

If you're a special ed director, principal, general or special ed teacher, school psychologist, therapist of any kind, or serve in any other professional capacity on an IEP (Individualized Education Program) Team, this is for you.

Dear Teachers and IEP Team Members...

Revolutionary Common Sense by Kathie Snow
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As a public speaker and trainer, I've presented to many teachers, therapists, and others who are on IEP Teams. And I routinely ask, "How many of you have read what the law (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act-IDEA) says?" In one group of 60, only three or four people raised their hands. In other audiences, no one replied in the affirmative! How can this be? A student's IEP *is the implementation* of IDEA. But how can you accurately and appropriately contribute to writing a student's IEP if you don't know what the law says? What educators *may* know is *school policy*, which may or may not reflect the spirit or intent of the law!

Do you know the law states:

- Assessment data should include "evaluations and information *provided by the parents* of the child; current classroom-based, local, or State assessments, and classroom-based observations; and observations by teachers and related services providers" (italics added), and that no "single procedure" should be used as "the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for the student."
- "To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities...are educated with children who are nondisabled; and special classes, separate schooling, or other *removal* of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily;" and "Unless the IEP of a child requires some other arrangement, the child is educated in the school that he or she would attend if nondisabled, unless the parent agrees otherwise;" and "A child with a disability is not *removed* from

education *in age-appropriate regular classrooms* solely because of *needed modifications in the general education curriculum.*" (Italics added.) "Not remove" is used twice in the law. The intent of the law is that students with disabilities *start out* in the

general ed environment with supports and accommodations. For example, if a student is ten but reads at a second-grade level, he should not be excluded from the fifth grade. Instead, he should receive curriculum modifications. Is your school following this part of the law?

- Schools are to ensure parents are "members of any group that makes decisions on the educational placement of their child." So if you've already decided where a student will be educated *before* the IEP meeting (*and without the parents' input*), you're not following the law, are you?
- The IEP Team is to consider the strengths of the child. And the Team is to write goals "designed to meet the child's needs...to enable the child *to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum*" (italics added) and "to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and nondisabled children." Are these procedures routinely followed in your district's IEP meetings?

Some members of the Team may need to know more than others. Special ed directors should know just about everything, while teachers need to know only those parts of the law related to placement, writing the IEP, goals, etc. As you can see by the quoted material, the law is not hard to understand and it can be easily found on the Internet. Many *parents* have chosen to learn what the law actually says—and not depend on educators' recitation of school policy—because it's in their child's best interests to do so. Isn't the same true for educators? *Is there any excuse for not knowing the law?*