SBIR IES Phase I Executive Summary

Innovative IEP Goal Creation: Equipping Special and General Educators

Education Modified (EdMod) is a proud recipient of a 2018 Small Business Innovation Research grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. This award made it possible for us to research and develop a new IEP goal and progress monitoring feature embedded within our existing platform for special education teachers. Our specific focus was to learn how special and general educators collaborate around their students with disabilities regarding IEP goals and the strategies used to help them achieve their goals.

In partnership with WestEd, a leading not-for-profit education research firm specializing in evaluations, our team conducted a series of research tasks including a focus group, user testing and a feasibility study between May and December of 2018. Ultimately, our research focused on learning whether the EdMod platform and its newly developed IEP goal feature is feasible for teachers to: 1) access a student's IEP within their daily workflow; 2) collaborate with other team members around progress monitoring of IEP goals; and 3) plan and implement appropriate instructional strategies for special education students in their classrooms.

We began by conducting a focus group interview to evaluate our hi-fidelity mockups of the new goals feature with a mix of special and general education teachers from various grade levels. Their responses indicated that our development process was heading in the right direction. All five teachers indicated that they would like to use the EdMod platform with its new IEP goals feature.

Using the results from the focus group, our development team created a prototype in preparation for the usability study. Teachers were asked to navigate the prototype by following a think-aloud protocol. The usability teachers reported that the prototype was easy to use, and the purpose of each step was clear. Additionally, they were eager to further explore the data collection resources contained within the new feature. Once again, we used the summary findings and recommendations as the basis for our iterative development.

For the feasibility study, we followed six teachers from a public charter school in Washington, DC as they utilized the EdMod platform over a period of six weeks. The teachers were paired in teams consisting of one special educator and one general educator. Both general and special education teachers were able to select and successfully implement evidence-based strategies from EdMod's Strategy Library, as well as communicate through the students' Learning Biography. They were also able to successfully use the new features to monitor IEP goals and instructional practices for addressing these goals. Teachers gave interview feedback on the IEP goal and progress monitoring feature, agreeing that it was a highly valuable resource for managing information and adjusting their teaching practices based on evidence of student improvement.

The promising results and recommendations from the feasibility study now form the basis for our planned Phase II research and development. Future research will primarily focus on teacher outcomes, to determine how EdMod users improve in their knowledge about the IEP process as well as the impact of the EdMod platform on the quality of the IEP process and student achievement of IEP goals.

With the support of the IES, Education Modified is moving closer to its goal - to provide a continuum of support to improve the implementation of student IEPs!