



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

October 17, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Sally Vaughn, Ph.D. *Sally*  
Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer

SUBJECT: Continuum of Alternative Placements, Least Restrictive Environment, and Private School Placement for Students with Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004 implementing regulations require that each public agency must ensure that a continuum of alternative placements is available to meet the needs of students with disabilities for special education and related services. The continuum must include the alternative placements listed in the definition of special education (instruction in general education classes, special classes, special schools, home instruction, and instruction in hospitals and institutions) and make provision for supplementary services (§300.115).

The provision of a free appropriate public education and placement decisions for all students with disabilities must be made on an individual basis. Placement decisions must ensure that each student with a disability is educated in the public school the student would attend if not disabled, unless the student's individualized education program (IEP) requires some other arrangement. The requirement for the continuum of alternative placements reinforces the importance of the individualized approach in determining the placement that is the least restrictive environment (LRE) for each student with a disability. The team determining the placement must select the placement option on the continuum in which it determines that the student's IEP can be implemented in the LRE. Any alternative placement selected for a student outside of the general educational environment must include appropriate opportunities for the student to interact with peers who are nondisabled, to the extent appropriate (§300.114).

The IDEA regulations do not prohibit placement in private schools. The regulations place a responsibility upon the state educational agency to ensure that a child with a disability who is placed in or referred to a private school or facility by the IEP Team be provided with special education and related services in conformance with the IEP, at no cost to the parent, and be provided an education that meets the standards that apply to the state educational agency or local educational agency (§300.146).

If you have further questions regarding this issue, please contact Dr. Joanne Winkelman at 517/373-1696, or via email at [winkelmanj@michigan.gov](mailto:winkelmanj@michigan.gov).

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

KATHLEEN N. STRAUS – PRESIDENT • JOHN C. AUSTIN – VICE PRESIDENT  
CAROLYN L. CURTIN – SECRETARY • MARIANNE YARED MCGUIRE – TREASURER  
NANCY DANHOF – NASBE DELEGATE • ELIZABETH W. BAUER  
REGINALD M. TURNER • CASANDRA E. ULBRICH

608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909  
[www.michigan.gov/mde](http://www.michigan.gov/mde) • (517) 373-3324