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## Choosing Outcomes and Accommodations for Children (COACH 3): A Guide to Educational Planning for Students with Disabilities, 3ed

Updated and streamlined for easier use based on user feedback, the third edition of this bestselling guide can be the key to effective educational planning for students with intensive special education needs in inclusion-oriented schools.

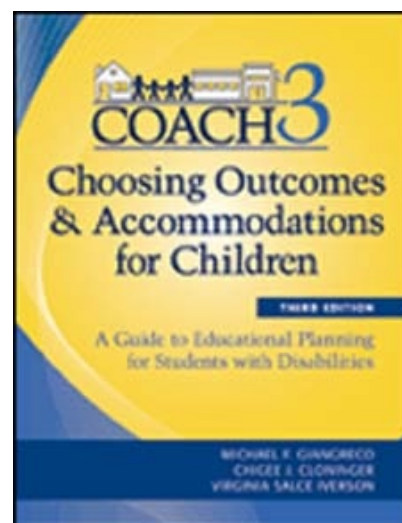
### Q: What is COACH, and how does it relate to the IEP?

A: COACH (Choosing Outcomes and Accommodations for Children) is a planning tool used by educational teams to assist in developing the individualized educational program (IEP) for students with intensive special education needs. It is a structured way to get family input and team involvement in the IEP process.

COACH provides an organized process to assist teams in making complex decisions culminating in an individualized, workable educational plan for a particular student to be implemented in inclusive settings. It assists in clarifying the student's participation in the general education curriculum and classes. By using COACH, team members develop a unified plan where they agree on a shared set of educational goals, rather than having separate goals for different professional disciplines.

### Q: What distinguishes COACH from other planning tools?

A: COACH provides a constructive forum for professionals and parents to listen to each other and clarify expectations. This increases meaningful family involvement. When used as intended, COACH encourages parents and professionals to think about educational planning in new ways, in part by considering how their choices about the educational curriculum can influence broader life experiences and opportunities for a student with disabilities.



### Q: What are the basic principles behind COACH?

A: To implement COACH successfully, team members should have a good understanding of the six guiding principles:

- Principle 1: All students are capable of learning and deserve a meaningful curriculum
- Principle 2: Quality instruction requires ongoing access to inclusive environments
- Principle 3: Pursuing valued life outcomes informs the selection of curricular content
- Principle 4: Family involvement is the cornerstone of educational planning
- Principle 5: Collaborative teamwork is essential to quality education
- Principle 6: Coordination of services ensures necessary supports are appropriately provided

## MICHAEL F. GIANGRECO, PH.D.

Michael is a professor in the Department of Education and the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, University of Vermont. He has devoted the past 35 years to working with children and adults with disabilities, their families, and service providers in a variety of capacities, including as a special education teacher, community residence counselor, school administrator, educational consultant, university teacher, and researcher.

Dr. Giangregco's work focuses on various aspects of education for students with disabilities within general education classrooms, such as curriculum planning and adaptation, related services decision making and coordination, and special education service delivery issues.



### Q: You published the first version of COACH in 1985. How has it changed over time?

A: While some key aspects of good practice are timeless (involving families, connecting curriculum content to valued life outcomes, identifying focus and breadth of curricular content), COACH now reflects a contemporary understanding of best practices such as expanded access to the general education curriculum.

### Q: Who leads the COACH process?

A: Any team member who is familiar with the process (special educator, general educator, school psychologist, guidance counselor, SLP, family support personnel) can facilitate COACH. The team should agree on who will assume responsibility for facilitating the various parts of COACH.

COACH can be facilitated by a person who is familiar with the student and family (to enhance individualization of the tool) or by a neutral party who is naive to the dynamics of the situation and, therefore, can minimize the potential for bias during question asking.

### Q: What are the steps of COACH:

A: COACH has six steps:

- Step 1: Family Interview – to enable the family to select learning priorities for the student for the upcoming school year
- Step 2: Additional Learning Outcomes – to determine learning outcomes beyond the family-selected priorities, both from COACH and the general education curriculum
- Step 3: General Supports – to determine what supports need to be provided in order for the student to successfully pursue his or her IEP
- Step 4: Annual Goals – to ensure the family's priorities are reflected as IEP goals
- Step 5: Short-Term Objectives – to develop short-term objectives to pursue annual goals
- Step 6: Program-at-a-Glance – to provide a concise summary of the educational program

### Q: What role does the student play in the COACH process?

A: The student may attend and participate in the COACH meeting at the discretion of the family. This decision is often based on the age of the student and his or her language

abilities. COACH is very language based; because many of the students for whom COACH is used have significant challenges with language, it may require adaptations for them to participate.

If a student is transition age (16 or older), then attendance and involvement are strongly encouraged. The most common scenario is that one or two parents or other primary caregiver representing the family attend the meetings.

### Q: What does COACH include in "general supports"?

A: Unlike learning outcomes, which seek observable change in student behavior, General Supports identify what other people need to do to assist the student. (In some other contexts these may be referred to as accommodations or management needs.) These include:

- 1. Personal needs (feeding, dress, giving medication)
- 2. Physical needs (therapeutic positioning, managing specialized equipment, environmental observations)
- 3. Teaching others about the student (AAC system, health emergency procedures, positive behavior supports)
- 4. Sensory needs (books in Braille, large-print materials, charged batteries for hearing aid)
- 5. Providing access and opportunities (community vocational experiences, literacy materials in native language.)

### Q: Why does COACH place such a strong emphasis on "valued life outcomes"?

A: Although each family will pursue Valued Life Outcomes for their child in unique ways, COACH is one of the few planning approaches that explicitly links selection of curriculum to individually determined Valued Life Outcomes. By selecting a curriculum based on Valued Life Outcomes, we are encouraging people to look beyond splintered skills and provide a curricular focus that has meaning to the family. Without an emphasis on Valued Life Outcomes, students with disabilities are at risk of completing their education without a coherent set of meaningful outcomes.