



Active Learning Space at [www.activelearningspace.org](http://www.activelearningspace.org)

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## Active Learning Study Group

January 26, 2017 from 3:00-4:00 PM

Presented by

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with

Kate Hurst, Statewide Staff Development Coordinator

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Matt Schultz, TX School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Developed for

Penrickton Center for Blind Children

Perkins School for the Blind and

TSBVI Outreach Programs

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# Active Learning Study Group January 26, 2017

Facilitated by:

Charlotte Cushman, Education Resources Manager  
Perkins School for the Blind with help from

Kate Hurst, Statewide Staff Development Coordinator, TSBVI

Matt Schultz, Deafblind Consultant, TSBVI

Patty Obrzut, Assistant Director, Penrickton Center for Blind Children

## Co-Host



Figure 1 Photo of Patty Obrzut

Patty Obrzut

Penrickton Center for Blind Children

## Webinar Dates

Additional ALSG webinars

- March 30, 2017
- May 25, 2017

Remember: You need to register separately for each session!

[https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/catalog/event.aspx?event\\_id=38978](https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/catalog/event.aspx?event_id=38978)

## View Recorded Webinars



Figure 2 Screen shot of archived webinar for the September 2016 Active Learning Study Group.

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/webinars>

## Active Learning Newsletter

### Subscribe to our mailing list

\* Indicates required

Email Address \*

First Name

Last Name



Welcome to Active Learning Space!  
This is our first newsletter and we hope to send them out regularly to let you know what's new.

Figure 3 Screenshot of the newsletter mailing list sign-up page

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/>

## Questions

Submit your questions!

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/questions>

**Add comment**

SPAM, offensive language and hateful comments will not be tolerated.

Name (required)

E-mail (required, but will not display)

Website

3000 symbols left

Notify me of follow-up comments

Figure 4 Screenshot of question form

## Questions from Active Learning Space

I'm just wondering what your response is to comments from people about Active Learning environments e.g. Little Room, SPG boards, MFA tables, Activity vests etc. being "too busy/too cluttered for students with a vision impairment or for students who are deafblind"?

- Trish

## Answer from Patty

- Encourage activity for child in all areas of development
- Filled with thousands of things that have tactile, auditory, gustatory and olfactory qualities to stimulate child's activity.
- Will select one or two things to interact with at a time, make choices based on likes/dislikes, and use sensory inputs needed to learn about world, eventually using all senses to create a "picture" of the world and how to act in it.
- Decide goal of activity and provide environment for child to be motivated to engage.

## Goals for Today's Session

- Identify how to align goals for students with significant multiple disabilities with the general curriculum
- Explore ways in which to implement the curriculum using an Active Learning approach



Figure 5 A young boy on a Support Bench plays with rocks in water under his hands and soil and pine cones under his feet.



Figure 6 A young girl in a HOPSA Dress explores various materials such as seeds, soil, water, and plants during a science lesson.

## What do we mean by “Curriculum”?

A set course of study

This may be determined at various levels:

- National
- State
- District
- School



Figure 7 Panoramic view of an Active Learning classroom at the Narbethong State Special School in Melbourne, Australia.

## Poll

Do you use a set curriculum?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure
- I don't work directly with students.

## FIELA Curriculum

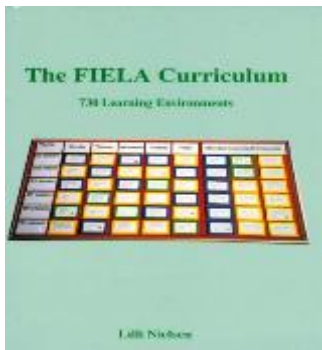


Figure 8 Cover of the FIELA Curriculum

- Flexible Individual Enriched Level Appropriate
- Developed by Dr Lilli Nielsen
- Offers 730 examples of developmentally appropriate activities for children and adults with multiple disabilities.
- An “appetizer” to the thousands of activities available, and should be used as a guide when designing suitable learning activities

<https://nfb.org/images/nfb/publications/fr/fr9/fr03co14.htm>

## How does the FIELA Curriculum work?

- Team decides which types of learning environments best meet the learner's needs.
- Activities alternate between fine and gross motor each day.
- There should be at least one 30-45 minute adult-child interaction per day.



## Active Learning is an APPROACH

- Enriched learning environment, which is carefully structured
- Instructional Strategies that focus on process rather than product
  - e.g. Crafts or carving pumpkins

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/arts-and-crafts>



Figure 9 Images of two arts and crafts activities (seeds and flowers, carving pumpkins) that are discussed on the Active Learning Space website.

