

**Independence Community Schools  
District-Developed Special Education Delivery Plan  
For Students Aged 3-21**

**Independence School District  
Independence, IA  
Conceived 1996  
January 2005  
Revised October 2007  
Revised February 2009  
Reviewed May 2010  
Reviewed May 2011  
Reviewed May 2012  
Revised April 2015**

**Special Education Advisory Committee Members  
2014-2015 School Year**

AEA Representative

Edie Penno /appointee by AEA Director of Special Education (AEA-267)

Parent Representatives

Susie Bevans

LEA Representatives

Jean Peterson (Superintendent)

Danielle Meyer (Director School Improvement)

Mary Jean Blaisdell (East Elementary Principal)

Dewey Hupke (West Principal)

John Howard (Jr/Sr High Principal)

Josh Payton (Jr/Sr High Assistant Principal)

Jon Carey (HS General Education Teacher)

Sonya Elzey (HS Special Education Teacher)

Katelyn Kleitsch (West Elementary General Education Teacher)

Christi Imsland (West Elementary Special Education Teacher)

Kay Dolan (East Elementary Special Education Teacher)

Donalyn Pogue (East Elementary General Education Teacher)

## **BELIEFS AND PHILOSOPHY**

The Independence School District Special Education Advisory Committee developed the following beliefs in the spring of 1996 through a consensus building process.-These beliefs are used to guide the study of our district services and in the development of this plan.

- All adults, (district staff and community members) should share the responsibility for students' education through a collaborative process.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that initial placement will occur in a timely manner while still adhering to state and federal guidelines.
- All students shall be provided with an environment conducive to learning and the necessary resources based on students' needs.
- All students can learn and will learn differently and at different paces.
- Students need continuity of support services, facilitated transitions between buildings, and preparation for life beyond a preK-12 education.
- Special education services should be made available only when all other appropriate interventions have been attempted and found to be ineffective.
- All students will receive services in the least restrictive environment.

### **SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN ASSURANCES**

1. The district assures it provides a system for delivering instructional services including a full continuum of services and placements to address the needs of eligible individuals aged 3-21, and shall provide for the following:
  - The provision of accommodations and modifications to the general education environment and program, including settings and programs in which eligible individuals receive specially designed instruction, including modification and adaptation of curriculum, instructional techniques and strategies, and instructional materials.
  - The provision of specially designed instruction and related activities through cooperative efforts of the special education teachers and general education teachers in the general education classroom.
  - The provision of specially designed instruction on a limited basis by a special education teacher in the general classroom or in an environment other than the general classroom, including consultation with general education teachers.
  - The provision of specially designed instruction to eligible individuals with similar special education instructional needs organized according to the type of curriculum and instruction to be provided, and the severity of the educational needs of the eligible individuals served.
2. The district assures the school board has approved the development of the plan for creating a system for delivering specially designed instructional services.
3. The district assures that prior to the school board adoption, this delivery system was available for comment by the general public.
4. The district assures the delivery system plan was developed by a committee that included parents of eligible individuals, special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators, students, a school board member, and at least one AEA representative (selected by the AEA Special Education Director).
5. The district assures the AEA Special Education Director verified the delivery system is in compliance with the Iowa Administrative Rules of Special Education.
6. The district assures the school board has approved the service delivery plan for implementation.

## SERVICES AND DELIVERY

The district implements the Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process to provide support services to students needing extra assistance. Through MTSS, students have access to three levels of instruction: core, supplemental, and intensive. All students receive core instruction.

Supplemental instruction supports students in a small group format. Students whose needs are not being met at the supplemental level, may move to the intensive level where they receive individualized or very small group instruction. Progress is monitored closely at both the supplemental and intensive levels and instruction is adjusted based on progress monitoring data. Instruction is provided by highly qualified teachers using research based instructional strategies.

In addition to these specially designed interventions, the district has a range of services in place to provide support for students. These services include: Building Problem-Solving teams, consultation with special education staff, Title I, building-driven interventions, Reading Recovery, Fast Forward, Read Naturally, Second Chance Reading, Quest, mentoring, to name a few. When these services do not adequately meet a student's needs at the intensive level of support and progress monitoring data from the intensive intervention indicates that there is justification and need, a student may be entitled to services in special education. Special education services are available to students following their identification of entitlement by a team facilitated by AEA support personnel, and consisting of parent, general education teacher, special education teacher, principal or other LEA representative, and other personnel as appropriate. The needs of the student will direct the service and placement. These needs may lead to one or several of the options described below.

A range of service options are available in the district. The list is not meant to be all inclusive and other options may be considered on a case by case basis. Whenever possible and to the fullest extent appropriate, students will receive services in the general education setting.

