

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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John L. Winn
Commissioner of Education



October 14, 2005

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Florida is committed to providing effective quality services for all students. This letter provides information regarding the provision of speech/language services in Florida to students with disabilities. As a parent of a student with a disability, we want to ensure that you understand and are involved in making the decision regarding services for your child.

The communication skills of each student in exceptional student education (ESE) must be addressed by the student's individual educational plan (IEP) or individualized family support plan (IFSP) team. Communication skills may be addressed by a speech/language pathologist (SLP) in a number of ways, such as consultation with the classroom teacher, classroom designed activities, or speech/language therapy sessions.

There are currently **two options** for a student to be eligible to receive speech/language services in Florida.

Option One

Option one requires that the student must meet the eligibility criteria as listed in the State Board of Education rule for *Special Programs for Students Who Are Speech and Language Impaired*. The specific rule can be found at <http://www.firn.edu/doe/rules/6a-61.htm#6A-6.03012>. Once the student is determined eligible for exceptional student education, speech/language impaired is identified as either the **primary disability** (the student's only ESE program) or as a **secondary disability** (student is in more than one ESE program).

Option Two

During the past two years, the Florida Department of Education has provided families and school districts an additional option to enable more students to receive speech/language services.

Through **option two** the individual educational plan or individualized family support plan team can determine that if a student identified as autistic, deaf or hard-of-hearing, traumatic brain injured, or developmentally delayed

- has a delay or absence of communication skills as documented by the initial speech/language evaluation and
- is in need of speech or language services.

In **option two**, the student does not have to meet eligibility criteria under State Board of Education rule.

We encourage you to work with your IEP or IFSP team members to continue to address your child's individual needs. There is not a difference in the type of services provided to your child based upon the **eligibility option** used for placement into the speech/language program. The IEP or IFSP team determines the goals and objectives, initiation/duration of services, and frequency of services.

If you have questions regarding this information, please contact your district Exceptional Student Education director, your district ESE parent services liaison, or your school guidance counselor. You may also contact Ms. Elise Lynch, Program Specialist, Florida Department of Education, by telephone at 850-245-0478 or by email at Elise.Lynch@fldoe for further information.

I hope this information helps you to ensure the highest quality services for your child.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John L. Winn".

John L. Winn
Commissioner