

## DATA SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The guiding principles and policies of the DATA special education department are in concordance with 34 CFR § 300.1, which states the primary purposes of IDEA:

- Ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for employment and independent living.
- Ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and those of their parents are protected.
- Assist states, local education agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities.

• Assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and provide them access to the general education curriculum. The IDEA of 2004 represents a shift from the previous federal focus of providing access to a FAPE to one that strives for improved educational and transitional results for students receiving special education services. To achieve results, educational systems now, and in the future, must maintain high academic standards and clear performance goals for students eligible under the IDEA.

DATA strives to deliver a highly effective special education program. Our goals reflect careful collaboration among members of the administrative staff, the special education staff, counseling staff, and ancillary providers. Each one of these goals is implemented in a specific and consistent manner.

### Special Education Department Goals

- Facilitate trust and collaboration among all people invested in helping each student reach their goals.
- Implement specific, evidence-based instructional strategies, appropriate to support each special education service and driven by the students' IEP.
- Provide the necessary resources to support the delivery of each service, on an ongoing basis. Services are strategically evaluated for utility and localization of equitable resources as relates to student needs and stakeholder involvement.
- Provide appropriate resources to support transition planning and implementation for every student with an IEP to facilitate effective transitions, from entry through graduation with a focus on services, goals, and post-school objectives.
- Provide a continuum of supports and services to every student in special education. Each student is prepared and able to achieve a level of competence, self-reliance, disability awareness and independence, based on their own abilities, so each student transitions successfully to their future.
- Cultivate the creation of a culture/school environment that ensures meaningful inclusion opportunities and emphasizes access, support and participation as well as classroom and extracurricular opportunities for all students.
- Our special education students thrive in programs and classes that build independence and prepare them for a successful transition to life after high school. We support the development of life skills, academic skills, social/emotional supports, and transition

options based on student ability, interest, and future goals. Every special education student is respected as a unique individual and capable of reaching high expectations. Decisions and practices for special education students are student centered and based on evidence and data. We want special education students who enter DATA to be successful in their time with us by focusing on effective communication, organizational skills, and academic supports for instruction and homework.

### **Process to evaluate and identify SWD:**

All students at DATA enter through the lottery process. Students who are selected are then asked to bring all required information for registration, including IEP information. All students go through an interview process so students, parents, and DATA administration can address any concerns, explain school expectations, and review IEPs provided.

Students new to DATA may not self-identify as being SWD, therefore we use the STARS reporting site to determine if they may have received these services. If a student is identified as SWD, we request the most current IEP from the previous school.

Whether through parent request or input from other school personnel such as teachers, counselors, ancillary staff etc...a child who may need special education services is first referred to the Student Assistance Team (SAT) for Tier I and Tier II intervention strategies and/or evaluation. Prior to referral for special education evaluation, SAT prescribed interventions are to be considered, implemented, and documented. If these Tier II interventions are deemed to be ineffective, the student may be identified as needing a formal evaluation to determine if additional services are required to enable the student to benefit from his or her education. Parents must give consent before their child is evaluated to determine if he or she is eligible for special education services.

Parents have the right to request an initial evaluation of a child at any time, and that evaluation must be conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent for evaluation. Otherwise, several steps should be taken before a student can be considered eligible for special education and, if appropriate, related service. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) and IEP team have the responsibility of ensuring that the required steps are followed.

DATA follows the suggested checklist provided by NMPED:

- \*Work with parents (and student when appropriate) to identify, implement, and evaluate intervention methods geared to the concerns that led to the referral.
- \*Decide if the student should be formally evaluated. Get written consent from parents.
- \*Evaluate the child through a variety of assessments, observations, and information gathering, targeting all areas related to the suspected disability.
- \*Have the IEP team examine the data and determine if the child meets the criteria to be considered eligible for special education and, if appropriate, related services. Record determination results.
- \*Have the IEP team determine if the child has a Specific Learning Disability.
- \* Inform school and other personnel of the need for a meeting and schedule it for a time when each person needed is available.
- \*Schedule the meeting to review the evaluation and determine the child's eligibility for services.

\*Send a written notice to parents informing them of and inviting them to the meeting. Allow sufficient time for response and opportunity to request another time in order to accommodate the parents' schedules.

