



Connections from Jerry

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From Jerry's Computer: NCLB and Highly Qualified Special Educators

Dear Educators and Parents:

With the Reauthorization of IDEA, special education teachers may have questions about the definition of "highly qualified" and how it pertains to them. When a federal law such as this one is passed, school districts act upon the guidance of their state departments of education and the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Department of Education in Washington. The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and OSEP, during the next year or so, are expected to write regulations interpreting the new law.



Once the Anchorage School District receives these regulations, we will ensure all of our special education teachers have access to educational opportunities to assist them to meet the new federal standard.

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

On December 3rd, President Bush signed the Reauthorization of IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Here are answers to some frequent questions asked about this new law and how it will affect the provision of special education services here in the Anchorage School District:

When do the provisions take effect -- should educators be reading the law to make changes right now?

Presently the ASD special education administrators are waiting for guidance from both DEED and the federal Office of Special Education Programs as to how to implement the new provisions. This guidance is crucial ~ it facilitates the development of policies that ultimately guide special education and regular education staff in their work at individual schools.

Publications such as this one and ECE Post (distributed by the Anchorage School District Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Department) will be one means of notifying special education staff and district administrators of new policies as they are written.

Why are district policies so important to implementing the changes dictated by the new IDEA?

District level policies are important for two reasons:

- 1) The policies are written based on the federal and state regulations that interpret the new federal law and upon the advice of district counsel.
- 2) District policies are written to ensure uniform compliance with the federal and state laws and regulations -- it is important that the all building level teams across the district are making procedurally consistent special education decisions.

How can educators learn about the new federal law?

The Council for Exceptional Children has released a summary of significant issues. The Summary of Significant Issues, located on the CEC website at: http://www.cec.sped.org/pp/IDEA_120204.pdf, includes information about changes that include such topics as the provision of early intervention services, evaluation of students with disabilities, identification of students with specific learning disabilities and discipline of students with disabilities.

How to Stay in Touch with ASD Special Education Policy...Our Online Handbook

The Special Education Online Handbook is an excellent resource for special educators and district administrators to remain informed about changes in special education policy and procedures. Located on the district website at: <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/policy/index.asp>, the ASD handbook is designed to provide educators with access to both the state regulations and pertinent school district policy in one place.

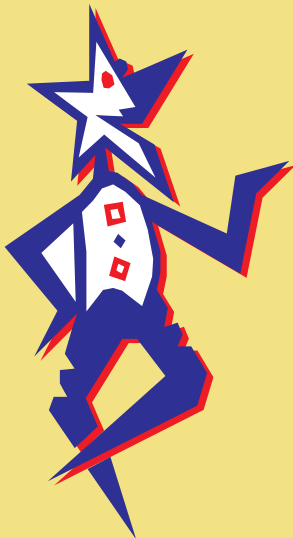
For example, in late December, I wrote a memorandum to all special education, related service providers, administrators, teachers and staff regarding Intensive Funding. This memorandum is designed in a question and answer format. It provides assistance to building level teams who determine whether a special education student qualifies for intensive funding. It specifically outlines the 7 criteria that a student must meet in order to qualify for special education funding. Additionally, the memo includes information about the limited exceptions.

This new policy is located online at: <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/policy/part1.asp>. Questions about this new policy can be directed to special education administrators and department chairs at secondary level.



The Local Scene

Tidbits of information about the local happenings!



Way to go Autism Cadre! Great job to Christine Zelinsky, Susan Diemer, Dana Dugdale and all of the teachers working with parents to host their Parent Night in November. Well attended and very informative, the evening was of great benefit!

Secondary Special Education Teacher Consultants are busy working on a new training “**Special Education Law: Roles and Responsibilities ~ What General Educators, Special Education Teachers and Administrators Need to Know**” -- look for its publication soon!