

Special Education Update:

Mandated Services and Budget Implications

December 18, 2025

Agenda

- Special education legal obligations
- Enrollment trends
- Out-of-district placement trends
- FY 26 budget status update
- Excess Cost reimbursement overview
- FY 27 planning considerations

Legal Obligations Under IDEA

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Free, appropriate special education and related services designed to provide **meaningful educational benefit** for every eligible student.

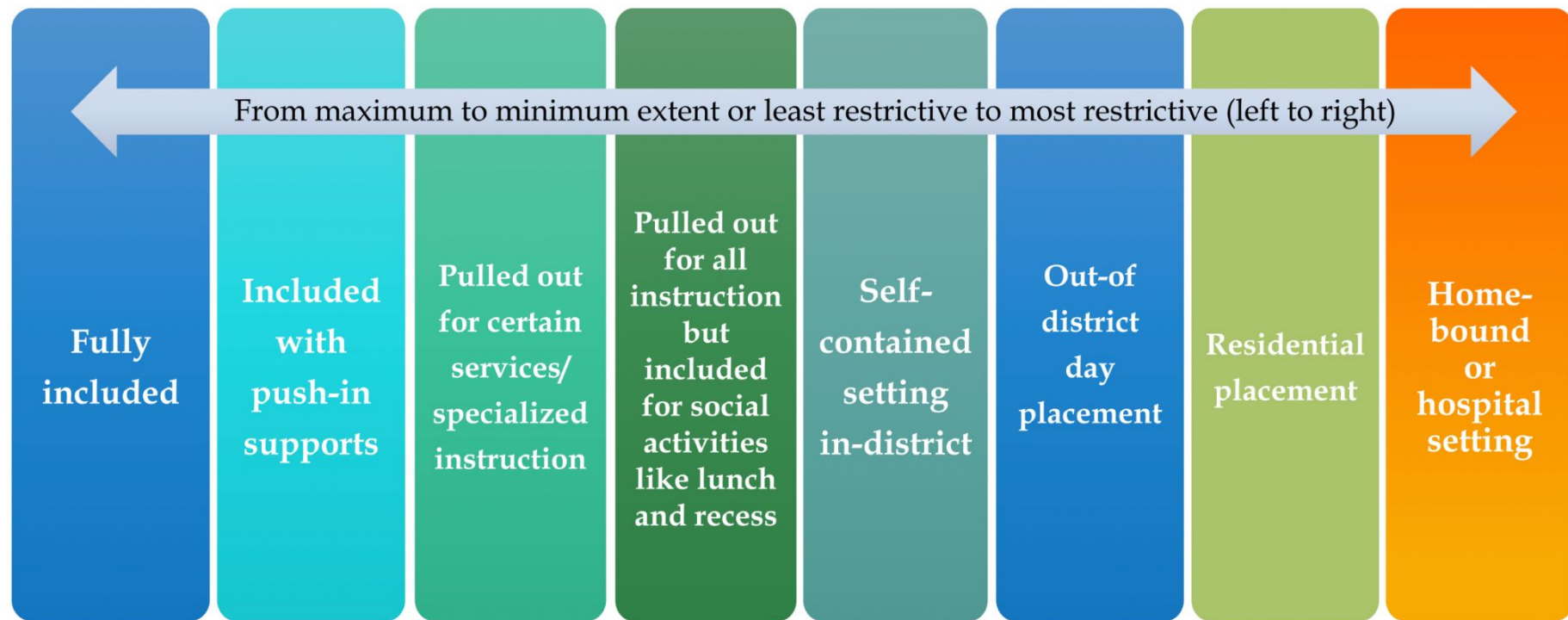
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Educate students with non-disabled peers to the **maximum extent appropriate** for that individual student.

Continuum of Services

A full range of placements and supports to meet individualized student needs

Continuum of Services



In-District Capacity

- In-district programs provide **appropriate supports within the district**
 - a. Integrated Life Skills (ILS) Program
 - b. Behavioral Emotional Support Team (BEST) Services
 - c. STRIDES transition program (ages 18-22)
- Educating students in-district aligns with **family preference** and **student stability**
- In-district options may reduce the need for **out-of-district placements** when appropriate

NFPS Special Education Trends

School Year	K-12 Enrollment (Oct.1)	PK-12 SPED	K-12 SPED	NF K-12 Prevalence Rate	CT K-12 Prevalence Rate	Total Outplacements
2021-22	2,014	350	309	15.3%	16.3%	21
2022-23	2,039	378	321	15.7%	16.7%	18
2023-24	2,070	395	338	16.3%	17.3%	12
2024-25	2,039	402	349	17.1%	17.8%	14
2025-26	2,014	403	370	18.4%	N/A	19

Outplacement Considerations

An outplacement is considered only when a student's needs **cannot be met within the larger school environment**, after exploring the full range of in-district services

Primary factors for consideration:

