



Budget & Education Working Group

Group A: Special Needs Students and Programs

May Meeting Summary

Below are notes from comments made by the Budget & Education Working Group members.

Identified Obstacles:

- Special education funding for 3–5-year-olds is a flat rate. Does not adequately cover the costs of providing services for this age group. There is a set amount of money schools get to serve these kids. Schools use ANB and special education funding for all the students to cover 3 & 5-year-olds, because schools do not receive funding for 3–5-year-olds. These students need more services than before.
- Building fund is inadequate to address aging facilities.
- Hard to recruit & train special education teacher. There is not enough special need teachers or paras to service the population.
 - Rural areas it is harder to staff. It is hard for individuals to travel to rural areas to service 1 student. It takes more resources to reach that student.
 - Not enough support staff for teachers for the special education students.
- With the rise in home and private school population, the percentage of special education children will grow as a percentage of the population.
- IDEA does not cover the funding needed to serve special education students.
- Montana doesn't adequately support the spectrum of children that need assistance. Some students need more specific help.
- Inflation has increased costs for everything in schools.

Discussed Solutions:

- Tie inflation increases to actual inflation. Inflation adjustment needs to be greater than the current cap.
 - Funding should take cost of living and inflation in specific districts.
- Have more defined and well-funded tiers for special education student funding. Take costs of serving the child into account: cost & time to travel and serve students, level of services provided to students, the number of services provided.
- Strengthen building maintenance fund.
- How can funding be geared toward the specific number of students and the needs of those students?
- Teacher retention: need to consider costs of living in the community. How can we address housing issue: housing vouchers, incentives for renting to teachers, Colorado examples.
- Funding survey for districts to identify the struggles that the districts are facing: to have data to justify changes.
- Take into account a student to teacher ratio for funding.
- More incentives for special education teachers.