

*Education students
are being taught
differently because
of IDEA amendments*

The way students in the College of Education are prepared for teaching careers may be changing because of new amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Originally passed in 1975, IDEA has been amended several times with the most recent changes occurring in June 1997.

IDEA states that all children with disabilities between the ages of 3 and 21, regardless of the severity of their disability, are entitled to free public education.

"IDEA really focuses on school-age children," said Linda Lewis, program specialist for the College of Education. "We need to make sure that we are preparing students who will be dealing with children with disabilities and give them the most current information available."

quires that students with disabilities be included in the annual state assessments of dropouts and graduates, post-secondary education and employment placement and comparisons with non-disabled children.

Students in the College of Education are learning the methods of assessing children in their classes at the University. Courses in education law, behavior management and individualized education programs, are all being changed to accommodate IDEA changes, said Kathy Jungjohann, senior instructor for special education and communication resources.

"By the time [education majors] get out in the teaching field, the amendments to IDEA will be in effect," Jungiohann said.

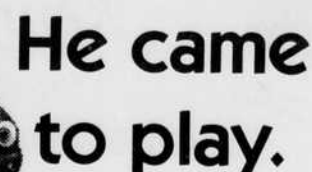
Other amendments to IDEA address behavior issues for children with disabilities. There is a concern that children with disabilities have higher incidents of school violence. Now, children with disabilities will not be denied public education for any reason. All children are entitled to alternative methods

of instruction, according to IDEA.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Appropriate training for teachers addressing the learning needs of children with disabilities, especially general education teachers in early grades, will help reduce inappropriate referrals to special education of learning disabled children." This is why 75 percent of the State Program Improvement Grant funds will be used for personnel training as part of the IDEA changes.

The amendments, however, are less than a year old and still are in transition, Lewis said. "One of the things that has hampered the way people teach is the U.S. Department of Education is trying to encourage people not to jump to conclusions," she said. The final regulations for implementing IDEA changes are expected by this April.

"People have been very anxious for these regulations to come out," Lewis said. At that point, the College of Education will be able to fully meet the needs of the changing legislation and prepare its students for the teaching profession.



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