

NOTES/FEEDBACK ON DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Special Education

1. Any changes to the funding formula need to maintain a clear distinction between funding and student need. The formula should neither reward the over-identification of special education students nor should it drive or limit the provision of student supports.

This is an important principle. In addition, any changes to the funding of special education students must also take into consideration issues of scale and resources. For example, a small charter school that has the same percentage of special education students as a larger school district may still have to employ or contract with the same number of specialists as the district with less available funding.

2. The funding formula should recognize the wide differences in students' special education need and the associated variability in the cost. A funding formula that gives the same flat amount for all students with disabilities, regardless of the services being provided, may under or overcompensate schools and districts.

The funding formula should account for the difference in students' special education needs and the associated variability in cost, but it must also account for the fixed and marginal costs of staffing and maintaining an appropriate special education program over time. The cost of maintaining necessary programs and services is not as fluid as variations in the numbers and needs of special education students a school may be from year to year.

3. The funding formula and all aspects of its management should rely on high-quality data and should recognize that special education data must be updated regularly for use resource allocation.
4. Changes to the funding formula related to special education support students wherever they are, irrespective of school type.

This is a worthy goal, but again, the formula must also provide sufficient support to all types of schools so that each school is properly equipped to provide appropriate education and services to its special education students.

5. Increasing funding for the high cost special education categorical fund should be a state priority. In addition to a potential increase in state funding, the 500% eligibility threshold should be reviewed with the goal of expanding reimbursement eligibility.

This is also a worthy goal!

6. Special education responsibilities can arise suddenly and in some cases, they have a significant impact on already-approved budgets. The state and schools of all types should work together to minimize the impact of sudden and expensive special education responsibilities.

The smaller a school's student population is, the greater the impact the sudden arrival of expensive special education students can be. Perhaps a process by which schools could apply for expedited reimbursement from the special education categorical fund could be put in place for particularly difficult situations.