talking about, and then you upload the IEP to CMS?

Interviewee: Yes. And if the child is already in special ed, then the general ed teacher doesn't enter anything, it's just if they are putting... We call it... It's an acronym, I don't know what it stands for, but we call it the CHILD Process. And so that's basically when you're giving information for the general teachers, they're putting a student that might be below level, let's just say for example, in reading. And so they might enter them into eSped, and then say what kind of interventions they're doing for that child, and is it working, is it not?

Interviewer: Yeah, that's when you get your RTI?

Interviewee: Yeah, RTI. Yeah, but as far as eSped goes, with the special ed programming, they don't actually enter anything in. And then the Principals, I think if they had to, they would, but on an actually ARD, no, they don't enter anything in.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Ms. Almaraz, the VP, she does 504s through eSped, so that's all her.

Interviewer: Which is a little bit, obviously...

Interviewee: Different.

Interviewer: Broader for the IEP than the 504. Okay. She used eSped for that as well, too?

Interviewee: Yes. She does.

Interviewer: Okay. Okay.

[background conversation]

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Interviewer: In terms of student's success rates, is there any comment you would have on how the IEP can be improved, for greater student success?

Interviewee: The IEP itself? Or the program?

Interviewer: The program.

Interviewee: Okay. I mean at this age, elementary age, I don't really know what could be done to help students as far as the programming goes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: The actual eSped itself. Because like I said, they don't have any access to it, so...

Interviewer: Access to it anyways. At the high school level... Any thoughts if they were older? Or no?

Interviewee: Well, I mean if they were older, I would say giving them access to see what their goals actually are, because I'm sure at that age, you go to your ARD once a year, you may not even remember what your goals are. So I think being able to check that, like I said earlier, just like you would check your grades to see the progress that you've made on your goals would be a great too.

Interviewer: That's perfect. When you think about the students that are in elementary here, and their performance in the classroom, is there any other thing that you would think of in terms of how a software could help benefit them in the classroom? What are the goals that you outline as part of eSped and list in the IEP? Is there any other thing that you think that software could do to ensure those goals are met?

Interviewee: To ensure that they're met?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: I'm not really...

Interviewer: Whatever you define success is for the student that school year in this classroom, whatever that may be, is there anything else that you think of that software could be better at? Or could do differently to make sure that the students are gonna be successful that year?

Interviewee: Well, not necessarily, but from my standpoint as far as tracking the goals, I would find it really convenient if there was some sort of way that the program could help us as special education teachers to track their goals more efficiently with percentages, things like that.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Because it's basically us old school with a calculator, figuring it out. And if that was part of the system, especially on that progress report feature, that would be nice. [chuckle] And that would be helpful, I think, and that would help with the students, in a sense.

Interviewer: Awesome. Good, good.

Interviewee: So if you could create that, that would be great. [laughter]

Interviewer: So you're having to track for all the goals, how many goals will a student have, typically?

Interviewee: I mean we have some student that have eight to 10 goals, it just depends on the student.

Interviewer: Okay. And are all those goals metric based? Meaning they're quantitative based, meaning...

Interviewee: Percentage?

Interviewer: Yes, where you can track by percentage, are they generally that way?

Interviewee: Generally, sometimes it's by trials. Sometimes it's by percentage. But I mean, I guess trials technically are a percentage, so yes. And so if there's some kind of feature on the program that could help come up with those percentages, I would like that better, because then I think it would be a little more consistent.

Interviewer: Especially when you could say, "Here's the goal. Here's where you are on that goal, and here's how much, maybe, time you have left in the school year." So you could see, "Are you behind?" Because if you're halfway through your goal during the first... Halfway through the school year, then you're on track, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. And then just for a student to see progression, or for that matter regression, if that happens. And then just to have it... And then I think that would help with documentation for us to have that just in the system.

Interviewer: Awesome. Okay.

Interviewee: I don't really know how you could do that, but it would, [chuckle] it would make life easier. Because right now it's us, like I said, figuring out the percentage, going through... Right now I'm talking about updating the IEP progress report, going through, selecting a percentage, making sure it matches. Is the school mastered, almost mastered, good progress? That kind of thing. And it's us selecting it. But if it was us just entering the information, and then the program could figure out that percentage and comment for us, I mean I think that would be really nice.

Interviewer: What's interesting is, I have to do an observation, one observation, I may try to observe what you're talking about there and see it, because I think that makes...

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Yep. So what you're saying is you enter the information in, and the system automatically calculates things based on the information that you're entering, is what you're saying?

Interviewee: Well, we calculate it and then we just select the percentage. So say I do my percentage. Say a kid is supposed to have 75% to be mastered and he's at, I don't know, 70%. So that would be considered almost mastered, because he's almost at 75%. So 95%. There's actually a drop down box that says, "Percentages" right? On that same note, this is where it gets tricky. Because sometimes say it's... Let's just say 73% mastery, there's not a dropdown box for you to enter in your own total, so I either have to pick 70% or 75%, when really it's 73%, which I mean isn't a huge deal, but it is when you feel like, "Well, it's 73%. So do I round up? Do I round down? What do I do?" [chuckle] Like, "Is it closer to 70% or 75%?" Which, obviously, for 73%, we 75%, but still, it's not completely accurate.

Interviewer: Got it. That's awesome. Good feedback.

Interviewee: Thanks. [chuckle]

Interviewer: That's awesome, that's exactly what I'm looking for. How has the IEPs made your responsibilities easier or more burdensome?

Interviewee: The IEP? Do you mean the program?

Interviewer: Yeah, both. Yeah.

Interviewee: Okay. Like I said, I like the accessibility, I like that it's online, but I think that that's pretty common now, though, I would think. I don't know. And then as far as burdensome, I mean it's always going through, like I said, a 20 plus page ARD, when that's just... And that's an easy one. [chuckle] 20 plus pages.

Interviewer: Is it? Yes?

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Interviewee: Because say you have a student with Autism, a lot of times their ARDs can be close to 40 pages. And then to be efficient and to make sure you're going through everything, you have to go through it as a teacher page by page. And so when you have... I mean because some... For when I worked at [] ____ for example, this is a very small school, when I worked in [] ____ I had 20 kids on my case load. And so when you have documents that big and there are schools at Northside that have that many students on a caseload.

Interviewer: They do.

Interviewee: Yeah. So when you...

Interviewer: So you have 20 kids at 40 pages per...

Interviewee: Yes. Yeah, and that's if you only have to an ARD once.

Interviewer: Yes. Normally do you have to do... Because you got your status reports, but do you do it once or do you do it twice sometimes? It could vary?

Interviewee: It just depends on the student, because I mean you have an annual, but say that's also the year they need to be re-evaluated, where you have two ARDs, or say you're not making the progress you want to and you need to come back and you need to do revision, it's... You never know.

Interviewer: This is good.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: That's what I needed.

Interviewee: Perfect.

Interviewer: And thank you.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: I'm gonna stop it.

Interviewee: I appreciate it...

Interviewer: Anything else before I hit stop that you wanna share?

Interviewee: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interview 4

Interviewer: Okay. I'm here with Interviewee. Thank you for doing this for me. I really appreciate it. You're talking about the Online IEP. Maybe give a little bit of background in terms of the Online IEP process here, if you don't mind.

Interviewee: Okay. Just the whole...

Interviewer: Yeah. Just spend a minute talking about what you use, when you use it, how Online IEP works.

Interviewee: Oh, okay. Okay. The online IEP, we use whenever we have an upcoming annual review or a brief review, or a new evaluation that we need to reveal. And during that time, I have access to it, and the school psychologists has access to it, and the other special education teachers have access to it. But as far as once the IEP is written, we create a PDF of that and we upload it into our district system.

Interviewer: CMS.

Interviewee: Yeah, CMS. And at that point, that's when the teachers have access to it.

Interviewer: They don't have access... Do they have access to anything in eSped?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Not at all.

Interviewee: One thing they do have access is the ERTI process, but for their class only.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: If they have a student who is in the Special Education Program, whether it'd be speech or for their services, they do not have access to that, to the IEP portion.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: They only have ERTI.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And when they see it would be once we send out the communication via email that the IEP has been uploaded. And in that, the whole document is not uploaded. We create one for CMS only. That includes the service of schedules, the levels of performance, their goals.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And then, it also includes that they have a behavior plan in place. And then if they're in a star grade, it'll include those accommodations but it does not... A normal report runs anywhere between 28 and 32 pages. What we upload for the teachers to view would run about, let's say, 12 to 16 pages depending on if they different plans.

Interviewer: How about the parents? What would they view?

Interviewee: The parents get a paper copy still.

