

SEND THE BANQUET INVITATIONS:  
METHODS OF MINISTERING TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

BY  
ANDREW P. KRUEGER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. NATHAN ERICSON, ADVISOR  
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY  
MEQUON, WI  
FEBRUARY 17, 2023

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to adapt American special education methods to a pastor's and congregation's ministry. Special Education and related services, especially in the United States, have developed significantly over the past century. Individuals with special needs, who were once primarily ignored and mistreated by society, can now learn in general education classrooms, pursue careers, and participate in social programs thanks to many individuals who advocated for them and changed government laws to establish researched-based support in schools. Using modified versions of the methods portrayed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a pastor and his congregation can coordinate effective and efficient ministry for individuals with special needs.

## INTRODUCTION

Why should a congregation focus on ministering to people with special needs when many others need to hear the gospel? Jesus started his sermon on the mount in Matthew 5 by describing the spiritual nature of all people who recognize their sinfulness and need for a Savior: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (NIV). While Jesus is not referring to physical disabilities, many of these traits reflect the difficulties individuals with special needs face daily. They are poor in spirit because every exhausting day can be a struggle to get through. They mourn because there are things they cannot do that people without disabilities easily accomplish. They are meek because they depend on doctors, nurses, teachers, housing staff, parents, and siblings to care for their specific needs. A congregation may feel intimidated by the physical barriers which prevent them from addressing their spiritual needs. Yet those who have worked with individuals with special needs tend to notice an attitude opposite to these traits. They find excitement in smaller things, like a butterfly coming out of its shell. They find joy in songs like “Jesus Loves Me” every time it is sung. They have the confidence to pursue the passions that interest them. Later Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 18:3). It is evident to many who work with individuals with special needs that their child-like

faith shines greater than in most Christians.<sup>1</sup> Jesus also emphasized the vital need to support individuals with special needs:

When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. (Luke 14:12–14)

A congregation may initially feel anxious about starting a special needs ministry, but Jesus encourages Christians to pursue it. Those who have experienced special needs ministry can attest to the hope and joy found within this unique form of outreach.

A congregation can address many types of special needs, and some are easier to offer aid for than others. American society has developed several methods of assisting individuals with physical disabilities: ramps and elevators for people in wheelchairs, ASL translators for the deaf, and assistive technologies such as text-to-speech for the blind. Mental disabilities, on the other hand, are significantly more nuanced. Some individuals require no extra care, while others always need a caretaker with them. It is difficult for a congregation to determine what care they need at the outset, so there is a temptation to ignore people who are perceived to have “difficult” special needs altogether. The Bible does not offer much guidance because, unlike physical disabilities, it does not overtly mention anyone having a mental disability. Some analysts believe

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1. Camp Phillip, a summer camp affiliated with the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod (WELS), hosts Jesus Cares Ministry, a WELS special needs ministry, each year for one week. One year I overheard a similar statement from one of the Jesus Cares staff. They were confused as to why churches invest so much in ministries to people who are not interested in hearing about Jesus when they could invest time in often neglected special needs ministries. In their experience, most people with special needs are overjoyed with the opportunity to be involved with a church. It connects them to a community of people who care about them and lets them know that God loves and cares about them. Their perception demonstrates the sad truth that there are souls eager for the gospel but often get neglected because they are “different.”

that there are examples of mental disabilities found within biblical narratives and have attempted to “diagnose” these biblical characters in an effort to have a case study for special needs ministry. One researcher supposes that Samson had a form of autism and that Moses might have had a learning disability.<sup>2</sup> The biblical evidence is lacking, though; seeking these examples tends to ignore what God says about individuals with special needs: they are sinful and need a Savior as all people do (Rom 3:23–24). The message of Christ is simple (Luke 18:17). Yet God challenges us to communicate his gospel message to people of various backgrounds (Matt 28:19–20) using different forms (2 Tim 3:16). While the Bible may not mention people with mental disabilities, Christians still have the explicit charge to evangelize to them with “great patience and careful instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). The methods described below are useful for aiding the ministry to individuals with any disability but are especially useful for individuals with significant mental disabilities.

Various barriers prevent pastors and congregations from welcoming individuals with special needs into the congregation. These hurdles include communicating, understanding behaviors, and knowing appropriate responses to an individual’s special needs. Christians are not alone in helping people with special needs, though. Educators in the United States have wrestled with Special Education (hereafter, SPED)<sup>3</sup> for the past century and have made significant progress.<sup>4</sup> The most significant legislation regarding SPED is the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), which lays out a comprehensive plan for serving an individual with

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2. Pandian, Jeyaraj, and Stephen Mathew, “Newer Insights to the Neurological Diseases among Biblical Characters of Old Testament.” *Annals of Indian Academy of Neurology* 13, no. 3 (2010), 164. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-2327.70873>.

3. See APPENDIX 1 for a list of acronyms.

4. Gerber, Michael M, “A History of Special Education,” essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 3.

special educational and functional needs.<sup>5</sup> IDEA was formed and has been continually revised through research-based best practices in SPED,<sup>6</sup> so this thesis will advocate for ministry reflecting IDEA. While it is difficult to establish an effective and sustainable special needs ministry, using the provisions of IDEA can jump-start a special needs ministry that ripples into the lives of many individuals and their friends, family, and communities. Using modified versions of the methods portrayed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a pastor and his congregation can coordinate effective and efficient ministry for individuals with special needs.

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5. Yell, Mitchell L., M. Renee Bradley, and Antonis Katsiyannis, "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," Essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 69.

6. Yell, "The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," 57-65.

## UNDERSTANDING SPECIAL NEEDS THROUGH THE EYES OF SPED

### **Terminology in Special Needs Ministry**

A congregation should understand how to talk with and about an individual with special needs. In Luke 5:17–29, Jesus taught in a house overflowing with people. Some friends wanted to bring their paralyzed friend, whom they carried around on a mat, to Jesus but were unsuccessful because of the crowd. They needed a creative solution to bypass the people, so they figured out a way to get their friend on the roof of the house, then they tore a hole above Jesus and lowered him down. One can imagine the annoyance from the crowd; how this *disabled man* “cut” in front of them to see Jesus, yet when Jesus saw the man, he did not focus on the man’s disability and the great hurdles he needed to overcome. Instead, the first thing Jesus addressed was a sinful man in need of forgiveness: “When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven’” (Luke 5:20). When ministering to individuals with special needs, congregations can use a similar mindset when talking to or about them. Referring to a person *as* a defect has often been used in a derogatory manner while calling them an individual *with* a disability keeps the focus on the person. In technical terms, “people with disabilities” is an example of person-first language, whereas “disabled people” is an example of identity-first language. While some individuals with disabilities may prefer to be called by identity-first language, it is best to default to person-first language before a relationship is established. Using this language also encourages the congregation to remember that individuals with special needs *are* people who need the gospel. After conversion, they *are* a child of God, yet they are still a person *with a disability* that the congregation can assist. Appendix 2 contains a graphic from the United States Center for

Disease Control (CDC) titled *Communicating With and About People with Disabilities* that details common addresses for specific disabilities. Similarly, for mental disabilities, it is important to avoid the term “mental retardation,” which was the correct terminology to use before the twenty-first century but has fallen out of use.<sup>7</sup> In special needs ministry, Christians cannot cure a person’s disabilities as Jesus did with a word, but they can cure their spiritual disability with Jesus’ saving Word. Using person-first language puts the attention on the person, who *has* a special need for Jesus, rather than on their disability.

### **Prevalence of SPED Disabilities**

It is difficult to measure how many people have special disabilities. According to the CDC, 10.8 percent of US adults have a cognitive disability that results in serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the CDC’s data is based on a comprehensive survey with a single question that asks: “Because of a physical, mental, or emotional condition, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?”<sup>9</sup> A simple “yes” does not give an accurate picture of their disability. A better estimate comes from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). While it only measures school-age children who receive special education services in the classroom, it is significantly more accurate as these are children who have a diagnosed disability specified in IDEA. The NCES estimates that 7.2

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7. Taylor, Ronald L., and Steve Richards, “*Exceptional Students: Educating All Teachers for the 21st Century*,” McGraw-Hill (New York: 2015), 17.

8. “Disability Impacts All of Us Infographic,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified October 28, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>.

9. “CDC - BRFSS – Questionnaires,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified August 24, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/questionnaires/pdf-ques/2021-BRFSS-Questionnaire-1-19-2022-508.pdf>

million, or roughly 13 percent, of students in the United States require Special Education services.<sup>10</sup> Assuming their estimates are reflective of the rest of the population, there is a great pool of individuals with special needs that a church could minister to.

### **Defining SPED Disabilities**

United States laws and programs, based on a century of evidence-based best practices, provide the foundation for defining disabilities, supporting individuals with disabilities, and advocating for them.<sup>11</sup> Today, researchers almost always base their criteria on government legislation, and in turn, they refine best practices that are weaved into new legislation.<sup>12</sup> The 1975 Education of All Handicapped Children Act, renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, is the chief law regarding special disabilities in the United States. However, it specifically targets individuals under the age of 21.<sup>13</sup> The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides broad legislation that prohibits discrimination and secures opportunities for individuals with disabilities to participate in American society. Using these researched-based resources will ensure an efficient and effective special needs ministry.

IDEA §§ 300.304–311 defines a child with a disability in need of special education and related services as an individual having an intellectual disability, a hearing impairment

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10. “Students With Disabilities, Condition of Education,” U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, last modified May 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg>

11. Gerber, “History,” 12–14.

12. Kauffman, James M., Devery Mock Ward, Richard L. Simpson, and C. Michael Nelson, “Contemporary Issues,” Essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 17–20.

13. Yell, “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,” 55–60.

(including deafness), a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment (including blindness), a serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, another health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities. IDEA guarantees free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for all children with a diagnosed disability starting at age three. Even before the age of three, many resources are available for at-risk infants and toddlers.<sup>14</sup> If a child is not diagnosed as having a disability in infancy, has a mild undiagnosed disability, or develops one later, it takes time for a school to formally recognize a student as having a disability.<sup>15</sup> For more details on the definitions of disabilities, see Appendix 3 from the United States Department of Education’s website.