Upon completion of the evaluation, special education teacher, general education teacher, LEA representative, diagnostician, any ancillary staff and the parents (the IEP team) meet to discuss the evaluation and decide if the child meets the criteria to be eligible for special education and, if appropriate, related services. If so, an IEP is developed. This may begin immediately by continuing and extending the scope of the current meeting or scheduling a separate meeting soon thereafter. If parents do not agree with the evaluation results, they have the right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE).

### **Process to track, develop, review, and revise IEPs**

DATA has a master spreadsheet with student demographics, IEP due dates, re-evaluation due dates, level of service and caseload manager. At the beginning of each year, special education teachers are assigned a caseload. The special education teacher is responsible for ensuring the IEP accommodations and services are implemented and monitored in all classroom settings. The special education teacher gathers all necessary data for the annual review and re-evaluation for each student on their caseload. The special education teacher, along with members of the IEP team, ensures that all documentation, such as prior written notice, and informed consent are obtained before any adjustments are made to the IEP or new testing is done.

Special education teachers begin gathering the necessary data for annuals and re-evaluations at least 2 weeks prior to the due date. They contact and gather information from all team members including diagnostician, ancillary services, counseling department, academic teachers, and administration. Special education teachers contact parents to set a date and provide a written notice of the IEP meeting.

The special education department meets with administration and ancillary services bimonthly to review student progress, discuss concerns, and update the master spreadsheet regarding completion of annuals and/or re-evaluations.

An IEP defines one or more measurable annual goals for the child, each of which may include short-term objectives and/or benchmarks, as appropriate. The annual goals are based on the student's strengths and needs according to his or her present levels of academic achievement and functional performances, provide direction for the IEP, and must be measurable. Each annual goal set at the IEP meeting spells out precise expectations, including identifying what methods of measurement and criteria will be used to track progress and judge success. The IEP also identifies who is responsible for implementing each goal and an anticipated date of mastery.

Once implemented, the law requires that the IEP be reviewed and revised as needed but at least annually. Of course, IEP reviews can and should be done more often if necessary. With or without a formal IEP review meeting, progress toward annual goals are regularly monitored and measured. Written progress reports are provided to the parents at least as often as they are provided for the rest of the student population, for DATA, that is every nine weeks. The report contains student progress towards academic goals as well as any behavioral or social emotional goals contained in the student's IEP.

### **Process to integrate special education into the general education program:**

All teachers are provided with accommodations for special education students who are in their classes at the beginning of each year and when new students enter their classes. Special education caseload managers, along with administration, give an overview of student, strengths, challenges, and concerns based on current IEP and parent/student interview information obtained during the registration process. This allows teachers to ask questions specific to the student's IEP and get clarification and support in implementing strategies and accommodations. DATA also implements a variety of methods, listed below, as needed.

- Individualized or small group instruction to meet the academic and behavioral needs of our special education students, either within the general education classroom or outside the general education classroom for specific skill development and support.
- Direct intensive specialized instruction by special and/or general education teacher using specialized strategies and techniques in a small group when necessary.
- Proactive and preventive behavioral mental health supports and interventions from qualified professionals within the school.
- Direct special education instruction within the general education classroom through collaborative co-teaching models.
- Direct support for individual students by the special education teacher or instructional assistant by making adaptations or modifications to the general education curriculum and assessments.
- Pull out or push in models for individual students or small groups during part of the general education setting.

#### **Process to deliver special education services and related services:**

Special education services are provided through educational assistants, special education teachers and general education teachers in the classroom. Ancillary services are delivered during the school day and pull out sessions such as social work or SLP are scheduled with the input of the student. DATA has implemented a flex period from 8:00-8:45 and many students chose to receive related support during this time rather than being pulled from one of their classes. All students are scheduled for specific days and times so they can plan accordingly. Ancillary staff works closely with the students to ensure they fulfill service requirements and track data towards student goals.