Interviewer: Still a paper copy? Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. I know that the district and I'm not sure if secondary is... I know some people... Secondary might be already moving this way to where they can get it.

Interviewer: Electronically?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Do you know why we are using Online IEPs versus paper-based?

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Interviewee: Well, when I started in Northside, we were still paper and we moved into, I wanna say, Online IEPs maybe my second or third year in Northside and I've been here for 18 years. I wanna say that it was more to have a standard that everything was included that is required federally in state, by the state.

Interviewer: Got it.

Interviewee: Even if it's a three-year-old that they're testing and they still have to come and do the ARD over here at school. And all of that may not be applicable to it. You just go through and you don't... You click a name, you could, don't print with ARD for certain things. But everything that's required from minimum to maximum is in that report.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I think it's to assure that we are addressing everything that is required for a student with a disability.

Interviewer: Okay. Tell me about your experience. What's your perception of the Online IEP?

[chuckle]

Interviewer: It's very broad.

Interviewee: Okay, but you're not gonna say my name?

Interviewer: No.

[laughter]

Interviewee: It's easy to use. It is easy to use. You go through and you check some boxes and you write your goals. I think there's the ease of it, but at the same time, it's almost cookie-cutter. And because you become so route in, "Okay, this box has to be... This box has to be

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checked," at points, you really stop paying attention to what box you're checking. You know what I'm saying? And what's your...

Interviewer: It's almost like almost busy work in a way?

Interviewee: Yeah. And so feel like that I've seen Online IEPs come through from other states that use an Online IEP, and it may not be eSped, it may be another program that they're using, and where it's not the 26 or 32 page ARD. It's a seven to 12 page because they're only using what's applicable for that student.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Yeah. Here, you might have a kinderkid who qualifies for speech but everything's gonna print with it. [chuckle] Do you know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Oh okay. [] ____, right?

Interviewee: And you might say NA, and you're in a meeting, and you're going through it with the parent and you say, "Oh, that doesn't apply to your child. That doesn't apply... " And to me as a parent, that's very overwhelming because you're siting there and you're like, "Wait, wait, wait," especially if you're new to the process. If you're not new, those parents are comfortable. But if you're new to the process, then I think you're just...

Interviewer: When you rate whether it's... There're two words here whether it's... Our study's looking at the efficiency and the effectiveness of the Online IEP. You mentioned a couple of inefficiencies there in terms of always having to click out the box and stuff. Thinking about efficiency in mind, what other inefficiencies or efficiencies are there would you say? Or pros and cons?

Interviewee: Okay, yeah. Of course, like I said, it is easy because it's all there. And you're not going to miss the parts, because you are going through the parts of it. The other thing I

think that could be an inefficiency is that if you're going from one year to the next and the student's going from one grade to the next and changing a case manager, sometimes you're going through it and you don't change things that should be changed. Do you know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Because you're used to the program, and you're not paying attention to every little box. Every little radio button. Do you know?

Interviewer: Yeah. It's almost like you're... Either there's so many boxes and checks that you may miss something, there's too many options.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Too many selections.

Interviewee: And there's times where we're printing it out and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. I didn't go into that notes box and that note's from 2014 and we're in 2016." And I didn't take it out.

Interviewer: And you should've done it.

Interviewee: Right, and I should've gone through. But there are so many things that you have to assure, and we're getting the... And it depends if you're a paper-pusher school. You know what I'm saying? And my position, I'm the coordinator, I teach. I'm teacher number one 'cause elementary coordinators for special ed, most, I would say, for Northside, 90% of them are teachers and then part-time coordinators. But you teach the full day. Part...

Interviewer: Okay, you teach the full day.

Interviewee: You teach the full day but you're a part-time coordinator. Do you see? My job, I check the paperwork. That's one responsibility. They turn in their paperwork to me, and I go through it.

Interviewer: All the other people here, all the specialists you're talking about?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: The part that they've... When you check it... When they print it and you check it like that, the system, if you forget to check certain things to print, will not print, so I don't know if it's missing. Do you know what I'm saying? Say they have a certain area and if they forget to check that supplement to print, I don't realize it's missing 'cause it's just not gonna print. I've changed it in that I go on and go online and check it through there.

Interviewer: That's what I was gonna say.

Interviewee: Their draft. Now the district has changed... Or eSped, I don't know why they did it, but whether it was a request from the district. This year is the first year now where they change it where prior to the ARD, a few weeks prior, I have to go in and change that child's document to a draft document. When it's changed to a draft document it erase... It does not transfer certain things. It does not transfer the child's present levels of performance, it does not transfer their goals. Those are the two main things. So that...

Interviewer: You'd want that to happen, right?

Interviewee: Yes. That requires the teachers that aren't... To go in and update the pertinent information.

Interviewer: Do teachers do that though then?

Interviewee: No, the special ed teachers.

Interviewer: Special ed. Okay. Yeah, okay.

Interviewee: Now the special ed teachers and the general ed teachers do communicate. They have to communicate as far as levels, goals, strengths, needs, and then... But it's the special

ed teacher's responsibility to put it into the system. They collaborate with it. You're required to, which you should, and then from there, it's entered into the system.

Interviewer: Interesting. Okay, when you say effectivity, so the definition of effectivity means something that is like... It gets the job done. How would you describe your online IEP experience with it being effective?

Interviewee: It gets the job done.

Interviewer: It does?

Interviewee: It does. I'm gonna tell you, I was paper copy and it gets the job done because, number one, paper copy, if you mess up, start all over. [chuckle] Do you know what I'm saying? It's easier to edit, to manage. You can work from it at home.

Interviewer: Okay. And that was also brought up by...

Interviewee: Yeah. Which is what we actually do the majority of the time because it is easier than... Your school day just doesn't allow for time. It is effective. You can work on pieces of it and you can create draft reports and PDF 'em to the parents. Now, that's something that depending on the case, I know she does it quite often for certain cases, we'll create the draft goals right away and we'll PDF it to the parents so they can have input prior to the meeting.

Interviewer: The ARD? Okay.

Interviewee: 'Cause you have parents who are very vocal. You have some that are okay with it, and you have some that want it. And it makes that part easy. But it is effective. It gets the job done.

Interviewer: Do you think the parents should have different access. Could software be tailored, or do you think there's even... Could it be more effective or efficient if the parents had access, versus you having to print out PDF and move it through?

Interviewee: I don't... [chuckle] I don't know if that would even be effective to be honest, because I've worked on two sides of the district. I've worked on the side of the district where the parents aren't involved and then I've worked on this side of the district where parents are 110% involved. Every parent comes, every parent... And here, I had 10% parents come to meetings. I don't know to how the parents have some sort of access being that it's legal and federal. Do you know what I'm saying? What kind... I'm not sure how that would work.

Interviewer: You're worry about the ramifications from a legality perspective?

Interviewee: Well, or just...

Interviewer: They can see their grades, right?

Interviewee: Yeah. They can see their grades and it's their report, they can see it like that's there. But if they had access, I think it would have to be limited in what that access could be. They couldn't be going in and write and change and do. Do you know what I'm saying? It would be if they could have access, they would have to be limited. It would have to be a view-only as far as just like they can see their grades, I think, to see an IEP report card ahead of time. Like, "Hey, how are they doing?" And that's the difference too. Our data for IEP report cards is recorded still by hand. You print the data collection sheet off the online system but you still record it by hand. It's different in that sense that the parents can go in and say, "Oh, how are they doing on their goals?" "Oh, the last time they had a goal check was three weeks ago." You know what I'm saying? And we're supposed to get one a week according to when we met or one every two weeks.

Interviewer: That would be a good thing or a bad thing?

Interviewee: Well, I think as a parent it would be a good thing. It's a grade. It's the same concept so if they did have access, it would have to be something like that where it was about the

goals. Do you know what I'm saying? But our goals are still collected and granted if they told me that, man, I'm not gonna lie, we're so overwhelmed with work. I'd be like, "Oh, my gosh. I gotta... " [chuckle] You know what I'm saying? Like, "Here's another thing to do."

Interviewer: To be able to talk about.

Interviewee: Yeah. But we do it, we record it constantly, but like I said, I think that would be good. From a parent's perspective, you wanna see their grades, you wanna see how they're doing on their goals. I think the goal part of it, but you don't enter it into the system.

Interviewer: You don't want them updating it. No. What would you improve with the Online IEP?

Interviewee: Oh, I've always said this. It's what I told you earlier. It's to be able to say, "Oh, this child is gonna be speech-only." So I'm not gonna... I'm gonna click speech-only and the report's gonna bring and then it's only gonna pull up these seven screens. Or this child is only qualified as a learning disabled child in X area, it's only gonna pull up this, versus like here for Ella, it's the same thing. Everything is on there, even what you need for secondary. You have to check. No, this is not a transition meeting, the child's not 13, but you have a parent come in and say, "I wanna talk about... " We had a second grade parent ask about graduation. Really, that's not applicable but it's on there.

