

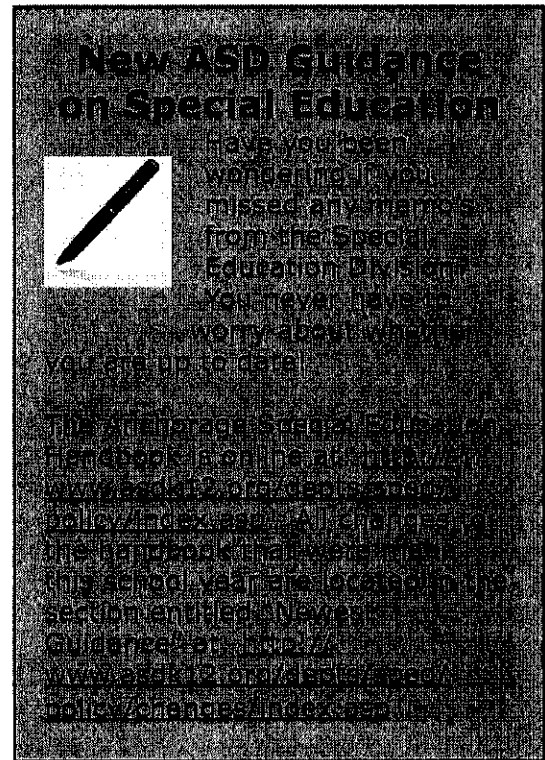
Connections from Jerr!

Spotlight on AYP and Students with Disabilities

The AYP report highlights many successes within the district. Districtwide, students met 93 percent of performance targets despite an increase in the proficiency bar.

"I'm particularly proud of the continued progress among our special education and disabled students. The fact that these students continue to make solid academic progress validates the efforts we've made. Much of those gains can be credited to improved curriculum, teacher training and year-round support. Students are grasping concepts and hanging on to them each year. Not only is this giving us better ways to help students pass classes, we're also working to prepare them for college.", explains Superintendent Carol Comeau.

Educating students with disabilities has its own set of unique challenges. District educators have targeted their efforts to provide the best education possible. Although there is a long way to go, Comeau says educators are pleased about several years of continued growth in language arts and math.



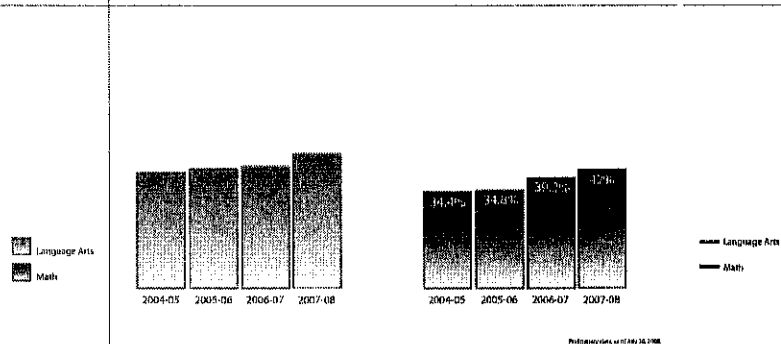
New ASD Guidance on Special Education

Have you been wondering if you missed any items from the Special Education Division? You never have to worry about whether you are up to date!

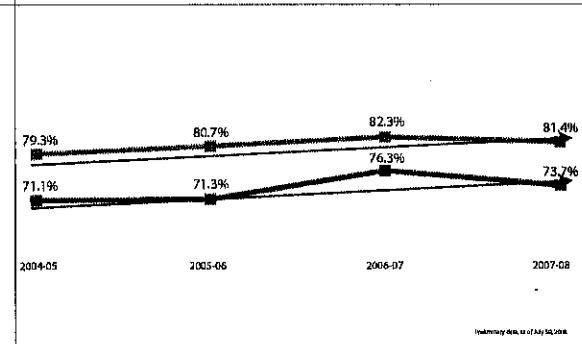
The **Assessment Standards Handbook** for the **2007-08** school year is now available. It contains information on the **2007-08** assessment standards and the **2007-08** assessment standards. This handbook is available in the **Assessment Standards Handbook** section entitled **New ASD Guidance** at www.egs.k12.or.us/assess/standards/policy/changes/0708.asp.



