

ISSUE BRIEF

Overview

Infants, toddlers, children, and youth with exceptionalities participate in and benefit from all federal public education and early childhood programs. A strong federal investment in programs that provide targeted support to the nation’s 7.9 million infants, toddlers, children, and youth with exceptionalities is critical to ensuring their success in the early years, in school, and beyond, as well as increasing opportunities for all children and youth. Unfortunately, these programs are consistently and woefully underfunded, straining the entire education system.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the main vehicle for providing services to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Fully funding IDEA would significantly improve outcomes by ensuring that infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities have access to educators trained to provide specially designed instruction, early intervention, curricula, devices, family support, and specialized instructional support services designed to help them meet the highest possible outcomes. Fully funding IDEA would also ensure access to and support for learning and quality of life that respects dignity, culture, language, and background.

Finally, as many of our states know, redirecting any public education funding to support vouchers, tax credits, or other funding mechanisms promoting the privatization of education is harmful to public schools and students. Strengthening and investing in public education is the means to ensure all children and youth, regardless of background or disability, can access a high-quality education.

Consistently well-funded programs, including those listed above, will lead to better outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with exceptionalities. Therefore, we call on Congress to provide appropriate funding levels for FY 2022.

Education Appropriations

Members of Congress Are Asked to Provide:

- No less than \$15.5 billion for IDEA's Part B, Section 611 State Grant Program.
- \$598 million to fund IDEA's Part B, Section 619 Preschool Program, and \$732 million to fund IDEA's Part C, Early Intervention Program.
- \$300 million to fund IDEA's Part D, Section 662 program.
- \$70 million to fund the National Center for Special Education Research.
- \$32 million for the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act

Supporting Special Education in Schools

Approximately 7.4 million school-aged children and youth in the United States benefit from the individualized special education and related services provided by IDEA. These services—provided by special and general education teachers and specialized instructional support personnel—are tailored to meet the specific needs of each child or youth. IDEA includes a commitment from the federal government to cover 40% of the “excess costs” of serving children and youth with disabilities, referred to as “full funding.” Unfortunately, the federal share was less than 13% in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, leaving states and school districts to pay the balance and increasing the burden on local taxpayers. An appropriation of \$15.5 billion for FY 2022 would enable districts to better support children and youth with disabilities, hire more fully prepared special education personnel, and put IDEA on the first step of a 10-year glidepath to full funding.

Supporting the Needs of Young Children with Disabilities and their Families

IDEA’s early childhood programs serve approximately

FUNDING FAST FACTS

- 14% of children and youth in public schools receive services under IDEA.
- IDEA funding, when adjusted for inflation, has actually decreased over the last decade.
- Special educator shortages occurred in at least 48 states for the 2020-2021 school year.
- Ensuring the continuum of IDEA programs and that Javits is well funded is critical to the success of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with exceptionalities.



1.2 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families through Part C and Part B, Section 619 (Preschool Special Education). Over the last 30 years, the number of people served by these programs has increased by approximately 50%. Despite this growth in enrollment and documented positive outcomes, federal funding has failed to keep pace. In fact, the federal cost per child has decreased by over 40% during this time. Additional funds must be appropriated to support the needs of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families.

Ensuring a High-Quality Special Educator Pipeline

IDEA Part D, Section 662, focuses on preparing special education and early intervention personnel to help ensure an adequate number of providers with the skills and knowledge necessary to support infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities—with an emphasis on incorporating research into training programs and practice. This program is increasingly critical to addressing pervasive special educator and early interventionist shortages across the nation.

Delivering the Research that Guides Best Practices

The National Center on Special Education Research (NCSE) is the primary driver of special education and early intervention research in the nation and identifies

evidence-based practices for classroom teachers and early intervention practitioners. Funding for NCSE has remained devastatingly low for the last 10 years. In fact, in 2011, 30% of NCSE's budget was cut, resulting in a near halt to special education research in 2014. NCSE has been operating on a diminished budget for a decade, significantly hampering the breadth of research supported by NCSE. In the aftermath of nationwide school closures, restoring funding to NCSE is critical to researching pressing questions about the impact on infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families.

Meeting the Needs of Learners with Gifts and Talents

There is a growing educational crisis playing out in every state across the nation that receives little attention among policymakers in Washington: A significant “excellence gap” exists at the top achievement levels between students of color and white students, and between low-income students and their more advantaged peers. The Javits Act—the sole federal initiative supporting students with gifts and talents—seeks to remedy this by promoting research and programs to better identify and serve high-ability students from underserved backgrounds. In FY 2021, the Javits program was funded at \$13.5 million. A \$32 million investment is needed for the Javits program to reach its potential.

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