Our continuum of services for PK-12<sup>th</sup> grade includes:

- The district will provide a full continuum of early childhood placements to children who are eligible for instructional IEP services. These early childhood placements will provide instructional services that adhere to one or more of the following Preschool Program Standards:
  - Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS);
  - Head Start Program Performance Standards; or
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation.
- Student is in general education with services provided through a consultative model.
- Student receives services in a co-taught classroom.
- Student is provided services with varying degrees of pull out to the special education classroom.
- Services are provided entirely in the special education classroom.
- Student receives services in an alternative setting.

## **DESCRIPTIONS OF SERVICE OPTIONS**

**Regular Early Childhood Program:** Services are defined as occurring in the general education classroom. The teacher holds a license issued by the Board of Education Examiners that includes pre-kindergarten and early childhood special education. The teacher is responsible for direct instruction, preparation of materials, adaptation and accommodations as specified in the IEP. The teacher with the dual endorsement is responsible for implementing and monitoring the child's progress according to the IEP.

**Regular Early Childhood Program Monitored by a Licensed Early Childhood Special Education Staff:** Services are defined as occurring in the general education classroom. The classroom teacher holds a license for pre-kindergarten. The general education teacher is responsible for classroom instruction and implementation of adaptations and accommodations as specified in the IEP. The licensed Early Childhood Special Education staff is responsible for monitoring the implementation of services described in each IEP and monitoring student progress relative to goals in the IEP.

**Early Childhood Special Education Program:** Services are defined as "direct specially designed instruction" and are provided to students with disabilities by a licensed Early Childhood Special Education teacher. The curriculum is tied to the general education curriculum, but is modified to meet the needs of the students. Classroom instruction is provided by a licensed Early Childhood Special Education teacher.

**Co-Taught Early Childhood Program:** Services are defined as a general education early childhood classroom. The general education curriculum and specially designed instruction are provided to a group of students with disabilities and without disabilities. All aspects of classroom instruction are co-planned and co-taught by a licensed Early Childhood Special Education teacher and an early childhood teacher. The Early Childhood Special Education teacher is responsible for monitoring the implementation of services described in each IEP and monitoring student progress relative to goals in the IEP.

**K-12 Consulting Teacher Services:** Consultation may consist of any combination of regular education, special education, and/or AEA267 personnel. This consultation may include specific advice on accommodations, teaching techniques, or materials and assessment criteria to evaluate progress.

### **K-12 Co-Teaching Services**

Students entitled to special education services may be served in a collaboratively taught class where a general education teacher and a special education teacher share responsibilities for planning and delivering lessons to general and special education students assigned to the class. There may also be para-educators in the classrooms to assist students. A student may participate in a co-taught class with or without other special educational services in the menu of options available. The general education teacher and the special education teacher are jointly responsible for the student's instruction.

When placing students with IEPs in general education classes, the percentage of students with

IEPs in any one class will be at or below 50%.

### **K-12 Collaborative Services**

Collaborative services are defined as direct specially designed instruction provided to an individual student with a disability or to a group of students with disabilities by a certified special education teacher in a general education classroom to aid the student(s) in accessing the general education content area instruction.

### **K-12 Pull-Out Services**

A PK-12 student is first assigned to a general education class/teacher and participates in every aspect of the general education program that is deemed appropriate in the IEP, and is additionally served in the special education class for areas of need indicated in the IEP. The degree to which the student is served in the special education class is determined by the IEP team and is based on the needs stated in the IEP. Students of preschool age are served in a self-contained class setting and may instead or additionally be served in a general education preschool in the district area.

### **K-12 Special Class Services**

An IEP team may determine that services are best provided entirely in the special education setting. In such a case, the team would continually evaluate the situation to determine when/if the student could be integrated into the general education environment. This would typically be done in small amounts of time to ensure student success.

**K-12 Alternative Setting Services:** When a student's needs cannot be met appropriately in the district school setting, an alternative setting may be necessary (which may/may not be located within the immediate district area). This may be the case when there exists a significant disruption to the educational environment or a potential risk of endangerment to themselves or others. The district is responsible for the cost of the transportation to this alternative site for the student. A district representative will remain connected with the student's IEP team.

### **Notes:**

- Students may receive different services at multiple points along the continuum based on the IEP.
- The district will provide access to this continuum for all eligible individuals based on their IEP.
- Services may be provided within the district or through contractual agreement with other districts and/or agencies.
- The continuum includes services for eligible individuals ages 3-21.
- The district will provide a full continuum of early childhood placements to children who are eligible for instructional services. These early childhood placements will provide instructional services that adhere to one or more of the following Preschool Program Standards:
  - Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (QPPS);
  - Head Start Program Performance Standards; or
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation.

