

2023 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Special Education

Every student in Minnesota deserves a world-class education, including students with disabilities. Special education teachers serve an incredibly important role in our schools, often taking a more hands-on approach to teaching.

For too long, our special education programs have not had the resources that they deserve, and it causes too many educators to burn out and leave the profession early.

Education Minnesota supports:

- Requiring the state to fund its portion of special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them. The special education cross subsidy will cost school districts about \$727 million in fiscal year 2023.
- Funding for 16 hours mandatory training for all paraprofessionals who work directly with students prior to the beginning of each school year.
- Providing extra prep time to special education teachers to meet students' needs and to hold individual meetings with families.
- Reducing local district paperwork requirements and caseloads, so SpED educators can spend more time teaching.

DEFINE Cross-subsidy: The amount of money from the District's General Fund used to pay the un-reimbursed cost of providing services.

Addressing burnout

Minnesota is facing a critical staff shortage among educators, but special education professionals are the most needed and most understaffed. School hiring officials predict that in the next five years the most difficult staff to hire will be special education teachers.


Minnesota requires more paperwork than the federal government, and these extra reports and forms do not change the actual services offered to students. A survey of more than 900 special education teachers and paraprofessionals found 98.4 percent were "moderately to extremely frustrated" with paperwork and almost 80 percent stated the most aggravating part of the paperwork is that it takes time away from their students. Twenty percent of the educators said they spend more than **nine hours per week** outside the classroom doing paperwork, and that's why Education Minnesota supports more dedicated time and funding for due process for SpED teachers.

Many paraprofessionals are also not receiving continuous, professional development relevant to special education. Minnesota statutes require school districts to provide annual training for paraprofessionals to continue to develop knowledge about how their students' disabilities affect behavior and learning. However, the state has not dedicated funding for this training. That means many districts do not set aside sufficient time or resources to provide this training.

Let's make sure that every student and educator can succeed.

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www.educationminnesota.org

Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  3370



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