To classify a student with disabilities who had not received early intervention care, IDEA regulates a process with several steps: initial identification, the prereferral process called response to intervention (RTI), the referral process, the determination of eligibility for special education, and then the development of the student’s special education program.<sup>16</sup> For most public schools, a three-tiered approach is used, which filters out students who do not need SPED.<sup>17</sup> The bottom tier is the general education curriculum, the middle is students recognized as needing additional help but not needing SPED, and the top is students requiring SPED. Figure 1 below is a simplified example of a tiered system. For ministry, a tiered system could be implemented in a catechism class or in a worship space to determine if an individual needs

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14. Snyder, Patricia A., Crystal C. Bishop, and Tara W. McLaughlin, “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,” Essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 65–66.

15. Taylor, “Exceptional,” 31.

16. Taylor, “Exceptional,” 30–35.

17. Kauffman, “Contemporary Issues,” 20.

additional help. Then the pastor or congregation can determine the necessity of an evangelism program designed uniquely for that individual, hereafter an Individualized Evangelism Program (IEvP), and, if so, what they can include.

## THE PRELIMINARY PROCESS TO THE INDIVIDUALIZED EVANGELISM PROGRAM

### The Initial Identification

As an example of the initial identification process in a church, imagine an individual walking into a church service and sitting through the first hymn, looking completely clueless. The hymn acts as a portion of the Tier I baseline, the “Core Instruction” portion of ministry, since most of the congregation understands basic hymnody and can either sing or follow along with ease. The initial identification is a church member observing their cluelessness while the first hymn is sung. Seeing them struggle, the member recognizes that this individual needs some help by either implementing changes to Tier 1 or adding a Tier II supplemental intervention. To determine what help the individual needs, the member lists several things he wishes to observe in his head for the rest of the service to have a baseline data set. He chooses to note whether the individual vocally responds when the rest of the congregation responds, if they follow along with the text of the Bible readings, and if they interact with the bulletin in any manner. Following the service, the member recorded several observations: the individual did not sing hymns, but they did mimic the

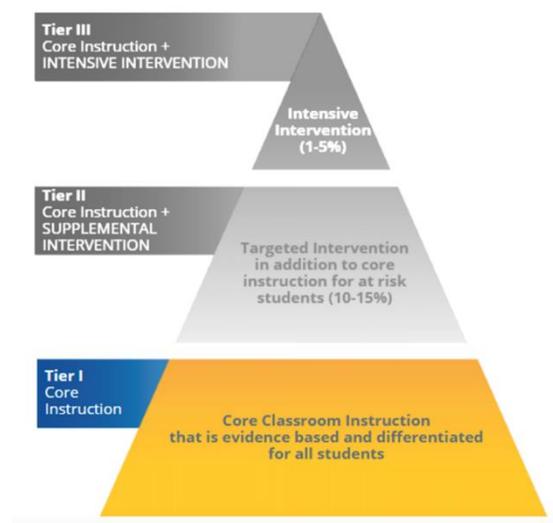


Figure 1

repeated lines of the liturgy, they did not seem to understand the Bible readings, and they seemed to hold the bulletin close to their face to read if they were reading at all.

### **Response to Intervention**

After collecting the initial data, the member asks the pastor to implement changes, or interventions, to the following week's service based on what they observed. The changes the member would then record are called the individual's Response to Intervention (RTI). There are different avenues the member could suggest for implementing interventions and collecting data. He first decides to change portions of Tier I worship to make it accommodate a broader audience. One suggestion he makes is to sing a hymn with a repeated refrain so that he could observe if the individual could sing after hearing the hymn a few times. Another suggestion is to play a visual Bible reading rather than having the pastor read the lessons so that the member could monitor whether the individual seemed to grasp what was happening. A final change he recommends is to include a supplemental Tier II intervention by providing a specific bulletin to the individual, which had the whole liturgy printed out in a larger font. The pastor endorsed the changes, and in the following week, the member paid close attention to how the individual would respond. That Sunday, the member noticed that the individual attempted to sing along after hearing the refrain, was captivated by the visual recording, and frequently used the bulletin during the service. The member records this data forming the individual's RTI. While RTI doesn't indicate that the individual has a disability, it provides proof that they may have some special needs which a congregation should be aware of.

In an ideal school setting, more RTI testing is completed. If the teacher feels confident that he can provide the necessary help without referring the student to SPED, then the student

would remain in the Tier I category with Tier II supports. If the individual needs additional support, the teacher would refer the student for Tier III Intensive Intervention, usually through SPED. Then the parents, special education teachers, medical professionals, and other specialists work together to identify and determine what disability the student has and what help the student needs.<sup>18</sup> Conversely, congregations do not have the luxury of time or knowledge of how to test an individual thoroughly. After collecting the RTI data, the pastor can converse with the individual, their family, and a few church members based on the recorded observations. In the example above, after talking with the individual, the pastor discovered that the individual in question was an immigrant from another country and came to practice his English. He likely, therefore, does not have a disability. On the other hand, he does have a special need that the congregation could use the IEvP to organize support for him.

### **Individualized Education Program**

The collaborative development of a student's special education program mandated by IDEA is called an Individualized Education Program (IEP). It is the essential part of IDEA, which legally regulates several components. It requires a record of current academic performance, measurable annual goals, a description of how progress is measured, a description of the required special education and related services that will be used, in what cases a child will not be in the general education classroom, a statement of necessary accommodations, and

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18. Taylor, "Exceptional," 38–44.

general information about the times and frequency of services during the goal period.<sup>19</sup> In summary, the primary purpose of an IEP is to facilitate growth in the individual toward standard functionality in school through obtainable goals. IEPs are intentionally thorough to give the student the best chance at success in the educational environment and to direct all parties in their roles to support the individual. Its holistic approach allows collaborators from different areas of expertise to understand all of a student's needs, which they can then relate to their area. Due to their extensiveness, an example of an IEP is not included in this thesis but is easily found online. Unlike an IEP, the IEvP is much less detailed in its approach because most churches do not have the resources to accommodate a full IEP. It does, however, follow a similar structure. If an individual has an IEP, the pastor or church staff could copy much of their IEP into the IEvP or include faith-related goals in their IEP, with the permission of the individual, their SPED teacher, and their parents.

An Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP) is also developed if the individual's family does not already have one from early intervention. Its purpose is to guide the whole family in supporting the individual, since they spend the most time with their family. Several functions of the IFSP include family training and counseling, special instruction, speech-language pathology, physical therapy, psychological services, medical services (for diagnosis), early screening services, social work services, vision services, assistive technologies, and transportation.<sup>20</sup> A pastor may find that family members are more difficult to work with than the

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19. Bateman, Barbara D, "Individual Education Programs for Children with Disabilities," Essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 87–94.

20. Taylor, "Exceptional," 45–47.

individual themselves for various reasons, yet their involvement is essential.<sup>21</sup> Appendix 4 contains a chart on strategies to promote family involvement. It is encouraged to have some form of an IFSP when collaborating on the IEP.<sup>22</sup>

### **Collaboration in an Individualized Evangelism Program**

One of the critical aspects of a successful IEP is collaboration.<sup>23</sup> In most cases, the failure of an IEP results from poor collaboration, usually because communication fails or people need to be more knowledgeable about the scope of the IEP.<sup>24</sup> It is not the special education teacher's job alone to teach a student. Instead, they must work with all parties to best serve the student. Similarly, it is tempting for a pastor to tackle the ministerial needs of an individual with special needs by himself. Instead, having several collaborators is in everyone's best interest.

In the best-case scenario, the church team will collaborate with an assembled team and can rely on them for support. If the individual is under 21, the team could talk with the SPED teacher or social worker, though they should first speak to the individual and their parents or guardians. If the individual or parents want a pastor to be involved in the individual's already-created IEP, school boards legally must allow the pastor to attend IEP meetings.<sup>25</sup> If they are

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21. Mueller, Tracy Gershwin, "Promoting Collaborative Partnerships with Families," Essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 777.

22. Due to its length, a sample IFSP is not provided in the appendix. An example form can be found here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/library/f-00989.htm>

23. Taylor, "Exceptional," 57–58.

24. Alexandra, Da Fonte M, and Miriam C. Boesch, "Effective Augmentative and Alternative Communication Practices a Handbook for School-Based Practitioners," (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 54.

25. Bateman, "Individual Education," 93.

over 21, the individual might be a part of an association or housing group which offers various supporting services that a church team can work with.

Unfortunately, some congregations will not be in areas that are competent in special education. In many circumstances, individuals will receive the bare minimum that a school or program must provide. They may have an IEP, but may lack a functional team to implement it. They may have some resources but lack others. In other instances, individuals might have gone their whole life without special help, to their detriment. In the past decade, researchers have recognized the lack of implementing IDEA in many American schools and are attempting to find solutions to make things easier for all involved.<sup>26</sup> A pastor, much like a general education teacher, can act as a front-line advocate for the individual. In such cases, advocating for an individual's legal rights might be the most crucial role a pastor plays in ministering to them.

Finally, the pastor cannot and should not be the only person to work with the individual. God demonstrates this many times in the Bible. Jesus had twelve close apostles and, early in his ministry, seventy-two disciples he sent out. Paul discussed the importance of collaboration in ministry in the first verses of 1 Corinthians 3. Moses' father-in-law advised him to delegate his work to others in Exodus 18. An added benefit of collaboration is that more people can serve and learn how to help people with disabilities. It cannot be stressed enough how vital a proactive, collaborative, ministerial team is in serving individuals with special needs.

### **A Pastor's Role in Special Needs Ministry**

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26. Kauffman, "Contemporary Issues," 20–21.

