

# Working With Special-Needs Students

A federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), governs how schools and families provide an education to children with special needs. In addition, state law and local board policy determine how IDEA is implemented.

IDEA clarifies that special education is a service, not a place. It may occur in schools, homes, hospitals and other locations. Special education is instruction designed specifically to meet the unique needs of students with special-needs, aged three to twenty-one. Children with disabilities are expected to progress and participate in the general curriculum and extracurricular activities as fully as appropriate.

## Referring a student

The process begins when a teacher or family refers a student, who is then evaluated by qualified professionals. To qualify for special education services, children must meet criteria in at least one of 13 categories of disabilities.



## Get Help

TEA's Instruction and Professional Development division can provide materials and assistance with IDEA. Contact TEA IPD at 800.342.8367. You may also find these Web sites helpful:

<http://www.ideapractices.org>  
<http://www.ideapolicy.org>

<http://www.fape.org>  
<http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced>