

Participation in Level 1 Courses for Students with Disabilities

PURPOSE

The purpose of this question and answer paper is to provide guidance to school and district personnel regarding the participation of students with disabilities in Level 1 courses. The 1997 Legislature amended Section 232.246(7)(d), F.S., regarding the use of Level 1 courses for graduation credit. The use of Level 1 courses is now defined as follows:

Section 232.246(7) General Requirements for High School Graduation — No student may be granted credit toward high school graduation for enrollment in the following courses or programs:

(d) Any Level 1 course unless the student's assessment indicates that a more rigorous course of study would be inappropriate, in which case a written assessment of the need must be included in the student's individual educational plan or in a student performance plan, signed by the principal, the guidance counselor, and the parent or guardian of the student, or the student if the student is 18 years of age or older.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Which courses are designated Level 1?

Please refer to the *Florida Course Code Directory and Instructional Personnel Assignments*, Section 1: Course Code Directory System Guide, for a listing of all Level 1 courses.

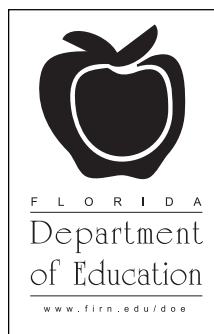
2. When is it appropriate for a student to be enrolled in a Level 1 course?

It is appropriate to enroll a student with disabilities in a Level 1 course when it is apparent from previous assessment data and other supporting documentation that the student cannot successfully complete a higher level course even when provided allowable modifications and supports. Therefore, when developing a student's course of study, there should be a logical sequence of progression to enable the student to obtain the prerequisite skills needed to advance to the next course.

3. Where can justification for the student's need for Level 1 courses be found?

School personnel may obtain the required information needed for Level 1 course justification from existing documents such as the individual educational plan (IEP). Sections of the IEP that may address the need for

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Level 1 courses include

- present level of educational performance statements
- sections in the IEP that address “other” information

If justification is based upon the content of the IEP, reference to the applicable IEP may be made on the student’s performance plan instead of restating the student’s need.

4. What type of assessment(s) may be used to indicate the need for student enrollment in a Level 1 course?

The specific assessment data used to determine the student's need to take Level 1 courses are a local decision. However, assessments that may be used include, but are not limited to,

- standardized test results
- academic progress information in the student's cumulative record
- previous group or individual achievement tests
- classroom work samples, including tests
- teacher observations or reports
- curriculum-based assessments
- past student performance in a specified subject area
- reports of student behavior

A comprehensive, multi-faceted approach should be employed when working with students and should be considered when deciding the appropriateness of Level 1 courses. The more data collected from standardized and nonstandardized measures that consistently indicate the need for Level 1 courses, the greater confidence the IEP committee will have in decisions made.

5. What are the necessary components of a written assessment of the student's need?

Suggested components include, but are not limited to,

- identification of the source(s) of the assessment data used
- summary/results of assessment data related to student performance
- a statement that identifies a specific skill deficiency
- a description of the effect the student's disability has on his or her progress in the specified subject area
- a statement that includes a recommendation of need for the Level 1 course

The minimum documentation includes

- results of the data reviewed
- recommendation of need for the Level 1 course

Examples of the written assessment of the student's need for enrollment in a Level 1 course:

- Based on previous achievement test results (e.g., Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement grade equivalent of 6.1 in Mathematics, Stanford Achievement Test national grade percentile rank of 45 in Mathematics Procedures, or TerraNova national percentile in Mathematics of 48) and performance in 8th grade math course, (student name) needs to learn the skills in (Level 1 course) before he/she is expected to enroll and succeed in a Level 2 course.

- Based on teacher observation of classroom work samples and the frustration that (student name) experiences when assignments are too difficult, enrollment in (Level 1 course) is appropriate at this time to enable (student) to learn the necessary skills before progressing to a Level 2 course.

6. Can a re-evaluation of a student in an ESE program within the last three years be used as documentation of a need for enrollment in a Level 1 course?

Yes, any information obtained that relates to a student's academic performance may be valuable. If information from the three-year re-evaluation is used, it should be substantiated by other measures of student academic functioning, such as performance on class work, homework, tests, etc. All information should be reviewed for *consistency* and *relevancy* in order to justify placing a student in a Level 1 course.

7. Can the decision concerning the need for participation in Level 1 courses be made and documented during the IEP meeting?

Yes, the decision concerning the need for participation in Level 1 courses may be made and documented in the IEP meeting, during which a discussion of appropriate academic programming should occur. However, according to amended Section 232.246(7)(d), F.S., there must also be written consent by the principal, guidance counselor, and parent or student (if 18 years of age or older) for each Level 1 course if credit toward graduation is to be earned. The actual documentation and approval signatures for Level 1 courses would generally not be contained in the IEP, unless the IEP includes a section specifically relating to Level 1 courses. Such a section would be necessary since signatures on the IEP reflect participants' attendance, not consent. Consequently, the simplest method of documenting consent would be the district's student performance plan, which could also be completed during the IEP meeting.

8. May courses designated as remedial/compensatory courses be used as credit toward a standard diploma for ESE students?

Yes, as specified in Section 232.246(2), F.S., those courses in grades 9-12 that are considered remedial or compensatory may only be used as "elective" credit toward a standard diploma, unlike Level 1 courses, which do meet subject area graduation requirements.

Please refer to the *Florida Course Code Directory and Instructional Personnel Assignments*, Section 1: Course Code Directory System Guide, for a listing of all remedial/compensatory courses. Courses are listed individually within each curriculum area (e.g., Language Arts, Mathematics).

9. May Level 1 math courses be substituted for the Algebra I requirement?

No, Level 1 courses may not be substituted for Algebra I or its equivalent, but Level 1 courses may be used as preparatory courses leading to Algebra I or its equivalent. Below are samples of courses of study that a student may take to fulfill the math requirement for graduation.

- Pre-Algebra as a freshman
- Algebra Ia as a sophomore
- Algebra Ib as a junior

or

- Explorations in Math II as a freshman
- Pre-Algebra as a sophomore
- Applied Math I as a junior
- Applied Math II as a senior

or

- Algebra Ia as a freshman
- Algebra Ib as a sophomore
- Other course as appropriate based upon student skill level

10. What is the remediation reduction incentive and how does it impact the use of Level 1 courses?

The remediation reduction incentive is a fiscal calculation designed to provide an incentive for teaching students in higher level courses. The incentive requires the allocation of funds in two parts:

1. The allocation in Part 1 is based on college entry placement test scores.
2. Part 2 is based on grades 9-12 enrollment in Levels 1, 2, and 3 mathematics and English courses. The amount of funding is prorated among districts for each subject, with districts receiving positive adjustments for Levels 2 and 3 courses and negative adjustments for Level 1 courses. The purpose of the funding formula is to provide an incentive for increased student enrollment in higher-level mathematics and English courses.