What exactly is the pastor’s role, then? The pastor will act much like a general education teacher in the classroom. For much of its history, SPED has struggled to balance inclusiveness and exclusiveness in general education classrooms. Naomi Zigmond and Amanda Kloo note this struggle, describing how, in the past, inclusiveness was assumed to be the best approach. Recently, however, inclusiveness has been observed to significantly harm students with special needs.<sup>27</sup> Due to the increase in diversity in public schools, many educators are adopting a “differentiated instruction” approach to education.<sup>28</sup> They do so to maximize every student’s individual success by providing multiple paths for their education. While differentiated instruction is valuable and practical, it is not *the* solution for special education. By being *so* inclusive in the classroom, students with special needs might have their special needs neglected.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, differentiated instruction does play a partial role in helping people with special needs. It challenges a general education teacher to provide multiple approaches for students to learn. It also reduces barriers that may prevent students with special needs from participating in a general education classroom.<sup>30</sup> For a pastor, this means that his role as a minister for people with special needs is not to adapt his sermon, worship, and bible studies to meet every individual need. Instead, by using differentiated instruction laid out in an IEP, a

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27. Zigmond, Naomi P., and Amanda Kloo, “General and Special Education Are (and Should Be) Different,” Essay, *In Handbook of Special Education*, edited by James M. Kauffman, Daniel P. Hallahan, and Paige C. Pullen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 249.

28. My wife recalled a time when she taught online for a Milwaukee Public School during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her school went “all in” on differentiated education. To ensure it was being done, an administrator would enter her Zoom classroom to observe for 5 minutes to see if she differentiated in that time.

29. Zigmond, “General,” 254.

30. Zigmond, “General,” 254.

pastor can include a person with special needs in the general congregational ministry with only minor changes to his approach. Then, the collaborative team can provide an appropriate specific ministry that accommodates their special need by being explicit, intensive, and supportive.

## THE INDIVIDUALIZED EVANGELISM PROGRAM

### **Developing an Individualized Evangelism Program**

With a collaborative team assembled, the pastor can now work with the team members to develop an IEvP. An example IEvP is provided in Appendix 5 and is recommended for viewing as a reference. It is an adaptation of an IEP and related forms from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's (WDPI) website.<sup>31</sup> Everyone present should get a copy of the IEvP, and one person can be the designated secretary for the meeting, who will then distribute the records shortly after the meeting. There is one cover letter and five parts to the IEvP form: Information about the Individual, Family Engagement, Measurable Annual Goals, Program Summary, and Individual Participation.

#### Cover Letter

The first form is the cover letter, detailing information about who the individual is, the purpose of the meeting, and everyone who is attending the meeting or involved in the IEvP in some manner. Notice that the first details are about the individual, bringing the focus to the one person everyone is gathered for. A form for each individual the congregation supports ensures that their specific special need is addressed and the responses in the coming pages cater only to their particular special needs. Going through the form, under "PURPOSE OF MEETING," checking

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31. Included on the website is an extensive guide to all their forms if the reader is interested in its usefulness in the classroom: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped/laws-procedures-bulletins/procedures/sample/forms>

the correct box will help organize past IEvPs in future meetings since the congregation can use this IEvP template each time. In the first meeting, you will check “Develop an initial IEvP.” The goals will be short-term oriented to gather information to help develop a more pointed “annual IEvP” next time. To note, IEvPs will not change much between meetings, which is discussed below under “Measurable Annual Goals.” “Other” factors could include extraneous things, such as meeting to respond to a recent medical emergency or a crisis, such as a pandemic, which may disrupt goals. Finally, all members have their names recorded so that the collaborative team knows who they can rely on. It is preferred that all members are present. If someone cannot make it, they should submit their thoughts before the meeting and receive everything that was discussed afterward.

### IEvP Section I: Information about the Individual

Section I on the IEvP form details how the individual currently functions in and outside the church environment. Section I.A., Strengths, does not include every talent the individual has, but rather those which are helpful in the church environment. Appendix 6 has a descriptive list of six “catch-all” skills the WDPI’s website recommends for consideration. Examples of these six skill strengths used in the IEvP can be seen in this table:

Academic	“Sally can read the simplified Bible verses from Jesus Cares Ministry without any help.”
Cognitive	“Thomas can memorize songs which have repeated refrains.”
Communication	“Lilly knows ASL and responds best to people who use it.”
Independence and Self-Determination	“George regularly uses his tablet to ‘sing’ the songs in church by pointing to the pictures related to the words of the hymn.”

Physical and Health	“James is able to sit and listen to anyone for hours!”
Social and Emotional	“When Jane is upset, she will leave the area to calm down so that she doesn’t disturb anyone.”

Section I.B., Current Church Engagement and Functional Performance, discloses the individual’s behaviors inside and outside the church. I.B. is best understood with comparatives using the RTI information. For example, “While most members could read responsively in the service, Alex could only respond with repeated lines like those in the prayer of the church.” “Functional Performance,” which includes any information outside of the church environment, can get exhaustive depending on who attends the meeting and what details they share. It is advised to keep the list concise to practical uses in the church environment, such as mobility on stairs or bathroom independence.

Section I.C., Special Factors, is crucial for targeting areas of improvement in the congregation. If question I.C.5., Concerning Assistive Technology, is marked “yes” because an individual’s hearing aid does not distinguish the sound produced by speakers well, the congregation might pursue a new sound system that can connect to hearing aids.<sup>32</sup>

Section I.D., Concerns of the Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Family, encourages the input of those most likely to be closest to the individual. It is not a place for them to describe how they feel or the problems they suffer in helping the individual. That is for an IFSP. Instead, it is their insights on how they have supported the individual and the worries they wish to express. I.D.2. is the chance for the individual to give specific input if they are able. If the individual wants to add

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32. Some states have libraries which rent out equipment to help individuals with disabilities so that they can test assistive communication devices. Wisconsin has one that rents equipment free of charge. You can find more information here: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wistech/index.htm>

something during the IEvP meeting, the team can put those notes here if they do not fit the current discussion point.

Section I.E., Effects of Disability, identifies how the individual's disability affects church engagement and functional performance. It highlights the "problems" which can be solved through practical changes in the church. Essentially, the congregation cannot change a disability, but they can mitigate how it affects the individual's church engagement. Statements should not restate that a disability has adverse effects; instead, they should state *how* it affects the individual's engagement. I.E. is answered differently in every meeting because it is what fine-tunes the rest of the IEvP. In future sessions, this is where the team responds to the effectiveness of previous goals and implemented practices in the church. At a later meeting, someone might say, "Last year, we made a goal to increase Sidney's participation by giving her cards to raise for 'yes and no' questions. Sidney struggled with sharing her thoughts because she could not always differentiate which questions were 'yes and no' and which were open-ended."

Section I.F., Summary of Disability-Related Needs, summarizes several things: 1. The effect of the individual's disability on access, engagement, and progress in the general congregational program and environment; 2. The root cause of why an individual is not meeting standard church engagement and functional expectations; 3. What skill or behavior the individual needs to develop and improve so the individual can participate in congregational activities. It synthesizes all the information about the individual in Section I and presents it in a checklist to tackle with goals in Section III. It is not about what everyone else does to support them. Instead, it is what the individual needs to improve on with the help of others. After several years, ideally, the IEvP will address the significant hurdles in the ministry environment, directing improvements towards maintaining rather than developing.

## IEvP Section II: Family Engagement

In an IEP, Section II describes the school's legal responsibility to engage the family in implementing the goals for a student with disabilities. In the IEvP, the focus remains similar without, of course, legal duties. The pastor wants to help the family, so he advocated for the IEvP, but now what? Noticing that the family does not have a strong devotional life, he decides he can support them by introducing them to several accessible devotions. By building the family up in Christ, the individual might also grow. Some congregation members also want to help, so a few members attended the IEvP. What can they do? Here are some examples. One member realizes that she lives close to the family, so she offers to drive them to church in the morning. Another member's niece has a disability, so he will see if that side of the family has any tips he can share with the current family if their child was recently diagnosed. Section II is helpful for getting other congregation members involved, even those not attending the meeting.

Section II is also helpful if an individual does not have relatives nearby but lives in an assisted living home. Maybe the pastor and a few members could come over once a month to do a mini-worship service at home. If the home has routine activities they go to, maybe the church could host a New Friends program or Jesus Cares Ministry and invite the whole group home. Section II is the "outward" focus of the IEvP as it encourages many others to participate in the ministry and give a strong witness to the faith.

## IEvP Section III: Measurable Annual Goals

Section III is the meat of the IEvP. Here, distinct goals are crafted that are ambitious but attainable, which will aid the individual in improving the disability-related needs drafted in

Section I.F. If an IEP was already made, III.A. reminds the team to review them. Goals could be modified and reused year by year, though the team should have discussed them in I.E. if the individual's disability prevented them from completing them. B–D goal slots are provided in the current form, but a team can develop many more if they wish.

In the section title, “measurable” means that these goals need comparisons. Before detailing the goal statement, it helps to understand what kind of goal is being made, found in sub-questions a. and b. of the goal statement. III.B.a. asks what the individual's baseline or starting point is. If the team mentioned in I.F. that individual “Thomas” needs to improve how many Bible verses he has memorized, the baseline would describe his current skill, in this case, “Thomas can recite only half of 3 verses.” III.B.b. asks what the level of attainment is or the end goal. Thomas' sister knows he can easily memorize whole Taylor Swift songs, so she suggested a highly ambitious level of attainment: “Thomas can recite thirty memorized verses of the Bible.” Now the team can craft the goal statement with the nuts and bolts of the goal “idea” completed.

A goal statement targets a skill or behavior which needs to improve. Attaining the goal will address the related effect(s) of the disability and disability-related needs. There is a lot of freedom in crafting a goal statement, and many templates are available. The WDPI suggests conditional statements as a framework.<sup>33</sup> Da Fonte and Boesch recommend this template:

(Individual's name) will (observable behavior, skill, or knowledge-based performance) to or with (some measure of criterion) for (consistency measure) by (schedule of evaluation).<sup>34</sup>

33. “At a Glance Step 3: Develop IEP Goals,” Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, last modified October 2017, <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/ccr-step3.pdf>.

34. Alexandra, “Effective Augmentative,” 211.

In the church environment, it could be, “Diane will repeat three take-aways from the sermon in 75% of opportunities for each month by June 10.”

