St. Louis Park Public Schools

BOARD STUDY SESSION

Special education in St. Louis Park

Where we are, what we offer, where the gaps are, and what comes next.

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Where we are: more students, steady growth

16.5%

of K-12 students have an IEP, up from 12.0% in 2019-20. Minnesota is at 18.0%.

78%

of our growth since 2018 is autism and specific learning disability.

+24%

more initial evaluations in one year, 67 to 83. About 87% qualify.

Enrollment fell from 4,600 to 4,409 students while students with IEPs grew by about 29 a year, roughly two teacher caseloads every year.

Sources: MDE October 1 enrollment files and Report #13 (2019-20 to 2025-26); district evaluation tracking.

How a student gets services

1	MTSS	Support for every student, not a path to special ed
2	Evaluation	Separate question, asked whenever a disability is suspected
3	Needs statement	What the evaluation says the student needs
4	Goals	Each goal answers a named need
5	Services	Services deliver the goals
6	Accountability	Delivered as written, and on time

FOR FAMILIES

A diagnosis can bring grief.

This is a hard process for everyone. We balance family needs with the resources that fit.

What we offer, and what is growing

Program offerings

Support in the general education classroom, resource support, and self-contained programs for autism, developmental cognitive disabilities, and social emotional learning.

Similar programming in every elementary school, so no child attends a different school than a sibling to get special education.

Support staff

Speech-language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy, with 1:1 support reviewed case by case.

Shared paraprofessional support is an accommodation, not a service, and we are being careful about that line.

59 to 87

students in Setting III, our more intensive programs

+32%

more students served, 550 to 727, over the same period

GAP 1 OF 3

Capacity: staff grew slower than students

+7%

teacher FTE, 34.4 to 36.8

+32%

students served, 550 to 727

19.7

students per FTE, up from 16.0. Richfield is at 13.3.

We have a workload policy. We do not yet have a measurable standard.

Policy 427 names the factors: contact minutes, evaluation time, indirect services, IEP management, and travel. It sets no thresholds and has no tool to apply them.

GAPS 2 AND 3 OF 3

Timelines and funding are tied together

Timelines

A student counts in the December 1 federal child count only with a current IEP, a current evaluation, and services in place.

A late IEP is a gap for the student and for the budget. Accountability here is a student issue first.

Funding

State special education aid does not cover the full cost. Our general fund carries about $6.41M of spending the aid does not cover.

Transportation reimbursement falls from 95% to 90% next year.

$6.41M

spending not covered by state aid, SFY 2026 estimate

~$137K

Medical Assistance billing revenue received September 2026

On the horizon: from oral history to written

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Practice lived in people's experience

Knowledge passed along by word of mouth and good will.

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Practice that is written down

Clear processes that hold no matter who is in the role.

- Written guidance for the evaluation to IEP chain, so needs, goals, and services line up
- A measurable workload standard built on Policy 427
- IEP timeline tracking so every student is counted and served on time
- Allocation decisions on a calendar the board can see for 2027-28

On the horizon: five reviews ahead

1	Programming in our buildings	What is happening in each program, and is it consistent
2	Self-contained programs	Restructure how they are administered and delivered
3	Supplies and supports	Do staff have what students need to learn
4	Professional development	A planned sequence tied to district goals and to our specialized students
5	Buildings and spaces	Can our spaces safely support our most vulnerable students

HOW WE WILL DO IT

Our Special Education Advisory Council will brings parent and stakeholder input to the table.

WHAT I AM ASKING OF YOU

Three things for the board

1. Know that growth in students with IEPs is steady and will continue.
2. Support putting our practice in writing, including a measurable workload standard.
3. Plan with us for the funding gap that state aid does not cover.

Questions and discussion