6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF The Individuals with Education Disabilities Act (IDEA)

1. **Free Appropriate Public Education** — IDEA guarantees that each child with a disability, eligible for special education, will be entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

   - ★ **Free** requires that the education of each child with a disability must be provided at public expense and at no cost to the child's parents.
   - ★ **Appropriate** means that each child with a disability is entitled to an education that is "appropriate" for his or her needs.
   - ★ **Public** refers to the public school system. The public school system must educate students with disabilities, respond to their individual needs, and help them plan for their future.
   - ★ **Education** - IDEA is an education act that guarantees that eligible children with disabilities will receive a public education that includes special education and related services as directed by the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

2. **Appropriate Evaluation** — IDEA requires that each child suspected of having a disability receive an appropriate evaluation. An appropriate evaluation provides information to be used to determine the child's eligibility for special education and related services and the educational needs of the child.

3. **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** — In order to ensure that students with disabilities receive an appropriate and individualized education, IDEA requires that, after drawing upon current evaluation information, the IEP team develop a written document, the IEP, designed to meet the unique educational needs of each student with disabilities.

4. **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** — IDEA guarantees that a child with a disability will receive a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) appropriate. This principle reflects IDEA's strong preference for educating students with disabilities in general education classes with the access to general education curriculum. Placement in the general education classroom is the first placement option the IEP team must consider.

5. Parent and Student Participation in Decision Making — This principle reinforces the belief that the education of children with disabilities is made more effective by strengthening the role of parents in the special education process. IDEA requires that parents (and students, as appropriate) participate in each step of the special education process. Students must be invited to participate in IEP meetings where transition services are to be discussed.

6. **Procedural Safeguards** — Procedural safeguards are a set of activities whose purpose is to ensure that:

- ★ The rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.
- ★ All information needed to make decisions about the provision of a free appropriate public education to the student is provided to parents of children with disabilities and to the student when appropriate.
- ★ Procedures (mediation and due process) are in place to resolve disagreements between parties.

Adapted from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website:

https://www.doe.mass.edu › mtss › mobilization