



**State of New Jersey**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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December 8, 2015

TO: Chief School Administrators  
Charter School and Renaissance School Project Lead Persons  
Directors of Special Education  
Administrators of a State Facility  
Administrators of an Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities  
Administrators of a College-Operated Program  
Statewide Special Education Advisory Council  
Agencies or Organizations Concerned with Special Education

FROM: Peggy McDonald, Executive Director  
Office of Special Education Programs

SUBJECT: Inclusive Education

I am writing to bring to your attention several resources which support schools' capacity to educate students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) together with their nondisabled peers in their neighborhood schools in inclusive classrooms.

Inclusive Schools Week

December 7 – 11 is Inclusive Schools Week. This international annual celebration brings attention to the importance of educating all students in a supportive, inclusive environment. This year's theme is "*Sharing Our Talents in Inclusive Schools*." Resources including self-assessments, planning guides, group activities, ideas and resources aimed at helping schools get organized and ready to implement inclusive practices are available on the Inclusive Schools Network website at: [www.inclusiveschools.org](http://www.inclusiveschools.org).

Unified Sports

Legislation signed by Governor Christie in 2014, regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in athletic activities, became effective for the 2015-2016 school year. In an effort to support the successful inclusion of students with disabilities in athletic activities, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), partnered with Special Olympics New Jersey to publish and disseminate a new publication, "Learn.Practice.Play. UNIFIED: Guide to Inclusive Physical Education and Sports Activities." This publication provides resources for schools in creating a continuum of options that offer participation opportunities for students of all interests and ability levels. The publication is available online through Special Olympics at: <http://www.sonj.org/learn-practice-play-unified.html>. The book is also available at all four Learning Resource Centers throughout the State. See here for locations: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/lrc/>.

## Inclusion in the CCCS

Access to a general education curriculum is part of inclusive education. The United States Department of Education (USDE) released a significant guidance document on November 16, 2015, which addresses the alignment of Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals with general education grade-level content standards. The guidance provides that while an IEP must take into account a student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and the impact the child's disability has on his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum, the student's IEP goals "must be aligned with grade-level content standards..." The guidance document also includes an example of how an IEP team could appropriately align a student's IEP with grade-level academic standards. The NJDOE OSEP supports the use of this document when developing IEPs for students with disabilities. The document can be viewed in its entirety at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-fape-11-17-2015.pdf>.

## Preschool Inclusion and Early Childhood Education

The USDE released additional guidance in support of the inclusion of children with disabilities in Early Childhood Programs in September of this year. The statement was issued jointly by the United States Departments of Education and Health and Human Services and states that all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality early childhood programs, where they can be provided with individualized and appropriate support in meeting high expectations. The statement can be viewed at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/earlylearning/joint-statement-full-text.pdf>.

I trust you find these resources helpful.

PM/JW/ke

c: Members, State Board of Education  
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