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## Virginia Public Schools Praised for IDEA Implementation

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) is commending the commonwealth's school divisions and the Virginia Department of Education for their performance in implementing federal laws and regulations governing education services for students with disabilities.

In a June 27 letter to Superintendent of Public Instruction Patricia I. Wright, federal Special Education Programs Director Melody Musgrove praised the commonwealth for its "high levels of compliance" with the law and for reporting "valid and reliable" data about special education programs in the commonwealth.

After evaluating Virginia's progress toward meeting the goals of its state performance plan, USED determined that Virginia is meeting the requirements and purposes of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the following nine areas:

- Reducing the dropout rate for students with disabilities
- Exceeding the state goal for participation of students with disabilities in state assessments
- Exceeding state objectives for the development of social and communications skills as well as for the use of appropriate behaviors among preschoolers with disabilities
- Exceeding the state objective for increasing parental involvement among parents of children receiving special education services
- Transitioning toddlers in need of special education services into the PK-12 system
- Providing supervision and correcting problems in special education programs
- Resolving complaints in a timely manner
- Adjudicating due-process complaints in a timely manner
- Collecting and reporting valid and reliable data about the education and performance of students with disabilities

"This recognition is a reminder of the dedication and caring of thousands of Virginia special educators who are committed to the success of their students and view special education as a calling as well as a career," Wright said.

Virginia is one of 30 states receiving a "meets requirements" designation based on 2010 special education data. Twelve states are classified as needing assistance, and eight states and the District of Columbia are rated as needing intervention. States found to need assistance or intervention are subject to federal sanctions and enforcement actions.

IDEA, which was reauthorized by Congress in 2004, requires states and school divisions to ensure that children with disabilities receive educational services that meet their educational needs and prepare them for further education, employment and productive lives. IDEA also requires states to establish targets in their annual State Performance Plans for achieving the objectives of the law.

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