

What is IDEA?

The landmark *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* is a federal law that guarantees the 6.4 million students across the country with disabilities access to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.



Inclusion and Access

- In 1967, local public schools only educated 1 out of 5 students with a disability.
- Today, 95% of students with disabilities are educated at their local public school alongside their peers without disabilities.
- From 2003 to 2012, the percentage of students with disabilities who spend most of their day (80%) in a regular class increased from 49.9% to 61.5%.

Early Intervention and Preschool

- In 2012, over 1 million children with disabilities, from birth to age 5, received early intervention or preschool services, an increase of 33% from 1995.
- Increased early identification and interventions for students with disabilities have helped ensure students enter kindergarten ready for success.

Outcomes

- Between 1996 and 2013, 8th grade students with disabilities made progress at a faster rate than their peers without disabilities, with an 18-point gain in math and an 8-point gain in reading on the National Assessment for Education Progress (NAEP).
- In 2012, 63.9% of students with disabilities graduated high school with a regular diploma, an increase of 11.3% from 1996. In 2012, 20.5% of students with disabilities dropped out, a decrease of 13.6% since 1996.
- Between 1987 and 2009, the percentage of students with disabilities enrolled in postsecondary education increased from 14.6% to 57%. In particular, enrollment in two- and four-year colleges increased. By 2012, 11% of undergraduates reported having a disability and 88% of schools reported enrolling students with disabilities.
- In September 2015, the unemployment rate for adults with disabilities was 10.4%, a decrease of 4% from 2009.

Looking Forward – The Next 40 Years

The significant progress made in the last 40 years demonstrates the potential of students with disabilities to thrive. Yet there is more work to be done in the following areas to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed:

1. Postsecondary transitions and accommodations – although enrollment is higher than ever, postsecondary completion for students with disabilities is only 40.7%.
2. Juvenile Justice – students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their peers without disabilities, with particular disproportionality towards African American boys. Students with disabilities are also more likely to be physically restrained or placed in seclusion at school.
3. Access – Although students with disabilities comprise 12% of the population, they make up only 2% of high school students in Advanced Placement courses.

Sources: American Institutes for Research; Bureau of Labor Statistics; National Assessment of Education Progress; Office of Civil Rights; the U.S. Department of Education

2014 – The Department of Education implemented Results Driven Accountability, emphasizing the importance of educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

2004 – Congress reauthorized IDEA to include: increased accountability; the requirement that special educators be highly qualified; expanded methods to identify students with specific learning disabilities; and addressed school discipline and disproportionality.

1997 – Congress recognized that simply “opening the door” for students with disabilities is not enough, and broadened access to the general curriculum in this reauthorization.

1990 – Congress reauthorized the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, renamed it the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and expanded research and supports including essential transition services for students with disabilities moving on to college and career.

1986 – Amendments to the Education for All Handicap Children Act authorized preschool programs and early interventions starting at birth.

1975 – Congress enacted the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142, mandating schools identify and educate students with disabilities, and give a voice to parents and families.

Before 1975 – many state legislatures had laws excluding students with disabilities.