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## Virginia Earns Top Special Education Rating from U.S. Department of Education

Virginia is one of only 18 states and territories earning a “meets requirements” designation under the US Department of Education’s (USED) new results-driven accountability model for rating state compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Previously in rating states, USED focused on procedural requirements such as timelines for student evaluations, due process hearings and transitioning children into preschool services. The new results-driven accountability model includes the participation of students with disabilities in state assessment programs and state progress in narrowing achievement gaps in reading and mathematics between students with disabilities and non-disabled students.

“That Virginia was one of a relative handful of states to earn a meets requirements designation under this new system speaks to the commitment of our public school divisions to helping students with disabilities reach their fullest potential,” Superintendent of Public Instruction Steven R. Staples said. “Behind this success are thousands of teachers, principals and administrators committed to serving all children, regardless of the challenges.”

USED announced the state ratings yesterday. Thirty-six states and territories were classified as needing assistance from the federal education agency and six as needing intervention to improve services for students with disabilities. No states or territories were listed as in need of substantial federal intervention.

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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