

FY 2008 QUESTION NUMBER: 16

QUESTION:

What is the research and legal aspects that provide the underlying basis for the MCPS recommendation to moving more students to more inclusive settings? What is the trend for jurisdictions both regionally and nationally?

BUDGET PAGE REFERENCE: NA

ANSWER:

The No Child Left Behind Act and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 mandate that students with disabilities be able to access the general education curriculum, classrooms, and accountability systems. These mandates are supported by two decades of education research that identify the benefits of educating students with disabilities with their nondisabled peers. As referenced in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 105th Congress, 1997, “Over 20 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by...providing appropriate special education and related services and aids and supports in the regular classroom to such children...”

A recent educational policy briefing from the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy of the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community notes that, across the country, students with disabilities have made progress on state assessments. The report includes information from a 2001 survey of state directors of special education. Two thirds of the states reported stable or increased performance levels of students with disabilities on state tests. Overall, states listed positive consequences of inclusive standards, assessments, and accountability.

In 2001, the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, cited the State of Maryland for noncompliance with the least restrictive environment mandates in IDEA. As a result, Maryland was placed under focused monitoring and required to set targets for school districts to increase student access to the general education environment. Maryland established the goal of having 80 percent of students with disabilities in the general education environment at least 40 percent of the time. As a result, all jurisdictions in Maryland began realigning service delivery models. According to the October 28, 2005, Maryland Census Data Report, Montgomery County Public Schools ranks 21 of 24 jurisdictions with regard to this goal.