Interviewer: Yeah. It almost detracts from the focus.

Interviewee: Right. So I would love to say, "Oh, elementary, none of that's gonna come out." Do you know what I'm saying? And, "Oh, we're in K through two, none of Stars gonna come out." And to be able to have some way to do that because everything comes out from graduation plan to transition meeting to being 18 to being 13. That's why it's overwhelming and

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that's where the inefficiency is. It's really a cookie-cutter thing. You know what I'm saying, Mike?

S?: Exactly.

Interviewer: This is good stuff.

Interviewee: Don't put my name in there. Not my district or my school.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: No. That's why we have it like this. When you talk about the... Let's see here. How should the students be engaged with the Online IEP? Should they at all?

Interviewee: The district pushed back a couple years ago for the students to attend their meetings.

Interviewer: Okay. They pushed back saying no?

Interviewee: No, they pushed...

Interviewer: Just have it.

Interviewee: I meant back a few years ago. I'm sorry. They want them to attend their meetings not... I know they attend starting in sixth grade. Sixth grade on up, they attend their ARD meetings. They wanted it to start earlier in elementary. I know schools do it with all the grade levels, we do it with fifth graders here. They attend their meeting into middle school and this is the plan. Some situations we do call in at the end of the ARD meeting for some students who are having a hard time and we talk about their plan with them. I can say, honestly, at this campus we're not consistent with that. The older kids, your fifth graders, who do attend their meetings, they're aware that they have a plan. Your younger ones, not so much.

Interviewer: It makes sense by the way.

Interviewee: Yeah, not so much. I think it's, for me, some kids are okay with and some aren't.

Interviewer: Based on maturity.

Interviewee: Yeah, some kids aren't even aware. Some kids wanna come here and they're not even in it. [chuckle] They're like, "I wanna plan, too."

Interviewer: That's another cool thing that's interesting is, I believe in individualized education plans. I think there are a lot of students that could benefit in the greater public, not just special ed that would wanna have a plan of how they learn, and what their goals are, and are they achieving those goals, and all that stuff.

Interviewee: Now we do... I can speak like we may not bring them into the meeting but we very much go over their goals and this is where you were. If it's a reading goal, this is where you are.

Interviewer: Okay. But you don't use the Online IEP to provide...

Interviewee: To show them...

Interviewer: To show or anything like that, no?

Interviewee: No, we show their goals that are on the IEP different ways. Some of them, we graph 'em. You know what I'm saying? We do have the goal setting and we do have the goal review. We're using the goals from the IEP, but we're not using, per se, the online program.

Interviewer: Does that take a lot of effort to take the goals from the IEP, transpose them to another graph or anything like that, or is it...

Interviewee: I think it's kid-friendly.

Interviewer: It is.

Interviewee: It's kid friendly. They like to color it in. They like to see it. They like to, "Oh, what was my score last time? Can you show me?" If you look at the Online IEP, it's not kid-friendly. If I came and brought my fourth grader in here, he'd be like, "What is that?"

[chuckle]

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. That's a great piece of feedback.

Interviewee: Yeah. It's not kid friendly. And it's not... Back to where you said, "What can we improve?" And I said, "I wish it was where you could tailor it per student, per situation." You could say, "I need these pieces." We've had parents comment who their kids are initially coming into the program and they're seeing it for the first time, and they're having to sign, they're like, "Oh, my gosh. This is like buying a house."

Interviewer: Overwhelmed.

Interviewee: Yeah. And they'll say, "We wanna don't wanna take the five day waiver. We wanna go home and read through it." Because it's a lot, it's a lot. And that's, I think, where for a community like this, they're okay because they're vested, and they'll go home, and they'll read it and they'll understand it, and they'll call with questions. And then the community where I came from, they're gonna sign no matter what.

Interviewer: It's almost like [] _____.

Interviewee: Right. They're like "Okay, done." And that's it. They're not reading through it. They're not really understanding, it's not tailored for everybody. Do you know what I mean?

Interviewer: I got it.

Interviewee: It's very overwhelming. I don't know if you've ever seen one.

Interviewer: You know what? I'm gonna do an observation with you guys. And what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna maybe sit in on an ARD meeting perhaps. I won't say a word. And then,

also, maybe one of your status reports that you do with the nine weeks, just so you can show me what it looks like and stuff.

Interviewee: Right. And that's the thing. And your nine week IEP progress report is written in such... A report card, it says Reading 94, you know what I'm saying? Your IEP report card is written in a language that, I understand it because I've been in the business for 18 years, but if I was a parent getting this, I'm like, it would be like if your goal is to meet 75%. It's written in a language that is very difficult to understand. So for...

Interviewer: Describe that more, yeah.

Interviewee: For example, if your goal is to do math word problems with a average of 75% accuracy, it would be... I averaged everything and you'd have to physically, on the calculator, do a formula, it's not like a report card where the computer does it for you. We're putting in the numbers, and we're averaging, and then we have to do this other formula with the percentage set by the goal. And it might come out, and I have to write in there, "Your child has met 80% of the 75% criteria." Do you see what I'm saying?

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewee: And then so we try and put in...

Interviewer: Because their goal is to get to 75% efficiency, or proficiency, and you're like, "You're halfway to that number."

Interviewee: Yes, that's basically what you're saying. And we try and put in... We put the statement that we're required to put in. However, I tell my girls... We're all girls here so I say my girls. [chuckle] Put in six out of eight assignments the child... Give them some more that they can visualize because if you just get that one statement and you don't understand where we're

getting the 80% of the 75%... I've had parents call and say, "Well, if they have 80%, they've mastered it 'cause it's... " They don't understand the formula.

Interviewer: That's right. The goals and achievement are very difficult.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: She mentioned the same thing, by the way.

Interviewee: Yes. And it should be... I worked in another district prior, and she worked in the same one as I did. She's just younger. [chuckle] It should be continued to be mastered, and it should be, I feel, in six out of eight assignments, your child averaged this.

Interviewer: That's good.

Interviewee: Do you know what I'm saying? And so we're gonna continue the goal.

Interviewer: Yep. Yep, 'cause they're not mastered yet. You either did it...

Interviewee: You either did or you didn't. Yeah.

Interviewer: Now, they may wanna know how far are they off.

Interviewee: Yeah, and I think all of that can be... But when you're trying to explain, "Oh, they've met 80% of the 75%," they're looking at you, then they've mastered it, they've met 80%. They don't understand that. And if I wasn't in the business, I probably wouldn't understand it either.

Interviewer: In terms of the classroom productivity, I don't know if the Online IEP has any bearing one way or the other because teachers don't really engage in it, right?

Interviewee: No. They look at it maybe. You're depending on them to be professional.

Interviewer: Okay, to look at it.

Interviewee: Do you know what I'm saying? When it's uploaded...

Interviewer: To view it in the CMS...

Interviewee: You are depending on them to implement the accommodations. But to say that it's always 100% that they're implementing what they should be. Do you know what I am saying?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: You can't guarantee it. Some teachers are better about it than others.

Interviewer: Could the software help one way or the other on that or no?

Interviewee: I don't think so, that's just a work ethic, a work ethic issue. If you're in the classroom like we are, they'll depend on you to do it even though it's supposed to be... If you're not in, it doesn't get done. If you're in, it gets done. Some teachers are better about it than others. It's just kind of who you get. But, I don't think the software can really work on that unless it gave access to them, and they were required to enter certain things. We are required, of course, we're on it. But since they don't have access to it, and they're not required to enter any data on the goal, anything like that then... And their plate's full just as much as our plate. I don't blame them. The thing that we stress the most is, "Please, please, just when we're not there, be sure you're implementing the accommodations."

Interviewer: Accommodations.

Interviewee: Don't say that they're not doing it and you haven't tried A through Z yet.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: Yeah. Do 'em all. And then we'll see the results.

Interviewee: Yeah. That's our big thing.

Interviewer: Has the Online IEP made your responsibilities easier or more burdensome?

Interviewee: It's burdensome.

Interviewer: Really?

Interviewee: For me, for my position, yes. I don't know because I'm doing my own. I'm checking theirs. I'm the one that's required to go in and change them to draft. When the ARD is complete, I'm the one that's required. They don't have access to that.

Interviewer: Because you're the coordinator.

Interviewee: Yeah, I'm the one that has to go and change it to active. After the ARD, I'm required to go into the School District System, Region 20, and enter all the dates and the coding, but I full-time teach.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: There's a great improvement area. What if it could automatically do that?

