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IDEAS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH IDD

# Unlocking Potential: The Feasibility of Extending FAPE for Adult Learners with Disabilities, an Optional Pathway for Support

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Who is working on this issue?	Advocacy areas
Thurston County Developmental Disabilities Coalition; The Arc of Tri-Cities; Benton County Parent Coalition	Public education; community services/supports

## What is the problem you are trying to solve?

- Current age limits for special education services in Washington state are not equitable.

The cutoff age of 21 is arbitrary, based on outdated concepts of how the human brain develops. Individuals with disabilities often require additional supports, including additional time, to reach their full potential. Ending public education at age 21 puts these individuals at a distinct disadvantage to their peers.



## What is your proposed solution?

- Study how Washington state might extend learning supports

In Michigan, adult learners with disabilities can access a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment up to the age of 26. We propose Washington state conduct a feasibility study to determine the impact of extending similar access to public education to age 26 for individuals entitled to special education services, similar to what Michigan has done since the mid-1970s.



## Why is this a good solution?

In an era of evolving perspectives on education and inclusivity, the option to extend learning opportunities and expand support for young adults to the age of 26 has become increasingly apparent. The benefits are significant.



### Holistic Development:

- The move allows for a more person-centered, comprehensive focus on development.
- Tailored programs can address cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs, fostering a well-rounded skill set.

### Enhanced Social Skills:

- Extended education facilitates prolonged exposure to structured social environments, promoting the development of crucial social skills.
- Interaction with peers, community members, and educators in diverse settings contributes to improved communication and relationship-building capabilities.

### Career Readiness:

- By extending education, individuals have more time to explore vocational opportunities, develop relevant skills, receive job coaching, and receive support, enhancing their prospects for meaningful employment.
- Specialized career guidance, work-based learning opportunities, and internships can be integrated into the curriculum, preparing them for the workforce.

### Improved Independence:

- Continued education empowers individuals with disabilities to gain greater independence in daily life.
- Life skills training, including personal care, financial literacy, and community engagement supports a smoother transition to adulthood.

### Inclusive Society:

- Extended education promotes a culture of inclusivity by nurturing diverse talents and abilities.
- Graduates become valuable contributors to society, challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive community.

