

Think. Ask. Act.

Oklahoma, Education Spending & Special Education¹

FOLLOW THE MONEY...

\$550 BILLION: annual spending on public elementary & secondary education in US (in 2000, this figure was \$360 BILLION) of which \$90+ billion is spent on special education services.

According to the latest US Census, about 5% of all school children (up to age 17) have a disability –almost 3 million students. Cognitive difficulties comprised more than half of these.

STATE + LOCAL + FEDERAL contribute to public education funding.

Most funding comes from an almost equitable split between local and state sources. Federal money accounts for approximately 10%. Overwhelmingly, taxation and appropriation impacts the amount of LOCAL funding available to public education. In 2008, OK reported receiving only \$769,000 in FEDERAL aid.

\$10,591: US average on spending per student

\$7,800: Oklahoma average on spending per student – placing us 46th nationally. However, our state's graduation rates (75%+) when compared to how much we spend (per student), actually puts us ahead of many states who spend more per student.

While special education costs have risen in our state (because more students require services), federal special education spending (IDEA Part B) as well as state special education spending have not kept pace.

Spending per student differs by state, by district and can even differ by individual school sites.

LEARN THE BACK STORY:

In 2001, President Bush created the **President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education** which held 13 hearings and meetings throughout the nation and listened to the concerns and comments from parents, teachers, principals, education officials and the public. Have things changed in terms of special education and funding in the last decade?

Excerpts from 2001 findings: *There is no scientific or particular public policy basis for defining full funding of the federal portion of special education at 40 percent of average per-pupil expenditure (AAPE). In 1975, the congressional conferees arrived at the 40 percent funding level in reconciling differences between the House and Senate versions of their originally passed bills. The conferees tied special education funding to APPE because they believed the cost of special education was approximately twice the cost of regular education. Since that time, Congress has expanded IDEA eligibility to include students with high-incidence disabilities, who constitute most children currently receiving services under the Act. The U.S. Department of Education now estimates that as a nation, we are spending about 90 percent (1.9 times) more on the average eligible student for special education than we do on the average general education student with no special needs. While the Commission believes that increasing appropriations for IDEA should remain a federal priority, it recommends keeping funding for this program discretionary. While students with disabilities receive civil rights-like protections under IDEA, it is incorrect to claim that the IDEA Part B program is an "entitlement" that should not be subject to the appropriations process. Like many other critical federal priorities, Congress and the Administration should have the ability to determine the appropriate federal funding level for IDEA on an annual basis.*