Interviewee: I wish. Yeah. I always say that, "Why can't it be automatically inputted?"

Interviewer: Input?

Interviewee: Yeah, from Region 20 to eSped. Why can't they talk to each other? They talk to each other for certain things, but they don't update it once... If the draft is updated to active, why doesn't it...

Interviewer: The status doesn't go through.

Interviewee: Yeah. Certain things happen but not that. I have to go in and say, "Oh, their annual was this day. Their testing was this day. They changed their coding to a 41." It's...

Interviewer: I would almost think any change to the Online IEP in eSped, it should reflect that automatically at the district level.

Interviewee: Right. And, right now, because signatures are electronic at secondary, but we haven't implemented 'em in elementary.

Interviewer: The software has the capability to do signatures?

Interviewee: I think, yeah. It says... I think that they got them the electronic signature pads and it's coming down because they told us at the beginning of the year that we will be implementing electronic signatures. Right now, once we sign, then we scan, and then we upload and archive the document, for now. Which is another to-do.

Interviewer: That's the one thing is to list all your to-dos out because it's making you more versatile. I bet there's a list of things that you have to do that there should be... There's sometimes where you can't automate things. There's some things you can't, right? The coordinating with the district system, electronic signatures, automating statuses, all those types of things.

Interviewee: Right. And I know that they've piloted certain things, and then they work out the kinks and it comes down our way. I know in the past when they first started with eSped, they had dropdown goals. They took that away because that was their cookie-cutter. You know what I'm saying? You could just go and pick a goal and we'll all...

Interviewer: And you guys didn't like the drop-down?

Interviewee: Oh, as teachers, you love the dropdown because it makes your life easier. But think about it, they're all the same for how many thousands of kids who are in the program in throughout the district and, really, it's individualized, right? [chuckle]

Interviewer: Got it. For teachers it's good, but for the student, it's bad because it's not tailored.

Interviewee: Yeah, no.

Interviewer: It's not individualized.

Interviewee: You're just picking and boom and done.

Interviewer: It's almost like you're checking a box.

Interviewee: Yeah, and you could edit it but when you're doing a 26 minimum screen report, you're checking things off, "Okay, did I do it ? Did I do it? Did... " And then when it's not... When it's not, when you send it, you upload it, you archive it, and then you send the original copy to Central or to Student Services which is our Special Ed department through the district. Then the secretary that you're assigned checks, audits your work and she looks for dates, basically, dates and signatures. Anything that's wrong, she sends you an email and then you have to correct it. And there's an amendment that you complete online, you call the parent, and you have to go through this whole process. It's quick but when you get that email, you're like, "Oh, my gosh, here's another thing I have to go online and fix."

Interviewer: It's too bad she can't have a workflow where when you hit submit, it submits to her electronically, she brings it up electronic, and do the review, and then just send it back to you, it's done in email it. It makes it a little bit easier for her to review and you don't have to send paper copies.

Interviewee: Well, and even, like you said, the whole importing the dates from one system to another, I don't get when you put, "The IEP is effective from 12/7/2016 to 12/7/2017." Why that date...

Interviewer: Can't flow through.

Interviewee: Doesn't transport to any of the goals. Why doesn't it go through the whole ARD? 'Cause we're manually entering the dates in different places. It goes to some places. It does not go to the goals. It does not go to your behavior intervention plan, it doesn't go to your prior written notice, it goes to certain ones but it doesn't go throughout the ARD. The room for error and for you to get an email that says, "Hey, you gotta do a correction," is there. You know what I'm saying?

Interviewer: It's very...

Interviewee: Yeah. It's tedious.

Interviewer: It's tedious and it's very likely that you have one. We're all humans.

Interviewee: We do. And I check it but, sometimes, when you're looking through it and I'm looking at the screen... Well, you know how it is when you look at a screen, and it never fails. I always have a year wrong. I'll put 2016 to 2016. Never fails. That's usually the most common error that we have is the dates.

Interviewer: It should reduce human errors, not promote it.

Interviewee: Yeah. I don't get why it doesn't flow through. And then if you need to change it because say you're meeting for a review, you just change it and it accepts it. Do you know what I'm saying? But at least it would flow through.

Interviewer: Yes. That's good. Anything else?

Interviewee: That's good and bad. I like it, I just wish there were more.

Interviewer: That's good. That's perfect, that was awesome. Let me hit stop here. 31 minutes.

Interview 5

Interviewer: Okay, I'm here with Ms. L. Administrator for a school. And here for the interview on the online IEPs. Maybe just start off, would you maybe provide a little bit of background on your academic career and what your role is?

Interviewee: Yes. I've been at an elementary campus for all of my career. I started out as a teacher. I taught first through fifth grades, Title I Math, Title I Reading, and then I've been in administration for the last 25 years at an elementary school.

Interviewer: Awesome. Great. Okay so in terms of the online IEP, what are the reasons why your school uses the online IEP?

Interviewee: The reason we use it is because that's the one the district has adopted. And we've changed, we've had several in the last few years but we've been using ESPED the last year and a half.

Interviewer: ESPED, okay. And in terms of your experience in using ESPED or online IEP, can you describe that a little bit?

Interviewee: Yes. My purposes really... I was [] ____ as an administrator in the ARDs, so I sit there in all the ARDs, even in the speech ARDs, and we go through the whole process, parents are included of course. And I offer suggestions if I'm asked to offer suggestions, basically I'm just there as the administrative role. And then at the end of course I read their... Forgotten what I read. Assurances, there are three assurances that I read at the end of each ARD.

Interviewer: And you mentioned parents there real quick. Obviously the parents are involved in the ARDs. What type of involvement do you see them in the online IEP, is it more just a readout? Do they...

Interviewee: Yes. No. We project it on a screen. The Special Ed Directors or the Special Ed teacher has the IEP on her computer, she's filled out, usually, all the information. She or he has filled out the information, it's projected on a screen and we just scroll through all the parts of it.

Interviewer: Great. Okay. When you think about that online IEP and going through that process, how efficient in terms of it's easy to use, it makes your life easier, from a process perspective, describe the process using online IEP.

Interviewee: Well, the teachers tell me it takes a lot of time to do, because it is very very thorough. There are a lot of parts of it that really... Well, I shouldn't say they don't apply to Special Ed, it seems to be a repetition of a lot of them. We have to deal with STAR, and even if

it's a Pre-K student, up to second grade we have to go through the STAR accommodations. We have to decide if they qualify for STAR A, or just STAR now, because there's not another STAR, there used to be three STARS but now there's just two. But we just have to go through it. What we do is just kind of skip through those pages and then we try to review the ones that apply to the student.

Interviewer: Great. Great. In terms of effectiveness, meaning, it gets the job done. So when you think about a student and their needs and the objectives that you have, if you think about just the process in general of IEP and what you have to do, how does the online IEP, is it effective? Does it do the job? How would you rate it?

Interviewee: At my end I think it does a good job because it's all there, it seems to cover everything, it seems to cover all of the legalities that may arise. And it's online, so that we can add to it, or delete from it as we go through the ARD if we need to of course. Most of the ARD is, the parents have been informed of the goals, and the new goals, what goals have been accomplished, and then if we need to establish new goals. Those are usually reviewed with parents, and then it makes the process a lot easier during the ARD process because we just discuss it, "Yes, is it good? Yes, it has the accommodations." We go through and list all the accommodations that the student may need. And then there's also a part if we have an ELL learner. There is a part where it addresses TELPAS. And so it just seems to address the whole child. There's also a part now where students with dyslexia. Those IITs are beginning to use the ESPED as well. So I think it's growing in the roles that school personnel are being able to use.

Interviewer: That's great. That's a great sign of it being effective because of growing in scope. More students and their parents are coming in.

Interviewee: And we also use it as a 504.

Interviewer: Okay. That's exactly right. Okay. Awesome. What features in the online IEP process would improve your experience? What could be done better?

Interviewee: Well, it's so lengthy that if we didn't have to repeat things over and over and over, go through the screens numerous times during the ARD process, I think that would speed it up. If we said it once, we should not have to repeat it several times in different ways on different pages. It's also, if you have a child that has a severe learning disability, or if you have a child that is really really low, or autistic, it's very difficult for a parent to sit there and hear the same thing every page. Like, "Your child is not doing very well. Your child is on this level. Your child's IQ is a 50. Your child's IQ is a 50". Then you go to a different page and you repeat the same thing, "Your child is... Has a difficult time doing this. He wasn't able to meet these goals, so we've adopted new goals for him." So when a parent sits there and hears this for an hour, I feel sorry for the parent. So I think sometimes if they just would say, "This is the problem with your child. These are the goals we're gonna work on," and move on. But I understand that it has to be repeated numerous times, but I just think that as a parent, I would not like to hear it over and over and over.