- Special education students who enter DATA develop a vision plan for their future as part of their transition plan. This plan is updated annually to accommodate the developing student. It is based on personal goals, strengths, values, and interests to meet their academic, career and IEP goals, with specific CTE classes.
- DATA special education department is in the process of building a database of local companies who will provide opportunities for students to participate in apprenticeships and on-site training. We also network with outside agencies, programs, and resources to best inform and prepare students for post-high school opportunities.
- Special education teachers provide the general education teachers with guidance on appropriate strategies for instruction, behavior management, data collection, progress monitoring, observation, and feedback in the general education setting.

- The DATA special education department provides an academic support area that is available to students with an IEP at any point during their instructional day for access to accommodations, supplementary aids, test preparation or completion, completing assignments, guided practice with an emerging skill, and/or re-teaching. Students do not use the support area during direct instruction of their content area classes.
- Should a student need more intensive support, based on academic or behavioral performance, DATA has the ability to create a segregated course offering in all core subjects. This option would be aligned with the student's specific learning disability and be unique to the subject/content matter in which the student needs this intensive support.

### **Process for enrollment/IEP transition procedure:**

The IEP is the overriding document of planning for a student receiving special education and related services to progress through the educational process. In accordance with 6.31.2.11 (G) NMAC, the IEP for each student receiving special education services in grades eight through twelve shall include graduation planning that is integrated into transition planning and services. The IEP is coordinated and developed with a graduation/transition plan, which includes the multi-year program of study for each student who progresses through a high school program. By the end of the eighth grade, each student's IEP must contain a proposed individual program of study for the grades remaining until high school graduation. These multi-year plans are based on the student's post-secondary goals, thus personalizing learning and providing relevance. These programs of study must be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

#### 1) The multi-year plan must:

- Be a part of all IEPs for students receiving special education support and services in grades 8 through 12 or to age 22;
- Identify by name all course options the student may take in the remaining years of the student's secondary program;
- Reflect the student's long-range measurable post-secondary goals; and
- Be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted to address the student's strengths, interests, preferences, and needs.

#### 2) The IEP team is responsible for developing a multi-year plan that is most conducive to preparing a student to achieve his or her post-secondary goals

- The composition of the IEP team must meet federal and state requirements.
- When a graduation program of study is proposed, an individual knowledgeable about high school curriculum should be included on the team.
- The parent(s) and student should be members of this team, and sign to verify and accept graduation/transition plans. (Parent participation is not mandatory if the student is 18 years of age unless the parent has legally retained guardianship.)
- A building administrator or designee who has knowledge about the student should be a member of the team when an alternative program of study is developed and be able to verify

and accept completed plans for students receiving special education services on the career and ability graduation options.

3) Program of study selection is an IEP team decision. Parents and students must be a part of the decision-making process. The student's graduation needs and personal goals are the primary considerations for identifying and developing an alternative graduation plan. The IEP team must:

- Base all decisions on the student's strengths, needs, measurable post-secondary, transition service needs, goals, interest, and preferences; and
- Begin discussion on graduation/transition plans at the eighth grade IEP, including plans leading to earning a regular diploma.
- Consider the graduation option in the order listed in regulation. If the IEP team chooses an alternative graduation option, the team must:

Justify and document the reasons for doing so in the IEP;

Provide sufficient documentation as a basis for its initial decision to place a student on an alternative graduation option other than the standard;

Notify parents and students of potential consequences of this decision; and

Base all decisions on the needs of the student and not on the student's ability to earn required credits or pass the current exit exam.

4) Assessing and documenting student progress toward graduation is crucial to the overall process. IEP teams must document the following information on the student's IEP:

- Review and document progress toward graduation on an annual basis for all students in grades 8-12.
- Document skill attainment and progress toward achieving competencies.
- Document each student's progress toward earning required graduation credits and passing the current graduation examination(s).
- Ensure and document that requirements of the student's program of study are met.
- Revise the IEP to reflect any changes in the student's graduation needs and/or plans.
- Identify supports and services that will help students achieve IEP goals and meet graduation requirements.

5) Transition planning is an important part of the IEP process beginning no later than the first IEP to be in effect when a student is in the eighth grade. The IEP team should address the following components of transition planning:

- Coach every student to think about goals for life after high school and develop a long range plan.
- Ensure the IEP contains appropriate measurable post-secondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments, and that these are updated annually.
- Develop a plan to ensure the high school experience relate to each student's postsecondary goals.