Students with Disabilities Language Arts and Math Proficiency



Upward District Trend



Keeping Up With the Alaska Notice of Procedural Safeguards

In May of 2008, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development made revisions to the September, 2007 version of the Alaska Notice of Procedural Safeguards.

Please be sure to utilize the Notice of Procedural Safeguards located on the ASD website at <http://www.asdk12.org/deeds/soed/policy/pat7.asp>. It is critical that all parents and students receive the most current copy.

ASD Surrogate Parent Plan Changes

I want to explain the very substantial changes that occur this year with the appointment of surrogate parents for students in need of special education services or 504 plans.

Over the last two years, the guidelines from the Alaska court system and the Department of Education have been contradictory regarding the application of the federal IDEA statutory language within our state. The IDEA clearly defines a "parent" to include "foster parent" and the Alaska Superior Court determined, in at least one case, that in the event that a special education student had a foster parent, then no surrogate parent was to be appointed.

Late in May of 2008, the Alaska State Board approved a regulation change that allows school district teams to seek a written "affirmation" from a foster parent to "act as a parent" for the purpose of making special education decisions. In light of this regulation change and the subsequent changes to the Alaska Special Education Handbook, we have rewritten all of our surrogate parent procedural guidance and forms. Located on the special education website is a guidance document designed specifically to assist special education and 504 teams to determine whether a student in state custody requires the appointment of a surrogate parent or an "Affirmation" document.

These are substantial changes to the prior procedures; in the event of questions, please feel free to contact your teacher consultant, special education department chair or the Special Education division office at 742-4272.

I am hopeful that the "affirmation" process will assist our district to address special education issues in a timelier manner than the prior requirement of a surrogate parent for each affected student.

Important Q and A on RTI!**What is Response to Intervention (RTI)?**

"Response to Instruction/Intervention is the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals and applying child response data to important educational decisions." (*Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation*, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, NASDSE, 2005).

"The RTI process is a multi-step approach to providing services and interventions to students who struggle with learning at increasing levels of intensity. The progress students make at each stage of intervention is closely monitored, results of this monitoring are used to make decisions about the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, in special education, or both." (*A Parent's Guide to Response to Intervention*, National Center for Learning Disabilities)

What is the federal mandate regarding RTI?

NCLB (2001) and IDEA (2004) require schools and districts to provide scientific research-based instruction, which includes intervention supports for struggling learners. Furthermore, IDEA specifies that a learning disability cannot be primarily the result of limited English proficiency or a lack of appropriate instruction in reading or math. Children may not be identified as having a specific learning disability if there is no documentation of appropriate instruction.



Does RTI pertain to all special education eligibility categories?

No. It is specific for students struggling in reading or math or for any student suspected of having a learning disability.

How is RTI different than the general education interventions that we are currently utilizing in our school?

It is not significantly different. Documentation is the critical component that we must formalize.

Are we ready for RTI?

Yes. During the years that the District has focused on the implementation of "scientifically research-based instruction," the number of students identified with a Specific Learning Disability has decreased from 4205 in 2004 to 3816 in 2007.

Is there a plan for more formally implementing RTI in the Anchorage School District?

Yes. Representatives across departments-general education, curriculum/instruction, assessment, English Language Learners, Title I, special education and related services- are collaborating to implement RTI. A manual and training will be developed that outlines ASD Student Support Team Procedures, resources, and documentation forms. Forms will be developed with a vision to be compatible with Zangle for future application.

What is the timeline for training schools in RTI?

Title I Elementary Schools will be trained during the fall of 2008 and coaching will be provided to Student Assistance Teams. Remaining elementary schools and secondary schools will be trained in the spring of 2009. Coaching and consultation to Student Assistance Teams for all elementary schools will be provided in the fall of 2009.

Who is responsible for documentation of interventions?

The general education teacher and Student Support Team.

What does this mean for this school year?

Prior to a special education referral for a student suspected of having a specific learning disability in reading or math, there must be development, implementation, and data collected on at least two (2) specific instructional interventions. If data demonstrates that the student is not making adequate progress following the second intervention, the special education referral and evaluation process would begin.

Learn more about RTI on the ASD website at <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/sped/policy/part2.asp>.