Interviewer: Great feedback. Great feedback. So when you think about the participants, people who use the IEP, in using it, what would be some deterrents? What would interfere? You've mentioned some of these about repetitiveness, and maybe it provides a bad experience to the parents. Are there other features that you think just interfere or would de-motivate the entire... All the participants.

Interviewee: I can't think of any. All the Special Ed department uses it, regardless of their roles. OT, the PTs, the speech teachers, any form of Special Ed, they use it. Like I said, we

use it for 504. We're beginning to roll into dyslexia. So I'm not sure. I can't answer that.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: It's okay. I think the final thing is, any additional improvements, other than the last, making you [] _____ and some of the things you already mentioned here about making it easier to use. Any other improvement areas? What other areas of improvement that you think would be great?

Interviewee: I'm not real sure. Because I"m not the one that inputs information. I'm just the one that receives the information during the ARD. However, if I... I probably would, but I just can't answer that because I'm not the one that puts the information in.

Interviewer: Okay, and from someone who just reads it and is involved in the ARDs, is there anything else you would wanna improve at this point?

Interviewee: No. I think it just, like I said before, depending on the child's disability, it depends on the length of it, and...

Interviewer: And be specific to that child's disability a little bit more.

Interviewee: Exactly, right. Well, and it is, but when you've heard it once, you don't need to hear it numerous times. But I understand that it probably has to be that way because of legalities. I guess it just has to be that way.

Interviewer: I just appreciate your time for doing this and thank you so much.

Interviewee: You're very welcome.

Interview 6

Interviewer: Okay, this is [] _____, I'm here for the online IEP interview. I am with a parent, and I'll let her introduce her role.

Interviewee: Yes, I am a parent of two children at Lotus Elementary School, and one of my children goes through the ARD Process, and one does not.

Interviewer: Great. So we're gonna talk today about the online IEP. And I guess it's a pretty straightforward question, but why are you using the online IEP today?

Interviewee: Okay. One of my children has a visual impairment, and needs certain accommodations in the classroom, as well as in PE, and the other classes that she takes. And so, we go through the IEP process to make sure her needs are being met in that regard with her vision impairment. And making sure she has the accommodations to be able to do what she needs to do in and outside the classroom.

Interviewer: Great. Can you describe your experiences with using the online IEP?

Interviewee: With the IEP, I have found it in our ARD meetings, and it's primarily been in the paper format. And I've seen it when it comes up when she gets her quarterly progress notes to see where she's at with her goals. And so it's primarily been yes, through the paper format.

Interviewer: And though the ARD process?

Interviewee: And through the ARD, correct.

Interviewer: How would you describe the efficiency of it from a parent's perspective?

Interviewee: I would say I'm coming into the digital age myself with other things. So I think I would like... It seems like it is a lot of work for the administrative staff in terms of having to make sure everything is printed out, everything is gotten to me ahead of time to be reviewed prior to the ARD. And I have found a newfound appreciation for things being done electronically. So in my opinion, I could see that it would be more efficient to have everything just be online, and not have to go through the paper process, or to have to print everything out.

Interviewer: So as a parent, you being able to see it on an iPhone, or on an app that you could bring up, and you could see goal, achievement. You can see accommodation in situations, whatever, communication back and forth. Would that be how you would like to see it?

Interviewee: Yes, I would like to see it electronically like that. Because I feel too, for me, I like to be able to save things and refer back to them. But I'd rather put it in a folder in my email box, and know that it's there forever rather than get lost in the closet, or the binder where I'm saving paperwork things. So, for me, I feel like that would be a better use, or how I could use it.

Interviewer: And in terms of effectiveness, meaning it gets the job done, how would you rate the online IEP in terms of overall effectiveness for your child?

Interviewee: I think it works well, because I can clearly see what the goals are, and that they are either being met, and at what percentage they're being met, and at how much she has to work on. So I think it works well in that regard.

Interviewer: Okay, in terms of the electronic process here. Going back to your answer about, I wish it was online bit. When I say the word use case, I'm meaning I'd like to see goal calculations, I'd like to see feedback from the teachers. What would be some of the things as a parent you would like to see online and have access to? What's the most important thing? When you think about the whole process, what's the most important things that you wanna see electronically?

Interviewee: I think like you said, with the goal process, and where it is in being met, it seems like visually, it would probably be good to almost like you said, in a graph, or a color format. So say if she's... You decide that in the 75% to 100% [] ____ is green, so we're doing well. Versus we're in a yellow zone if we're 40 to 75, or if we're below 40%, it's red. 'Cause I think that's a good vision to see where you're at. And it seems like too doing it electronically might be able to get more feedback to the parent, in terms of a bullet point of, "This is what we worked on and met over the past nine weeks."

Interviewee: I feel like in some ways, it could almost be streamlined to when they're filling it out, that the parent gets notice of it, versus it having to be... I don't know if it feels like a duplicate process on the teacher's end, or the administrative person's end, that they're filling it out electronically, but that it could then just be shown to the parent too easily from that point too. Like, click send and done, exactly.

Interviewer: And you have the screen that you need to see?

Interviewee: Right, yes.

Interviewer: Makes sense.

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Yep. Are there any features... And this is hard because you don't have a lot of access to the online IEP... That you can think of where people involved in the online IEP process, maybe they're not motivated to complete... What are de-motivators? Features of the software that you know of as a parent that would de-motivate you in terms of wanting to use it etcetera, like that? Anything you know of at this point?

Interviewee: Not really, I'm not sure.

Interviewer: It's okay.

Interviewee: No, I'm sorry, I don't know.

Interviewer: You've already talked about what improves it. Let me see if I go here to a couple more of my parent questions here. We've talked about the collaboration. We've talked deficiencies. Describe... What's the best method to engaging the student? In terms of this online IEP process. What would you as a parent say... Here's how the students should be involved?

Interviewee: I think actually... My daughter is very verbal and likes to give her own feedback, and in some ways, I think I don't even know what she needs because she's really the

one going through the process and she's the one at school. I don't know all of the ins and outs of her daily routine at school, so I can appreciate even at this age though, that she could be asked like what she would want to work on too. You know what I mean? Like even just... Or in some way... It doesn't necessarily have to be like a formal process, but even if she got to have a questionnaire and she doesn't realize that it's necessarily being used for that process per se, but that she's being asked what she would want to do or be able to learn, and that could then be incorporated into it and help her with life skills and independence and social skills and all those things that we sometimes kind of forget about or take for granted.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Interviewee: I think in some way, like her input in a questionnaire or just verbally, kinda talking about it. I think she might have some good input.

Interviewer: Terrific, that's terrific feedback.

Interviewee: That's good.

Interviewer: What else? Anything else? Those were my questions.

Interviewee: Okay, yeah. I'm trying to think. Let me think on it for a minute, I'm sorry.

Interviewer: That's okay.

Interviewee: I don't know that this necessarily... In some way falls into the IEP process, but I think... One thing I do think about that's just kind of happened naturally with her in her classroom, is the other students getting engaged and learning about things that are different. So there's certain tools that she utilizes in her classroom that her friends now have taken notice of and have learned from that. I think that's... I guess I appreciate it. The fact that these kids are kind of getting a positive...

Interviewer: They're learning from her experience.

Interviewee: They're learning from her too. Exactly. So even though the focus is for her to utilize them, there's still other kids that are learning from that too.

Interviewer: Awesome. Which goes to the opportunity of making sure students continue to be with their peers.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Because it's a two way learning opportunity.

Interviewee: Exactly. If you separated her from that classroom, those kids would not learn about those devices or that technique or... You know?

Interviewer: Terrific. Thank you for your time.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interview 7

Interviewer: Okay. I am with Interviewee Real quick, I'll have her give just a quick background of herself, in terms...

Interviewee: This is my 30th year, I'm gonna be completing my 31st year. I have been an administrator principal for nine, a VP for five. I've held the role of First Grade teacher, Second Grade, Fourth Grade, CMC, AMC, BMC, which are behaviour units and resource, and then I was a special campus coordinator for the district, and taught middle school for three years.

Interviewer: Fabulous resource.

Interviewee: Lots of experience.

Interviewer: Thank you very much. Thank you for doing this, by the way.

Interviewee: Absolutely.

Interviewer: So, the first question is, why are you, why is your school using the online IEP?

Interviewee: Actually, I was back in the day when we were using paper and pencil, and triplicate forms. So, the district implemented our current eSped and so, it's implemented on a district level, the decision to use that vendor.

