



WAPSD

Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities

4/17/2020

Secretary DeVos
US Department of Education
Washington, DC

Dear Secretary DeVos:

The Wyoming Advisory Panel for Students with Disabilities (WAPSD) is charged with advising the Wyoming Department of Education on the unmet needs of students with disabilities and other matters involving the education of these students ages three through 21. As panel members, we are honored to serve the State and Wyoming's children and families. Our Panel consists of Wyoming educational professionals, students with disabilities, and parents of children with disabilities who have beliefs, dreams and aspirations for their students to receive the same educational opportunities, support and achievement as their typically developing peers.


With that in mind, the Panel would like to submit this letter as documentation to reflect our opposition regarding any waivers to IDEA that would change the rights of students with disabilities pursuant to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. During these unprecedented times, we recognize that school districts and families must work together to ensure equitable services. We believe schools and families should work together to develop updated timelines and education plans that fit the needs of the students during these exceptional times. We also believe our school districts should take guidance from both the Wyoming Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education, knowing that sound judgment and protecting the rights of students with disabilities is at the forefront of our collective minds.

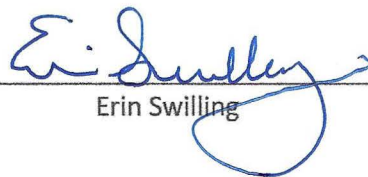
We recognize the reality of school closings across the nation due to the global pandemic, and that flexibility, patience, and innovation will be needed to ensure that students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education in this challenging time. With that in mind the WAPSD strongly believes that the U.S. Department of Education must enforce and Congress must uphold the following principles:

1. Students with disabilities must continue to be provided with FAPE.
2. Parents must be involved in all decision-making, even if such involvement is virtual, regarding student IEPs.
3. Parent and student due process rights must remain intact.

We urge you to support the rights of ALL students, including those with disabilities, by keeping the current laws intact and protecting the civil rights of students with disabilities. Legislators, attorneys, advocates and families have fought for the past 50 years to ensure fair and equitable education. We ask that the hard work of those collective individuals be upheld to ensure that students with disabilities continue to receive specialized instruction to the full extent possible, while safeguarding the rights of these children with disabilities and their parents. We must work together to ensure schools and families collaborate in support of every infant, toddler, child, youth and young adult with a disability eligible for services under IDEA and/or the Rehabilitation Act.

Sincerely,

Panel Chair 
Rachel Crawford

Panel Chair Elect 
Erin Swilling

WAPSD Members:

Ammon Bullinger
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WDE Representatives

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cc: Mark Schultz, Acting Assistant Commissioner, OSERS
Laurie VanderPloeg, Director, Office of Special Education