Lisa Lightner, a Special Education Advocate, gives a different guide on her blog *A Day in Our Shoes*:

By (time frame), (Individual) will (skill) in (setting/context) as measured by (reporter) with (percentage) accuracy with (XYZ) supports.<sup>35</sup>

In the church environment, it could be, “By June 10, Quinn will initiate interaction with 2 church members after church in the narthex as measured by the record sheet given to Jane (a church member) in 6 out of 8 observed opportunities with no more than 2 prompts.”

Goals on an IEP tend to focus on measurable statistical data, which teams can track over time to demonstrate the improvement or failure of goals. At a church, this may prove difficult unless someone on the team can understand and interpret data. Instead, it is suggested to use a simplified version of these goals. The tricky part is that the team should not make goals that are too broad and without measurable marks. As an example, “William will do better greeting people” does not specify how much “better” the team wants William to get. Thus, framing questions after answering III.B.1. a. and b. will keep them brief yet effective.

III.B.2. splits the main goal into smaller goals, if necessary. These include setting dates for specific outcomes or establishing criteria being met at certain intervals, culminating in completing the goal. Individuals with the most significant cognitive disabilities will need these fractured goals as they provide a needed support structure. III.B.3. ensures that the disability-

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35. Lightner, Lisa. “Free IEP Goal Bank with 1000+ Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives Separated by Domain.” *A Day in our Shoes*, October 21, 2022. <https://adayinourshoes.com/iep-goal-bank/>.

Lisa has hundreds of examples for formulating questions if a team is having difficulty formulating questions!

related needs in I.F. are addressed. III.B.4. asks for a description of how the team will measure progress. Suppose something were to happen to the person designated with recording the progress of goals; III.B.4. will describe the process for someone to take over. III.B.5. keeps the family or guardians involved and informed. Much like a pastor discussing a catechism student's progress with their parents, a pastor or team member should also keep the individual's family informed and accountable for the individual's spiritual care.

Hopefully, the importance of the collaborative team shines through the goal-making process. It requires creativity and several different perspectives to generate and advance effective ministerial goals. Having multiple members involved in the team also spreads out the workload so that it is manageable and so that everyone can support one another (IV.D) and hold one another accountable if any part were to suffer.

#### IEvP Section IV: Program Summary

With goals set, the team can decide on the services needed by all parties. In parts A.–D., remember that the overall objective is to include the individual in the regular church environment to the furthest extent appropriate to their disability. If transportation to church is an issue, then ensure that it is discussed in detail in IV.C. IV. dictates who does what in the IEvP, so delegating is strongly encouraged in keeping with an “outward” focus and involvement by the congregation.

IV.A., Supplementary Aids and Services, in an IEP details the required resources a school would provide, at no cost, to the individual. Most of these are not services churches offer, such as an ASL interpreter in church, though in most states, there are resources readily available, discussed in IV.C. A church could offer some services if the congregation already has a special

needs ministry or people skilled in applicable areas. Included in IV.A. is if church members provide assistance to the individual during any church activity. For example, if a child needs to be pulled out of Sunday School for behavioral issues, a designated staff member who understands their disability can be noted here.

IV.B., Specially Designed Ministry, speaks to the pastor's role in designing a ministry that caters to the individual's special needs. Is the pastor going to offer a unique service once a month for people with special needs? That would be recorded here. Is the pastor going to use a simplified translation when doing personal devotions with the individual? That goes down as well. When drafting sermons and Bible studies, a pastor can consider making a simplified, differentiated version. He would not need to do this weekly, but out of all the things a pastor can do, this would likely be the easiest role for him to play in the IEvP. Sunday School teachers or elders can also describe their role in the specially designed ministry.

IV.C., Related Services Needed to Benefit from Special Ministry, is every outside support a church should consider before attempting to offer their support for the individual. Resources differ vastly by state; Appendix 7 has a list of a multitude of resources a church can look into, which include legal help, transportation, and support groups for families of individuals. Some resources are available through WELS Special Ministries, such as a grant to update audio equipment.<sup>36</sup> Pursuing these programs can often alleviate many burdens from the congregation while saving on costs if that is a concern. For school-aged individuals, there is a substantial amount of resources schools and communities are required to give by law. If a parent

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36. "MDHH to Offer Grants for Hearing Loops," WELS Mission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, last modified March 9, 2022, <https://wels.net/mdhh-to-offer-grants-for-hearing-loops/>.

feels their child is not receiving proper resources, they should consult an attorney immediately.<sup>37</sup>

After reviewing resources within the community, the collaborative team can determine what supplementary aids and services the church can offer.

IV.D. Program Modifications or Supports for Church Personnel determines the people supporting the individual. When supporting individuals with special needs, there might be a knowledge barrier causing them to be hesitant out of fear of harming or offending the individual. Others might have a negative attitude toward individuals with special needs. Offering some training can help create a church environment that is inviting to individuals with special needs. In some instances, an IEP team might consider the possibility of funding professional development for a Sunday school teacher, elder, or pastor in the field of special needs if they spend significant time with an individual. If cost is a concern, specific organizations listed in Appendix 7, such as PACER, offer free or inexpensive training seminars. If needed, Appendix 8 is a form to record what training someone will receive, which can be attached to the IEP. Keeping the “outward attitudes” in mind, a church could even consider receiving professional consultation to equip its members to be responsive to various special needs, such as paying an

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37. Jeffrey Forte, a special education attorney, and certified child advocate, expresses in his podcast Let’s Talk Sped Law that school districts in the United States frequently underplay their legally required role in SPED. Often, legal jargon and dismissiveness are used against parents to dissuade them from advocating for their children. For WELS pastors, this is especially pertinent in WELS grade schools, which may not have a SPED program. Private schools typically do not need to offer resources, but public schools have to. In most states, even if a child attends a private school, the public school is required by law to provide resources for them. Professor Kelli Green at Martin Luther College is writing a doctoral thesis on this subject, which will be a resource for private schools. Consulting a lawyer could be the best and cheapest way to provide the necessary supplementary aids and services for a child if they do not have access to those services.

In the seventh chapter of the Handbook of Special Education, “Individual Education Programs for Children with Disabilities” by Barbara Bateman, Bateman notes on pages 100–101 a number of lawsuits parents have made against school boards. It’s a common issue in our country, unfortunately.

ASL teacher to teach a class after church.<sup>38</sup> Depending on the needs of a community, a church can make a positive impression in many people's lives if they go "all in" in a special needs ministry. It starts with the individual and their IEvP, though.

### IEvP Section V: Individual Participation

Finally, the main objective is considered in the IEvP: involving the individual in the regular church environment. It is intentionally kept as the last point to help the team assess what programs the church offers and if they truly are accessible to the individual (or any other for that matter) with special needs. If the individual is high functioning, then the team could mark the first box indicating that they can participate in all activities. If they cannot, the second box is marked, and questions V.A.1. and 2. are asked. If the answer to these questions concerns a problem related to the congregation or church and not the individual, then the team can note it and discuss it in their appropriate contexts. For instance, if the individual uses a wheelchair and the church does not have a ramp, thus preventing them from attending worship, then the team can make a note to discuss this with the church council. Previous IEvP Section Vs are helpful to study in future IEvP meetings as there might have been problems the past IEvP did not address that the team can tackle in the present.

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38. In 2023 Martin Luther College began to offer online ASL courses and the WELS Mission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing offered grants for individuals who asked and completed the course. Information here: <https://csm.welsrc.net/download-csm/mdhh-resources-for-congregations/?wpdmdl=3447&refresh=6165e495bab521634067605&ind=1628687715314&filename=CSM-MDHH-MLCSignLangclass-Sprin2022-082021.pdf>.

Martin Luther College offers online SPED classes as well through their continuing education program, found here: <https://mlc-wels.edu/continuing-education/registration/>.

## IEvP Summary

The IEvP is a tool modified from the research-backed IEP that a church can use to support individuals with special disabilities. It describes the effects a disability has on the individual. It facilitates the creation of goals that address disability-related needs. It organizes the services a church can provide to support the individual and their family. It dictates the dates for reaching goals and when revision is needed to build on past progress. The growth focus will help the individual, their family, team members, the congregation, and even those outside the church to grow in Christ or encounter him for the first time. Investing some time at the start to become acquainted with the IEvP will save much more time in the future. Future IEvPs should be similar to previous ones if necessary so teams can share goals across multiple years and IEvPs. After a few uses, the committee will become familiar with the IEvP's use and can expedite the process, inviting more individuals to participate. This thesis will now shift from defining the targets of an IEvP to discussing the methodology of doing ministry that includes individuals with special needs.

## METHODS OF TEACHING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

### **What is the Least Restrictive Environment?**

One component of IDEA is implementing the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) in the general education classroom. LRE is achieved when proper accommodations are made in the method of instruction and classroom environment, which allow the individual to participate.<sup>39</sup>

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39. Taylor, "Exceptional," 48–50.

Most teachers do this through differentiated instruction, but before discussing the LRE in a church, it makes sense to relay the various instruction methods that a teacher or pastor may already use first. Peter Westwood, an educational consultant and author of *Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs and Disabilities*, summarizes popular teaching methods, some of which a pastor may already use. These are all Tier I methods; that is, they are used in the general education classroom.

