

IDEA Part A

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is broken down into four parts, A, B, C, and D. Each part breaks down rights, expectations, and specifics of each part of the law. Part A of IDEA lays the groundwork for what the law covers, as well as outlining definitions of words as they relate to the document and law.

The Groundwork

Part A of IDEA shares that based on decades of research, the education of students with disabilities has seen a direct improvement when all students are held to high expectations. The key, however, is that expectations and goals must meet students' developmental needs to the maximum extent possible.

Prior to IDEA, the needs of special education students were addressed through the Education for all Handicapped Children Act of 1975. When lawmakers started the process of creating IDEA, it was because they found that the needs of millions of special education students were not being fully addressed by the prior law. They found that: children were not receiving appropriate educational services, children were being excluded entirely from the public school setting and being educated away from their peers, undiagnosed disabilities were significantly hindering children from having successful education experiences, and that there was a lack of adequate resources in the

public school system that forced families to find support elsewhere.

IDEA aimed to address these needs by making sure families had access to a free and appropriate public education and improving educational results for all children with disabilities.

What Research Says

30 + years of education research and experience has demonstrated that the education of students with disabilities can be made more effective by having high expectations for all students, ensuring developmental goals are met to the greatest extent possible, and ensuring that students are prepared to lead productive and independent lives to the greatest extent possible. The way these statements occur look different for all students based on their needs and strengths, but by maintaining the idea of competence for all students, we begin to see greater growth from our students with disabilities. Research also suggests that by strengthening the role and responsibility of parents, we allow a more cooperative learning environment and open the doors for students to more meaningfully engage in their educational environment.

What IDEA pushes for

With evidence that the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 was not fully meeting student needs, and armed with decades of research, lawmakers sought to bridge these gaps with the creation of

IDEA. Within IDEA are core elements that pushed for stronger, more supportive special education services. These include the idea of providing special education services and all related supports and services in the child's most natural environment, such as the classroom, supporting high-quality and intensive preservice preparation for all teachers, focusing resources to improve teaching and learning, and supporting and developing the use of technology, such as AAC and other assistive technology, to maximize the accessibility of the classroom for all students. IDEA Part A, outlines how the law supports the educational access and quality for all students with disabilities. Parts B, C, and D get more specific with examples.