- **Behavioral Needs**

Intensive supports required to maintain safety and meaningful learning

- **Clinical Needs**

Mental health, medical, or specialized therapeutic requirements

Current Outplacement Exceptionality Categories

New Fairfield Public Schools Total Outplacements: 19 Students

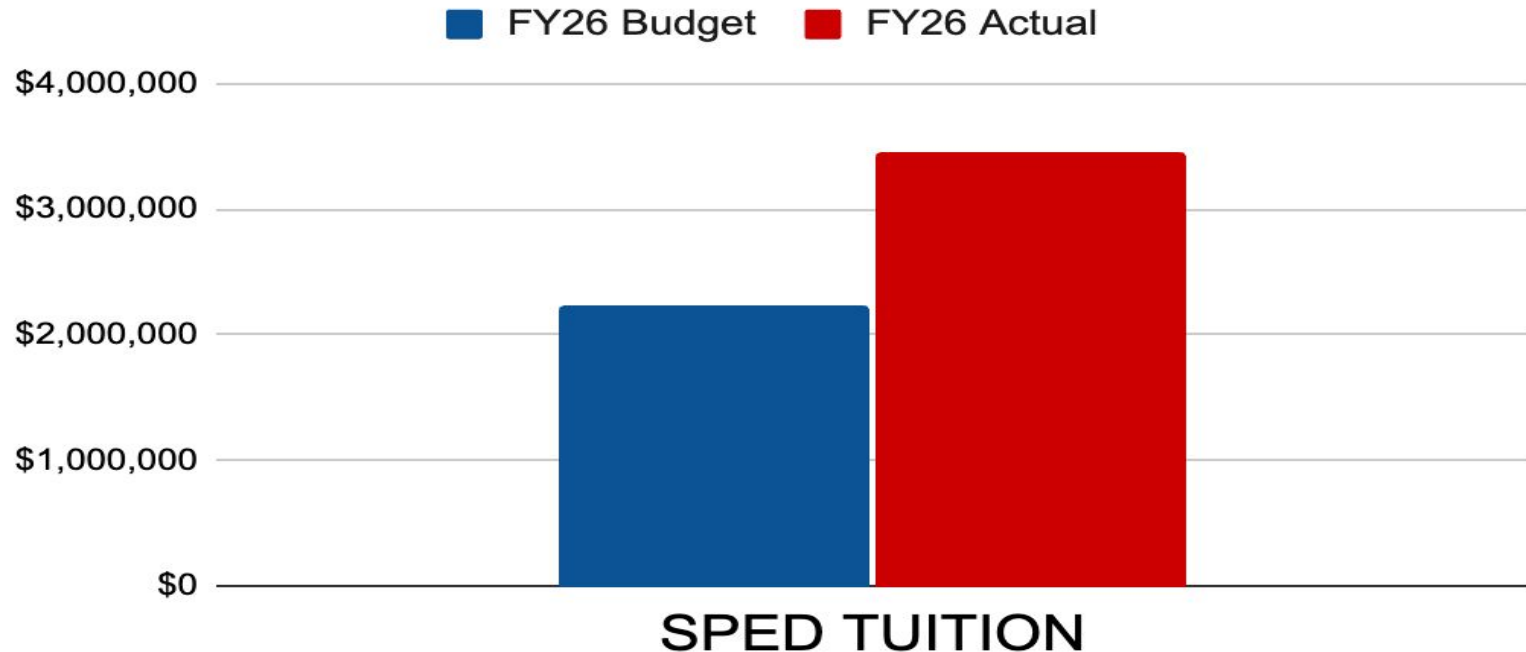
New Fairfield students educated in specialized out-of-district programs are identified with the following disabilities:

- Autism
- Emotional Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Multiple Disabilities

FY 26 Special Education Budget Status

(\$1,224,885)

Budget vs Actual



Unanticipated Budget Needs

Contributing factors include:

- Unanticipated outplacements
- Complexity of needs for students requiring outplacements
- Rising costs of outplacements and services

Excess Cost Eligible Expenses

Definition:

Excess Cost = special education expenses beyond 4.5x Per Pupil Expenditure

Examples of Excess Cost Expenses:

- Special education tuition
- Transportation
- 1:1 paraeducators
- Related services (speech, OT/PT)

Excess Cost Reimbursement

How Reimbursement is Determined

Example:

Total Special Education Cost.....\$200,000
(1 outplacement - tuition & transportation)

Only applies to costs exceeding:
4.5× Per Pupil Expenditure.....(\$106,670)

Eligible Excess Cost:.....\$93,330

Reimbursement prorated based on state ranking and available funding.

NF Reimbursement rate (68%)
(rate dependent on available state funding)

NF State Rank = 51st (Wealthiest Tier 1-58)

Reimbursements processed in February & May

Eligible Excess Cost:.....\$93,330

NF Reimbursement (68%).....\$63,464

Net District Cost

District Cost Beyond Excess Cost Reimbursement

Total Special Education Cost:\$200,000

Less State Reimbursement:.....;.....(\$63,464)

Net District Cost:.....\$136,536

Excess Cost reimbursement covers only a fraction of total special education costs.

Estimated FY 26 Special Education Budget Shortfall

Total Unanticipated Special Education Costs:.....\$1,224,885

Less Estimated State Reimbursement:.....\$768,747

Estimated Shortfall:.....\$456,138

Mitigation Strategies

- Ongoing monitoring of special education budget and Excess Cost reimbursement
- Continued implementation of FY 26 budget controls
- Explore and pilot programmatic enhancements to expand in-district options

FY 27 Budget Outlook

- FY 26 reflects a **\$1.2M special education overage**, driven largely by increased outplacements and services.
- Many outplacement and service costs are **ongoing and multi-year**, not one-time expenses.
- State Excess Cost reimbursement will offset only a **portion** of these costs.
- If current trends continue, the **FY 27 budget** will reflect a continuation of these costs.

Questions & Discussion

