



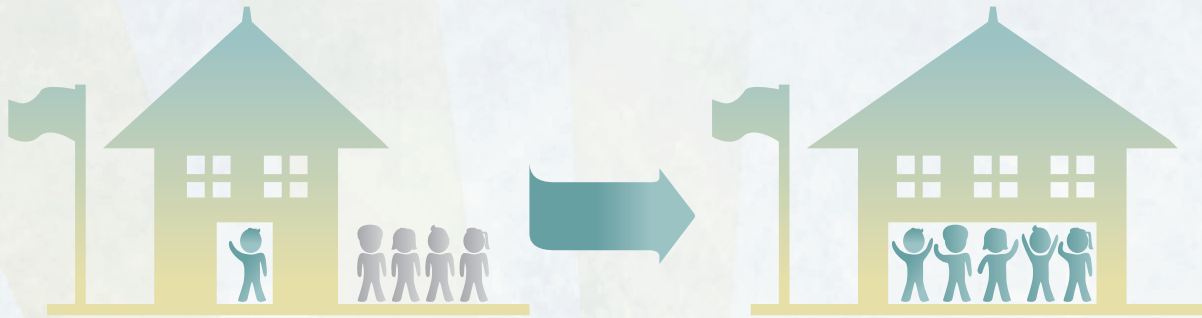
# Arizona

## Students with Disabilities Funding Primer



# What is Special Education?

Before federal legislation was passed in the 1970s, only 1 out of every 5 students with disabilities attended public schools. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that drives the requirements of special education and other related services. This law helps to ensure that all students, regardless of the type of disability, have equal access to academic programs as well as post-school activities. Most significantly, it ensures that the rights of students with disabilities are protected. Local districts and charter schools are required to provide access to the general education curriculum and specially-designed instruction and individualized services, as appropriate, ensuring every student has the opportunity to learn to the best of his or her abilities. ▼



- ◀ Special education consists of specially-designed instruction and services to meet the unique needs of the student. These are provided in a learning environment structured to enhance the student's educational performance. Whether instruction takes place in a general education classroom, resource room, or a special school, funding for students in special education is not dependent on the instructional setting; it is based on the documented needs of each student.

The underlying belief of special education is that the quality of education for students with disabilities is equal to that of students without disabilities. This means that schools and districts promote access to general education services for children with disabilities. They must also provide support and related services to children in their general education settings as much as possible.

Every child from age 3 to age 22 is eligible to receive special education services from a school district. Services for children from birth age to age 2 are provided by separate service agencies and supported by different funding sources. ▶



# How Does a School District or Charter School Determine What Services to Provide?

A student is determined eligible for special education services through a series of steps including the initial referral by the teacher and a formal evaluation by a team of qualified professionals. All of the evaluations take into account the student's unique strengths, abilities, and areas in need of support. ▶



- ◀ Once a student is eligible for special education services, the team decides if the student also requires other services or supports that will help him or her benefit from the educational program.

The Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is a document that is produced as a result of a collaborative, team-based process which includes parents, general education teachers, special education experts, district and school leaders, and, of course, the student.

The IEP is crafted to specify the type of instruction that is needed and identify the location where the student will receive services. The document is based on the student's individual interests, strengths, and needs, and guides the delivery of services and supports.

The intent of the IEP is to ensure all students with disabilities have access to general education programs in order to have opportunities to meet challenging standards and academics, participate in district-wide assessments, and experience instruction alongside their peers without disabilities. The belief which guides IEP development is that most students with disabilities can meet and demonstrate the same education and academic outcomes as other students in general education classrooms if they are given access to educational programs based on high expectations.

The plan also documents individual student goals, ways progress will be measured, and serves as a communication tool for parents to talk about their child's milestones with teachers.

The law requires that IEP meetings are held annually to review progress and to determine if the program is meeting the student's needs. Every three years, the IEP meeting is held to determine if special education services are still required.



Many adults within a school or district work as a larger team to support each student receiving special education services. Members of the team can include teachers and classroom staff or those who provide related services. For example:

- ◇ Bus driver who provides transportation to and from school,
- ◇ General education teacher who delivers instruction and supports academic goals,
- ◇ Physical education teacher who teaches skills to build physical activity,
- ◇ Aide who works with the student in the classroom academics.



The professionals who support students with disabilities in reaching their educational and personal goals work together to monitor progress, make modifications as needed, and ensure all students receive individualized and comprehensive services.

