



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Special Education Funding Report

2024

**Authorizing Legislation: Senate Bill 5950. Sec 509 (16)
(2024)**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Special Education Funding Report	4
Table 1: Summary of Increases to Special Services, Programs, and Supports	4
Table 2: Classified Staffing Ratios (Number of students per one staff member)	5
Table 3: Certificated Staffing Ratios (Number of students per one staff member)	6
Table 4: Summary of Increases to Employee Compensation	7
Table 5: Summary of Increases to Employee Compensation	8
Conclusion & Next steps.....	9
Acknowledgements.....	9
Legal Notice	10

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of the 2024 supplemental budget, the Washington State Legislature added a requirement that each local education agency (LEA) report to OSPI, by November 1, 2024, on the LEA's expenditures relating to the following items:

- i. To what extent the district has increased special services, programs, and supports to students with disabilities for the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years;
- ii. How the district has modified staffing ratios during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years in special programs to provide more intensive staff support to students enrolled in special education programs;
- iii. How the district has used the resources provided under chapter 475, Laws of 2023, and this act to increase employee compensation for both certificated and classified staff during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years to improve staff retention and recruitment of new staff;
- iv. To what extent the district has increased staff development programs and curriculum that is both timely and relevant to the needs of students with disabilities during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years; and
- v. To what extent the district has used the resources provided under chapter 475, Laws of 2023, and this act to purchase staff safety equipment during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years in order to reduce work-related injuries?

A survey was distributed to all LEAs in the state. Included with the survey was an Excel tool that districts could use to populate and gather the data related to the questions in the survey. The survey was open for 13 weeks and 267 complete responses were collected. The survey included five sections with a total of 35 questions.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING REPORT

Data Limitations

While 267 districts responded to the survey that was distributed, many did not have comparable data across all years. Some were due to the fact that the districts were not in operation or did not have students receiving special education services for all years that data were collected. There were also districts that had data that appeared to be entered incorrectly.

Increases to Special Services, Programs, and Supports

The first section of the survey related to the extent the district has increased special services, programs, and supports to students with disabilities for the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years. This section of the survey included seven questions. Four of the questions in this section were intended to be entered as numeric values related to the per pupil amounts received in special education revenues (3121 and 4121) for the 2018–19, 2022–23, 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years. Note that the 2018–19 data year was included as a pre-COVID baseline. The remaining three questions were open-ended text responses where districts could list the types of services, programs, and supports that increased most during these school years.

Of the 267 responses to the questions requiring a numerical value, only 243 entries had comparable data across all four years of data requested.

In general, the average increase to the per pupil amounts received in 3121 and 4121 funds is approximately four to five percent each year.

Table 1: Summary of Increases to Special Services, Programs, and Supports

Question	Lowest Value Entered	Highest Value Entered	Average	% Increase in Average
1a. What is the per pupil amount received in 3121 and 4121 during the 2018–19 school year?	\$7,178.66	\$11,348.64	\$8,390.90	
1b. What is the per pupil amount received in 3121 and 4121 during the 2022–23 school year?	\$8,032.74	\$13,577.54	\$9,644.00	14.93%
1c. What is the per pupil amount received in 3121 and 4121 during the 2023–24 school year?	\$8,534.82	\$15,459.58	\$10,020.49	3.90%

Question	Lowest Value Entered	Highest Value Entered	Average	% Increase in Average
1e. What is the per pupil amount received in 3121 and 4121 during the 2024–25 school year?	\$9,354.32	\$15,116.09	\$10,515.06	4.94%

Source: Special Education Funding Report Survey, November 2024

Increases to Staffing Ratios

The second section of the survey related to how districts have modified staffing ratios during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years in special programs to provide more intensive staff support to students enrolled in special education programs. This section of the survey included 12 questions, all of which were intended to be entered as numeric values. Data collected in this section of the survey related to the number of classified and certificated staff coded to special education, as well as the number of students served in special education for the 2018–19, 2022–23, 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years.

Of the 267 responses to the questions requiring a numerical value only 231 entries had comparable data across all four years of data requested.

Figures in tables one and two were calculated by dividing the number of students reported by the number of staff reported in the same year. Calculations were rounded to the nearest whole number.

Between 2018–19 and 2024–25, the number of students per classified staff increased for 43% of districts and decreased for 57% of districts. For certificated staff, 37% of districts saw an increase in students per staff and 63% saw a decrease in the number of students per staff member.

