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Students with Disabilities and the Common Core State Standards

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The *Common Core State Standards Initiative* is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The standards were developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare our children for college and the workforce.



These standards present rigorous grade-level expectations for students in grades K-12 in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). They also challenge students with disabilities to excel within the general curriculum in order to reach the same college and/or career goals. Continued development, understanding, and implementation of research-based instructional practices in mathematics and ELA will help all students reach their highest potential.

Common Core Standards do not tell teachers how to teach. They present the knowledge and skills students need to know in order for teachers to create the best lessons and environment for their classrooms. Standards help students, parents, and teachers set clear and realistic goals for achievement as well as provide an organized plan for reaching those goals. But, what about students with disabilities?

Students with disabilities are a heterogeneous group with one common characteristic: the presence of disabling conditions that hinder their abilities to benefit from general education (IDEA 34 CFR 300. 39, 2004). Reaching this diverse group of students depends on how teachers are teaching and assessing the standards. In order for disabled students to meet these high academic standards and fully demonstrate their knowledge and skills in mathematics, reading, writing, speaking and listening, their instruction must include and support certain accommodations, including:



- Supports and related services designed to meet the unique needs of disabled students and to enable their access to the general education curriculum (IDEA 34 CFR 300. 34, 2004).



- An Individualized Education Program (IEP) which includes annual goals aligned with and chosen to facilitate their attainment of grade-level academic standards.



- Teachers and specialized instructional support personnel, prepared and qualified to deliver high quality, evidence-based, individualized instruction and support services.



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The fundamental goal of the **CCSS** is to promote a culture of high expectations for all students. In order to experience successful participation 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) which



foster student engagement by presenting information in multiple ways and allowing for diverse avenues of action and expression.

“The UDL is a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice that values diversity through proactive design of an inclusive curriculum, thereby eliminating or reducing barriers to academic success. Initially proposed as a means for including students with disabilities in the general-education classroom, it is now better understood as a general-education initiative that improves outcomes for all learners.”
(This includes students with limited English proficiency.)

• **Instructional accommodations** – 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** – ensure access to the general education curriculum and the Common Core State Standards.



Some students with the most significant cognitive disabilities may require substantial supports and accommodations based on their academic needs. Supports and accommodations should ensure that students receive access to multiple means of learning opportunities to demonstrate knowledge but retain the rigor and high expectations of the Common Core State Standards.

The **Council for Exceptional Children** contributed to the creation of the Core Curriculum Standards by voicing concerns about the needs of disabled students. Deborah A. Ziegler, Associate Executive Director of Policy and Advocacy Services for the Council for Exceptional Children stated, *“Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) was pleased to be involved throughout the process to ensure that the new Common Core Standards address the needs of students with disabilities and gifts and talents. CEC believes the new standards will move education in the United States in the right direction for all students and will provide them with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and work. We look forward to supporting the initiatives to implement the Common Core Standards.”*

Resources:

Common Core States Standards Initiative. 2010. Application to students with disabilities. Retrieved Sept. 2012.
<http://www.corestandards.org/assets/application-to-students-with-disabilities.pdf>

Council for Exceptional Children. CEC applauds common core standards initiative. Retrieved September 2012.
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/k12_statements/CEC-Statement-of-Support.pdf

Ralabate, Patricia K. ASHA Leader, The. August 30, 2011. Universal design for learning: meeting the needs of all students. Retrieved September 2012.
<http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2011/110830/Universal-Design-for-Learning-Meeting-the-Needs-of-All-Students/>

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