

# Connections from Jerr

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## *From Jerry's Computer:*

Dear Educators, Parents and Community Members:

Welcome back for the 2004-2005 school year! This year will bring many changes and exciting improved program options for students in need of special education services!

In the 2004-05 academic year, our department will begin maintenance of a Special Education Policy and Procedure Web site. This new section is designed for use by district staff and parents to locate special education state regulations and district policy and procedures. Additionally, our department will distribute this bimonthly newsletter entitled "Connections from Jerr", designed to assist educators and community members to stay informed about changes in our department personnel, policy and procedures. The electronic newsletter will travel by e-mail to each special educator and be made available to the public on our department Web site at [www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/](http://www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/).

Parents or community members who wish additional information about special education services are urged to contact their child's school or the Anchorage School District STeP Center at 907- 742-3872; the STeP Center provides information resources to Students, Teachers and Parents. Additional information about special education or the Section 504 process can be gained by accessing the STeP Center's Web site at [www.asdk12.org/depts/step/](http://www.asdk12.org/depts/step/).

Together we can ensure that this year will be remembered by each of our students as an important milestone in their path towards lifelong learning.

***Jerry Sjolander***

Executive Director,  
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## ***In This Issue...***

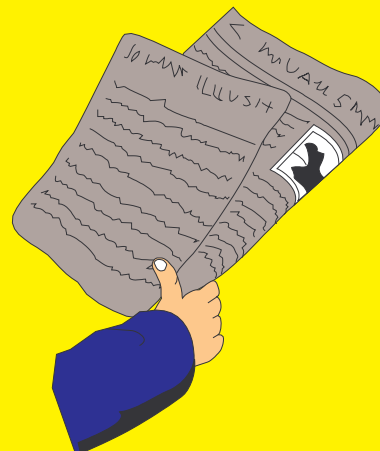
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## ***Keep in Step - What's Happening with IDEA Reauthorization?***

The IDEA stands for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Every year, under this federal law, millions of children with disabilities receive special educational services designed to meet their unique needs. About every five years, parts of this federal law must be reauthorized. This means that these sections of the law will expire (in other words, not be in force) unless Congress passes them again (hence the word reauthorization).

In May of 2004, the bill to reauthorize the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), passed the Senate by a vote of 95 to 3. Currently the bill is with a conference committee to discuss the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

To compare the two bills, you can visit the National Association of State Directors of Special Education website at: [http://www.nasdse.org/government\\_relations/ideareauthorization.htm](http://www.nasdse.org/government_relations/ideareauthorization.htm).



## ***Settlement of Lawsuit Affects Statewide Assessment***

The Parties in the Noon v. State class action lawsuit filed on behalf of students with disabilities who take the High School Graduation Qualifying Examination have reached a comprehensive settlement. Under the settlement, (1) disabled students will be offered alternative ways to demonstrate they have achieved proficiency in math, reading, and writing, as measured against the same standards that apply to other students; (2) the exit exam will be a high stakes requirement for graduation for students with disabilities in the spring of 2005, but in certain cases it will be phased-in; and (3) the range of accommodations available to students with disabilities will be broadened. The settlement agreement is posted on the web at [www.eed.state.ak.us/](http://www.eed.state.ak.us/) under "Headlines."

Watch for training opportunities available to special education staff and informational evenings for parents and students to learn about the regulations and participation guidelines that are the result of this settlement.



## *The Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process in Alaska*

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is responsible for assessing the impact and effectiveness of State and local efforts to provide early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, and a free appropriate public education to children and youth with disabilities. OSEP assists State Education Agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), early intervention service providers, and other State agencies in implementing the Federal mandates under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments of 1997 (IDEA '97).



Toward this goal, OSEP designed a multifaceted process that includes technical assistance, review of a state's statutes, regulations, policies and procedures, on-site reviews of implementation, ensuring corrective action of noncompliance, and engaging in ongoing communications with States, organizations, parents and advocates and other constituents. Beginning in 1998, OSEP implemented a new monitoring system, known as the Continuous Improvement Monitoring System (CIMP). CIMP is built around a number of critical themes that include: continuity, partnership with stakeholders, state accountability, self-assessments, data driven processes, and the provision of technical assistance

The District has been monitored by the State department as part of the CIMP process since the 01-02 year. Each year one high school attendance area is scrutinized for compliance with state and federal regulations. Special education records and school district policy and procedures are evaluated to improve the manner and delivery of special education services to its students. Each year the district uses the information gained from the audit to formulate a plan of improvement which functions to supplement the division staff development plans.

## *The Local Scene*

Tidbits of information about the local happenings!

### **Goalview Update** -- Currently the Anchorage School

District is working with the Department of Education and Early Development to create a web based solution -- more news to come!



The Special Education Parent Resource Center has been renamed -- the **STeP Center** will work to provide information resources for Students, Teachers and Parents. Check out their website at: <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/step/>.