Table 2: Classified Staffing Ratios (Number of students per one staff member)

Year	2:1 to 9:1 (Number of Districts)	10:1 to 19:1 (Number of Districts)	20:1 to 29:1 (Number of Districts)	Greater than 30:1
2018–19	105	100	20	6
2022–23	110	94	18	9
2023–24	111	97	18	5
2024–25	106	108	13	4

Source: Special Education Funding Report Survey, November 2024

Table 3: Certificated Staffing Ratios (Number of students per one staff member)

Year	2:1 to 9:1 (Number of Districts)	10:1 to 19:1 (Number of Districts)	20:1 to 29:1 (Number of Districts)	Greater than 30:1
2018–19	11	159	47	14
2022–23	11	166	42	12
2023–24	10	168	40	13
2024–25	9	165	49	8

Source: Special Education Funding Report Survey, November 2024

Increases to Employee Compensation

The third section of the survey related to how the district has used the resources to increase employee compensation for both certificated and classified staff during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years to improve staff retention and recruitment of new staff. This section of the survey included six questions. Four questions in this section were intended to be entered as numeric values related to the annual average compensation for classified and certificated employees during the 2018–19, 2022–23, 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years. The remaining three questions were open-ended text responses where districts could list the funding sources utilized for employee compensation during the 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years.

Of the 267 responses to the questions requiring a numerical value, only 231 entries had comparable data across all four years of data requested.

In general, employee compensation increased each year. Between 2018–19 and 2023–24, employee compensation increased between 5.5% and 6% each year. However, there was a larger increase of 13.76% from 2023–24 to 2024–25.

Table 4: Summary of Increases to Employee Compensation

Question	Lowest Value Entered	Highest Value Entered	Average	% Increase in Average
3a. What was the annual average compensation for classified and certificated employees during the 2018–19 school year?	\$19,618.00	\$127,405.17	\$47,152.99	
3b. What was the annual average compensation for classified and certificated employees during the 2022–23 school year?	\$18,328.00	\$133,047.00	\$55,766.12	18.27%
3c. What was the annual average compensation for classified and certificated employees during the 2023–24 school year?	\$24,807.17	\$134,950.00	\$58,833.85	5.50%
3e. What was the annual average compensation for classified and certificated employees during the 2024–25 school year?	\$22,672.00	\$188,355.00	\$66,929.33	13.76%

Increases to Staff Development Programs and Curriculum

The fourth section of the survey related to the extent the district has increased staff development programs and curriculum that is both timely and relevant to the needs of students with disabilities during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years. This section of the survey included six questions. Four of the questions in this section were intended to be entered as numeric values related to the amounts charged to special education revenues (3121 and 4121) for professional development and curriculum in the 2018–19, 2022–23, 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years. The remaining three questions were open-ended text responses where districts could list the types of purchases during the 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years.

Of the 267 responses to the questions requiring a numerical value, only 251 entries had comparable data across all four years of data requested.

In general, amounts charged to 3121 and 4121 for professional development and curriculum increase year over year.

Table 5: Summary of Increases to Employee Compensation

Question	Lowest Value Entered	Highest Value Entered	Average	% Increase in Average Response
4a. What is the amount charged for professional development and curriculum to 3121 and 4121 during the 2018–19 school year?	\$0.00	\$3,230,924.00	\$109,022.47	
4b. What is the amount charged for professional development and curriculum to 3121 and 4121 during the 2022–23 school year?	\$0.00	\$2,549,788.00	\$161,403.32	48.05%
4c. What is the amount charged for professional development and curriculum to 3121 and 4121 during the 2023–24 school year?	\$0.00	\$2,769,103.00	\$162,358.87	0.59%
4e. What is the amount charged for professional development and curriculum to 3121 and 4121 during the 2024–25 school year?	\$0.00	\$2,631,888.87	\$166,449.91	2.52%

Resources for Staff Safety Equipment

The fifth section of the survey related to the extent the district has used the resources to purchase staff safety equipment during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years in order to reduce work-related injuries. This section of the survey included four questions.

Of the 267 responses, 116 districts reported spending funds on safety equipment in 2023–24 and 110 districts reported spending funds on this in 2024–25. About half of districts spent less in 2024–25 than in 2023–24, and the other half spent more in 2024–25. There did not appear to be a discernable trend in the data collected in this section of the survey.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

These data confirm the increasing costs of special education in addition to the persistent gaps that can only be addressed by an ongoing commitment and investment over time. One of OSPI's legislative budget requests for the 2025 legislative session is state set-aside funds that would help close gaps in funding and ensure critical efforts to improve the lives of students with disabilities can continue, creating a more equitable and supportive educational system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The OSPI Special Education Department would like to thank all the districts that responded to the survey. We would also like to thank OSPI's Apportionment Office for developing an Excel data tool for respondents to use when gathering their survey responses.

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