

Advance Special Education



Schools have the moral and legal obligation to serve each and every student.

To do so, **the state and federal government must fully fund eligible students' individual education plans and remove the artificial cap on funding.**

Costs vary for every district based on the uniqueness of each student and community.

Why is it important?

To improve student outcomes, a comprehensive and equitable approach to serving and supporting students with disabilities is vital.

01 Equal Educational Opportunities & Outcomes

Advancing special education is about providing equal opportunities for students with disabilities who deserve our investment in them and need our collective support to access a fair chance at a quality education comparable to their peers. ^{1 2 3}

02 Full Funding for Required Services

Fully funding the services that are not only required but needed for students with disabilities to succeed is a moral imperative. This legal obligation was designed to help students receive the support necessary for academic success. ^{4 5}

03 Removing Funding Limits

Arbitrary funding caps limit schools' ability to provide the services students need to thrive, which is unjust to students and their families and should be eliminated.

04 No Penalties for Paperwork

Creating a culture that encourages schools to prioritize student needs without fear of financial penalties is essential. School districts should not be penalized for minor clerical errors when submitting paperwork to access funding made available for this specific purpose.

05 Recognizing Unique Costs

Each and every student has unique learning needs. It is vital to acknowledge that strategies effective for one student may not work for another. ⁶

06 Better Outcomes Through Inclusion

Expanding inclusive practices improves student outcomes and all students benefit from inclusive learning environments. ⁷





07 Investing in Special Education is Imperative for Everyone

Students who receive special education will continue to be a part of the greater society. Creating schools rooted in belonging fosters stronger cultures with community members who possess skills and abilities that contribute to the whole.

08 Legal Compliance

Complying with legal federal requirements, like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), is not optional.

09 Supporting Education Professionals

Teachers and staff who work with students with disabilities need adequate training and resources. Adequate funding is key to attracting and retaining qualified professionals and securing partnerships with much-needed professionals and professional services in the area, such as telehealth and school-based clinics.

10 Promoting Diversity and Inclusivity

Robust and responsive special education programs adequately address disabilities and recognize and celebrate diversity within our schools. ⁸

11 Investing in Our Future

Advancing special education is an investment in our state's future. Ensuring all students receive a high-quality education prepares them to become contributing members of society and integral parts of our communities.

What can school board members do to advocate for advanced special education?



- ✔ Meet with your superintendent to familiarize yourself with the needs of the schools in your district.
- ✔ Connect each identified need to its impact on teaching, learning, and the enhancement of economic development in the community and state.
- ✔ Schedule meetings with legislators who represent your district.
 - Target legislators that have not previously supported changes to special education funding.
 - Share connections you found between advanced special education and learning. Consider having positive examples to contrast with your negative anecdotes.
 - Engage students in the advocacy process. Students can also meet with legislators and provide testimony during the legislative session.

For additional recommendations on effectively and persuasively communicating the importance of advancing special education to legislators:

✉ Please contact us at strategicadvocacy@wssda.org

Supporting Research

- ¹ Shields, L., Newman, A., & Satz, D. (2017). Equality of Educational Opportunity. In Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Metaphysics Research Lab.
- ² Becker, M. (2019, May). The Value of Inclusive Education. Open Society Foundations. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/value-inclusive-education>
- ³ OECD (2012), Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264130852-en>
- ⁴ Graham, E. (2022, December 5). Maximizing student success with least restrictive environments and appropriate models of inclusion. NEA. <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/maximizing-student-success-least-restrictive-environments-and-appropriate-models-inclusion>
- ⁵ Hayes AM, Bulat J. Disabilities Inclusive Education Systems and Policies Guide for Low- and Middle-Income Countries [Internet]. Research Triangle Park (NC): RTI Press; 2017 Jul. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554622/> doi: 10.3768/rtipress.2017.op.0043.1707
- ⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). Retrieved December 6, 2023, from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/crc.pdf>
- ⁷ Molina Roldán, S., Marauri, J., Aubert, A., & Flecha, R. (2021). How inclusive interactive learning environments benefit students without special needs. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.661427>
- ⁸ Steffek, E. (2023, October 25). Inclusive Education: What It Is and How to Implement It. *Education Advanced*. <https://educationadvanced.com/resources/blog/inclusive-education-how-to-implement/>