

# Diploma Taskforce

## Special Education: New Considerations

February 17, 2016

- ▶ Dear Colleague Letter from the Office of Special Education
- ▶ Reauthorization of ESEA

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies...

November 16, 2015

- ▶ 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.

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies..

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...

# Dear Colleague Letter

- ▶ 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.**

# Dear Colleague Letter

- ▶ 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.**

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies...

- ▶ 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.**
- ▶
- ▶ <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-fape-11-17-2015.pdf>

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies

## Expectations for IEPs:

- Provides FAPE
- Based on the individual needs of the student
- Takes into account the **impact of the child's disability on his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum.**
- **Goals must be aligned to grade level content standards, must be achievable, must be sufficiently ambitious to close any achievement gaps.**

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies

Interpretation of General Education Curriculum:

the same curriculum as for nondisabled children based on the **State's academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled**, regardless of the severity of the disability.

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies

Reiterates the Definition of Specially Designed Instruction:

“**adapting**, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, **the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction** to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s **disability...so that the child can meet the educational standards...that apply to all children.**” 34 CFR 300.39(b)(3)

# Dear Colleague Letter Clarifies

For those with significant cognitive disabilities:

- ▶ Alternate Academic Achievement Standards must be aligned with grade level standards
- ▶ May be restricted in scope or complexity or take the form of introductory or pre-requisite skills.

# ESSA

## Standards:

- ▶ Retains requirements to adopt challenging academic standards that apply to ALL public schools and their students, including students with disabilities.

# ESSA

- ▶ **Assessment:** States must ensure that for each subject, the total number of students assessed using an alternate assessment does not exceed 1 percent of the total number of students in the state who are assessed in that subject.

# ESSA

## Graduation and diplomas:

- ▶ States may not preclude a student with the most significant cognitive disabilities who takes an alternate assessment from attempting to complete the requirements for a regular high school.
- ▶ Prohibits states from counting lesser credentials, such as certificate of completion, certificate of attendance, or GED – as a regular high school diploma.

# ESSA links to Dear Colleague Memo

- ▶ High Expectations
- ▶ Educating students with disabilities is a shared responsibility
- ▶ Ensures access to general education curriculum and grade level standards.
- ▶ Focus on alternate assessment aligned to grade level standards for students with severe cognitive disabilities