

TO: Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators

SUBMITTED BY: Professional Standards Work Group

ITEM FOR DISCUSSION: Entry 2: Accommodating Students Identified as Having Special Needs

BACKGROUND:

Attached you will find Entry 2 from the ROPA manual. Please review these in preparation for the discussion regarding Entry 2: Accommodating Students Identified as Having Special Needs.

Completing Portfolio Entry 2:
Accommodating Students Identified as Having Special Needs

Entry 2 of the redesigned licensure portfolio offers candidates an important opportunity to begin learning about working with students with special needs. A number of institutions have expressed a concern with candidates' access to IEPs in order to complete the entry. While the Design Team does not specifically require that candidates read a student's IEP in order to complete the entry, clearly access to an IEP would greatly facilitate a candidate's reflection and analysis on the entry's questions.

Although legally candidates cannot access IEPs without the permission of the student's parent or guardian, it should not be difficult for programs to obtain this signed release. Problems may arise, according to Karin Edwards, Director of Student Support, when individual candidates approach classroom teachers or special educators to request access. It is important, she advises, that programs use their relationships with schools to create a mechanism whereby the special educators in the school identify families who are willing to support this important component of training new educators.

Julie Longchamp, Williston site coordinator and Design Team member, describes her school's process for sharing IEP information with candidates as follows: "We have a special educator go through an IEP as part of the seminar class. This allows them to understand the components of a student's plan, especially the accommodations, which the intern, as part of the classroom, needs to provide for the individual student."

"Our school also provides each team with an "IEP at a Glance" for students on each team. I look at this frequently throughout the year as I work with students."

Finally, Julie says that she thinks "entry 2 is critical for the preservice teacher. Legally, they need to understand and apply the information in the IEPs in order to meet the needs of the special learners."

Michael Hock, Department employee and special educator for over thirty years, thinks that programs should work with schools and special educators to assure that candidates who are directly serving students with special needs are knowledgeable of the IEP document. Schools must, he adds, balance their response to the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* with their efforts to respond to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*.

The Design Team wishes to emphasize that whatever challenges institutions confront as they create procedures to attain permission for access to IEPs, candidates' experience responding to the entry is an essential first step in working with students with special needs. "The more experience candidates get," Karin Edwards adds, "the better!"

Entry 2: Accommodating Students Identified as Having Special Needs

Purpose	Candidates demonstrate an understanding of how to identify and accommodate students with special needs in an equitable learning environment. This includes an understanding of applicable laws, policies, and procedures.
Principles to Be Addressed	<p><i>Principle # 3: The educator understands how individuals and groups differ and creates equitable instructional opportunities that respond to the needs of all students.</i></p> <p><i>Principle # 8: The educator integrates students with disabilities into appropriate learning situations.</i></p> <p><i>Principle # 13: The educator understands laws related to student and educator rights and responsibilities, and applies current state and federal laws and regulations as they pertain to all children, including those who are at risk and those with disabilities, and treats students and colleagues fairly and equitably.</i></p>
Required Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of needs and accommodations (IEP, 504, etc.) • Notes from conference with classroom and/or special education teacher
Directions	<p>Select one student who has an IEP and a second student who may be eligible or who is eligible for special services (e.g. a student on a 504 plan, an English language learner, a student identified as gifted, or a student who is in the early stages of the referral process). Gather information from multiple settings over time.</p> <p><i>For each student describe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of services provided • The identification/referral process (including assessments) • The classroom setting including climate • The instruction being provided including materials and any modifications • Any human and/or technical support services provided • Information gathered from a conference with the classroom and/or special education teachers <p>Analyze the information gathered discussing how the policies, procedures, and supports work to serve each of the two students. Within the context of your analysis consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given your knowledge of law, policies, and procedures for students with special needs, how effectively are the needs of each of these two students being met? • What impact does the learning environment have on the learning for the two students as well as for all of the students in the classroom? <p>Reflect on your experiences with the two students. Within the context of your reflection consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the implications for teaching students with special needs within your endorsement area? • What would be your strengths and challenges in accommodating students with special needs?

