



**State Board of Education Resolution
On Supporting Students with Disabilities
SR20-8**

WHEREAS, the current COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted learning for the District of Columbia’s roughly 90,000 students;

WHEREAS, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has committed in its 2019–2023 strategic plan to helping accelerate academic outcomes for students with disabilities;

WHEREAS, outcomes for students with disabilities lag behind their peers;

WHEREAS, only 2 out of every 20 students with disabilities, 1 out of every 20 students with a primary disability or Specific Learning Disability, and 1 out of every 20 students with disabilities who are at-risk are classified as proficient in literacy on the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the District’s statewide English Language Arts (ELA) assessment;

WHEREAS, from 2016 to 2019, the percentage of students without disabilities who performed on grade level increased by 14 percentage points, while students with disabilities increased by only 3 percentage points on the ELA statewide assessment;

WHEREAS, poverty and race are linked to the identification and exit of students with disabilities, and 1 out of 4 Black males and 1 out of 8 Black females are identified as students with disabilities—twice the rate of their white peers; and Black students are less likely to exit special education services once identified, even after controlling for other demographic factors;

WHEREAS, other urban districts, including Miami-Dade, Boston, New York City, and San Diego, demonstrate that better outcomes for students with disabilities are possible;

WHEREAS, research indicates that nearly all students with disabilities can perform on grade level¹(85 to 90 percent of students with disabilities can perform at grade level when provided with appropriate services and supports);

WHEREAS, OSSE has committed to improving outcomes for students with disabilities by “building ecosystem capacity,” which among other things, includes exploring a technical assistance center to share resources²;

¹ [Students with Disabilities in Educational Policy, Practice, and Professional Judgment: What Should We Expect?](#) (NCEO Report #413)

² [Students with Disabilities in the District of Columbia Landscape Analysis](#) (2019)





WHEREAS, in 2018, the Office of the Student Advocate developed a family engagement framework that can be leveraged to better support parents of students with disabilities;

WHEREAS, during this period of school closures due to COVID-19, families of students with disabilities, as well as special education advocates and scholars, have testified before the State Board that 1) it has been difficult to find critical information (i.e., contact information for school-based personnel able to answer special education related questions during school closures), 2) not all take home packets have been modified for students with disabilities, and schools’ distance learning plans remain unavailable to families, and 3) the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guidance on OSSE’s website should provide more necessary information to assist families attempting to support their children’s learning at home; and,

WHEREAS, the State Board wants to partner with OSSE to advance the critical priority of improving outcomes for students with disabilities;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, to facilitate families’ communication with their schools about issues related to educating students with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Board calls on OSSE to make available on their website contact information for school-based special education liaisons/personnel and school distance learning plans, particularly any special education provisions, for each DC public school and, beginning in December 2020, ensure that this information be included on the DC School Report Card;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the State Board calls on OSSE to extend IDEA eligibility for services to students who would otherwise lose eligibility at the end of the 2019-2020 school year; to provide guidance to LEAs on parent training as a related service pursuant the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); to clarify and deepen guidance on nursing staff requirements for LEAs during the COVID-19 pandemic should school buildings open in the fall; to clarify guidance for how LEAs should provide modifications for students with disabilities both through virtual learning and take home materials; provide guidance to LEAs on data tracking of virtual special education service provision and student progress monitoring that is available and transparent to students and families; to update its FAQ document with critical information OSSE sought and received; and, the State Board shall provide quarterly updates to OSSE about requests, questions, and complaints we receive from families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Date Adopted: May 20, 2020 Signed: 

