

The IEP Project

Design to Reach Each Learner

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Creating Strengths-based Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) Using the Science of Learning and Development

Supporting a Mindset Shift
Supporting the Whole Child



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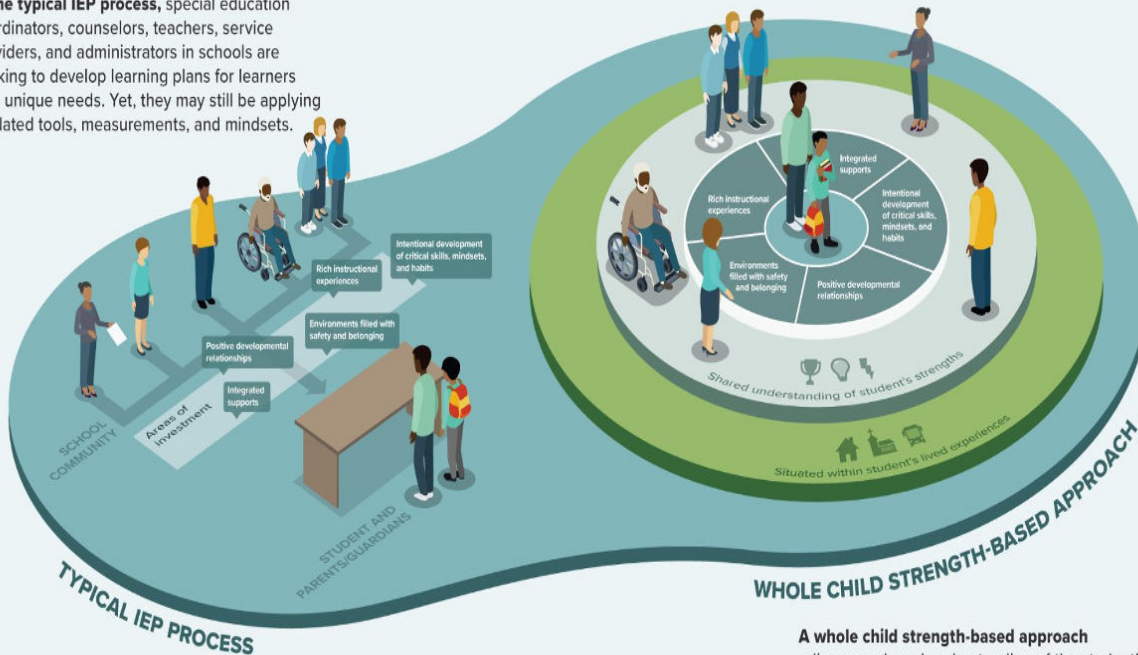
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What we'll cover today

- *What is the IEP Project?**
- *The importance of strength-based IEPs**
- *Strength-based IEPs through the lens of racial equity**
- *Exploration of the culturally responsive guide**
- *The learner variability connection**
- *Developing strength-based IEPs**

Elevate the IEP process with a whole child, strength-based approach

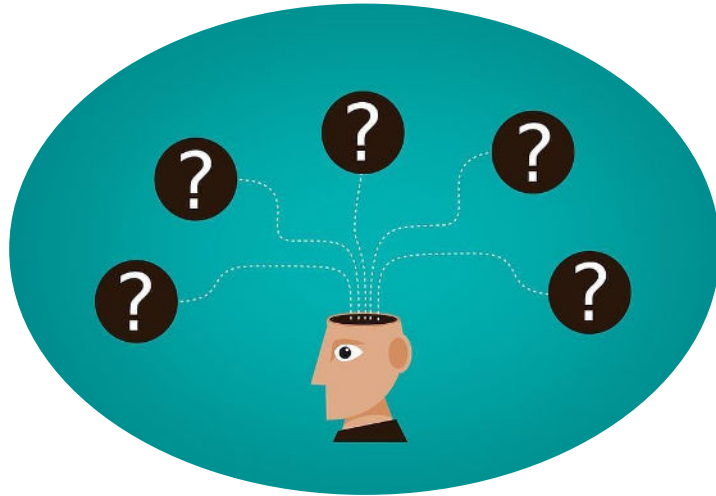
In the **typical IEP process**, special education coordinators, counselors, teachers, service providers, and administrators in schools are working to develop learning plans for learners with unique needs. Yet, they may still be applying outdated tools, measurements, and mindsets.



The five areas of investment listed here have been identified by Turnaround for Children as the Guiding Principles for Equitable Whole-Child Design.

A whole child strength-based approach relies on a shared understanding of the student's strengths and is situated within the student's context. This allows the stakeholders to work together to create coherence for the IEP process.

What do you think of when you hear “strengths-based IEP?”



