
FROM THE DIRECTOR

FEDERAL SPECIAL EDUCATION GUIDANCE

Please see the following letter from Melody Musgrove, Director of the Office of Special Education Programs at the national level. **The clarification of FAPE is a VERY IMPORTANT LINK !**

Dear Colleagues,

Today, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is a civil rights law, guaranteeing a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to millions of children, many of whom were excluded 40 years ago from the American education system.

As educators, advocates, parents, and policymakers, we need to work toward creating a culture of high expectations; ensuring students with disabilities have full access to college- and career-ready learning opportunities and assessments; and supporting students with disabilities so that they may excel in the general curriculum for college and career success. To do so, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice have released several resources including the:

[**Dear Colleague Letter: Clarification of FAPE and Alignment with State Academic Standards**](#), which clarifies that individualized education programs for children with disabilities must be aligned with state academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled.

[**IDEAs That Work: Preparing Children and Youth with Disabilities for Success**](#) website will connect teachers and families with resources to assist them in improving instruction and supporting academic, social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students with disabilities as they become college and career ready.

[**Supporting and Responding to Behavior: Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies for Teachers**](#) toolkit, which summarizes evidence-based, positive, proactive, and responsive classroom behavior intervention and support strategies for teachers.

Best,

Melody Musgrove

Comments from IDOE

The **November 16, 2015 Dear Colleague Letter** (hyperlinked above) should be read and the following take-away points shared with your staff:

- ◆ Ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, are held to rigorous academic standards and high expectations is a shared responsibility for all of us. To help make certain that children with disabilities are held to high expectations and have meaningful access to a State's academic content standards, we write to clarify that an individualized education program (IEP) for an eligible child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled. 1 Research has demonstrated that children with disabilities who struggle in reading and mathematics can successfully learn grade-level content and make significant academic progress when appropriate instruction, services, and supports are provided. 2 Conversely, low expectations can lead to children with disabilities receiving less challenging instruction that reflects below grade-level content standards, and thereby not learning what they need to succeed at the grade in which they are enrolled.
- ◆ This letter provides useful interpretive guidance for the phrase "[**general education curriculum**](#)," and then gives an instructive example of implementation of this interpretation on pages four and five.