



MYTH #4:

When a student has a significant cognitive disability, their curriculum is their IEP, meaning they focus exclusively on their annual IEP goals.

FACT:

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) require that all students make progress toward grade-level learning standards.

The Truth Is...

- All students eligible for special education should have IEPs that are aligned to grade-level learning standards, including students with significant cognitive disabilities whose instruction focuses on functional skills.
- Students with IEPs who are placed in special education settings should not have a separate/alternative curriculum with little connection/alignment to the general curriculum.

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE FACTS:

- [WAC 392-172A-01175](#) (2)(c): SDI means adapting the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of a student with a disability and ensure access to and progress in the general curriculum.
- TIES Center resources: [The General Education Curriculum–Not an Alternate Curriculum!](#) and [Academic Standards for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms: Same Content Standards, Alternate Achievement Standards](#)
- [U. S. Supreme Court Case Decision Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District](#): IEPs must be reasonably calculated to ensure reasonable progress in light of a student's unique circumstances.

STRATEGIES FOR DISPELLING THE MYTH:

- IEP teams must [engage in discussions about how and when IEP goals and specially designed instruction \(SDI\) can be provided in inclusive settings.](#)
- Ensure that general education and special education team members have time to collaborate. This can be achieved through in person meetings, virtual meetings, and use of shared collaborative lesson planning documents. The starting point for collaborative planning is the general education standards and curriculum and the general education context. Refer to the [5-15-45](#) Tool for what meaningful collaboration can look like whether teachers have 5 minutes, 15 minutes or 45 minutes to meet.
- Consider how IEPs in the district are written. [Do the goals support](#): (1) access and progress in the general education grade-level curriculum, (2) what SDI will be integrated across the school day through multiple means, and (3) the direct and indirect service minutes that special educators provide to support student SDI (SDI can be provided either directly by special educators or provided by others if they are designed and supervised by the special education).