Interviewer: Across all the district?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. And what would be your experiences, in terms of... Your feedback on using the online IEP?

Interviewee: Well, I like it in the way that it's a 21st century solution to not having paper, pencil, files to track and get a hold of. It's always available, readily available, to campuses. If a student transfers, it's always available for all the stakeholders to get on. I don't have to find a physical folder, the information's there. So the access is good.

Interviewer: Not multiple copies floating around...

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Of that nature, right?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: You mentioned the duplicate and triplicate, right? That isn't happening any more?

Interviewee: No. That was back in the day.

Interviewer: That's good. In terms of efficiency, so the process being very efficient, easy to use... What's your perspective on that? And there could be both the pros and the cons.

Interviewee: I'll tell you the good and the cons.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I feel like the document itself... Being electronic is the way we go with everything nowadays. I think it's even hard to be a regular citizen and not have access to the computer, as far as your taxes, things like that. So that's a positive.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: I do think some of the paperwork that's required in the document needs to be looked at, as far as time to prep. It's a pretty difficult document for teachers to prepare, and then in the meetings, it goes pretty smoothly, but there's a component that... You have to go through a lot of different screens. It would be a lot easier if they looked at it and tried to refine it.

Interviewer: Great.

Interviewee: Is is okay that I mention the vendor?

Interviewer: Yes, you can.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Because I've seen other documents from other school districts, in and out of Texas...

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: And I've seen simpler templates.

Interviewer: Approaches?

Interviewee: And I don't think eSped is actually responsible for it, maybe our district that, really, dictates what's in the template.

Interviewer: Okay. Very good. Let's get inside... That echoes...

Interviewee: And maybe due to lawsuits and things, I don't know... There's a lot of things that we have in there that I just wonder, "Does it have to be?"

Interviewer: Stuff that happened from the past, where...

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Parents have come, and then you need to try to drive that out?

Interviewee: To document.

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. In terms of effectiveness, getting the job done, being effective with handling the online IEP, how would you describe effectiveness?

Interviewee: I think it's effective. The real work comes with the person behind the computer.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: The teacher. The administration behind... Making sure it's implemented. I think it has a good structure, with the goals, and then the activities that align with the goals.

Interviewer: So, when you talk about... Just real quick on the, "It comes with the people behind it." Describe... Actually making sure, fulfilling the requirements...

Interviewee: It's not the program, it's the person.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: It's not the program.

Interviewer: Very good insight.

Interviewee: It is.

Interviewer: By the way, just so you know, I've met now five of your staff...

Interviewee: Yeah, they're awesome.

Interviewer: They're phenomenal. They're phenomenal. One of the things that they talk about is, you have so many kids you have to support, and I think this allows them... They work...

I've given all of them, and I think you know, and... I see they care so much for the kids, and I think your parents should be very thrilled of the staff they have.

Interviewee: I think they do, for the most part. I don't know if anyone communicated that with you, but I think there are parents that come here, just because of the reputation of our special education staff here. And it's great, because with both Tania and I, we have a background. She's definitely very versed with special ed because of her son, and then I've worked in it for years and years and was a special ed campus coordinator, and even a special ed teacher, so I understand the value. So, I think it's not really eSped that is whether it's effective, it's the teacher behind it. And I do have great teachers.

Interviewer: That's great. In terms of any features that you think would improve the people who use it, their experiences with it?

Interviewee: Streamline it. It needs to be streamlined, as far as how we're required to fill out the information. I don't know if any of the teachers talked to you about the prep time, the amount of time it takes to prepare the document, according to what the standards of what our district sets. But just getting the PLAAFP, which is the present levels of academic performance, completed. I just think that it's a good document, it's necessary, but there's some streamlining that needs to be done.

Interviewer: And those are the features that interfere just too much?

Interviewee: Sometimes I feel like it's not parent... For the parent and actually it is for the parent.

Interviewer: That was going to be my next question. Expand on that.

Interviewee: I think it's almost like buying a house. I always say that to the parent, there's so many things that have to be signed. It's very intimidating. A lot of our lingo is in the document

and I don't think all the time parents understand the process because of, if we talk about when they have to sign off. Let's say, I'm trying to think of, if they understand least restrictive environment, if they understand that the five day waiver, I mean it's all very confusing for a parent, especially if it's their first time signing in to the program.

Interviewer: And when you think about parents' access to the program itself, from what I understand, they get printed paper. Do you think that's the right amount? Do you think as a parent or putting yourself in their shoes, should they have greater access, less access, what do you think?

Interviewee: I think they definitely need access. I mean that's their child. I could see where it could be sent electronically very easily and we could do that via an email and it would be a great way of keeping up with what's going on. I think that just like when you buy a house. You get a paper copy still right, or you get a CD.

Interviewer: No, you get both.

Interviewee: So I kinda feel it's two-fold, it would be nice to provide them with electronic and a hard copy.

Interviewer: And how about, the last question is objectives, like being on a monitor and manage those objectives so they can see the performance of their child based on the plan that's in place. Would that be helpful, you think, in terms of...

Interviewee: Oh, definitely, definitely. I think they're an important part and as the person... It's not the program, it's the person. They have to feel like they're part of the program and during the ARD meeting, you need to ask the parents continually, "Is that okay? Do you have suggestions?" Because they know their child best. They have to be part of the process. It's not one-sided.

Interviewer: That's awesome. Great feedback...

Interviewee: Well, it's true. It's a passion of mine and oftentimes, long ago, special ed looked differently than it does now. Our goal is for kids to make progress, to learn to compensate and then eventually be dismissed.

Interviewer: Yes. Get improved, get to the point where we can be self-sufficient and move people.

Interviewee: And a lot of times that happens.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Interviewee: I'm very passionate about the kids that receive special education services and I think with our state mandates, I'm very disturbed by how we're expecting kids to fit one size and test in one size fits all. It's sending a message to kids in a very early age that they may not pass the tests, but that failure is something that is very hard to turn over to kids. We see growth and we celebrate it, but when a child's been... You failed, you have to go through and when you're in fifth grade, you have to take it again. And we know some of these kids are significantly below level because they've got some real significant eligibilities that will impact the way they learn, so instead of looking at a growth or model or a continuous improvement model and celebrating that, we're looking at a pass/fail.

Interviewer: It [] _____ them too, it kills them.

Interviewee: It does and it kills parents.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And it's disappointing to teachers that they work so hard to get kids to grow, and then the kids are told that you failed. It's not that simple and our politicians need to realize

there are kids in our schools with significant needs and it's not one size. We're built on a population of diversity and we have to recognize that in an educational forum, right?

Interviewee: Exactly right. I think that once you correct... So the intent behind all this is I wanna seek... Every student should have a learning plan, frankly, right? Because everyone learns differently. I learn different from you. And once you get this amazing teacher that can crack the code, you want that code to be shared so that student can continue to grow and they have an amazing learning career. And I'm trying to get the learning from what we're doing with online IEP to figure out how can it also impact...

Interviewee: Let me tell you, it can be done because we use...

Interviewer: In an efficient way.

Interviewee: We do have a program that uses data, it's called CMS. Did anybody talk to you about that?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Yeah, so that's really like your file at the doctor's office, it's kind of like a file like that. It's gonna take your data about your attendance, how you do on CDBs, it's gonna even have report card data and that could be really the basis for what you're talking about. 'Cause they talk about now little chips that will follow you when you go to the doctor's office with all your information so that the doctor can just open up and see where you're at, well that's where I think we're going. That it'll be kind of like a chip or an ID that you come and register and then you have all this information about the kids.

Interviewer: And each teacher can know exactly what worked well, what didn't work well. How we cracked the code to make sure that they grow.

Interviewee: So instead of a focus on testing, maybe one day if the rulers of the world think about it, it can be more about design and growth and improvement.

Interviewer: Awesome.

Interviewee: You know as...

Interviewer: I know exactly what you mean.

Interviewee: Yeah, you do. Yeah. It's very disheartening to me, what we're doing to some kids. They leave here feeling like a failure.

Interviewer: Yeah, and so do parents, and so do teachers and everyone. It affects everyone in that process, all the stakeholders.

Interviewee: And parents, they don't want their kids to struggle. That's just, when you're the protector, you're the parent, you don't want them to struggle, but then they put them in a system. Maybe we have a kid that has autism and they definitely have comprehension issues and struggles with just the spoken word, but yet you're saying they have to pass this fifth grade test, and it's just not appropriate. You know? And it doesn't look at that growth model that we should look for everyone, continuously through our lives, right?

Interviewer: Agree.

Interviewee: Hopefully.

Interviewer: Thank you for all your time and thank you for letting me have access to your school.

Interviewee: Oh, yes. Certainly. I know that.

Interview 8

[background conversation]

Interviewer: Okay. I am here with Interviewee, who is a parent and also has some deep Special Education experience, along with obviously being a parent of a student with a learning disability. Perhaps you could just describe your role and who you are.

Interviewee: I have a son with special needs and he just turned 11. My background is in Special Education. I have my Undergraduate and my Master's in Special Education, and I taught Special Ed for five years, and then I flipped over and taught General Ed for 10 years, and my last seven were in a collaborative setting. So now, I work for a school district where I'm the Collaborative Teaching Specialist. I do all the support scheduling for our entire district, which allows schools to have a more efficient and effective use of their Special Education staff, to work alongside a General Education teacher. So trying to keep kids with special needs in the least restrictive environment and teaching those two teachers, a General Ed teacher and a Special Ed teacher, how to work collaboratively together to move all kids and progress them forward in education.

Interviewer: Fantastic.

Interviewee: I've done that for the last eight years.

Interviewer: That's fantastic. Great experience for not only a parent, but also from your, obviously, work experience. So in using... Why is the district, why is the school using the online IEP from your perspective?

Interviewee: I think they do it as a... To be more efficient and effective, definitely probably to save the paper. You hear a lot about paper and printing costs. It's always about budgetary issues, always comes up when it comes to Special Education and the amount of paperwork that happens, so I think that's the main reason. I think they also do it, of course, to keep up with the times. I think it's more helpful to probably streamline the procedures in the

training process and everybody is seeing the same thing. With a district our size, that's always an issue, is how to get people trained and get them up to speed.

Interviewer: Okay, And is that technology at large or is that all process? It's just...

Interviewee: All processes, especially with Special Ed. It is a big struggle. With the amount of turnover within that department and the amount of constant training that has to be done within that department, it's just an ongoing uphill battle. So anything that they can make more formal, they're gonna do it.

Interviewer: Good. In terms of your lived experiences with the online IEP, your use, your interaction with, either as a parent or as in your job, describe that. Describe your experiences with it.

Interviewee: I think even with my educational background, that really, it kind of goes out the window a lot when you come into a ARD situation, because you are wearing the hat of a parent, of a mom, and that is a very emotional hat that you're wearing. So even though you have all of this background knowledge, you're still going in there as a mom. I feel like the ARD process, just in general, is quite intimidating. I feel like the online ARD, when you get that paperwork, you don't have to worry about understanding the handwriting that someone's written, because it's all been typed out, so it looks very professional. It looks very formal, which can be somewhat intimidating. And even with my background, the amount of forms that you get is overwhelming to me. And so a lot of times, I don't put a lot of credence in it, because I just simply think it's a check off box that has to be done and it's really not gonna give me a lot of useful information about my son. What I value is the face-to-face interaction of time with the teachers, with the people that are touching my son, where I can look in their eyes. I can read their

body language. I can ask questions. That, to me, is a lot more powerful that anything that's put on paper.

Interviewer: Okay. That's fantastic insight. I could go so many places there, but you're right, it's about what the conversation is versus... You're not alone in talking about the checkboxes and things of that... It's just a formality almost. So taking that into perspective, how would you describe in terms of efficiency, like efficiency may be easy to use, a streamlined process, when you think about that, the current online IEP process?

Interviewee: What I hear from teachers, and I train about at least 2,000 teachers every year...

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: 2,000 Special Ed teachers every year and they all talk about the ARD process. They all talk about the paperwork. And what I know from a leadership standpoint, being in the district, I know our district puts too many protocols in place, so our teachers are having to do more work than they should have to do, than the state requires paperwork-wise. That bogs them down. So when you listen to a teacher talk about, "I've gotta set aside a minimum of 10 to 13 hours to prep an ARD, and I'm not given time to do that other than time at home," I think that's a problem. The teachers don't always understand the paperwork. Every campus has different procedures for teaching those teachers how to do paperwork.

Interviewee: Some are better than others, so you get discrepancies within the paperwork. In my position, I work with elementary, middle, and high school. I see the gamut. I see the gamut of paperwork, and you see so many discrepancies based on the teacher's skill set. A lot of times what you see is just kind of cookie cutter and cut and paste, where a lot of what goes in to that paperwork is just, they're trying to jump through those hoops and through those boxes, because

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they've gotta go to ARD and it's a lot of prep. So it's not really that individualization gets lost, unfortunately. Now, when you have an ARD that's tedious, and I mean when you have an advocate, or it's a contentious ARD, then so many people jump in to support that teacher, to make sure that paperwork truly is individualized, and then I think it has more value. For the majority of ARDs that happen, no, I think it's really a bunch of check off boxes.

Interviewer: Check off boxes. Just get through the process.

Interviewee: Just get through the process. And I think it's a lot of wasted time.

Interviewer: Okay, so in terms of effect... Now let's change gears to it being effective. Right, when you think about the student, or your child, given all that, is that process, that online IEP process, would you consider it effective at this point? Yes, or no. Describe it.

Interviewee: I would probably say no, in the sense that too much time is being spent on the teacher having to go through and prep all these pages, whether it's electronic or not. No, and I don't think it benefits my son. I would rather the teacher not have to spend so much time on that paperwork and have more energy prepping his or her lesson to impact my child in the classroom.

Interviewer: Right, spend more time on... In the business world, I call it the customer... But the child is what you're trying to support. Right?

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: So, spend all your energy there, less time on all this other stuff.

Interviewee: Yes. And I really think a lot of teachers, special ed teachers and gen ed teachers don't even understand the paperwork. Especially our gen ed teachers. They don't understand what they're signing, and as much training as they get, they don't understand when they sign that paper, they've really tied their hands into what instructional practices are supposed to be happening for those kids. And I see that those instructional practices don't often occur.

Interviewer: Because they don't know what they're signing and they get themselves into something that's pretty difficult or complex.

Interviewee: Yes, or not warranted. Really not needed, and they don't have the data and they don't have anyone helping them understand that it's okay to go to ARD and tell mom and dad this, even though it's in here and you want this, this isn't gonna help your child because of these things. I do these practices instead and these can benefit your child much more. They don't understand that they have the right to have those professional conversations. As parents, that's what we wanna know. What really works for my child?

Interviewer: That's right, what's the key to unlock success? Okay. In terms of features, when you think about the software itself... I know you have limited exposure as a parent... But would there be any features you would like to see that would improve your experience? And talk about even access. Would you like to have more access even?

Interviewee: I don't have any desire to have more access. I think because, as I stated, I don't put a whole lot of credence into a lot of it. I think anything we could do to cut it down and streamline it for the teachers would be beneficial. I know that when they took the drop downs away for the teachers, that kinda slowed the process, which kinda made it more cut and paste type of situations. I don't think that really helped when they took that away from them. Really, to me, it's about whatever we can do in this process to make it easier on our teachers to get this part of it done so they can get to their real work, which is teaching the kiddos, which is what they wanted to do when they signed up to be a teacher.

Interviewer: That's what they went into the business to do.

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: That's where their heart is.

Interviewee: I know, and I think if we don't start doing a better job cleaning up this process, we're gonna continue to lose a lot of good teachers.

Interviewer: And what you just spoke to is things that interfere. All those things you just mentioned talk about what interferes with the process, and at the end of the day, it's interfering with the teacher's ability to actually teach the child, correct?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Okay. Let me see here. Last question I have here is, talk about the student... Your child in this process. What would be ideally the way you'd want to see them engaged in the IEP process? Would you want to see them engaged at all or not, is it too much, too little? Think about that.

Interviewee: I haven't reached the stage where kiddos are really included in that process yet. Now I know that that's coming. I know when kiddos get older and they transition to high school, then they become part of that process. I don't talk to my son... We don't talk about him being special ed or having special ed services, because I think what we find when our kids are little is they already feel so different, and their self-esteems have often been affected because they're not... They haven't been successful in school, So, in the early stages, I think we're fighting so hard as a parent to help them just simply feel good about themselves and be successful. So, as far as the ARD process, I don't see a need for him to be a part of those meetings until he does become older. My hope for him is that by then, he might be exited out of the program, so he wouldn't ever have to deal with that. But if that is not his reality, if he does continue to need those services, then part of that, I wanna educate him that learning differently is okay and these are support mechanisms, a system that's in place to help you be the best you can be.

Interviewer: Yup.

Interviewee: I think that if we get to that point and he's coming into high school and he's... And I wouldn't really think I would want him to participate in middle school other than maybe coming in and maybe listening to what teachers have to say about him, and him being able to have some dialogue in middle school about his learning... I think he would probably have the maturity to do that. But only if it was a very positive, kind of productive experience for him. Not, "I'm gonna come down on your kid, 'cause your kid has... "

Interviewer: Yeah. Lifting him up.

