

WSPTA recognizes that closing the gap between what it costs to provide services to students with disabilities and what the state funds for these services is essential to meeting the needs of ALL students across the state.

Background

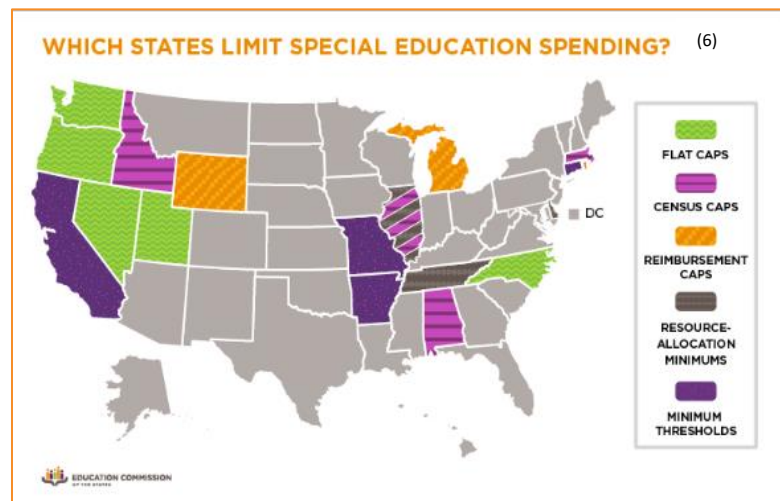
There are several major issues in special education, including but not limited to the following:

- 143,000 students or 14% of the Washington K-12 student population receives special education services and that number is growing.⁽¹⁾
- The 1977 Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA) has never been fully funded by the federal government. It funds only 12% of special education nationwide.⁽²⁾
- ¹In 2020-2021, Washington school districts spent 18% more than they received in special education funding, equating to a funding gap of \$400 million a school year.⁽³⁾

“Olympia’s penny wise, pound-foolish refusal to fulfill its financial duties unfairly shifts responsibility to school districts—and local taxpayers—forced to bridge the gap through local levies. That is no way to fund basic education.”

Seattle Times Editorial Board 3/1/2020

- Approximately 30% of special education funding relies on voter-approved levies.⁽⁴⁾
- State law caps Washington school districts at 13.5% enrollment for funding special education students.⁽⁵⁾ Washington is one of only five states that limits special education funding through flat caps.⁽⁶⁾
- Our state faces a significant special education teacher and staff shortage.⁽⁷⁾



- High leverage teaching practices (HLPs) help to ensure quality outcomes for students with disabilities. Special education teachers should provide evidence-based instruction that is highly responsive to these students’ complex and varied needs organized around four key aspects: collaboration, assessment, social/emotional behavior, and instruction. Examples include: Universal Design for Learning, Specially Designed Instruction, and Culturally Responsive Training.⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾
- Washington ranks 44th out of 50 states for inclusionary practices.⁽¹⁰⁾

(please continue to next page)

For More Information

Lizzy Sebring, WSPTA Advocacy Director
ptaadvocacydir@wastatepta.org

Marie Sullivan, WSPTA Legislative Consultant
legconsultant@wastatepta.org

For more information on the WSPTA advocacy program, please visit our website.

Proposed Solutions

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that support students with disabilities and their families by:

- Fully funding special education services with no caps on funding enrollment.
- Developing solutions to address a statewide special education staffing shortage.
- Promoting full inclusion in general education classrooms.
- Promoting high leverage teaching practices.
- Assessing needs for and providing assistive technology and multi-tiered systems of support.
- Simplifying the safety net reimbursement process to school districts.
- Banning student isolation in schools.

Citations

- (1) [Special Education | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)
- (2) [2022-23 Special Education Priorities & Strategic Planning \(educationvoters.org\)](http://educationvoters.org) p. 28
- (3) [2022-23 Special Education Priorities & Strategic Planning \(educationvoters.org\)](http://educationvoters.org) p. 28
- (4) [Special Education Funding In Washington State | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)
- (5) [Special Education Funding In Washington State | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)
- (6) [Five Ways That States Limit Special Education Spending – Ed Note \(ecs.org\)](http://ecs.org)
- (7) [Washington schools can't keep up with a growing need for special education teachers | Crosscut](#)
- (8) [About the HLPs | High-Leverage Practices \(highleveragepractices.org\)](http://highleveragepractices.org)
- (9) [#17129 CEC High-Leverage Practices \(highleveragepractices.org\)](http://highleveragepractices.org)
- (10) [OSPI and University of Washington's Haring Center Expand Inclusionary Practice Project to Include Preschools | UW College of Education](#)