



Responsible Office: Office of Student Services

BOARD POLICY 6800

SPECIAL EDUCATION

PURPOSE

The Board of Trustees is committed to providing high-quality, individualized instruction in the least restrictive environment to students with disabilities, empowering them to achieve high levels of success and education, based on their individual needs. It is the responsibility of the Washoe County School District ("District") to customize the learning environment to meet the wide-ranging needs of diverse learners and to provide learning opportunities for each and every student, no matter their challenge. The District shall focus on building an equitable educational environment by working with families and the community to ensure all students graduate college- and/or career-ready.

POLICY

1. The District shall maintain policies, regulations, practices, programs and services to promote equity and an understanding for students with disabilities and the families who support their needs. This policy, which includes guiding principles, practices, and desired outcomes, supports these commitments.
2. Guiding Principles
 - a. The District believes all students should be educated in the general education classroom and have access to the general curriculum to the greatest extent appropriate and in alignment with the Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The District shall create and sustain an inclusive culture of high expectations for all students, recognizing that students with disabilities are part of the larger educational system. Students with disabilities shall receive rigorous, explicit, high-quality, and individualized instruction in the least restrictive environment while being held to high expectations and standards in order to access grade level content and meet the goals identified in the IEP.
 - b. The academic success of students with disabilities is a responsibility shared by students, educators, families, and the community. The District is focused on increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the achievement gap of students with disabilities through the implementation of high-quality

Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), standards based instruction, evidence based practices, high expectations, rigorous instruction, partnerships with families and the community, and effective use of assessment data.

- c. An effective system of professional learning related to special education services is vital to raise academic achievement for students and improve the effectiveness of faculty and staff. The District will require all general and special education teachers, school administrators, and applicable support personnel to participate in professional learning opportunities related to special education services on an ongoing basis.
 - d. All students, including those with disabilities, should receive instruction from an effective teacher in the least restrictive environment. Students with disabilities may, when determined necessary by the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team, also receive support from effective educational support professional staff, such as an assistant or aide. This may be in addition to technical support, professional learning, or appropriate technology.
3. Guiding Practices
- a. The Office of Student Services shall:
 - i. raise educator awareness on best practices in special education;
 - ii. provide professional learning to District staff that focuses on inclusive practices, instructional practices, building partnerships with families, and compliance for general education teachers, special education teachers, and staff;
 - iii. coordinate with schools to provide related services for students with disabilities;
 - iv. monitor Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) throughout the school year, ensuring that schools are providing services outlined in Individualized Educational Programs (IEP) as well as procedures and timelines are being followed by school staff;
 - v. assist school based staff with Individualized Educational Program (IEP) development;
 - vi. support school based staff with Individualized Educational Program (IEP) implementation;
 - vii. assist schools in reviewing data for students with disabilities; and,

- viii. through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, build relationships and opportunities, for parents/guardians, and families to include, but not limited to seminars, conferences and trainings related to special education, laws, and practices.
- b. School administrators, under the Office of School Performance, shall serve as the Local Educational Agency (LEA). School administrators lead the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team and help to identify the individual needs of students.
 - i. Local Educational Agency (LEA):
 - 1. is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities;
 - 2. is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and
 - 3. is knowledgeable about and can make decisions on the availability of resources of the school district.
 - ii. The Local Educational Agency (LEA) acts on behalf of the Board of Trustees and the District when making decisions and implementing the Individualized Educational Program (IEP).
 - iii. Key responsibilities include:
 - 1. ensuring that services outlined in the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) match student needs;
 - 2. facilitating the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meetings;
 - 3. ensuring that students are receiving the services and supports as outlined in Individualized Educational Programs (IEP);
 - 4. leading staff to ensure Individualized Educational Program (IEP) goals are met; and,
 - 5. ensuring that students transition successfully.
- c. The District will support families to build capacity in their advocacy of students with disabilities to include a comprehensive understanding of the Individualized Educational Program (IEP), families' rights, and the role of Child Find in identifying students with disabilities.

