



# How a Teacher Used Polaris to Craft High-Quality IEPs in Georgia



Coffee County School District is in southeast Georgia, approximately 200 miles southeast of Atlanta. Around 7,600 students are enrolled in the district, preschool through twelfth grade. The district is home to 13 schools: eight elementary schools and a middle school, freshman campus, high school, college and career academy, and educational academy.

Coffee County School District's vision is "creating a stronger community through an equitable and excellent education for every student."

It believes in:

- Community
- Opportunity
- Focus
- Fairness
- Ethics
- Excellence

## The Story of Coffee County School District

The Coffee County Board of Education diligently adheres to federal and state laws in providing education to students with unique needs. A dedicated team of over 100 teachers and support personnel caters to the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

The educational approach for unique learners encompasses collaborative, pull-out, self-contained, community-based education, and consultative services.

To stay at the forefront of educational practices, Coffee County stands out in therapeutic offerings.

Besides conventional related services, the district offers aqua therapy in collaboration with South Georgia State College, showcasing its commitment to innovative and comprehensive support for students with special needs.

## The Challenges for Teacher Sonya Lott

Special education teacher Sonya Lott faced challenges in formulating goals that genuinely addressed her students' individual needs. She also encountered difficulties ensuring these goals were measurable. Sonya devoted considerable time scrutinizing the wording of her goals so they would be clear to anyone reviewing them and ultimately work for the students she serves.

Sonya needed an IEP solution that provided step-by-step individualized education program (IEP) writing guidance, SMART goal recommendations based on student data, and data collection and visuals of student progress.

## WHY COFFEE COUNTY CHOSE POLARIS

Coffee County School District was already using n2y solutions in their classrooms, including Unique Learning System, News2you, L<sup>3</sup> Skills, Positivity, SymbolStix PRIME, and Inspire, so the administration was well aware of n2y's track record in the special education field. After a careful review of what n2y's IEP development solution Polaris could offer students and teachers, the district added it to its suite of solutions.

At first, Sonya was hesitant to implement Polaris. She felt it was "another program to learn [and] something else on my plate to deal with." But n2y developed Polaris to help teachers focus more on their students and less on the documentation that comes with being a special educator. So, Sonya began using it for her students' IEPs.

## The Solution

### IEP WRITING GUIDANCE

Sonya has found that Polaris significantly enhances her ability to write goals. Remarkably, for the first time in years, the goals that she creates continue to be compliant, eliminating the need for adjustments later. Previously, she often had to add or remove elements in her goals to meet compliance standards. The combined efficiency and accuracy introduced by Polaris has erased compliance-related challenges and given Sonya the guidance she needed to write high-quality, impactful IEPs.

### SMART GOALS

Polaris offers comprehensive assessments that Sonya's students can use, generating valuable data that translates into meaningful present levels statements. Based on this data, Polaris then recommends SMART goals tailored to each student's areas of need. This personalized approach proves instrumental in addressing the unique needs of each student in a meaningful and effective manner.

### DATA COLLECTION AND VISUALIZATION OF PROGRESS

Assessing students, crafting compliant SMART goals, and collaborating with all the IEP team members to complete the IEP is a time-consuming process. After the IEP is implemented, the ongoing tasks of data collection and progress monitoring begin. Prior to Polaris, Sonya used solutions scattered across different platforms that were not user-friendly for her or her students, making it challenging to gather the necessary data to communicate progress effectively. She found using Polaris to be a more streamlined approach with a central location for data collection and progress monitoring. It also provides easy-to-comprehend, detailed visualizations that enable the entire IEP team to celebrate student growth.

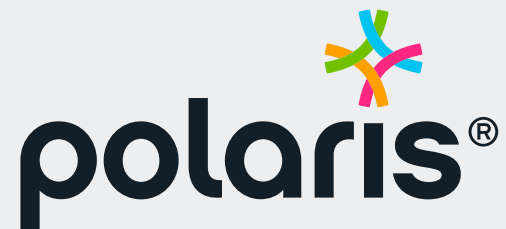
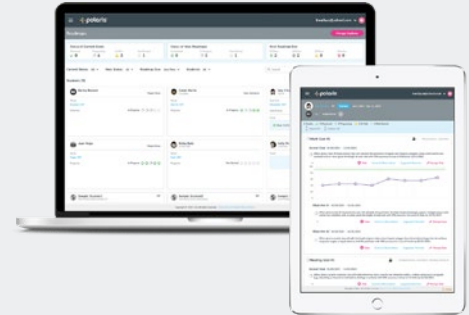
*"I cannot wait to learn even more [about using Polaris.] I wish I had access to this years ago!"*



## The Results

Sonya reported that her district employs a mentor program to support new special education teachers in various aspects, including writing IEPs, progress monitoring, and understanding the legal aspects of special education. With Polaris' user-friendly and comprehensive features helping her fulfill her responsibilities, Sonya's overall job satisfaction has significantly improved. She states, "I cannot wait to learn even more [about using Polaris.] I wish I had access to this years ago!" Now Sonya can't imagine being a special educator without Polaris!

*"Once I completed the entire process on one of my students and saw everything I could do, I was blown away and thought, 'We don't need any other programs but this!' Assessments, goals, data collection, and progress monitoring...all in one central location for each student. It doesn't get any better than this! It is now my golden nugget!"*



Polaris is an online IEP development and progress monitoring solution for teachers and service providers to plan, write, execute, and report on IEPs for pre-K–transition students on general education or extended learning standards. Polaris provides IEP writing guidance, SMART goal recommendations, and easy-to-interpret data visualizations for high-impact and high-quality IEPs.