The need for strength-based IEPs

The importance of shifting current mindsets

A Strengths-based IEP:



Whole child

- Strengths & weaknesses
- Leverage strengths to achieve goals



IEP Team Considers

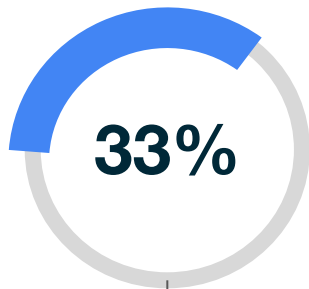
- Information from the student
- Shift adults' lens to strengths and support needs



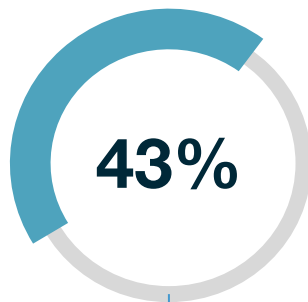
Promotes

- Self-advocacy
- Self-determination

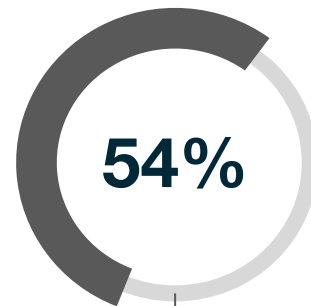
What parents and educators think



...of classroom teachers and other educators believe that a learning or attention issue is sometimes just laziness

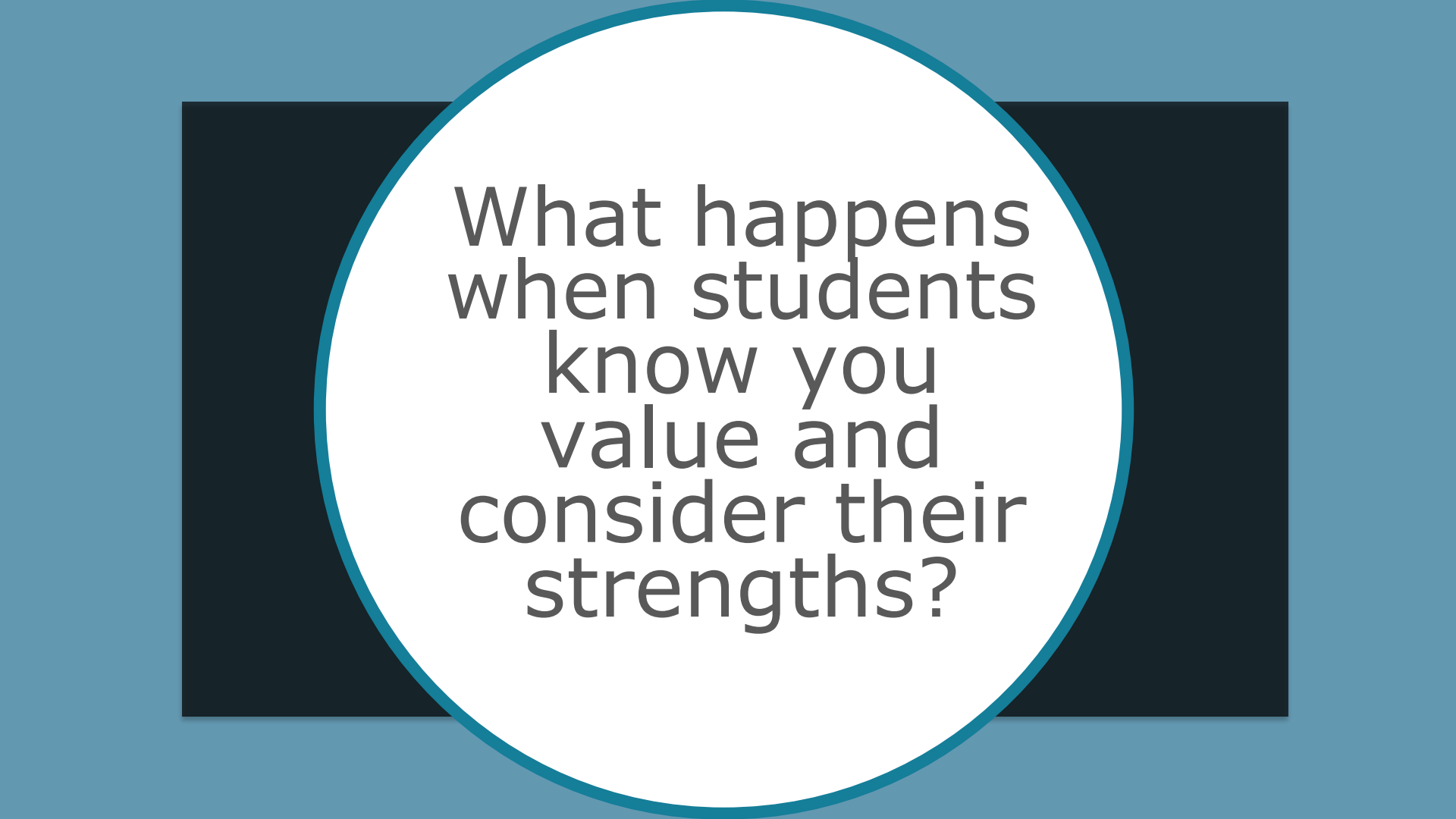


...of parents say that they wouldn't want others to know if their child had a learning disability



...of parents whose child is evaluated for learning and attention issues follow doctors' recommendations

[State of LD](#), NCLD, Horowitz, S. H., Rawe, J., & Whittaker, M. C., 2017.



What happens
when students
know you
value and
consider their
strengths?

Let's hear from Benjamin.

He has a special
interest in and
immense knowledge
of cars.

He also struggles
with concepts like
compare and
contrast.



The need for a lens of educational equity to create strength-based IEPs

Addressing the intersectionality of race and learning disabilities

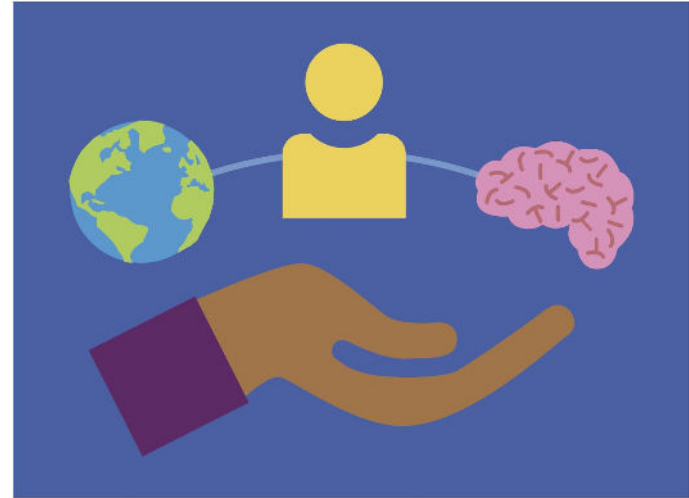
They are ALL deserving...

More than celebrate...address and include.



Culturally Responsive Practice

Learner Variability Project in the Field:
A Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice



The Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice

Learner Variability Project in the Field:
A Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice



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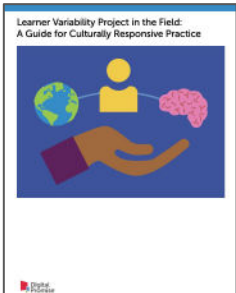
The Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice

Social Emotional Learning

- How can I identify strengths for each of my students and create opportunities to communicate those strengths to them? [CRS 3, 5, 6, 7](#)
- How do my assignments provide opportunities for students to collaborate and build **empathy*** for others? [CRS 3, 4, 6](#)

In my work (Relay)

- *Whole Learner Framework*
 - Teach educators how to identify strength and needs in the whole learner domains (cognitive, social-emotional, and academic)
 - How do they show up in classroom? How to support?



The Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice

Setting the Stage for Culturally Responsive Instruction

Individual Reflection

Setting the Stage for Culturally Responsive Instruction

Protocol for Initial Meeting

Setting the Stage for Culturally Responsive Instruction

Protocol for Recurring Planning Meetings

Setting the Stage for Culturally Responsive Instruction

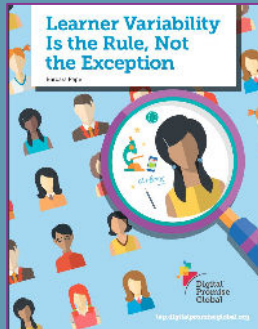
Protocol for Recurring Individual Planning Sessions

The learner variability connection

Using the science of learning to create
change

What is learner variability?