- d. The Office of Human Resources shall recruit and develop qualified special education staff. All District school and department leaders are responsible for retention and development of effective staff.

DEFINITIONS

1. Achievement Gap – refers to any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students.
2. Individualized Education Program (IEP) refers to the written document required for each child who is eligible to receive special education services. It is provided to a student who has been determined first to have a disability and, second, to need special education services because of that disability.
3. Individualized Instruction refers to a method of instruction in which content, instructional technology, and pace of learning are based upon the abilities and interests of each individual learner.
4. Local Educational Agency (LEA) is defined in the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) 2004 as a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of or to perform a service function for public schools. The LEA is acting on behalf of the school board of education when making decisions, committing resources, and implementing the IEP.
5. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is the requirement in federal law that students with disabilities receive their education, to the maximum extent appropriate, with nondisabled peers and that special education students are not removed from regular classes unless, even with supplemental aids and services, education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily.
6. Child Find is a requirement under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) that school districts shall identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. This obligation to identify all children who may need special education services exists even if the school is not providing special education services to the child.
7. Specially Designed Instruction refers to adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to meet the student's unique needs.

8. "Effective," as used in Policy item 2(d), has the meaning associated with the District's evaluation process within the Professional Growth System. An effective teacher can demonstrate he/she is able to:
 - a. design coherent instructional plans using knowledge of their students, the subject matter, the expected outcomes, and resources to support learning for a diverse student population;
 - b. establish a culture for learning characterized by high expectations for all students and an environment that is respectful and values learning;
 - c. implement engaging instructional plans and utilize information gained through assessment to adjust instruction when necessary.
 - d. fulfill his/her professional responsibilities by reflecting on teaching, participating in professional learning communities, and establishing strong partnerships with families.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

1. As a result of this policy:
 - a. IEPs will be monitored to ensure students' paths are guided toward success, ensuring that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.
 - b. Staff, families, students, and community members will be provided opportunities for input to ensure that families and students feel welcomed, valued, and connected. Parent or guardian and student rights will be protected and they will participate as meaningful members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team.
 - c. The Office of School Performance, along with the Office of Student Services, will report to the Board of Trustees, on an annual basis, outcome data for students with disabilities to ensure that students with disabilities are on track to graduate college-and/or career-ready.
 - d. The Office of Student Services will report to the Board of Trustees, on an annual basis, data related to special education support provided to families and staff, professional learning offered, and compliance activities provided.
 - e. The District will recruit, employ, develop, and retain a diverse, qualified, effective, and culturally competent workforce. The Office of Human

Resources will report to the Board of Trustees on an annual basis data related to hiring efforts, results, and vacancies.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES & ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

1. This policy reflects the goals of the District's Strategic Plan and aligns/complies with the governing documents of the District, to include:
 - a. Board Policy 5036.1, Family Engagement
 - b. Board Policy 6600, Course of Study
 - c. Board Policy 9201, Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Prohibited
 - d. Board Policy 9210, Equity and Diversity
 - e. Board Policy 9156, Safe and Healthy Schools Commission
2. This policy complies with Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) and Nevada Administrative Code (NAC), to include:
 - a. Chapter 388, System of Public Education, and specifically:
 - i. NRS 388.417 – 388.525, Pupils with Disabilities
 - b. Chapter 389, Academics and Textbooks
 - c. Chapter 392, Pupils
3. This document complies with federal laws and regulations, to include:
 - a. American with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008
 - b. Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - c. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
 - d. Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973
 - e. Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)

REVIEW AND REPORTING

1. This document shall be reviewed as part of the bi-annual review and reporting process, following each regular session of the Nevada Legislature. The Board of Trustees shall receive notification of any required changes to the policy as well as an audit of the accompanying governing documents.

2. Administrative regulations, and/or other associated documents, will be developed as necessary to implement this policy.

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Modification
1/10/2017	1.0	Adopted: