Application to Students with Disabilities

The Common Core State Standards articulate rigorous grade-level expectations in the areas of mathematics and English language arts.. These standards identify the knowledge and skills students need in order to be successful in college and careers

Students with disabilities —students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Office of Special Education Programs, 2006) —must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide an historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities. The continued development of understanding about research-based instructional practices and a focus on their effective implementation will help improve access to mathematics and English language arts (ELA) standards for all students, including those with disabilities.

Students with disabilities are a heterogeneous group with one common characteristic: the presence of disabling conditions that significantly hinder their abilities to benefit from general education (IDEA 34 CFR §300.39, 2004). Therefore, *how* these high standards are taught and assessed is of the utmost importance in reaching this diverse group of students.

In order for students with disabilities to meet high academic standards and to fully demonstrate their conceptual and procedural knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening (English language arts), their instruction must incorporate supports and accommodations, including:

- supports and related services designed to meet the unique needs of these students and to enable their access to the general education curriculum (IDEA 34 CFR §300.34, 2004).
- An Individualized Education Program (IEP)[1] which includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate their attainment of grade-level academic standards.
- Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel who are prepared and qualified to deliver high-quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services.

Promoting a culture of high expectations for all students is a fundamental goal of the Common Core State Standards. In order to participate with success in the general curriculum, students with disabilities, as appropriate, may be provided additional supports and services, such as:

- Instructional supports for learning— based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)[2] —which foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression.

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[1] According to IDEA, an IEP includes appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the individual achievement and functional performance of a child

[2] UDL is defined as "a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that (a) provides flexibility in the ways information is presented, in the ways students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and in the ways students are engaged; and (b) reduces barriers in instruction, provides appropriate accommodations, supports, and challenges, and maintains high achievement expectations for all students, including students with disabilities and students who are limited English proficient." by Higher Education Opportunity Act (PL 110-135)

- Instructional accommodations (Thompson, Morse, Sharpe & Hall, 2005) —changes in materials or procedures— which do not change the standards but allow students to learn within the framework of the Common Core.

- Assistive technology devices and services to ensure access to the general education curriculum and the Common Core State Standards.

Some students with the most significant cognitive disabilities will require substantial supports and accommodations to have meaningful access to certain standards in both instruction and assessment, based on their communication and academic needs. These supports and accommodations should ensure that students receive access to multiple means of learning and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, but retain the rigor and high expectations of the Common Core State Standards.

References

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 34 CFR §300.34 (a). (2004).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 34 CFR §300.39 (b)(3). (2004).

Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. "IDEA Regulations: Identification of Students with Specific Learning Disabilities," 2006 http://idea.ed.gov/object/fileDownload/model/TopicalBrief/field/PdfFile/primary_key/23. (Accessed January 29, 2010).

Thompson, Sandra J., Amanda B. Morse, Michael Sharpe, and Sharon Hall. "Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer and Evaluate Use of Accommodations and Assessment for Students with Disabilities," 2nd Edition. Council for Chief State School Officers, 2005 http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/AccommodationsManual.pdf . (Accessed January, 29, 2010).