## Importance of Materials

- Variety
- Quantity

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/materials>



Figure 10 Sets of materials used in Active Learning that include (on the left) kitchen utensils and (on the right) various types of balls.

## Embedding Skills in All Activities

- Communication
- Motor (Fine and Gross Motor)
- Cognition
- Vision
- Hearing
- Tactile

We don't use just one skill for an activity.



**Figure 11** A toddler sits on an ESSEF Board while he uses his hands to explore ropes, chains, and beads on an SPG Board.

## Steps to Align Standard Curriculum

- Begin with assessment tool, such as Functional Scheme Assessment or other comparable tool
- Determine student's current performance level
- Identify priorities with the IEP team (including parents)
- Look at standard curriculum for your school/district/state/country



**Figure 12** A young child uses her hands to explore materials on either side of her body.



## Grade Level Alignment

Priority Skills	General Curriculum Area
Self-concept, emotional skills	Health
Fine, gross motor skills (especially use of hands, arms, legs, feet, mouth)	Science & Mathematics & Fine Arts & Physical Education
Foundational concepts - object properties, functions	English Language Arts and Reading & Science
Receptive, expressive communication	English Language Arts and Reading
Audition - recognize, localize sounds	English Language Arts and Reading & Social Studies & Fine Arts
Vision, other senses - locate and identify objects, people	English Language Arts and Reading & Fine Motor
Tactile exploration	English Language Arts and Reading & Social Studies
Oral motor/speech skills - feeding, vocalizing, tactile exploration	English Language Arts and Reading & Fine Arts & Health
Overall body awareness	Social Studies & Health & Physical Education

## Access or Entry-Level Skills

- Modification of General Curriculum
  - Sometimes schools just simplify or modify an activity at grade level, using partial participation, especially for students who are fully included
- Another approach is to look at prerequisite skills
  - These may be broken down for you already, if you're lucky! E.g. Texas Early Learning Pathways

## Aligning Curriculum - Learners below 48 Months Developmentally

- Common Core  
<http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/>
- Dynamic Learning Maps: Essential Elements  
<http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>
- Texas Early Learning Pathways  
<http://earlylearningtexas.org/media/24000/texas%20early%20learning%20pathways.pdf>



Figure 13 Images of Common Core, Dynamic Learning Maps and Texas' Early Learning Pathways

### Prerequisite Skills

OSERS (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services) letter states:

Focusing on prerequisite skills is appropriate for children at these developmental levels (p. 5)

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcitrs/guidance-on-fape-11-17-2015.pdf>

dated November 14, 2015



Figure 14 Image of first page of the OSERS letter. See also page 12 of this handout.

## Common Core: Math

### Kindergarten: Measurement and Data

*Describe and compare measurable attributes.*

#### CCSS.Math.Content.K.MD.A.1

- Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight.
- Describe several measurable attributes of a single object.

#### CCSS.Math.Content.K.MD.A.2

Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference. For example, directly compare the heights of two children and describe one child as taller/shorter.

*Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category.*

#### CCSS.Math.Content.K.MD.B.3

Classify objects into given categories; count the numbers of objects in each category and sort the categories by count.1

<http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/K/MD/>

## Kindergarten: Geometry

**Identify and describe shapes.**

- CCSS.Math.Content.K.G.A.1
- Describe objects in the environment using names of shapes, and describe the relative positions of these objects using terms such as above, below, beside, in front of, behind, and next to.
- CCSS.Math.Content.K.G.A.2
- Correctly name shapes regardless of their orientations or overall size.

<http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/K/G/>

## Dynamic Learning Maps Essential Elements



Figure 15 Dynamic Learning Maps logo

- Specific statements of knowledge and skills linked to the grade-level expectations identified in the Common Core State Standards.
- Purpose: build a bridge from the content in the CCSS to academic expectations for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

<http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/>

# Dynamic Learning Maps

## Kindergarten Mathematics Domain: Measurement and Data

CCSS Grade-Level Standards	DLM Essential Elements
<b>CLUSTER: Describe and compare measurable attributes.</b>	
<b>K.MD.1.</b> Describe measurable attributes of objects, such as length or weight. Describe several measurable attributes of a single object.	<b>EE.K.MD.1-3.</b> Classify objects according to attributes (big/small, heavy/light).
<b>K.MD.2.</b> Directly compare two objects with a measurable attribute in common, to see which object has "more of"/"less of" the attribute, and describe the difference. <i>For example, directly compare the heights of two children, and describe one child as taller/shorter.</i>	
<b>CLUSTER: Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category.</b>	
<b>K.MD.3.</b> Classify objects into given categories; count the numbers of objects in each category and sort the categories by count. <sup>4</sup>	<b>EE.K.MD.1-3.</b> Classify objects according to attributes (big/small, heavy/light).