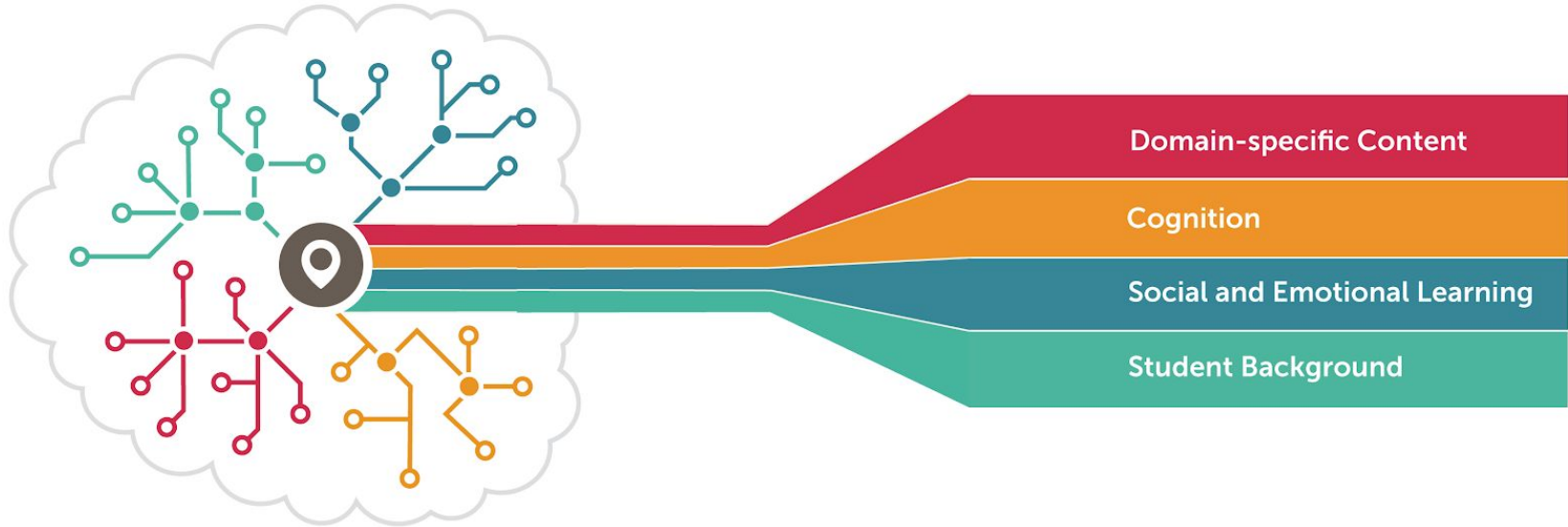
When you understand learner variability, you see a design challenge not a student problem



Learner variability is the recognition that every student has a unique set of strengths and challenges across a whole child framework that are interconnected and vary according to context.

Learner variability, in concept and practice, opens up the doors to cultural responsive and strengths-based inclusive teaching and learning for *each* student.

The Learner Variability Navigator: A Whole Child Framework



How to develop strength-based IEPs

Putting mindset shifts into practice


Why IEPs as a lever for change?

- The individualized educational program, or IEP:
 - Is the **only legal document** in the current educational system that allows for the **systematic delivery of instruction and intervention** that is **tailored to the individual student**.
 - Is the only document that **legally requires parent input**, regular report of progress, and multi-disciplinary **collaboration** for the delivery of an **individualized education experience**.
- With **improved IEPs**, students will have greater skill and growth potential due to:
 - **More accurate** identification of a learner's needs
 - **More effective** descriptions of how to support students to learn and thrive, and
 - More **connected systems of intervention**

**The IEP Project
was developed
by Brooklyn
Labs Charter
Schools and
Digital Promise
in partnership
with teachers.**

**The goal is to
guide teachers
to:**

- Reflect the whole child experience by starting with guiding questions.
- Embody a growth mindset by using positive strength-based language and leveraging a student's strengths to address their challenges.
- Incorporate exemplars from the field written by expert educators.
- Include and integrate evidence-based resources from the Learner Variability Navigator



**Putting it into
practice. Start with
reflective questions**

Gather the right information.

Questions to consider:

- What does the student do well?
- What do they enjoy doing?
- How can I pair what they do well and enjoy doing with challenges they face to improve opportunities for learning?
- How can I work with the student and family to create strategies that allow their strengths to support their challenges?

Include students in the process.

Ask them:

- What do you think are your strengths, interests, and preferences?
- How can we help you use these strengths to develop strategies for success?
- What do you know about yourself that you want me to know?

Plan curriculum around students' strengths.

Consider:

- How can I incorporate students' interests and hobbies into coursework?
- How does this student best engage with content?
- What supports will help this student engage?
- Is this student an independent worker or prefer to work with others?

Support student agency

Consider:

- How does the student see themselves?
- How well do they self-advocate?
- How can I support them telling me about their interests outside of school?

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Measure strengths, not just deficits

- Take note of the types of assessments that best highlight a student's success.
- Help students demonstrate their knowledge in the most positive way possible.

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Teacher tools to develop strength-based IEPs

Resources to support

Strength-based Teacher Report: IEP Reflection

The Tool

Discussion/Questions?



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