### **Types of Instruction**

Teaching methods include explicit instruction, interactive whole-class teaching, and direct teaching. Explicit instruction is the most common style of teaching, where a teacher provides information using a comprehensive and engaging curriculum. Still, it allows the freedom to explore information not laid out in the lesson plan. It encourages student-teacher interactions, typically in the form of questions and answers. A teacher can use aids such as PowerPoints or whiteboards to enhance their teaching. When teaching Bible studies, most pastors likely use the explicit instruction method. Interactive whole-class teaching is similar to explicit instruction but incorporates whole-class interaction. Examples include answering questions in unison, using response cards such as drawing an answer on a writing board and raising them, or having the class move to different sides of a room based on their answer (left for True, right for False). Direct Teaching follows pre-made curriculums, called Direct Instructions, with smaller groups or individuals. Unlike explicit instruction, which gives freedom to engage

information outside the curriculum, direct teaching strictly conveys information and frequently assesses the student's ability to retain that information.<sup>40</sup>

In the past few decades, educators have experimented with student-centered methods. The original concept of this is Discovery Learning, which is the belief that students construct knowledge best through actively seeking and engaging in materials with little guidance from the teacher. A master's thesis is an example of this, where an individual pursues a topic of interest, engages the material on their own, then writes a comprehensive paper on what they learned. Westwood notes that while there are several benefits of challenging students to teach themselves, many problems arise. Chiefly, when students do not have adequate inductive reasoning skills about the topic to synthesize gathered information correctly, they are led to develop serious misconceptions which cause confusion and frustration. In light of Discovery Learning's problems, teachers have opted for guided discovery. Guided discovery offers a framework to use and directions to materials that will help. Guided discovery has several offshoots: project-based learning, resource-based learning, inquiry-based learning, issues-based learning, and situated learning. Among these few, situated learning is the most applicable for individuals with special needs. It teaches students how to solve problems that will likely arise outside the classroom while in those contexts.<sup>41</sup> An example is going to a grocery store to practice math by counting change to give to the teller. As the individual with an IEP gets closer to the age of 21, or when the school has no more legal responsibility for them, it will start to include transitional services and focus on situated learning objectives in the classroom.<sup>42</sup>

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40. Westwood, Peter S, "Commonsense Methods for Children with Special Needs and Disabilities," (New York, Ny: Routledge, 2021), 140–145.

41. Westwood, "Commonsense," 145–150.

42. Bateman, "Individual Education Programs," 98–99.

Due to its flexible nature in the student-to-teacher interaction, explicit instruction is the easiest method to establish the LRE for individuals with special needs in the church.<sup>43</sup> Church services and Bible studies are staples in most churches, so it would be challenging to select a new teaching method for an individual while retaining the interest of the rest of the congregation. Thus, Tier II supports are necessary for certain individuals, which should be discussed and noted in the individual's IEP. If the congregation has interested and available staff, direct learning can also be implemented. Jesus Cares Ministry (JCM), a ministry affiliated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, offers a series of Bible studies called "Dear Christian Friend." They also provide online worship services, called "Worship at the Cross," for people with special needs. A church that is interested in supporting a group of individuals with special needs should consider contacting the JCM staff for their resources.<sup>44</sup>

Situated learning can also be highly effective for applying what the individual has learned in the worship or Bible study setting. Situated learning is done on an individual basis, so in the IEP, the team might make a goal about trying to apply what the individual has learned in Bible study. An example of a pastor using both explicit instruction and situated learning is having a Sunday Bible study about the fourth commandment (explicit instruction). Then the pastor (or chosen congregant in the IEP) visits the home of the individual and discusses how the individual might apply the fourth commandment by pointing to the dishes that they could clean for their parent(s) or guardian(s) or ways they can be thankful if someone helps them get dressed in the morning (situated learning). Therefore, the individual connects much more to what was

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43. Westwood, "Commonsense," 18.

44. For more information, see <https://www.tlha.org/jesus-cares-ministries/>

taught on Sunday and to practical applications of that knowledge. Ideas of using situated learning can be discussed in the individual's IEvP.

### **Principles of Differentiated Instruction**

To achieve the LRE, the pastor must attempt to implement the specific services and accommodations in the individual's IEvP. It can be intimidating, but there are general principles Westwood suggests keeping in mind that can alleviate a pastor's or congregation's fear. First, adapting everything to meet the individual's needs is not necessary. As mentioned earlier, differentiated education is becoming widely popular in American education. It is the idea that all students are unique, so there should be multiple avenues for learning to ensure everyone has the best chance for success. Some churches do this with multiple worship services. The first service might have significant audience participation in the liturgy and hymns. The second service might have a shortened liturgy and songs with repeated refrains. The end goal is for everyone to participate in worship in a way that allows them to glorify God and be edified with his Word without being distracted by simplicity or complexity.

Achieving the LRE requires significant planning and resources. It also tends to be riskier as it takes a while to determine whether it works. Most churches may not be able to accomplish significant changes, as Westwood notes: "Meeting students' special educational needs successfully in the mainstream usually requires that the subject matter, learning activities, teaching procedures, resource materials, methods of assessment, and patterns of classroom organization must at times be adapted or modified."<sup>45</sup> Practically achieving the LRE through

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45. Westwood, "Commonsense," *emphasis author's*, 154.

differentiation thus is not necessarily about making significant changes but minor adaptations to accommodate the outliers of the group.

### **Three Concepts of Inclusion Accommodations**

To make accommodations means keeping things simple by only providing alternate pathways and additional support to achieve outcomes rather than making substantial, individually based changes.<sup>46</sup> Susan Baglieri, an associate professor of special education at Montclair State University, summarizes popular learning concepts which are taught to general educators today to assist in making those accommodations. They originate from social constructivist learning theory, which is the idea that students generate knowledge from their own experiences, emphasizing the social and cultural contexts they learn in. These concepts include a zone of proximal development (ZPD), scaffolding, and mediation.<sup>47</sup>

Consider the example of singing a new song in church. ZPD is the range in which a student is challenged to complete a task or skill with support. If it is too difficult, then the individual will likely give up. If it is too easy, then the individual will not learn anything. Goals should be oriented toward the ZPD so the individual can benefit from participating in the general church environment.<sup>48</sup> Churches can consider the ZPD when singing new songs. Many congregants may give up if extremely complicated songs are chosen, ones that make difficult

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46. Westwood, "Commonsense," 155.

47. Baglieri, Susan, "Disability Studies and the Inclusive Classroom: Critical Practices for Embracing Diversity in Education," 2nd ed (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017) 176–177.

48. For diagrams and in-depth discussion on the ZPD, see: <https://www.structural-learning.com/post/the-zone-of-proximal-development-a-teachers-guide>

jumps or are higher or lower than the average acceptable range. On the other hand, the congregation may get bored and mindlessly sing hymns if elementary songs are chosen. Scaffolding is the idea of offering support in an activity to facilitate learning. Demonstrating a task, sometimes called “I do, we do, you do,” is a primary type of scaffolding. Guided practice and providing stepping stones are other ways of providing scaffolding. When learning a new hymn, it would be wise for a church to scaffold. Having a soloist or choir sing the first verse and then having the congregation sing the verse again with them is a form of demonstrating and guided practice. Providing stepping stones could be in how the hymn is presented. Simply displaying the words on a screen offers no additional support. Showing the melody line with the words is a stepping stone to singing it correctly.

Mediation is the context and means, the medium, that encourages or discourages church engagement.<sup>49</sup> Concerning new hymns, David Gordon, in his book *Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns*, argues extensively that the kinds of songs people develop and use in church affect the culture of a church. He suggests three types of music cultures: High/Classical Culture, Folk Culture, and Pop/Mass Culture. If, for instance, new pop/mass culture songs are sung, which are easy to sing but are, as he describes, banal and trivial, then the congregation will develop into a banal and trivial church.<sup>50</sup> Yet, a person with special needs would likely have a significantly easier time singing pop/mass culture songs than high/classical culture songs.

Balancing ZPD, scaffolding, and mediation is a challenge the collaborative IEP team will need to discuss. The example of introducing a new song in the church shows the extreme

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49. This is different from mediation in IDEA, which is when there are disagreements in how an IEP is carried out, and those involved come together to discuss a plan going forward. Typically, a third party comes in and acts as a mediator to facilitate discussion.

50. Gordon, T. David, “Why Johnny Can't Sing Hymns: How Pop Culture Rewrote the Hymnal,” (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2010), 79–93.

“big-picture” side of how choices to help individuals can affect everyone else in a church. “Big-picture” changes should not be the main discussion at an IEvP meeting, though, as that violates Westwood’s principle of keeping it simple. Instead, the concepts Baglieri relays can be used in section IV.B. of the IEvP, Specially Designed Ministry, to plan how the individual will reach their goals and who will help them. If the individual does not sing in church but can sing, a goal in the ZPD might be to have them sing two hymns each Sunday. To help them, the team decides that the individual’s parents will scaffold by practicing the song with them using the I do, we do, you do method for twenty minutes the day before church. They may also decide that simply sitting still and singing is too difficult because the individual’s disability causes them to shift around. To address this, they may change the medium the individual participates in by giving them a shaker egg to play with as they sing. Over time, the team tracks how effective their methods are and ideally notices an improvement in the individual’s participation in singing hymns.

The inclusion concepts can also be kept in mind by the pastor as he preaches or teaches in the general setting. For example, in a Bible study on the soils in Matthew 13, a pastor may decide that the goal which fits in the ZPD for the general congregation member is to apply the parable to sharing God’s Word. To do this, the pastor decided to scaffold by sharing examples of different instances he evangelized to people of various “soil” types. Thinking it through, he then changed his mind about the medium through which he would scaffold because people might not pay attention to him telling his stories. Instead of simply speaking about his experiences, he asked four church members to act out different scenes. As a result, after the Bible study, a member thanked the pastor because she was always afraid of sharing her faith because of potential reactions. After seeing it play out, she felt more confident that the concerns of sharing

God's Word were not as scary as she thought, and the benefits were much more obvious. Using these simple accommodations should not change the curriculum substantially. They make it easier for particular learners to engage.

### **Planning the Church Environment**

Going a step further to help an individual in the general Tier I setting, Westwood describes the different tiers of differentiation an educator can use with three statements: "All students will...", "Some students will...", "A few students may..."<sup>51</sup> In a sermon, a pastor usually has a main theme he wishes the congregation to grasp. If the sermon is on John 3:16–21, the main theme he wants all congregants to understand could be, "Jesus is the light that saves all people, including YOU!" A part of his sermon he would hope some parishioners will notice is the opposite of the theme, "People whom Jesus does not shine on are not saved." A final "deep" part a few congregants may pick up on as the pastor mentions the context of John 3 is, "Jesus is the Savior prophesied in the Old Testament." With these three points of differentiation in mind, the pastor can wrestle with how his sermon will communicate to the three groups. If it is noted under I.A., Strengths, in an IEvP that the individual responds best to object lessons, then the pastor may consider that everyone would benefit if he pointed a flashlight at them. As he preaches, he would then describe the flashlight as the gospel which shines on people who are sinners (the whole congregation).

