

Indicator: Units of instruction and activities are aligned with IEP goals and objectives for students with disabilities. (5106)

Evidence Review

The *No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act* of 2001 makes schools accountable for the learning and achievement of all students. The need to align Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) with the general education curriculum was first introduced in the 1997 reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. In 2004, the IDEA was reauthorized to align with NCLB, and a powerful connection was created. NCLB drives accountability and furthers alignment with state standards and assessments administered to all students with disabilities. Related requirements in IDEA 1997, IDEA 2004, and NCLB are the driving forces that affect the planning process for IEPs.

Benefits of aligned IEP's include higher expectations, focused and collaborative instruction, and increased exposure to curricular content. In a study by McLaughlin, Nolet, Rhim, and Henderson (1999), special education teachers indicated that when IEP's were aligned with state standards, students with disabilities had improved exposure to subject matter with focused instruction to meet challenging goals. These researchers also found that collaboration between special and general education teachers was greater when they worked with a student with an aligned IEP. When using aligned IEP's, educators tended to focus on high expectations rather than on student deficits (Thompson, et al., 2001). In sum, the aligned IEP changed teachers' pedagogy and attitudes to ensure that students with disabilities had access to the general education curriculum. As special education students gain greater access to state content standards, their test scores should improve and the achievement gap between special education and general education should decrease.

Source: *Aligning IEP's with State Standards and Accountability Systems*, The Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K – 8.

References and other resources

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities <http://www.nichcy.org/disability>

National Association of State Directors of Special Education <http://nasdse.org>

The Access Center for Improving Outcomes for All Students K - 8 www.k8accesscenter.org

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