

# Person-Centered Planning for Inclusive Schooling

An Approach for Learners with Extensive Support Needs



## The MAPs Planning Process

(McGill Action Planning System aka Making Action Plans)

### WHAT IS MAPs?

MAPs is a process to plan a future for an individual who needs support from others. The Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE) has adapted the MAPs process to design supports for a learner with extensive needs so they can participate in general education instruction and school settings as a successful and valued member of their school community. It can be used for any learner who is being included for the first time, who is transitioning from a more restrictive setting to an inclusive setting, or when a school team wants to improve participation, membership, or performance in social and academic areas.

When used as a planning process for the *initial* inclusion of a learner with disabilities, MCIE recommends that the MAPs process occurs over two sessions.

**The first meeting** (or “MAPs”) is **to gather information and identify supports** that will be useful in planning the IEP goals and specialized services, as well as the practical strategies to increase school participation and success.

**The second meeting** (or “Learner Planning”) is **to develop the action plan and strategies to promote access and participation**. In this meeting, MCIE recommends the use of various planning tools for instruction, school routines, and social relationships based on the learner’s needs.

If a learner has previously had both a MAPs meeting and learner planning, and is transitioning to a new school, teams may want to focus on learner planning (see Section 2).

#### Assumptions of the MAPs Process:

- ✓ **Inclusion:** Planning is for successful participation **in general education classes** and in other settings within the neighborhood school.
- ✓ **Individualization:** The team focuses on the **learner's unique gifts and support needs** across all activities in the school day and year.
- ✓ **Teamwork and Collaboration:** This begins or expands upon a structure for various educators and service providers to work as a team for creative solution-finding.
- ✓ **Flexibility:** Initial plans may need to be modified as the learner **adjusts** to the school, the team learns more about the learner’s abilities, and peers are engaged as partners in the social and academic life of the learner.
- ✓ **Competence:** The team assumes that regardless of the learner’s apparent abilities, it is less dangerous to assume that the learner is competent and to provide access to grade-level content than to presume incompetence and limit educational opportunities.

## Section 1: MAPs - The Initial Planning Meeting

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- ✔ **The family** (*This includes parents, siblings, grandparents, and whoever the family wants to bring.*)
- ✔ **Sending faculty** (*This includes faculty from the current/recent school placement and is usually the administrator and two staff members who know the learner well.*)
- ✔ **Receiving faculty** (*This includes an administrator, general and special educators, and other support personnel who may be involved in the delivery of instruction and support(s) in the new school.*)
- ✔ **The learner** (*The family may choose to have the child present for the full meeting or only for certain questions.*)
- ✔ **Friends** of the learner (*Other learners often have valuable input and may be present for part of the MAPs 1 meeting to state their hopes for their friend, their friend's strengths, and supports that are age-appropriate. The family usually decides who may attend based on the relationships and experiences of neighbors and learners in the school.*)
- ✔ **Two Facilitators** (*These are two individuals who are knowledgeable in the MAPs process. One leads the questions; and one records the team's input on the charts.*)

### THE MEETING SETTING

The participants are seated in a half-circle, preferably **without a table**, to help distinguish the MAPs meeting from an IEP meeting. Large chart paper is posted around the room with one key question on the top of each. The two facilitators stand in front of the group and one facilitator leads the discussion using the questions to guide the conversation while the other facilitator records responses. The MAPs meeting usually takes at least 1½ to 2 hours.

Alternatively, the meeting can take place on a virtual platform such as Zoom. MCIE finds that when conducting a virtual session, it is essential that everyone has their video on with microphone muted unless speaking. Also, when using this format, notes do not need to be shared on the screen unless asked, as it is more important for members to see all of the participants especially when they are speaking.

In either case, expectations for the participants (i.e., “be present” in the meeting, wait to ask questions, contribute information conversationally, etc.) are reviewed before the meeting begins.

## THE FACILITATION PROCESS

**Opening:** The facilitator asks each participant to introduce themselves and state their role/relationship to the learner. The facilitator then states that the purpose of this meeting is for information gathering and discovery, not for debate or for detailed problem-solving. Also, it is not an IEP meeting; no decisions about placement will be made during the meeting. Participants are reminded that notes will be taken by one of the facilitators which lets them listen and contribute without worrying about taking notes. The responses on the chart papers will be summarized and distributed to all participants after the meeting.

**Questioning Process:** The facilitator poses the questions one at a time, first to the family, and then encourages all who know the child best to contribute. Initially, the receiving faculty may be listeners, but as they become comfortable with the process and familiar with the learner, they may have contributions to make. The facilitator keeps everyone focused and contributing and monitors the use of time. A “parking lot” chart can be used for questions/concerns that are beyond the scope of the meeting so that they can be addressed at a later time.

## THE QUESTIONS

The following sequence of questions generally works well to guide the discussion. The facilitator may vary the order of the questions or construct a similar set of questions to suit the individual situation. The “fears/nightmares” question may be omitted if the learner is present, or it may be framed as a “barriers” question to identify issues to be addressed.

- ✓ What is \_\_\_\_\_'s **history**?
- ✓ What are your **Hopes and Dreams** for \_\_\_\_\_ over the next year and into the future?
- ✓ What are your **Fears/Nightmares** for \_\_\_\_\_ over the next year and into the future?
- ✓ **Who is** \_\_\_\_\_? (personality, motivators, likes, dislikes)
- ✓ What are \_\_\_\_\_'s unique **strengths, gifts and talents**?
- ✓ What are \_\_\_\_\_'s **support needs** for successful participation?
- ✓ What do we need to do to make this happen? (**Action Plan**)



The facilitators are responsible for summarizing the MAPs meeting input and distributing it to all participants.

## Section 2: Developing an Action Plan and Additional Planning for Participation in General Education

The MAPs process creates a picture of who the learner is and what supports need to be put in place to empower the learner to be an active participant in the general education classes and in the school community. Often, the MAPs meeting will end after the questions are answered due to the length of the meeting and the intense and personal discussion by the family and team members. If this is the case, a second meeting is planned with the receiving educators to develop the action plan and complete other planning tools. These results are then shared with the family.

Prior to the second planning meeting, the members of the planning team review the following documents: MAPs summary, IEP, and class/grade schedule. If the learner is transitioning from a segregated to a general education setting, the learner planning session is held after the IEP meeting in which the placement is changed. In this second meeting, the receiving team uses tools for collaborative planning across general educators and specialized educators (e.g., educators, related service providers, interventionists). These tools help the team discuss how and in what subjects they will provide direct instruction on IEP goals, how they will adapt general education lessons to promote progress toward grade level standards, how they will address personal support and communication needs, and how they will promote positive peer relationships.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

- ✔ **Receiving faculty/instructional team** (*This includes the classroom and special educators and other support personnel who may be involved in the delivery of instruction and support(s).*)
- ✔ **School administrator** (*This includes the principal or assistant principal who can make decisions and guide the team in considering the feasibility of the team recommendations.*)
- ✔ **One facilitator** (*This individual is knowledgeable in the planning process and will guide the discussion and record the input from the team onto planning tool forms.*)
- ✔ **Others who MAY attend:**
  - *Paraprofessional support person for the classroom*
  - *Guidance counselor or other service provider*

If it is not possible for direct service providers to attend, the **action plan will include strategies to communicate the plans and provide coaching** for other adults responsible for implementation.

## BEFORE THE MEETING

Working with the school administrator or designated school staff, the team planning facilitator will:

- ❑ **Identify** the learner's schedule and who will be the classroom educator(s).
- ❑ **Observe** the learner in current classes.
- ❑ **Observe** instruction in proposed class(es).
- ❑ **Conduct** (if necessary and appropriate) a discussion with future classmates about how the learner could be supported by peers.
- ❑ **Draft an IEP/curriculum matrix** with current IEP objectives and the schedule/environments in which the learner will participate.
- ❑ **Select the planning tools** based on observations, the MAPs information, and input from the team members.
- ❑ **Schedule the meeting** when it is feasible and convenient for the instructional team.

## CONDUCTING THE MEETING

It is best to have the necessary documents (e.g., summary of the MAPs meeting, the IEP, a list of supports drafted from these documents and observations, and the tools that may be used) available as hard copies and as digital files at the beginning of the meeting. Each of the documents/tools can then be displayed as they are reviewed and/or completed by the team.

The tools include:

- ❑ **The IEP-Curriculum Matrix:** If the team wants to determine where IEP goals can be met, they will complete the IEP-curriculum matrix to identify the classes, subjects, or learning opportunities across the school day to teach, practice, and/or assess specific IEP goals.
- ❑ **Planning for Participation:** If the team wants to figure out how the learner will participate in various learning activities created by the educators, in other school settings/activities, or with augmentative or alternative communication systems, the team will select the Participation tools needed:
  - Planning for instructional participation
  - Planning for communication and social interactions
  - Planning for school routines
- ❑ **Disability Acceptance/Social Participation:** If activities for the learner's classmates and for all learners, in general, are needed to promote positive peer relationships, then a plan may be developed. What is the activity? Who will lead it? What are the expected

outcomes? How will the family be involved? This may include general information to promote acceptance or specific plans for interactions between the learner and a group of peers.

- ❑ **Customized Learning and Behavior Supports:** Sometimes a team identifies areas of need and are stuck on how to move forward. Planning tools can be customized to address the questions that the team wants to answer. Examples are:
  - Learner Strengths/Motivators
  - Strategies: What works/What doesn't work
  - Current Academic Skills/Next Steps
  - Behavioral Supports (e.g., sensory, social, emotional, academic, etc.)
  
- ❑ **Action Plan:** Teams that have conducted MAPs meetings will want to create a plan for the actions to support overall the learner's participation in school settings, most of which are not specified on the IEP. Examples include providing: an alternative lock for the learner's locker that is easier to open than a combination lock; support for transitioning from class to class; instruction on how to get around the school; an alternate bus stop; and instruction or support for toileting. The plan will specify the actions, when they will be completed, and who has the primary responsibility for making sure that they are.

## REFERENCES

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