Figure 16 Example from the Dynamic Learning Maps for Kindergarten Mathematics Domain: Measurement and Data showing Essential Elements EE.K.MD.1-3 "Classify objects according to attributes (big/small, heavy/light).

**EE = Essential Elements**

**Classify objects according to attributes (big/small, heavy/light)**

[http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/Math\\_EEs/DLM\\_Essential\\_Elements\\_Math\\_%282013%29\\_v4.pdf](http://dynamiclearningmaps.org/sites/default/files/documents/Math_EEs/DLM_Essential_Elements_Math_%282013%29_v4.pdf)

## Texas Early Learning Pathways: Pathways of Cognitive Development

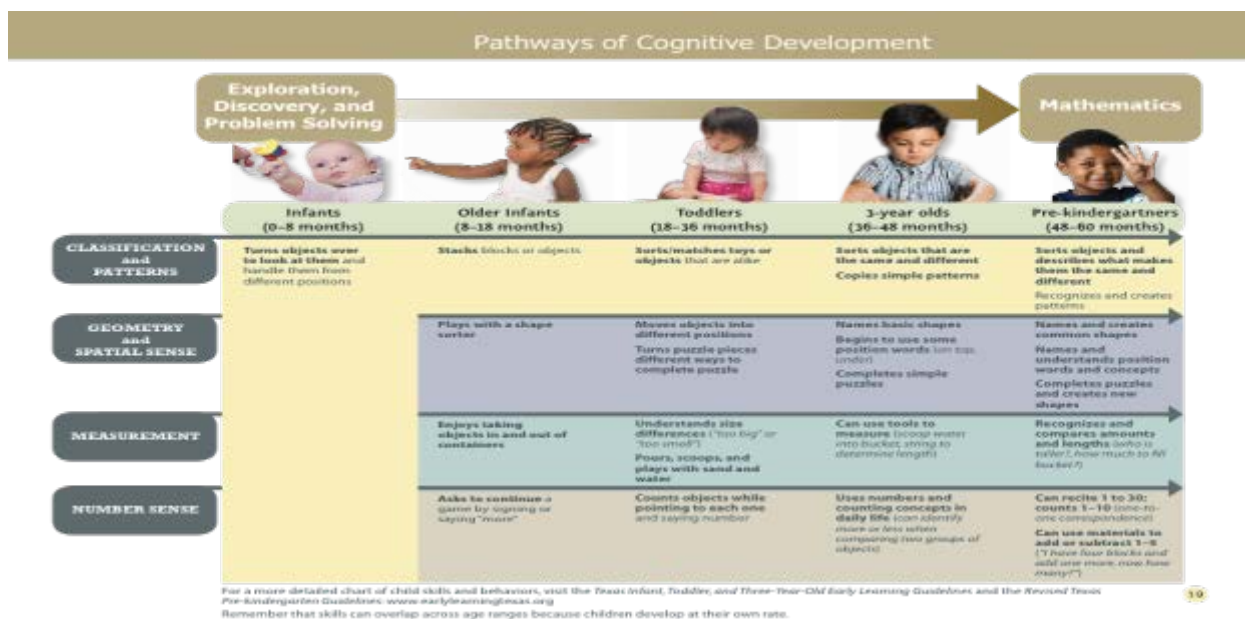


Figure 17 Example of a page from Texas Early Learning Pathways: Cognitive Development - Math.

## Texas Early Learning Pathways: Math

For child at 0-8 months developmental level:

- Turns objects over to look at them and handle them from different positions

For child at 8-18 months developmental level:

- Enjoys taking objects in and out of containers

## Sets of Comparables

Video courtesy of SKI-HI Institute



Figure 18 A toddler explores a variety of balls in a cake tin while he sits in his highchair.