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51. Westwood, "Commonsense," 156.

### **Methods of Teaching: An Exhaustive Study**

The teaching methods above are some of the basic principles for instructing individuals with special needs in a Tier I environment. There is a lot of information and debate on SPED teaching pedagogy, so the collaborative team might consider inquiring what methods are most conducive to addressing the unique needs of the individual's disability. The table in Appendix 7 is a starting point for discovering the vast field of online resources available. As part of Section IV.4., the collaborative team could assign the group to read a recommended book from one of the websites to learn more about the individual's disability. With the overabundance of resources, there are always more strategies that a congregation or pastor can test and implement. One final group of strategies included in this thesis is in Appendix 9 from David R. Mitchell's book *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education*. Appendix 9 provides his 26 strategies summarized from SPED research. His book contains concise information on each strategy, along with suggested further readings that develop the topic. For those who are interested in research topics for further discussion in the field of special ministries, areas of interest might include these strategies, the effectiveness of each instructive method, strategies for supporting individual disabilities, methods of including the congregation in special needs ministry, the importance of the ADA in special needs ministry, and a critique of certain ministry curriculums for individuals with special needs.

## CONCLUSION

Ministering to individuals with special needs takes effort and is time-consuming.

Communicating, understanding behaviors, and knowing appropriate responses to their special needs are hurdles that can cause hesitation in congregations while doing special needs ministry.

Yet Jesus sets several examples of evangelizing to people with special needs, demonstrating the care God has for every soul. To follow Jesus' ministerial attitude, Christians can tap into the researched-based methods used in SPED. Using modified versions of the methods portrayed in IDEA, a pastor and his congregation can coordinate effective and efficient ministry for individuals with special needs. It is done by gathering a collaborative group, developing an IEvP for the individual, and using differentiated teaching methods to create an inclusive church environment based on the IEvP. As a church implements these practices, it will likely notice a shift in the congregation. A congregation that may have hoped others would change to fit their ministry now adjusts to accommodate the unique needs of all individuals. The Christian community that was once indecisive on who to evangelize to can now actively seek the neglected and lost with the good news about Jesus.

## APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

CDC: Center for Disease Control

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Act

IEP: Individualized Education Plan

IEvP: Individualized Evangelism Plan

IFSP: Individualized Family Service Program

LRE: Least Restrictive Environment

RTI: Response to Intervention

SPED: Special Education

WDPI: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

WELS: Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

## APPENDIX 2: CDC PEOPLE-FIRST LANGUAGE<sup>52</sup>



### Communicating With and About People With Disabilities

About 1 in 4, or 61 million, U.S. adults reports having some form of a disability.<sup>1</sup> Disability is part of the human experience, but sometimes people use words or phrases that are insensitive and do not promote understanding, dignity, and respect for people with disabilities. Most often than not, this is not intentional, but is disrespectful just the same.

#### People-First Language

People-first language is used to communicate appropriately and respectfully with and about an individual with a disability. People-first language emphasizes the person first, not the disability. For example, when referring to a person with a disability, refer to the person first, by using phrases such as, "a person who ...", "a person with ..." or, "person who has ..."

These are some general tips you can follow:



Tips	Use	Do not use
<b>Emphasize abilities, not limitations</b>	Person who uses a wheelchair	Confined or restricted to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound
	Person who uses a device to speak	Can't talk, mute
<b>Do not use language that suggests the lack of something</b>	Person with a disability	Disabled, handicapped
	Person of short stature	Midget
	Person with cerebral palsy	Cerebral palsy victim
	Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder	Epileptic
	Person with multiple sclerosis	Afflicted by multiple sclerosis
<b>Emphasize the need for accessibility, not the disability</b>	Accessible parking or bathroom	Handicapped parking or bathroom
<b>Do not use offensive language</b>	Person with a physical disability	Crippled, lame, deformed, invalid, spastic
	Person with an intellectual, cognitive, developmental disability	Slow, simple, moronic, defective, afflicted, special person
	Person with an emotional or behavioral disability, a mental health impairment, or a psychiatric disability	Insane, crazy, psycho, maniac, nuts
<b>Avoid language that implies negative stereotypes</b>	Person without a disability	Normal person, healthy person
<b>Do not portray people with disabilities as inspirational only because of their disability</b>	Person who is successful, productive	Has overcome his/her disability, is courageous

10koro CA, Hollis ND, Cyrus AC, Griffin-Blake S. Prevalence of Disabilities and Health Care Access by Disability Status and Type Among Adults— United States, 2016. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2018; 67:882–887. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6732a3l>.

For more resources on disability inclusion, visit: [www.cdc.gov/disabilities](http://www.cdc.gov/disabilities)

52. “Communicating with and about People with Disabilities” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, last modified February 1, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/materials/factsheets/fs-communicating-with-people.html>.

APPENDIX 3: IDEA DISABILITY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS (PARAGRAPH C)<sup>53</sup>

(1) Autism	<p>(i) means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.</p> <p>(ii) does not apply if a child’s educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (c)(4) of this section.</p> <p>(iii) A child who manifests the characteristics of autism after age three could be identified as having autism if the criteria in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section are satisfied.</p>
(2) Deaf blindness	<p>means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.</p>
(3) Deafness	<p>means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.</p>
(4) Emotional disturbance	<p>(i) means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:</p> <p>(A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.</p> <p>(B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.</p> <p>(C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.</p> <p>(D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.</p> <p>(E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.</p> <p>(ii) includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance under paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section.</p>

53. “Sec. 300.8 (C),” Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, last modified May 25, 2018, <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/a/300.8/c>.

(5) Hearing impairment	means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.
(6) Intellectual disability	means significantly subaverage general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term “intellectual disability” was formerly termed “mental retardation.”
(7) Multiple disabilities	means concomitant impairments (such as intellectual disability-blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities does not include deaf-blindness.
(8) Orthopedic impairment	means a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease (e.g., poliomyelitis, bone tuberculosis), and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).
(9) Other health impairment	means having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment, that— (i) Is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and (ii) Adversely affects a child’s educational performance.
(10) Specific learning disability	(i) General. Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. (ii) Disorders not included. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
(11) Speech or language impairment	means a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance.

(12) Traumatic brain injury	means an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.
(13) Visual impairment including blindness	means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

APPENDIX 4: ENCOURAGING PARENT PARTICIPATION<sup>54</sup>

The Instructional Team 51

**Families as a Team Member: Knowledge and Skills Checklist**

Name of the student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher's name: \_\_\_\_\_

<p><b>Instructions.</b> Check the appropriate box to indicate your request.</p> <p><b>Note.</b> <i>Knowledge</i> refers to the family's understanding of the content indicated in each question. <i>Skills</i> refer to your ability to implement or address this component within the home or community setting. <i>Requested</i> is for when you are requesting training to increase your knowledge and skills in this area. <i>Suggested</i> refers to when a professional suggests that your family receive training to increase your knowledge and skills in this area.</p>		Yes, I have knowledge	Yes, I have the skills	Training	
				Requested	Suggested
Do you know how to identify your child's needs?	Academic needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Behavior needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Communication needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Daily living needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Motor needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know how to prioritize and feel confident in identifying and setting goals for your child?	Academic skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Behavior skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Communication skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Daily living skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you aware of the various related services potentially available to your child?	Alternative communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Assistive technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Augmentative communication	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Behavioral supports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Occupational therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Physical therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Speech language pathology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you know how to implement instructional plans and strategies in your everyday activities?	Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel confident in monitoring the progress of the goals identified for your child?		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**FIGURE 3.5** Families as a team member knowledge and skills checklist.

(Kulkarni & Parmar, 2017). Companies and professionals will need to work together to identify potential solutions and resources for families and students with CCN in order to improve students' communication skills. Interestingly, research has suggested that families prefer to use *low-technology* options or natural speech in the home, as it better accommodates the first language than most AAC devices (Kulkarni & Parmar, 2017). Strong collaboration between families and professionals is key for effective instruction both with the home language and the language used in school (Cheatham & Hart Barnett, 2017). The need for translators will

54. Alexandra, Da Fonte M, and Miriam C. Boesch. "Effective Augmentative and Alternative Communication Practices: A Handbook for School-Based Practitioners," (New York, NY: Routledge 2019), 51.

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## APPENDIX 5: THE INDIVIDUALIZED EVANGELISM PROGRAM

**INDIVIDUALIZED EVANGELISM PROGRAM (IEvP)  
TEAM MEETING COVER PAGE**

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ LUTHERAN CHURCH

Name of Individual	DOB
Identified impairment area(s), if applicable	
Telephone (area code/number)	Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)
Address	

Date of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_ (month/day/year)

PURPOSE OF MEETING (check all that apply):

- Develop an initial IEvP
- Develop an annual IEvP
- Review/revise IEvP
- Other. Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

IEvP Team Participants Attending or Participating by Alternate Means in the Meeting:

Parent(s)/Guardian(s)	Pastor:	Pastor:
Individual (if appropriate):	Church member:	Church member:
Elder or Council member:	Other:	Other:
Other:	Other:	Other:

**INDIVIDUALIZED EVANGELISM PROGRAM:  
Linking Present Levels, Needs, Goals, and Services Form**

Page \_\_\_ of \_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **LUTHERAN CHURCH**

Name of Individual \_\_\_\_\_

Note: This IEvP form is an adaptation of a free-access example IEP form from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Its purpose is to provide a visual aid for Andrew Krueger's thesis on Ministering to Individuals with Special Needs. It is not suggested to use this IEvP in the church setting as its effectiveness has not been tested. Use at your own discretion.

