

NASDSE's Legislative Priorities



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The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) Board of Directors, with feedback from the membership, has developed nine focus areas for legislative consideration. The papers list some guiding principles and legislative priorities to guide NASDSE's participation in the next IDEA reauthorization and other legislative processes. Precise legislative language will be provided at a later date. The nine areas selected by the Board of Directors for focus are listed below.

Accountability for Results

NASDSE's vision for a balanced accountability system provides the background for guiding principles and legislative priorities in this area. This system of accountability includes an equal emphasis on student achievement, system performance and inputs/processes that ensure participation and procedural safeguards.

Unified System of Education

The success of all children is dependent upon the quality of both general and special education and how well schools integrate services that, in the past, have been fragmented or separate. Special education is not a place apart, but an integral part of education.

Interagency Coordination

Numerous public and private agencies and organizations are frequently called upon to provide both expertise and support services for students with disabilities. Coordination of these services with education must occur at the national, state, regional, and local levels in order to be effective and cost-efficient in their delivery.

Early Intervention and Preschool Services

Early identification/intervention and preschool services are critical for meeting the needs of infants, toddlers and young children with disabilities. Research indicates that these services also provide prevention and amelioration of the effects of disabilities.

Charter Schools and Other Choice Options

Charter schools and other choice options are increasing in number and impact as state and local flexibility options that promote parental choice opportunities in education proliferate. Children with disabilities in charter schools and other choice options should have access to special education as defined by the IDEA.

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Discipline/Positive Behavior Supports

The importance of each child's participation in the education experience cannot be overstated. Removing a student from school and needed services for any substantial length of time based on the student's behavior places that student in a situation that, in all probability, will exacerbate the behavior and reduce the likelihood that appropriate behavioral interventions will be available.

Conflict Resolution System

Procedures designed to resolve conflicts between parents and schools through mediation are cost efficient and protect the rights of students. A conflict resolution system takes into account and is designed to resolve honest differences between parents and school personnel regarding the appropriate individualized programs for children.

Qualified Personnel

The need for qualified personnel is a long-term problem requiring the development of both short- and long-term strategies. Strategies must address solutions for the real reasons that vacancies exist: (1) the volume of paperwork; (2) legalistic environment; (3) reduced time being spent on instruction; (4) inadequate salaries, and (5) the lack of administrative support.

Federal Funding for the IDEA

States and local education agencies have seen significant increases in the cost of providing a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities. When Congress enacted the predecessor law to IDEA in 1975, the goal for federal funding to support the law was 40 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure (NAPPE), a mark that has never been realized.