## Texas Early Learning Pathways: Pathways of Language and Communication Development

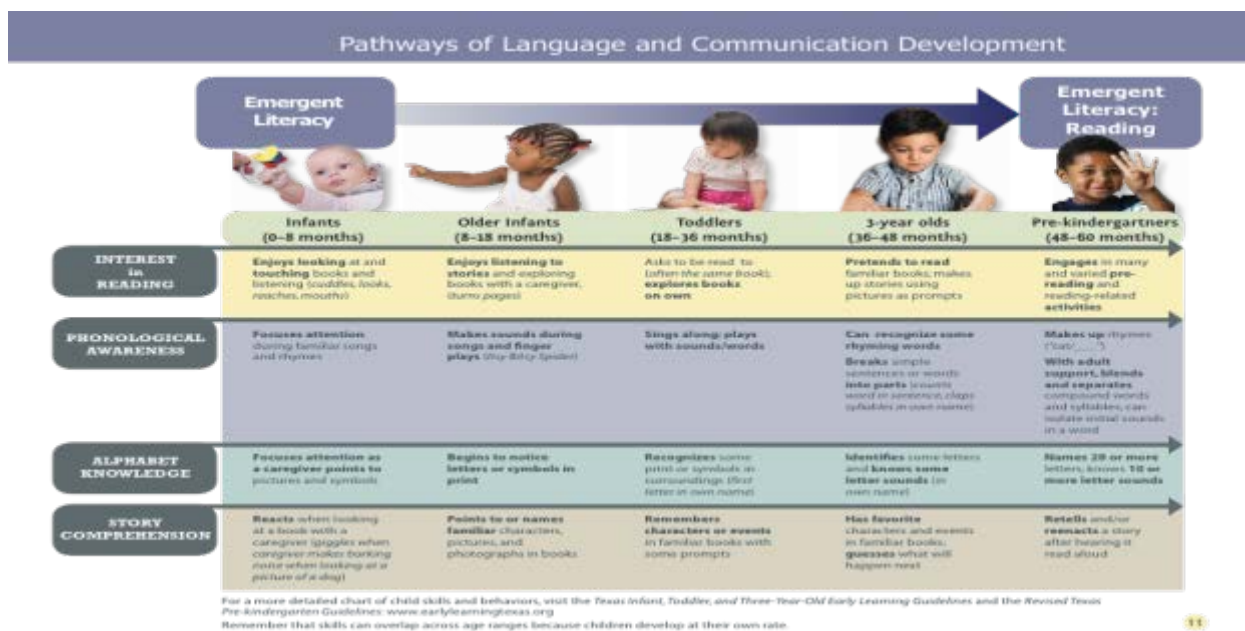


Figure 19 Example of a page from Texas Early Learning Pathways: Language and Communication Development – Emergent Literacy/Reading.

### Emergent Literacy: 0-8 Months

- Enjoys looking at and touching books and listening (cuddles, looks, reaches, mouths)
- Focuses attention during familiar songs and rhymes
- Focuses attention as a caregiver points to pictures and symbols

<http://earlylearningtexas.org/media/24000/texas%20early%20learning%20pathways.pdf>



Figure 20 Series of 5 images showing children from infancy thru age five.



## Dynamic Learning Maps: ELA

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas	
<b>SL.K.4</b> Describe familiar people, places, things, and events and, with prompting and support, provide additional detail.	<b>EE.SL.K.4</b> With guidance and support, identify familiar people, places, things, and events.
<b>SL.K.5</b> Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.	<b>EE.SL.K.5</b> With guidance and support, add or select drawings or other visual or tactual displays that relate to familiar people, places, things, and events.
<b>SL.K.6</b> Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.	<b>EE.SL.K.6</b> With guidance and support, communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
<b>RI.K.7</b> With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the text in which they appear (e.g., what person, place, thing, or idea in the text an illustration depicts).	<b>EE.RI.K.7</b> With guidance and support, identify illustrations or objects/tactual information that go with a familiar text.

Figure 21 Example from the Dynamic Learning Maps: English Language Arts showing Essential Elements EE.SL.K.4-7 dealing with identifying familiar people, places, things, and events, and communicating thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

### Communication and Literacy are intertwined at this level:

- Identify familiar people, places, things and events
- Visual or tactile displays (e.g. object symbols) relating to activities

## English Language Arts (ELA)



Figure 22 Photo of a pegboard book.

- Pegboard books
- Experience books
- Story boxes

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/things-you-can-make/books>

<http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/>

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/>

## Jarvis and the Drum Store



Figure 23 Video image of Jarvis and his teacher visiting a drum store.



# Active Learning & General Education



Figure 24 Screenshot of the Active Learning and General Education page on Active Learning Space.