## How Does a School District or Charter School Pay for Special Education Services?

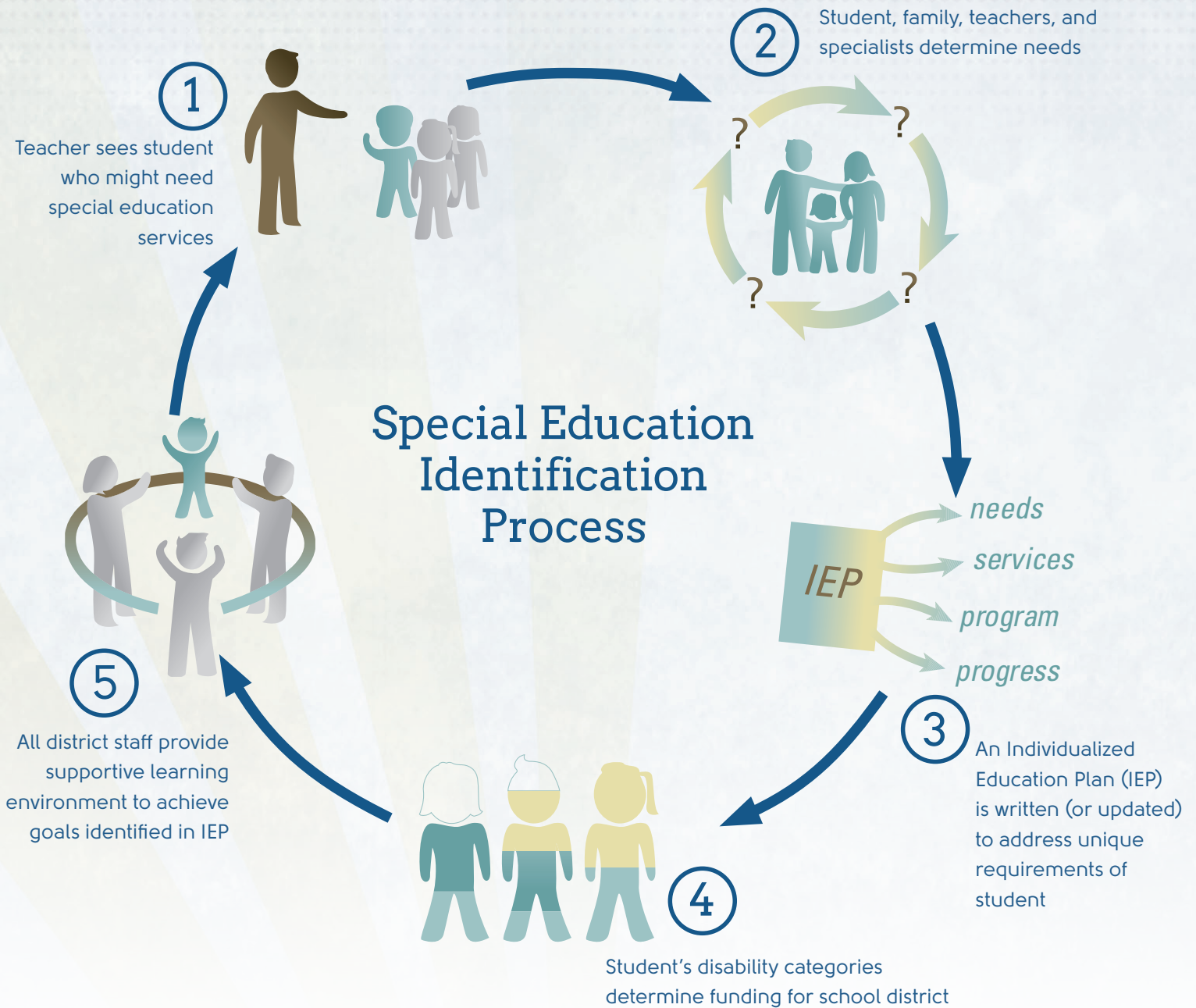
All states annually receive funds for special education services. Each state has a different method to allocate this money to school districts.

Federal special education funds do not pay for general education, including general education of a student who qualifies for special education services. Instead, federal funds pay for supplemental services to allow students with disabilities to participate in general education (also called core academic instruction). ▶





## Special Education Identification Process



## Quick Funding Facts

Arizona spends over **\$700 million** each year to provide special education services to its students. Approximately **25%** is supplied from federal funds; the remainder is sourced from local, county, and state revenues.

Arizona receives over **\$180 million** annually in IDEA funds—this represents approximately **1.6%** of federal IDEA grants to states.

Over **125,000** Arizona public school students in grades K-12 receive special education services. Approximately **10,000** students in preschool have also been identified for special education services.

# Glossary of Terms

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** This is the name for the federal special education law. It provides guidelines for intervention, services, and appropriate use of funds to serve children with disabilities. This law applies to all states, school districts, and public agencies.

**Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** A standard set by IDEA that requires school districts to provide a free and appropriate education to all students with disabilities who qualify for special education and related services.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** IDEA requires that all students with disabilities have the opportunity to be educated alongside their peers without disabilities. The LRE influences where, how, and to what degree students with disabilities receive special education services.

**IDEA Part B (3-22):** This portion of the federal special education funding law provides funds and guidance for individuals age 3-22.

**IDEA Part C (birth-2):** This part of the federal law specifies funding and requirements for children from birth to age 2. Most school districts are not required to provide services under Part C, but may collaborate with providers as students transition to the district.

**Individual Education Plan (IEP):** A written plan or program, mandated by law and developed by a student's education team, that defines the student's needs, goals, and objectives for receiving special education services.

**Average Daily Membership (ADM):** During the first 100 days of the school year, each student's attendance is counted and averaged across the district. The ADM determines the per-student amount for state funding for general education. It also factors into calculations for distribution of federal special education funds.

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