- Ensure that each student gains the skills and competencies needed to achieve his or her desired post-secondary goals.
- Identify and link students and families to needed post-secondary services, supports, or programs before the student exits the school system.
- Ensure that the student has necessary evaluations, documents, or reports to facilitate a smooth transition to adult services and/or postsecondary institutions.
- Ensure that all domain areas of transition (instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-secondary living objectives, and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation) are considered and documented in the IEP, pursuant to federal regulations and state special education rules.

6) Students receiving special education services must participate in the Statewide College and Workplace Readiness Assessment System and take the current state graduation and/or exit exam or the state approved New Mexico Alternate Assessment. The IEP must specify:

- Which assessment will be administered,
- Are accommodations necessary, if so
- What State approved accommodations are needed.

7) IEP teams must determine if the student is eligible for participation in an alternate assessment according to the following criteria:

- The student's past and present levels of academic achievement and functional performance in multiple settings indicates that a significant cognitive disability is present;
- The student needs intensive, pervasive, or extensive levels of support in school, home, and community settings; and
- The student's current cognitive and adaptive skills and performance levels require direct instruction to accomplish acquisition, maintenance, and generalization of skills in multiple settings.

8) As a best practice, IEP teams should identify strategies that will help the student master skills required to pass the assessment for students on the Standard graduation option or to achieve the level of proficiency determined by the IEP team for students graduating on the Career Readiness or Ability program of study. The team should also consider identifying who will be responsible for ensuring the completion of the above items.

9) Additional responsibilities for IEP teams include the following:

- Monitor and report student progress toward meeting IEP goals to parents with at least the same frequency as the reporting schedule for non-disabled students.
- Verify that each student achieved program goals and objectives leading to graduation and receipt of a high school diploma.
- Protect the integrity of the diploma for all students by complying fully with the requirements of the graduation options for students receiving special education services.

- Ensure that the IEP and Prior Written Notice of Actions Proposed (PWN), given to the parents at the end of each IEP meeting, reflects the student's progress toward his or her graduation plans as he or she transitions into high school, and at all points in the process.

10) Pursuant to 34 CFR §§ 300.43 and 300.320 and State rules including 6.31.2 NMAC and 22-13-1.1 NMSA, IEP teams must provide each eligible student with a summary of the student's academic achievement, functional performance, and additional recommendations on how to assist the student in meeting his or her post-secondary goals.

11) The Department strongly recommends that building administrators monitor progress of each student with a disability toward graduation plan requirements throughout high school.

12) When the exit IEP team meets to review the student's program of study and progress to determine if the student has fulfilled graduation plan requirements, the building administrator must be included on the team. The building administrator is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the graduation process. The LEA's Special Education Director is responsible for monitoring graduation data.

13) A student graduating under any option or receiving a certificate with a follow-up plan of transition must participate equitably in all graduation ceremonies.

14) The least restrictive environment (LRE) principles apply to all graduation options, and IEP teams must ensure that the student has appropriate access to the general education curriculum.

As well as ensuring all of the above, DATA engages all students in college and career planning throughout their high school career. College and career planning is a key component of the advisory program. Students complete interest inventories, learning styles surveys, and research college and post-secondary options during advisory periods, which meet twice a week for a total of 70 minutes a week. Caseload managers also have students complete a student interest inventory before the annual IEP.

DATA offers a number of dual credit options on campus. All students, by their senior year, have taken the ACCUPLACER at least once. The school counselor is approved by CNM to offer and oversee the administration of the ACCUPLACER on the DATA campus. DATA offers the opportunity for students to take the ASVAB, ACCUPLACER, and AP exams on campus.

Visits by college representatives, military representatives, DVR, and business representatives are scheduled throughout the school year and special education students can choose the option that best meets the needs of their chosen career/college path.

Special education students who choose to take the ACT or SAT and qualify for accommodations on those tests are assisted by their caseload manager in completing required documentation. DATA also has waivers for the cost of the test for those who qualify.

Special education students participate all state required testing for graduation and those who qualify for accommodations receive them. Caseload managers work with administration and the school test coordinator to ensure the appropriate accommodations are available and implemented.