<http://www.activelearningspace.org/active-learning-and-general-education>

## General Curriculum Skills Science

### Prerequisite Skills in Science

- Energy & Matter: Characteristics and Properties of Matter
  - compare and contrast a variety of mixtures and solutions such as rocks in sand, sand in water, or sugar in water
  - measure, compare, and contrast physical properties of matter, including size, mass, volume, states (solid, liquid, gas), temperature, magnetism, and the ability to sink or float
- Organisms & Environment: Identify How Organisms Meet Their Basic Needs
  - identify and compare the parts of plants
  - identify parts of plants such as roots, stem and leaves and parts of animals such as head, eyes, and limbs
- from the Texas Curriculum Framework Pre-requisite Skills in Science

### Science, Grade 5, Curriculum Goals

**Matter and energy.** The student knows that matter has measurable physical properties and those properties determine how matter is classified, changed, and used. The student is expected to:

- (A) classify matter based on physical properties, including mass, magnetism, physical state (solid, liquid, and gas), relative density (sinking and floating), solubility in water, and the ability to conduct or insulate thermal energy or electric energy;
  - (C) demonstrate that some mixtures maintain physical properties of their ingredients such as iron filings and sand; and
  - (D) identify changes that can occur in the physical properties of the ingredients of solutions such as dissolving salt in water or adding lemon juice to water.
- from Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills §112.16

## Science, Sensory Efficiency, Gross & Fine Motor

By the end of the IEP completion date, **given a variety of materials used in various Science units (as well as other materials) in combination with perceptualizing aids (e.g. Support Bench)**, the student will experiment and explore the properties and characteristics of organic and inorganic objects and materials through tactile exploration using her mouth, lips, tongue, hands, arms, legs and feet **for at least 20 minutes of a 30 minute period.**

An Approach for General Curriculum Instruction on the ALS website

## Science Lesson Using a Support Bench



Figure 25 Image from a video on ALS showing a young boy uses a Support Bench and explores using his hands and feet during a science lesson.

<http://library.tsbvi.edu/Player/13134>

## Remember our Science Goals

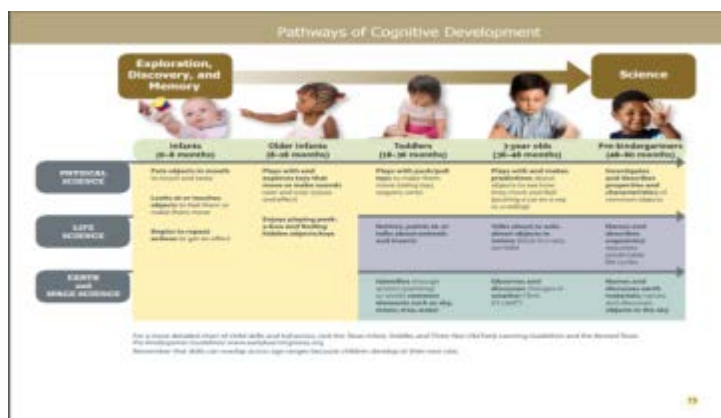


Figure 26 Image of Pathways to Learning for Science.

- Puts objects in mouth
- Looks at or touches objects
- Begins to repeat actions to get an effect
- Plays with and explores toys that move or make sounds over and over (cause & effect)

## Science Lesson Using a HOPSA Dress



Figure 27 Video image of a young girl in a HOPSA Dress exploring various materials in a science lesson on plants.

<http://library.tsbvi.edu/Player/13065>

### Homework Assignment

What other ideas do you have for an Active Learning activity that might focus on some of the Math, ELA or Science goals addressed today?

- (A) Classify objects according to attributes (big/small, heavy/light).
- (B) Visual or tactile displays (e.g. object symbols) relating to activities
- (C) Classify matter based on physical properties
- (D) Identify changes that can occur in the physical properties of the ingredients of solutions

### DropBox

- Upload anything you'd like to share, such as:
  - sample IEP goals using an Active Learning approach
  - case studies, where permission has been granted to share
- To share files (even if you don't have a DropBox account): <http://bit.ly/2ddYtm5>
- To view files only: <http://bit.ly/2crJiXg>



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION SERVICES**

November 16, 2015

Dear Colleague:

Ensuring that all children, including children with disabilities, are held to rigorous academic standards and high expectations is a shared responsibility for all of us. To help make certain that children with disabilities are held to high expectations and have meaningful access to a State's academic content standards, we write to clarify that an individualized education program (IEP) for an eligible child with a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must be aligned with the State's academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.<sup>1</sup> Research has demonstrated that children with disabilities who struggle in reading and mathematics can successfully learn grade-level content and make significant academic progress when appropriate instruction, services, and supports are provided.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, low expectations can lead to children with disabilities receiving less challenging instruction that reflects below grade-level content standards, and thereby not learning what they need to succeed at the grade in which they are enrolled.

