

# SPECIAL EDUCATION

SUMMER 2019 | BRIEF 1

## WHO IS THIS LEARNER?

A **student with a disability** who qualifies for special education and related services is a diverse learner who:

- Has a **documented disability** under one of the categories as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education act (IDEA): intellectual disability; hearing impairment (including deafness); speech or language impairment; visual impairment (including blindness); serious emotional disturbance; orthopedic impairment; autism; traumatic brain injury; other health impairment; specific learning disability; deaf-blindness and/or multiple disabilities.
- Has a disability that has an **adverse impact** on the student's educational performance in academic and nonacademic areas.
- **Needs** special education services.

Students with disabilities are entitled to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). IDEA states that, to the maximum extent appropriate, all students with disabilities (ages 3-21) are to be educated with age appropriate peers, both with and without disabilities. This is known as the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The LRE is the appropriate balance of settings and services to meet the student's individual needs.

## WHY IT MATTERS

- In Oklahoma, approximately 16% of all students in public schools are receiving special education services.
- 72% of the students in special education spend more than 80% of their time in the general education classroom.
- 37% of students in special education have a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), a category that includes dyslexia, brain injury, etc.
- 17% of students in special education have an Other Health Impairment (OHI), a category that includes diabetes, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, asthma and more.
- 6% of students in special education have autism.

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

A variety of strategies can support students with disabilities in the classroom. These may include the following:

- **Build relationships** with your students and provide a safe and supportive environment for learning.
- Provide high-quality instruction.
- Establish consistent and **high expectations** for all students.
- Adjust instruction based on the individual needs of students.
- Implement **accommodations** and **modifications** indicated in the IEP.
- Ensure access to assistive technology.
- **Focus on student's strengths** instead of deficits.
- Understand trauma-informed instructional practices.
- Use Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

## ATTENDING TO EQUITY

IEP teams must develop a high-quality and individualized IEP based on the child's needs. To meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA, a school must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable academic appropriate progress in light of the child's circumstances. The IEP must contain appropriately ambitious goals. If a child with a disability is not making meaningful progress toward goals, the IEP team must meet to determine what additional supports may be required.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do you **contribute** to the development of the IEPs of your students?
- How do you **involve the families** of your students with disabilities to support their education inside and outside of classroom?
- How will you **support** your students who have experienced trauma?
- What services and educational setting options are available in your district to meet the individual LRE needs of each student?