Interviewee: Right. It's gotta be part of that continuing education. And I think some teachers can struggle with that when kids hit secondary, especially. But by the time if he's still in the program... By high school, he's gonna have to learn how to self-advocate. And he's going to need to understand how he learns, what things need to be put in place for him to be successful, because my hope for him is even if we have to go to a junior college, which would probably be our reality before moving on to a university, that he would be able to advocate for himself. And so, sitting through that process and understanding the process, maybe it wouldn't be as intimidating.

Interviewer: Makes sense.

Interviewee: I don't want him to be intimidated.

Interviewer: Yup. And actually take it on as more ownership and then also, he knows how he learns. And it's okay. God made us all different. Everyone learns differently.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: And here's how you learn. Right?

Interviewee: And I think that impacts the teachers, too, to see when the kiddo cares enough about to ask inquisitive questions and, "Okay, what can I do" type situations. I think that

makes teachers wanna work harder, especially at secondary. Because we see teachers think, "Well, it's one size fits all. And I'm gonna create an assignment. This assignment's gonna be for the 30 kids in my class and it doesn't matter that these accommodations need to be done, much less modifications, even though I'm supposed to be doing them." So, I think when you put the child there and they can advocate for themselves that that's [] ____ to that teacher.

Interviewer: Awesome. Anything else? You good?

Interviewee: I think that's it.

Interviewer: Thank you for your time.

Interviewee: Absolutely. All right, I don't know if that was helpful.

Interview 9

Interviewer: Okay, I am here with Interviewee for our online IEP interviews. He's an administrator. Interviewee, if you mind just maybe introducing yourself and your role.

Interviewee: Sure. I'm an administrator that supervises campus principals, and supervise clusters of campuses.

Interviewer: Great. And you've been in the academia for how long?

Interviewee: 41 years.

Interviewer: [chuckle] And counting?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: That's great. And you've been a principal, you've been...

Interviewee: Principal, administrator at every grade level, special ed, speech pathologist...

Speaker 3: High school.

Interviewee: High school principal, high school assistant principal, elementary assistant principal and middle school principal.

Interviewer: Awesome, great.

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Interviewee: And now central office executive director.

Interviewer: That's awesome, thank you. Now in terms of using online IEPs, why is the district using online IEPs?

Interviewee: Basically, as a legal entity in order to cover themselves and make sure that modifications in individual education plans are met and documented for every student.

Interviewer: Great, great. In terms of you using IEP, I know you're in administrator role, so you may have a little bit of limited access, but drop on what you currently are... Talk about your experiences with the online IEP.

Interviewee: Well, the online IEP, basically, when it gets to my level is normally having to deal with issues that are coming up either with a parent complaint, a teacher complaint, student complaint, or some type of initiative where it's either in a grievance process, or litigation dealing with an IEP not being met. And so, the IEP online basically gives us access to say what it was, who all had access to it and how they were implementing it, or what they were not implementing.

Interviewer: Great, great. As you look at... In terms of efficiencies, that process where your teachers and your parents and special ed and your principals are all using the online IEP process. In terms of it being efficient, easy to use, what do you hear, what do you know in terms of your lived experiences in that?

Interviewee: The main thing I hear is the amount of time, the time that it takes to get teachers to get the information in, and a lot of the times, access to it. Having access to it and being able to spend enough time to get the proper information. And I know a lot of teachers prior to going into an ARD will be working hours on end to get all the information in on the IEP online.

Interviewer: Both daytime, nighttime.

Interviewee: Oh, many night hours, yes. Yup, I hear that from teachers always.

Interviewer: Great. In terms of it being effective, getting the job done, how would you rate and how would you describe the effectiveness of your current online IEP process?

Interviewee: You know, I can't really say too much about that. I know that if the process goes well, and after the ARD is complete and IEP is established, once it gets in the system, I think it's a pretty effective system. I think the... I'm not sure as far as once it gets in the system, who all has access and how easy the access is to the IEP.

Interviewer: And we say that is... Are you talking about in terms of access in terms of people seeing it?

Interviewee: Direct teachers that are involved with the kids, yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: Because legally, no one should be seeing that except the teacher that is directly involved with the kids and so you have to have it protected, where those teachers are aware of it. But then if you have a schedule change or a teacher change in the middle of a month, the middle of a year and the last teacher was well aware of these IEPs, then making this new teacher aware of the IEPs, it's almost like you need a monitoring system to be able to go in and say who all is monitoring, who all is going in and looking at this IEP, are the teachers even looking at it? So ideally, if you can have a tracking system that shows you every time somebody hits on that IEP and who it was, it'd be ideal.

Interviewer: That's great. And I think also for monitoring terms, is it actually reaching the classroom?

Interviewee: Exactly.

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Interviewer: Okay. Well, you mentioned there a couple of features that would improve the system, you talked about the monitoring and being able to transition from teacher to teacher, what other features would you say could really improve the process of an online IEP?

Interviewee: Well, and I'm sure it's tied somehow to a student schedule or a classroom teacher. Like I said before, if it could be red-flagged, or something when there's a schedule change, so that when the counselor, like at a secondary level would make a schedule change, it would red-flag it so that then that new teacher, that new schedule change would be immediately notified, "This a SPED student that has an IEP, and here are the modifications in the individual education plan that needs to be met in their class," so that there is no wasted time or downtime. And the other thing is, how accessible is it? Is it accessible by mobile devices now such as phones like everything else is going to? Do you have to get in behind the firewall on this campus, which typically, in most school districts, you do. And then how easily accessible is that from home?

Interviewer: And you just mentioned there're some... With things that interfere, right? Is accessibility from a mobile perspective.

Interviewee: Exactly.

Interviewer: Anything else interferes, you think, maybe goal calculations? Or goal []
____?

Interviewee: Well, and every time, say a parent or a teacher calls for an ARD review and they go in and change that IEP, then what's the process, what's involved in notifying everybody that's involved in that, changing that IEP. If they met the goal, or if they're not meeting the goals, how are they modifying the IEP? And then if it's a major change and they've had an ARD, the process a lot of the schools use caseworkers and where there's a special ed teacher assigned as

the case worker. After the ARD, that caseworker then goes to all the teachers and says, "These are the changes." But if all the teachers had a notification that an ARD's taken place, then they could go in and access the IEP the next day, and see if any changes were made that they're gonna need to start implementing on the next day.

Interviewer: Good. In terms of... You mentioned major gaps. Any additional gaps that you would say... When you think about, envision a perfect online IEP process or setup, any other gaps that you think that would exist out there that you haven't mentioned?

Interviewee: Well, ideally, an individual education plan on the SPED student, whether they're identified in kindergarten or what grade level, you would be able to start plotting and checking student progress, the student growth measure. So ideally if you could look at the baseline or where they entered at, and then start looking at the progress measure, it would help that student not only towards their future goal of graduation and beyond graduation, but also success in whatever state-mandated test they have to take. Then it would tell you exactly their capabilities of being able to take this test, or not being able to take the test, and how it would qualify.

Interviewer: Awesome. That's a great gap, if you could [] ____ that up.

[chuckle]

Interviewer: Okay. In terms of parent involvement, talk about the online IEP process and what you would see as, how parents should be involved.

Interviewee: Well, I think the parent and the student... In the school district we work with, it's a lot about student involvement along with the parent. The student and the parent actually get together, and we even have a lot of the student-led ARDs now, in which, if the student can, they actually lead their ARD. So it really makes them own it a lot more and get a lot

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more involved, rather than people talking about the student. The student gives feedback with the parent. And I think the more involved the family is in the process, the more cooperation, the more follow-through, the more communication you're gonna have between the home and the school.

Interviewer: Fantastic. Any other comments in terms of the online IEP process, you know, at your level? Anything that you would think from a teacher perspective at all, anything else to mention? I mean, we covered...

Interviewee: Other than maybe figuring out some way that those special ed IEPs could be... Whenever the teacher gets their initial class roster, if there was... And a lot of school districts do now, they're coded SPED on their schedules. But if there's a way that a teacher, whenever they got their class roster or their secondary class schedules, would be able to get something that immediately tells them, "This is a special education kid that has a really detailed... Or an IEP that has to be implemented in my classroom." Because too often we leave it up to that special ed caseworker to go around and sit down, and meet with all the teachers so that they understand those modifications. If there was some way when that master schedule's built that it would be able to notify that teacher, "Look immediately at these students, 'cause they have detailed IEPs."

Interviewer: Great, that's fantastic. I appreciate your time.

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: Thank you so much.