The cornerstone of the IDEA is the entitlement of each eligible child with a disability to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet the child's unique needs and that prepare the child for further education, employment, and independent living. 20 U.S.C. §1400(d)(1)(A). Under the IDEA, the primary vehicle for providing FAPE is through an appropriately developed IEP that is based on the individual needs of the child. An IEP must take into account a child's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, and the impact of that child's disability on his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum. IEP goals must be aligned with grade-level content standards for all children with disabilities. The State, however, as discussed

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<sup>1</sup> The Department has determined that this document is a "significant guidance document" under the Office of Management and Budget's Final Bulletin for Agency Good Guidance Practices, 72 Fed. Reg. 3432 (Jan. 25, 2007), available at [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/fedreg/2007/012507\\_good\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/fedreg/2007/012507_good_guidance.pdf). The purpose of this guidance is to provide State and local educational agencies (LEAs) with information to assist them in meeting their obligations under the IDEA and its implementing regulations in developing IEPs for children with disabilities. This guidance does not impose any requirements beyond those required under applicable law and regulations. It does not create or confer any rights for or on any person. If you are interested in commenting on this guidance or if you have further questions that are not answered here, please e-mail [iepgoals@ed.gov](mailto:iepgoals@ed.gov) or write to us at the following address: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 550 12th Street SW., PCP Room 5139, Washington, DC 20202-2600.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of this research see Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged; Assistance to States for the Education of Children With Disabilities, Final Rule, 80 Fed. Reg. 50773, 50776 (Aug. 21, 2015).

on page five, is permitted to define alternate academic achievement standards for children with the most significant cognitive disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

## **Application of Provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to Children with Disabilities**

Since 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), has required each State to apply the same challenging academic content and achievement standards to all schools and all children in the State, which includes children with disabilities. 20 U.S.C. §6311(b)(1)(B). The U.S. Department of Education (Department), in its regulations implementing Title I of the ESEA, has clarified that these standards are grade-level standards. 34 CFR §200.1(a)-(c). To assist children with disabilities in meeting these grade-level academic content standards, many States have adopted and implemented procedures for developing standards-based IEPs that include IEP goals that reflect the State’s challenging academic content standards that apply to all children in the State.

### **Interpretation of “General Education Curriculum”**

Under the IDEA, in order to make FAPE available to each eligible child with a disability, the child’s IEP must be designed to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum. 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(A). The term “general education curriculum” is not specifically defined in the IDEA. The Department’s regulations implementing Part B of the IDEA, however, state that the general education curriculum is “the same curriculum as for nondisabled children.” 34 CFR §300.320(a)(1)(i). In addition, the IDEA Part B regulations define the term “specially designed instruction,” the critical element in the definition of “special education,” as “adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards within the jurisdiction of the public agency that apply to all children.” 34 CFR §300.39(b)(3) (emphasis added). Otherwise, the IDEA regulations do not specifically address the connection between the general education curriculum and a State’s academic content standards.

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<sup>3</sup> In accordance with 34 CFR §200.1(d), for children with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take an alternate assessment, a State may define alternate academic achievement standards provided those standards are aligned with the State’s academic content standards; promote access to the general curriculum; and reflect professional judgment of the highest achievement standards possible. See also 34 CFR §300.160(c)(2)(i).

## Analysis

The Department interprets “the same curriculum as for nondisabled children” to be the curriculum that is based on a State’s academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. This interpretation, which we think is the most appropriate reading of the applicable regulatory language, will help to ensure that an IEP for a child with a disability, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability, is designed to give the child access to the general education curriculum based on a State’s academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled, and includes instruction and supports that will prepare the child for success in college and careers. This interpretation also appropriately harmonizes the concept in the IDEA regulations of “general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children),” with the ESEA statutory and regulatory requirement that the same academic content standards must apply to all public schools and children in the State, which includes children with disabilities.

The IDEA statutory and regulatory provisions discussed above, the legislative history of the IDEA, and clarification the Department has provided on the alignment of the IEP with a State’s content standards in the Analysis of Comments and Changes to the 2006 IDEA Part B regulations also support this interpretation. When it last reauthorized the IDEA in 2004, Congress continued to emphasize, consistent with the provisions in the ESEA, the importance of “having high expectations for [children with disabilities] and ensuring their access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom, to the maximum extent possible.” 20 U.S.C. §1400(c)(5)(A). The Senate Report accompanying the 2004 reauthorization of the IDEA also explained that “[f]or most children with disabilities, many of their IEP goals would likely conform to State and district wide academic content standards and progress indicators consistent with standards based reform within education and the new requirements of NCLB.” S. Rep. No. 108-185, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. 29 (Nov. 3, 2003).