## CASELOADS

Special education teacher rosters will be informally reviewed at least 4 times per year by the teacher and the building principal, with support from an AEA 267 representative. Roster reviews will be scheduled as follows:

- a. At the beginning of the school year (August/September)
- b. During the month of November (following special education count)
- c. During January at the beginning of second semester
- d. At the end of the year to project rosters and make plans for the following year (April/May)

A teacher's caseload will be informally reviewed when either of the following occurs:

- a. The number of students on a teacher's roster, the level of services these students receive, and the amount of time a teacher spends engaged in joint planning/collaboration indicates a need to conduct a caseload review.
- b. A special education teacher expresses concern about his/her ability to effectively perform the essential functions of his/her job due to caseload.

Caseload determinations will be made by assigning points for the intensity of service required by each IEP on a teacher's roster. Each student is assigned 1, 2, or 3 points based on level of intensity of services.

1Point Student requires limited modifications to the general curriculum which requires special education personnel to provide specially designed instruction for less than 55% of the school day. Student's IEP has 1-2 goal areas requiring specially designed instruction.

2Points Student requires significant modifications to the general curriculum, requiring special education personnel to provide specially designed instruction for 56%-85% of the school day. Student's IEP has 3-4 goal areas requiring specially designed instruction.

3Points Student requires significant adaptation to grade level curriculum requiring instructional strategies. Alternate assessment is used to monitor the IEP. Behavior intensity is such that an FBA and BIP are monitored. Special education personnel provide specially designed instruction for 86%-100% of the school day. Student's IEP has 4 or more goal areas requiring specially designed instruction.

\*Administration can adjust points in special consideration of Alternate Assessment

### Joint Planning and Collaboration Load Considerations

Additional points are assigned based on the special education teacher's time spent joint planning with general education teachers, co-teaching partners, and/or with para-professionals. This is calculated for the teacher and not for individual students.

1Point Special education teacher conducts joint planning with general education teacher(s) and/or para professional over the course of a month for up to 2 hours of time.

2Points Special education teacher conducts joint planning with general education teacher(s) and/or para professional over a course of a month for 2-4 hours of time.

3Points Special education teacher conducts joint planning with general education teacher(s) and/or para professional over a course of a month for more than 4 hours of time.



**In general, a special education teacher's caseload should not exceed 22 points. The assignment of education assistants must be taken into consideration and may be used to compensate for a caseload that exceeds 22 points. Caseloads of 22 points or more will be considered for further review.**

### **Resolving Caseload Issues**

When a staff person has a caseload concern, the specific concern should be communicated verbally to the building principal and the AEA team in the early stages of concern. At the secondary levels (7-12), the guidance counselor may be included in the discussion. Efforts should be made to resolve the concern through informal problem solving.

If the concern persists, or in the event that there is a disagreement as to the appropriate instructional caseload and concerns are not resolved by working through the process described above, staff may request further consideration through the formal procedures outlined below.

### **Requesting a Caseload Review**

All requests must be in writing and will include all relevant information to support the request. Requests should initially be given to an individual's principal. This information might include, but is not limited to:

- IEPs
- Schedule and instructional groupings
- Collaborative/co-teaching assignments
- Number of buildings

### **Procedural Steps**

1. Informal problem solving strategies in relation to caseload concerns have been exhausted.
2. A written request for caseload review is submitted to the principal.
3. The request is reviewed for clarification with the principal. The principal meets with the individual within 8 working days.
4. If the caseload concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved, the request is then sent to the superintendent.
5. Within 8 working days, the superintendent will review the request and give a recommendation to the individual's principal.
6. Upon receipt of the superintendent's recommendation, the principal will review the information and discuss it with the individual.
7. If the person requesting the review does not agree with the determination, he or she may appeal to the AEA Director of Special Education or designee within 5 working days.
8. The AEA Special Education Director/designee will meet with personnel involved and will provide a written decision.

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Determining effectiveness of the Special Education Program will be accomplished through a comprehensive evaluation conducted every 5 years. The goal of the Special Education Program is to increase the number of special education students who are proficient in reading comprehension and math. The ICSD's action plan for achieving this goal is to increase integration of students into the general education classroom, increase collaboration between general education teachers and special education teachers, and fully articulate curriculum, instruction, assessment and grading practices.

In order to determine the program's effectiveness, the district will collect the following:

- Student achievement data
- Student integration data
- Collaboration data
- Parent satisfaction data
- SPP/APR data

The district will also examine yearly our SPP/APR data to determine priorities and develop an action plan. If the district meets SPP/APR requirements, the delivery system will be considered effective. If the district does not meet requirements, the district will work in collaboration with the State and AEA to make changes that will improve the effectiveness of the plan.