

Special Education Update

February 2026



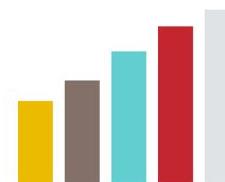
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**Special
Services**

IDEA Law-34 CFR 300

Purpose - to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate education that emphasizes specially designed instruction and related services.

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of the eligible child, with the disability, the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction.



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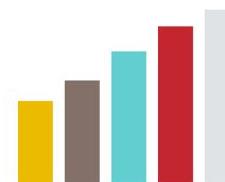
Budgetary Guidance from MDE

The state funds special education because it recognizes that special education services cost more than those provided to all children. Appropriations are based on the perception of the “excess costs” of special education. The term “excess cost” stems from the legislative assumption that general education revenue is used to cover basic costs for each child (including those with disabilities) and the legislative desire to share the burden of these extra costs with local educational agencies (LEAs).

Special Service Support Team

- Director: Jason Crane
- Assistant Director: Lora Thurston
- 4 Administrative Clerical and Business Manager:
- Julie Venus TOSA: Supports PD, Mentors, Surrogacy, Assistive Technology
- 6 Supervisors:
 - Kathryn Hatfield-supports Setting 3 all levels
 - Rebecca Crane-Early Childhood Special Education
 - Sarah Arlt-Elementary Special Education
 - Kate Pahl-Secondary Special Education
 - Ashley Downey-STEPs Supervisor
 - Sonny Jenkins- Behavior Support Specialist

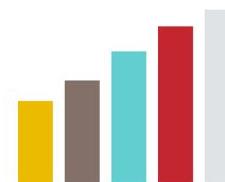
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Areas of District Identification:

- The federal Department of Education requires states to report annually on districts' efforts to implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). As part of the report, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) identifies districts as having disproportionate data related to indicators measuring activities potentially influenced by non compliant policies, procedures or practices within the district.
 - **Indicator 4:** Measures disproportionate rates of suspension/expulsion for children with disabilities.
 - **Indicator 9:** Measures disproportionate identification of racial and ethnic groups as needing special education services.
 - **Indicator 10:** Measures disproportionate identification of racial and ethnic groups as needing special education services in specific disability categories.

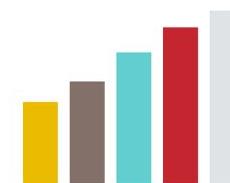


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Support and Leadership provided by Special Services

- MTSS - Compass
 - ADSIS Grant
- Suspension projects
 - Coordinated Early Intervening Supports - CEIS
- Advocacy response
- Special services support
 - Mentoring
 - Due Process Support
 - Individual Staff Support
 - Evaluations
- Professional Development
 - Science of Reading Training for Certified and Non-Certified
 - Licensure specific trainings



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Special Education Eligibility

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Elementaries	551	528	586	791	837	807	880
Middle School	278	260	277	318	320	321	342
High School	432	422	442	484	552	567	576
Care and Treatment	61	56	43	58	123	165	164
Non-Public	14	31	26	42	48	38	47
ECSE	276	232	306	361	418	395	337
Total	1598	1498	1654	2012	2250	2293	2299

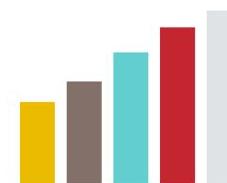
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Staffing Increases

	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26
Certified	132.50	134.50	149.10	162.90	172.90	172.30	174.40
Related Service	60.30	61.10	61.30	66.50	75.35	72.65	70.77
Non Certified	166.90	155.04	165.43	172.83	181.42	192.80	199.20
Support Staff	13.54	12.34	14.14	14.20	15.80	15.80	15.80
Total FTE	373.24	362.98	389.97	416.43	445.47	453.55	460.17



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Factors Impacting Budget

- Robust Health and Family Services provided in Duluth draws families and students to receive services and enroll in ISD709.
 - Rising demand and complexity of student needs
 - increased enrollment, including families in other districts being encouraged to seek services in Duluth
- Staffing Crisis - 29 licensure areas needed to support students with IEPs. Nationwide shortages in many areas of licensure.
- Increased funding costs
- Mandated early Identification and services provided until age 22.
- More Professional development opportunities



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