



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Mr. Michael De Sa
Superintendent
Walnut Creek School District
960 Ygnacio Valley Road
Walnut Creek, California 94596

SEP 20 1999

Dear Mr. De Sa:

I am writing in response to your letter to Richard W. Riley, Secretary, United States Department of Education. Your letter was referred to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for response. In your letter, you urge Secretary Riley to support full funding of special education at the 40 percent authorized.

OSEP is very much aware of the financial issues that many of our State educational agencies and local educational agencies are experiencing. During the most recent reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in June 1997, Congress revised the formulas for the distribution of funds for the IDEA, Part B programs. A new formula for allocating Part B funds under Section 611 of IDEA will go into effect when the Section 611 appropriation is more than \$4,924,672,200. At that point, State allocations for the year prior to that year become the base allocations for distributing funds in that year and all subsequent years. Eighty-five percent of additional funds above the base will be allocated based on population in the age ranges for which States mandate services, and 15 percent will be based on the number of children in the State in those ranges living in poverty.

It is important to note that Federal funding levels for special education programs have increased during the past several years, even though there have been reductions in other Federal programs. For example, Part B funds were approximately \$2.3 billion in Fiscal Year 1996, \$3.1 billion in Fiscal Year 1997, \$3.8 billion in Fiscal Year 1998 and \$4.3 billion in Fiscal Year 1999.

Both the U.S. Department of Education and OSEP are committed to seeing that all children with disabilities receive appropriate special education and related services, and support State and local efforts in this area. Thank you for taking the time to share with us your views on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Patricia J. Guard
Acting Director
Office of Special Education
Programs