The Analysis of Comments and Changes accompanying the 2006 IDEA Part B regulations also included important discussion that further clarifies the alignment of an IEP with a State’s academic content standards under the ESEA, explaining: “section 300.320(a)(1)(i) clarifies that the general education curriculum means the same curriculum as all other children. Therefore, an IEP that focuses on ensuring that the child is involved in the general education curriculum will necessarily be aligned with the State’s content standards.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities, Final Rule, 71 Fed. Reg. 46540, 46662 (Aug. 14, 2006); see also 71 Fed. Reg. 46579.



The Department’s interpretation of the regulatory language “general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children)” to mean the curriculum that is based on the State’s academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled is reasonable. This interpretation is also necessary to enable IDEA and ESEA requirements to be read together so that children with disabilities receive high-quality instruction that will give them the opportunity to meet the State’s challenging academic achievement standards and prepare them for college, careers and independence. Therefore, in order to make FAPE available to each eligible child with a disability, the special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, and other supports in the child’s IEP must be designed to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining his or her annual IEP goals and to be involved in, and make progress in, the general education curriculum based on the State’s academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled.

### Implementation of the Interpretation

Based on the interpretation of “general education curriculum” set forth in this letter, we expect annual IEP goals to be aligned with State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. This alignment, however, must guide but not replace the individualized decision-making required in the IEP process.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the IDEA’s focus on the individual needs of each child with a disability is an essential consideration when IEP Teams are writing annual goals that are aligned with State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled so that the child can advance appropriately toward attaining those goals during the annual period covered by the IEP. In developing an IEP, the IEP Team must consider how a child’s specific disability impacts his or her ability to advance appropriately toward attaining his or her annual goals that are aligned with applicable State content standards during the period covered by the IEP. For example, the child’s IEP Team may consider the special education instruction that has been provided to the child, the child’s previous rate of academic growth, and whether the child is on track to achieve grade-level proficiency within the year.

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<sup>5</sup> The IEP must include, among other required content: (1) a statement of the child’s present levels of academic achievement and functional performance, including how the child’s disability affects the child’s involvement and progress in the general education curriculum; (2) a statement of measurable annual goals, including academic and functional goals, designed to meet the child’s needs that result from the child’s disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and (3) the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals, and to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum in accordance with the child’s present levels of performance. 34 CFR §300.320(a).

The Department recognizes that there is a very small number of children with the most significant cognitive disabilities whose performance must be measured against alternate academic achievement standards, as permitted in 34 CFR §200.1(d) and §300.160(c). As explained in prior guidance,<sup>6</sup> alternate academic achievement standards must be aligned with the State’s grade-level content standards. The standards must be clearly related to grade-level content, although they **may be restricted in scope or complexity or take the form of introductory or pre-requisite skills**. This letter is not intended to limit a State’s ability to continue to measure the achievement of the small number of children with the most significant cognitive disabilities against alternate academic achievement standards, but rather to ensure that annual IEP goals for these children reflect high expectations and are based on the State’s content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled.

In a case where a child’s present levels of academic performance are significantly below the grade in which the child is enrolled, in order to align the IEP with grade-level content standards, the IEP Team should estimate the growth toward the State academic content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled that the child is expected to achieve in the year covered by the IEP. In a situation where a child is performing significantly below the level of the grade in which the child is enrolled, an IEP Team should determine annual goals that are ambitious but achievable. In other words, the annual goals need not necessarily result in the child’s reaching grade-level within the year covered by the IEP, but the goals should be sufficiently ambitious to help close the gap. The IEP must also include the specialized instruction to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability necessary to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the State academic content standards that apply to all children in the State.

