

Copy for Leave Behind

Front Page

Headline: The IDEA Promise: A Commitment Congress Made - and Has Never Kept

In 1975, when Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it made a clear and explicit commitment: The federal government would fund 40 percent of the cost to educate students under the Act to help cover the excess costs of special education services.

Today - 50 years later- Students covered under the act have increased from 3.7 million in 1975 to 8.3 million in 2027 and Congress funds just 10 percent of the cost. The rest falls on states and local school districts. This funding gap undermines the promise of IDEA and places significant financial strain on [insert state] public schools.

The Impact on [insert state] Schools:

[Insert state] statewide special education federal funding shortfall now exceeds [insert amount] million annually. This means that districts must transfer hundreds of millions from general education funds to cover federally mandated special education services. Consequences for students and schools include:

- Larger class sizes
- Delayed or reduced academic programming
- Fewer mental health supports
- Reduced elective offerings
- Increased reliance on local levies
- Persistent structural budget deficits

Rural, small, and property-poor districts are hit hardest because they have fewer local tax resources to absorb the federal shortfall.

Why Fully Funding IDEA Matters?

Students with disabilities are legally entitled to services.

- It is a fiscal responsibility issue: schools must provide them regardless of cost.
- Underfunding forces districts to divert resources from the general education population to pay for special education services.
- It is a workforce issue: Districts cannot invest in needed staff, mental health services, transportation, and classroom supports when IDEA is chronically underfunded.

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District Example: [insert]

District: [insert]

Annual Federal Funding Shortfall : [insert]

Because IDEA is underfunded, our district must transfer local general education dollars to ensure legally required special education services. These diverted dollars could otherwise support:

- Smaller class sizes
- Literacy and math interventions
- Student mental health supports
- Career and technical education
- Technology, transportation, and staffing

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District Example: [insert]

District: [insert]

Annual Funding Gap: [insert]

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- Smaller class sizes
- Literacy and math interventions
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This is not a sustainable financial model. Local schools cannot keep backfilling a federal responsibility.

What Fulfilling IDEA Would Mean for [insert state]

If Congress funded IDEA at the promised 40 percent level, [insert state] schools would receive [insert amount] in additional federal support annually - reducing local levies, stabilizing district budgets, and ensuring equitable, high-quality services for all students.