**I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL<sup>1</sup>**

**A. Strengths**

1. Describe the individual's strengths that can be used to engage the individual in church-related activities. *(Including academic; cognitive; communication; independence and self-determination; physical and health; social and emotional skills)*

**B. Current Church Engagement and Functional Performance**

1. Describe the individual's present level of church engagement. *(Including academic; cognitive; communication; independence and self-determination; physical and health; social and emotional skills)*

2. Describe the individual's present level of functional performance.<sup>2</sup>

**C. Special Factors<sup>3</sup>**

1. Does the individual's behavior impede their church engagement or that of others?

Yes                       No

If yes, describe the individual's behavioral needs:

---

<sup>1</sup> **Information about the individual**, including strengths, effects of the disability/special factors, present level of church engagement and functional performance, and any concerns must be considered when identifying the individual's disability-related needs and developing goals and services to address those needs. Include strategies that have been effective in improving the individual's achievement and functional performance and access to general evangelism.

Parents/Guardians are important members of the IEvP team and are encouraged to share information throughout the process. The individual should be included, whenever appropriate, and encouraged to provide input throughout the process.

<sup>2</sup> **Functional performance** includes skills needed for independence in school, in the home, in the community, and during leisure time. Some examples include activities of everyday living, school/work/play habits, health-enhancing physical activity and social and emotional skills. Functional performance statements are useful when compared to the average persons' functional performance.

<sup>3</sup> **Special Factors** must be considered when developing the individualized evangelism program. Consider the special factors when identifying the effects of disability, summarizing disability related needs, developing goals, and determining services in the Program Summary.

Form IEvP    **Name of Individual** \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

2. Is the individual an English Learner (EL)?

 Yes                       No

If yes, describe how this factor affects the individual's needs related to this IEvP:

3. In the case of an individual who is blind or visually impaired, does the individual need materials in Braille or the use of Braille?

 Not Applicable     Yes     No     Cannot be determined at this time

If yes, describe needs, including Braille needs:

If no, explain why not:

4. Does the individual have communication needs that could impede their participation?

 Yes                       No

If yes, describe the communication needs (including speech and language needs):

If the individual is deaf or hard of hearing, describe (a) the individual's language and communication needs; (b) opportunities for direct communication with peers and professional personnel in the individual's language and communication mode; and, (c) church engagement level and full range of needs including opportunities for direct instruction in the individual's language and communicative mode:

5. Does the individual need assistive technology services or devices?

 Yes     No

If yes, describe the individual's assistive technology needs:

**D. Concerns of the Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Family**

1. Describe the concerns of the parent(s)/guardian(s)/family for enhancing the church engagement of the individual:

2. Describe the concerns (if any) of the individual for enhancing their church engagement:

**E. Effects of Disability<sup>4</sup>**

1. Describe how the individual's disability affects their access, involvement, and progress in church activities. Consider special factors when identifying the effects of the disability on church engagement and functional performance.

2. Does the individual's disability adversely affect their progress toward standard church engagement?

 Yes                       No

---

<sup>4</sup> **Effects of the disability** identifies **how** the individual's disability affects church engagement and functional performance. The effects are what the IEvP team observes when the individual has difficulty accessing, engaging and making progress in the general education curriculum, instruction, and environments. This item must be addressed for all individuals, regardless of the areas of impairment, including individuals identified as speech and language only.

Form IEvP Name of Individual \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

**F. Summary of Disability-Related Needs<sup>5</sup>**

Based on a root cause analysis of the effects of the individual’s disability, **list and number** the disability-related needs.  
*(The individual needs to develop/improve...)*

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

**II. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

How will church staff engage parent(s)/families in the support of the individual (e.g. sharing resources, communicating with parent(s)/families, building upon family strengths, connecting parent(s)/families to church activities, etc.)?

---

<sup>5</sup> A disability-related need:

1. Addresses the **effect** of the individual’s disability on access, engagement, and progress in the general church setting and environment;
2. Addresses the **root cause** why an individual is not meeting standard church engagement and functional expectations; and
3. Specifies what **skill/behavior** the individual needs to develop/improve so the individual can participate in congregational activities.

Form I EvP Name of Individual \_\_\_\_\_

Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

**III. MEASURABLE ANNUAL GOALS<sup>6</sup>****A. Before developing annual goals**, review the previous I EvP goals and progressPrevious I EvP goals reviewed:  Yes  No  Not Applicable**B. Goal # \_\_\_\_\_** (*The Goal # changes as goals are added. Complete 1 through 5 below for each goal.*)

## 1. Goal Statement:

a. Baseline (Individual's current level of performance from which progress toward this goal will be measured):

b. Level of Attainment (Must relate to the baseline measurement and reflect progress):

2. Benchmarks or Short-Term Objectives (*Necessary for individuals with the most significant cognitive disability*): Not Applicable3. Annual goal addresses disability-related need(s) # \_\_\_\_\_ of the individual. (*Needs identified in Section I.F.*)4. Procedures for measuring the individual's progress toward meeting the annual goal **from baseline to level of attainment**:5. When will reports about the individual's progress toward meeting the annual goal be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s)? (*Document reviews and individual's progress on the I-6, Interim Review of I EvP Goals.*) Not Applicable**C. Goal # \_\_\_\_\_** (*The Goal # changes as goals are added. Complete 1 through 5 below for each goal.*)

## 1. Goal Statement:

c. Baseline (Individual's current level of performance from which progress toward this goal will be measured):

d. Level of Attainment (Must relate to the baseline measurement and reflect progress):

2. Benchmarks or Short-Term Objectives (*Necessary for individuals with the most significant cognitive disability*): Not Applicable<sup>6</sup> Each goal must address at least one disability-related need.

Develop / revise one or more measurable annual church engagement goal(s) to:

- Address any lack of expected progress toward the annual goals, if appropriate;
- Address the unique needs of the individual that result from the individual's disability (*see section I.F. above*);
- Enable the individual to progress toward average person's engagement
- Enable the individual to be involved in the church
- Enable the individual to progress toward meeting standard parishioners' participation; and
- Enable the individual to be educated and participate with nondisabled individuals.

Form IEP Name of Individual \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

3. Annual goal addresses disability-related need(s) # \_\_\_\_\_ of the individual. *(Needs identified in Section I.F).*
4. Procedures for measuring the individual's progress toward meeting the annual goal **from baseline to level of attainment**:
5. When will reports about the individual's progress toward meeting the annual goal be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s)?  
*(Document reviews and individual's progress on the I-6, Interim Review of IEP Goals.)*  
 Not Applicable

**D. Goal # \_\_\_\_\_** *(The Goal # changes as goals are added. Complete 1 through 5 below for each goal.)*

1. Goal Statement:
  - e. Baseline (Individual's current level of performance from which progress toward this goal will be measured):
  - f. Level of Attainment (Must relate to the baseline measurement and reflect progress):
2. Benchmarks or Short-Term Objectives *(Necessary for individuals with the most significant cognitive disability):*  
 Not Applicable
3. Annual goal addresses disability-related need(s) # \_\_\_\_\_ of the individual. *(Needs identified in Section I.F).*
4. Procedures for measuring the individual's progress toward meeting the annual goal **from baseline to level of attainment**:
5. When will reports about the individual's progress toward meeting the annual goal be provided to parent(s)/guardian(s)?  
*(Document reviews and individual's progress on the I-6, Interim Review of IEP Goals.)*  
 Not Applicable

**IV. PROGRAM SUMMARY<sup>7</sup>**

Projected beginning and ending date(s) of IEvP services & modifications from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.  
 (month/day/year) (month/day/year)

**A. Supplementary Aids and Services**  
 Aids, services, and other supports (accommodations) that are provided in every setting, to enable individuals with disabilities to participate with nondisabled individuals to the maximum extent appropriate. The amount of time specified for each service must be appropriate to the service and stated in a manner that can be understood by all involved in developing and implementing the IEvP. *For each supplementary aid and service, identify the corresponding annual goal(s). In some situations, there may not be a corresponding goal. In those situations, it is acceptable to identify the disability-related need(s). If assistive technology devices are provided, specify the type that will be used.*

None needed

Describe	Frequency & Amount <i>(describe the circumstances, if appropriate)</i>	Location	Duration	Addresses Goal(s) #	Addresses Need(s) #

**B. Specially Designed Ministry**  
 Adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible individual, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the individual that result from the individual's disability; and ensure access of the individual to the general church activity, so the individual can meet the average congregant standard. *For each special ministerial service, identify the corresponding annual goal(s).*

Describe	Frequency	Amount	Location	Duration	Addresses Goal(s) #

<sup>7</sup> Include a statement for each of A, B, C and D below to allow the individual to (1) access, be involved in and make progress in the general church activities, (2) be educated and participate with other individuals with and without disabilities to the extent appropriate, and (3) advance appropriately toward attaining the annual IEvP goals. Include frequency, amount, location, & duration (if different from projected IEvP beginning and ending dates). The services must be stated in the IEvP so the level of the pastor's/congregations' commitment of resources is clear to the parent(s) and other IEvP team members.

**C. Related Services Needed to Benefit from Special Ministry**  
 Transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist an individual with a disability to benefit from special ministry. *For each related service, identify the corresponding annual goal(s). In some situations, there may not be a corresponding goal. In those situations, it is acceptable to identify the disability-related need(s).*

None needed

Describe	Frequency	Amount	Location	Duration	Addresses Goal(s) #	Addresses Need(s) #
<input type="checkbox"/> Assistive Technology <i>Describe service or device:</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> Audiology						
<input type="checkbox"/> Counseling						
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Interpreting						
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical Services for Diagnosis and Evaluation						
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational Therapy						
<input type="checkbox"/> Orientation and Mobility <i>(For individuals meeting criteria under Blind and Visually Impaired or Deafblind)</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical Therapy						
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological Services						
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation						
<input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation Counseling Services						
<input type="checkbox"/> School Health Services						
<input type="checkbox"/> School Nurse Services						
<input type="checkbox"/> School Social Work Services						
<input type="checkbox"/> Speech / Language						
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <i>Describe details:</i>						
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: specify						

**D. Program Modifications or Supports for Church Personnel**  
 Services or activities for church personnel to meet the needs of the individual. *Identify the goal(s) or need(s) addressed.*

None needed

Describe	Frequency	Amount	Location	Duration	Addresses Goal(s) #	Addresses Need(s) #

Form IEvP    Name of Individual \_\_\_\_\_    Page \_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_

**V. INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPATION**

**A. Participation in Regular Church Environment** (*location, including worshiping, fellowship space(s), and classrooms*)

Ensure any supplementary aids and services needed for the individual to participate in the regular church environment.

