



## ISSUE BRIEF: APPROPRIATIONS

### Overview

Infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and/or gifts and talents participate in and benefit from all federal public education and early childhood programs. A strong federal investment in programs that provide targeted support is critical to ensuring their success in the early years, in school, and beyond, as well as increasing opportunities for all. Unfortunately, these programs are consistently and woefully underfunded, straining the entire education system.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the preeminent federal law for providing services to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Fully funding IDEA would significantly improve outcomes by ensuring access to early intervention services, special educators trained to provide specially designed instruction, curricula, devices, family support, and specialized instructional support services designed to help them meet the highest possible outcomes. Fully funding IDEA would also ensure access to and support for learning and quality of life that respects dignity, culture, language, and background.

Finally, as many of our states know, redirecting any public education funding to support vouchers, tax credits, or other funding mechanisms promoting the privatization of education is harmful to public schools and students. Strengthening and investing in public education is the means to ensure all children and youth, regardless of background or disability, can access a high-quality education.

Consistently well-funded programs will lead to better outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. Therefore, we call on Congress to provide appropriate funding levels in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 for all of public education, and specifically the programs listed below.

### Members of Congress are Urged to:

- ▶ Invest no less than \$16.2 billion in IDEA Part B State Grants (Sec. 611)
- ▶ Invest \$932 million in IDEA Part C
- ▶ Invest \$503 million in IDEA Part B Section 619
- ▶ Invest \$300 million in IDEA Part D personnel preparation (Sec. 662)
- ▶ Invest \$1 billion in School-Based Health Professionals
- ▶ Invest \$70 million National Center for Special Education Research
- ▶ Invest \$32 million in the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Grants

### Supporting Special Education in Schools

Approximately 7.4 million school-aged children and youth in the United States benefit from the individualized special education and related services provided by IDEA. These services—provided by special and general education teachers and specialized instructional support personnel—are tailored to meet the specific needs of each child or youth. IDEA includes a commitment from the federal government to cover 40% of the “excess costs” of serving children and youth with disabilities, referred to as “full funding.” Unfortunately, the federal share was only about 13% in Fiscal Year FY 2022, leaving states and school districts to pay the balance and increasing the burden on local taxpayers. It is imperative that Congress put IDEA on the first step of a 10-year glidepath to full funding in FY 2023 to enable districts to better support children and youth with disabilities and hire more fully prepared special education personnel.

### FUNDING FAST FACTS

- ▶ The number of students receiving services under IDEA has risen by 17% since 2000-2001
- ▶ Approximately 6% of public school students are enrolled in gifted and talented programs.
- ▶ 98% of school districts report special educator shortages
- ▶ Only half of youth with mental health conditions received treatment last year

### **Supporting the Needs of Young Children with Disabilities and their Families**

IDEA's early childhood programs serve approximately 1.2 million infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families annually through Part C and Part B, Section 619 (Preschool Special Education). Over the last 30 years, the number of people served by these programs has increased by approximately 50%. Despite this growth in enrollment and documented positive outcomes, federal funding has failed to keep pace. In fact, the federal investment per child has decreased by over 40% during this time. Significant increases are needed to support infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities and their families.

### **Ensuring a High-Quality Special Educator Pipeline**

IDEA Part D, Section 662 (Personnel Preparation), focuses on preparing special educators, early interventionists, and specialized instructional support personnel to help ensure an adequate number of providers with the skills and knowledge necessary to support infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities—with an emphasis on incorporating research into training programs and practice. This program is increasingly critical to addressing pervasive personnel shortages across the nation.

### **Supporting School Mental Health Services**

There is a significant mental health crisis in this country— an estimated 1 in 6 children and youth experience a mental health disorder each year. This challenge, which has been further amplified by the pandemic, hampers success inside and outside the classroom. In the FY 2023 budget proposal for the U.S. Department of Education, the Biden Administration recommends \$1 billion for school-based health professionals, including school counselors, nurses, social workers, and school psychologists. This funding, targeted to schools based on their share of Title I Part A, would help support school-based mental health services in schools by investing in personnel.

### **Delivering the Research that Guides Best Practices**

The National Center on Special Education Research (NCSE) is the primary driver of special education and early intervention research in the nation and identifies evidence-based practices for classroom teachers and early intervention practitioners. Funding for NCSE has remained devastatingly low for the last 10 years. In fact, in 2011, 30% of NCSE's budget was cut, resulting in a near halt to special education research in 2014. NCSE has been operating on a diminished budget for a decade, significantly hampering the breadth of research it supports and its ability to support new research projects. Restoring funding to NCSE is critical to researching pressing questions in special education, and especially now, as the impact on infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families must be examined and addressed.

### **Meeting the Needs of Learners with Gifts and Talents**

There is a growing educational crisis playing out in every state across the nation that receives little attention: a significant “excellence gap” exists at the top achievement levels between students of color and white students, and between low-income students and their more advantaged peers. The Javits Act—the sole federal initiative supporting students with gifts and talents—seeks to remedy this by promoting research and programs to better identify and serve high-ability students from underserved backgrounds, including students with disabilities. This program is an equity accelerator that ensures students with gifts and talents, regardless of their background, can excel.