

Eligibility Rules for Student Athletes on IEPs

Background Information

Students with IEPs are guaranteed equitable participation in extracurricular activities. This document provides a brief description of key points in ensuring high school students with disabilities receiving an Individualized Education Program are able to participate in their chosen extracurricular activities. Per Iowa Administrative Code rule 281-36.15(2)(c)(2)(d), “A student with a disability who has an individualized education program shall not be denied eligibility on the basis of scholarship if the student is making adequate progress, as determined by school officials, towards the goals and objectives on the student’s individualized education program.” This means a student is not to be denied eligibility on the basis of grades if they are making adequate progress towards their goals.

Key Points

- “School Officials” make the determination of adequate progress, not the student’s IEP team and not the student’s parents.
- Officials must immediately communicate what “adequate progress” constitutes to the student and the student’s parents, teachers, and others who assign grades to or monitor progress of the student.
- Students are not required to meet their goals. In some cases, a student may make adequate progress without attaining their goal(s). However, in some cases goal attainment would constitute adequate progress. Determining “adequate progress” will be dependent on facts of each case.
- When a student fails a class with no express IEP goal or specially designed instruction, examine the relationship between the goals and the failed course(s). If there is a close relationship and the student has made adequate progress, then the student is eligible. If there is a close relationship and the student did not make adequate progress, they are not eligible. If there is little or no relationship between the goal and failed course, the student is not eligible.
- If a student is passing all of their classes, yet does not make adequate progress on their goals, they are still eligible.
- If a student with a disability is not eligible under this rule, they may participate (e.g. practice, serve as team manager) as is true of non-disabled students, but may not participate in competition or dress for competition at the varsity level. A local district may provide, however, that ineligible competitors are not permitted to practice.
- This Chapter defines high school students as “a person under 20 years of age enrolled in grades 9 through 12... ninth grade begins with the summer immediately following eighth grade.”