The individual **will** participate full-time with non-disabled peers in the regular church environment.

The individual **will not** participate full-time with non-disabled peers in the regular church environment.

1. Describe the extent to which the individual will **not** participate with non-disabled peers in the regular church environment:

2. Explain **why** full-time participation with non-disabled peers is not appropriate:

## APPENDIX 6: GOAL AREAS<sup>55</sup>

### **Academics**

Includes knowledge, skills, and habits within specific content areas such as reading, written language, mathematics, science, disciplinary literacy, etc.

### **Cognitive Learning**

This area includes skills and habits involved in processing and comprehending information gathered through the senses in order to acquire and use knowledge and skills. There are several theoretical models of cognition and learning that have a sound base of research that support them. Examples of cognitive learning skills include but are not limited to executive functioning skills (i.e. planning, focus, organization, impulse control), information processing skills (i.e. storing information/memory, cognitive fluency), problem solving, knowledge, and reasoning. Examples of specific importance to early learners (ages 3-6), include but are not limited to imitation, discrimination, representation, classification, sequencing, and problem solving as observed in a child's play.

### **Communication**

This area includes knowledge, skills, and habits in the understanding and use of language for communication including speech skills (sound production, fluency, voice), social and pragmatic language abilities, and includes understanding of students with limited verbal communication that require the use of augmentative and alternative communication systems. This area also incorporates consideration of language difference (e.g., home language or use of dialect) as it applies to communication within school environments.

### **Independence and Self-Determination**

This area includes life-long knowledge, skills, and habits relating to self-identifying individual strengths and needs; asking for help; self-advocacy; negotiating support; self-care and hygiene; safety; navigating community settings; organization; goal setting; work and employment skills; decision-making; maintaining and generalizing skills across environments, people, and contexts; and use of technology, social media, and assistive technology.

### **Physical and Health**

This area includes physical conditions relating to vision, hearing, and other senses (e.g., vestibular, proprioception, olfactory, tasteoral, auditory, visual, tactile); as well as skills in areas of gross and fine motor; motor planning; feeding, eating, and swallowing; touch; balance; endurance; alertness; attention; vitality; auditory and visual processing; orientation and mobility; and other areas of physical health.

### **Social and Emotional Learning**

This area includes knowledge, skills, and habits relating to social and reciprocal adult and peer relationships; identifying and communicating individual needs; perspective taking; emotional awareness and expression; managing transitions; self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-confidence; self-management and regulation; play skills; resiliency; and receiving and responding to feedback.

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55. Parker, Daniel, "Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation Six Areas of Academic and Functional Skill," Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, last modified September 2021, <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/comp-eval-six-areas-2.pdf>.

## APPENDIX 7: WEBSITE RESOURCES

\*Denotes recommended resources

### Information on IDEA

\*<https://ldaamerica.org/>

\*To find out resources by state, see the contact information provided at

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/states/>

\*<https://dpi.wi.gov/> (The Wisconsin Department of Instruction's website. It has a lot of free information on SPED in general, including many forms and instructions for those forms.)

### SPED Law

\*<https://www.copaa.org/>

\*<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/policy.html>

<https://www.ada.gov/>

<https://www.wrightslaw.com/>

### Advocacy and Resource Hubs – General

\*[www.aaid.org](http://www.aaid.org)

\*<https://nacdd.org/>

\*<https://www.communityinclusion.org/>

[www.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

[www.c-c-d.org](http://www.c-c-d.org)

[www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)

[www.ndrn.org](http://www.ndrn.org)

[www.ollibean.com](http://www.ollibean.com)

[www.tash.org](http://www.tash.org)

[www.vor.net](http://www.vor.net)

### Family Help

\*<https://kidstogether.org/>  
\*<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/>  
<https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/>  
<https://www.php.com/>

### Assistive Technologies

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wistech/index.htm> (For Wisconsin)  
<https://us.tobiidynavox.com/>  
[www.resna.org](http://www.resna.org)  
[www.atnet.org](http://www.atnet.org)  
[www.ataporg.org](http://www.ataporg.org)  
[ithare.com/guide-to-software-accessibility-for-the-disabled/](http://ithare.com/guide-to-software-accessibility-for-the-disabled/)

### Early Intervention

\*<https://www.zerotothree.org/>  
<https://www.mottchildren.org/posts/your-child/developmental-milestones>

### Training

\*<https://www.pacer.org/> (This Minnesota website has a library of training videos, most of which are free.)  
[www.thenadd.org](http://www.thenadd.org)  
<https://www.specialeducationguide.com/>  
<https://www.asha.org/>

### Employing People with Disabilities

\*<https://www.recruitdisability.org/>  
\*<https://www.dol.gov/general/topic/disability/hiring>  
<https://www.whatcanyoudocampaign.org/where-to-learn-more/resources-for-employers/>

### Research

\*<https://www.aucd.org/template/index.cfm>

## History

<http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/list3.pl>

## 5P- Syndrome

<https://fivepminus.org/>

## Autism Disorders

\*[www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org)

[www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)

[www.autisminternetmodules.org](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org)

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/autism-overview-4582004>

## Cerebral Palsy

<https://cerebralpalsygroup.com/>

<https://www.cerebralpalsyguidance.com>

## Down Syndrome

\*<https://ndss.org/>

## Fragile X Disability

\*<https://fragilex.org/>

## Galactosemia

\*<https://www.galactosemia.org/>

## Prader-Willi syndrome

\*<https://www.pwsausa.org/>

APPENDIX 8: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT<sup>56</sup>

**AAC/AT Training and Professional Development Form: Outside Agencies**

Student name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Team members: \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions.* Indicate information related to the team training needs and select if the task is in progress (IP) or it has been completed (C).

*Note.* IP indicates that a person has been identified to complete each specific task for the team. C indicates that a person was identified to complete the task and he or she has met the plan set by the team.

TASKS AND STEPS						
STEP 1. Identify Training Needs and Potential Outside Agency						
<b>Team members to be trained</b>			<b>Outside agency</b>		IP	C
<input type="checkbox"/> Family/guardian			<input type="checkbox"/> Company representative		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Special education teacher			<input type="checkbox"/> Consultants		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> General education teacher			<input type="checkbox"/> Educational service centers		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Speech language pathologist			<input type="checkbox"/> Local expert		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational therapist			<input type="checkbox"/> Outreach community centers		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Physical therapist			<input type="checkbox"/> University faculty expert		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral therapist/consultant			<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> AAC consultant						
<input type="checkbox"/> AT consultant						
<input type="checkbox"/> Paraeducators						
<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____						
STEP 2. Content and Agency						
<b>Topic/Content</b>	<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Agency</b>			IP	C
1					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEP 3. Schedule and Provide Training						
<b>Trainer</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>		IP	C
1					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STEP 4. Schedule Follow-up Training Meeting						
<b>Person responsible</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>		IP	C
1					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**FIGURE 3.7** AAC/AT training and professional development form: outside agencies.  
 (Sources: Hunt et al., 2001; Hunt et al., 2004; Hunt et al., 2002; Soto et al., 2001a, 2001b; Soto & Zangari, 2009)

56. Alexandra, "Effective Augmentative," 49.

APPENDIX 9: SPED STRATEGIES<sup>57</sup>

Strategy 1–Cooperative group teaching: ‘Help learners to learn from each other’

Strategy 2–Peer tutoring and peer influences: ‘Utilize peers to teach and support each other’

Strategy 3–Social skills training: ‘Teach learners how to positively interact with others’

Strategy 4–Collaborative teaching: ‘Become an effective team player’

Strategy 5–Parent involvement and support: ‘Respect families’ rights, skills, and needs’

Strategy 6–Cognitive strategy: ‘Teach learners ways of thinking’

Strategy 7–Self-regulated learning: ‘Help learners take control of their own learning’

Strategy 8–Memory strategies: ‘Help learners to remember important information’

Strategy 9–Review and practice: ‘Practice makes perfect’

Strategy 10–Reciprocal teaching: ‘Help learners understand what they read’

Strategy 11–Behavioral approaches: ‘Control antecedents and consequences to change behaviors’

Strategy 12–Functional behavioral assessment: ‘Change problem behaviors by changing their antecedents and consequences’

Strategy 13–Cognitive behavioral therapy: ‘Help learners change their negative thinking’

Strategy 14–Direct instruction: ‘Make lessons highly structured, briskly paced, and successful’

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57. David R. Mitchell and Dean Sutherland, *What Really Works in Special and Inclusive Education: Using Evidence-Based Teaching Strategies*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2014).

Strategy 15–Formative assessment and feedback: ‘Regularly check and inform learners of their progress’

Strategy 16–Assistive technology: ‘Enhance learners’ skills’

Strategy 17–Augmentative and alternative communication: ‘Utilize all means to develop communication skills’

Strategy 18–Phonological awareness and phonological processing: ‘Use a sound reading strategy’

Strategy 19–Quality of the indoor physical environment: ‘Provide a physical environment that enables learning’

Strategy 20–Universal design for learning: ‘Ensure all learners have access to all aspects of learning’

Strategy 21–Response to Intervention: ‘Employ a gradation of evidence-based interventions to take account of the extent of individual needs’

Strategy 22–Classroom climate: ‘Create a safe, positive and motivated classroom environment’

Strategy 23–School wide strategies: ‘Create a multi-tiered system to prevent or minimize problem behaviors’

Strategy 24–Inter-agency cooperation: ‘Move from fragmented to coordinated services’

Strategy 25–Inclusive education: Adapt the classroom program to suit all learners’

Strategy 26–Opportunities to learn: ‘Provide sufficient quantity and quality of time for learning’

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