### **An Example of Implementation**

We provide an example of how an IEP Team could apply the interpretation of “general education curriculum” set forth in this letter. For example, after reviewing recent evaluation data for a sixth grade child with a specific learning disability, the IEP Team determines that the child is reading four grade levels below his current grade; however, his listening comprehension is on grade level. The child’s general education teacher and special education teacher also note that when materials are read aloud to the child he is able to understand grade-level content. Based on these present levels of performance and the child’s individual strengths and weaknesses, the IEP

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<sup>6</sup> See U.S. Department of Education Non-regulatory guidance: Alternate achievement standards for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities August 2005) available at: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/altguidance.pdf>

Team determines he should receive specialized instruction to improve his reading fluency. Based on the child's rate of growth during the previous school year, the IEP Team estimates that with appropriate specialized instruction the child could achieve an increase of at least 1.5 grade levels in reading fluency. To ensure the child can learn material based on sixth grade content standards (e.g., science and history content), the IEP Team determines the child should receive modifications for all grade-level reading assignments. His reading assignments would be based on sixth grade content but would be shortened to assist with reading fatigue resulting from his disability. In addition, he would be provided with audio text books and electronic versions of longer reading assignments that he can access through synthetic speech. With this specialized instruction and these support services, the IEP would be designed to enable the child to be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum based on the State's sixth grade content standards, while still addressing the child's needs based on the child's present levels of performance.<sup>7</sup> This example is provided to show one possible way that an IEP could be designed to enable a child with a disability who is performing significantly below grade level to receive the specialized instruction and support services the child needs to reach the content standards for the grade in which the child is enrolled during the period covered by the IEP.<sup>8</sup> We caution, though that, because the ways in which a child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general education curriculum are highly individualized and fact-specific, the instruction and supports that might enable one child to achieve at grade-level may not necessarily be appropriate for another child with the same disability.

## Summary

In sum, consistent with the interpretation of "general education curriculum (i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled children)" based on the State's academic content standards for the

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<sup>7</sup> For information on developing, reviewing, or revising the IEP for a child with limited English proficiency, see: Questions and Answers Regarding Inclusion of English Learners with Disabilities in English Language Proficiency Assessments and Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/q-and-a-on-elp-swd.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> While the Department does not mandate or endorse specific products or services, we are aware that many States have issued guidance addressing standards-based IEPs. For example see Minnesota Department of Education, Developing Standards-Based IEP Goals and Objectives A Discussion Guide available at: [https://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_FILE&dDocName=050483&RevisionSelectionMet hod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary](https://education.state.mn.us/mdeprod/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&dDocName=050483&RevisionSelectionMet hod=latestReleased&Rendition=primary). States and LEAs also may consider reviewing the following examples from OSEP-funded projects regarding implementation of standards-based IEPs: inForum: Standards-Based Individualized Education Program Examples available at: [www.nasdse.org/portals/0/standardsbasediepeexamples.pdf](http://www.nasdse.org/portals/0/standardsbasediepeexamples.pdf). For an example of annual goals aligned with State academic content standards for a child taking the alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards, see: an issue brief provided by the OSEP-funded National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC), NCSC Brief 5: Standards-based Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for Children Who Participate in AA-AAS available at: <http://www.ncscpartners.org/Media/Default/PDFs/Resources/NCSCBrief5.pdf>.

grade in which a child is enrolled set forth in this letter, an IEP Team must ensure that annual IEP goals are aligned with the State academic content standards for the grade in which a child is enrolled. The IEP must also include the specially designed instruction necessary to address the unique needs of the child that result from the child’s disability and ensure access of the child to the general education curriculum, so that the child can meet the State academic content standards that apply to all children, as well as the support services and the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided to enable the child to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals.

### Opportunities for Input

We are interested in receiving comments on this document to inform implementation of this guidance. If you are interested in commenting on this document, please e-mail your comments to [iepggoals@ed.gov](mailto:iepggoals@ed.gov) or write to us at the following address: US Department of Education, 550 12th Street SW, PCP Room 5139, Washington, DC 20202-2600. Note that we are specifically interested in receiving input from the field on examples of models of alignment of IEP goals with State content standards that are working well at the State and local level, and how this guidance could be implemented for children with disabilities who are English learners and children with the most significant cognitive disabilities. We will share appropriate models with you in further communications as they become available. We would also be glad to help answer your questions and help with your technical assistance needs in this important area. We ask you to share this information with your local school districts to help ensure all children with disabilities are held to high standards and high expectations. Thank you for your continued interest in improving results for children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

/s/

Michael K. Yudin  
Assistant Secretary

/s/

Melody Musgrove  
Director Office of Special Education  
Programs

## Notes:

## Penrickton Center for Blind Children



Figure 28 Penrickton Center for the Blind logo.

## Perkins School for the Blind E-Learning



Figure 29 Perkins E-Learning logo.

## Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Outreach Programs



Figure 30 TSBVI logo.



"This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the U.S. Department of Education."

Figure 31 IDEAs that Work logo and OSEP disclaimer.