

IDEA TALKING POINTS

In preparation for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Nation's Governors have come together with the Chief State School Officers to take a strong stand in support of quality education for all student including students with disabilities.

Recognizing the importance of Governors and Chief State School Officers working hand in hand on this critical issue, for the first time in NGA history we will be considering for adoption a joint policy that directs federal support to the education of children with disabilities as well as enhances the opportunity for students with disabilities to be prepared for, participate in, and contribute to the 21st Century economy and society.

The Joint IDEA policy calls for the following.

- Governors call on Congress and the Administration to meet its full mandatory funding commitment of 40 percent of the average per pupil expenditure. (Currently the federal government provides less than 17 percent.) In addition, the federal government should provide sufficient flexibility in the use of funds to allow states and school districts to implement the new IDEA in concert with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and state reform measures.
- The primary goal of the new IDEA must be to improve educational outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Procedural protections must be retained, but the paperwork associated with their implementation must be minimized. Increased emphasis must be placed on teaching and learning and closing the achievement gap between children with disabilities and their nondisabled peers.
- Improved outcomes are dependent upon a unified system of quality services and accountability. Quality services must be provided to all children. General education and special education must be flexible and responsive to individual needs. All teachers must be prepared to teach diverse learners and no child should be excluded from the accountability system.

The upcoming reauthorization of IDEA provides an opportunity to refocus federal policy and strengthen the commitment to children with disabilities by emphasizing improved educational achievement and more positive post-school results.