



Arizona Special Education Programs and Cost Review

In the fourteen years since Arizona last commissioned a special education cost study, policymakers and stakeholders have had to get by on outdated information as they make critical decisions about special education funding and programming.

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) is utilizing federal recovery dollars to commission a new special education cost study with Heinfeld, Meech & Company. ADE hopes the results will provide a comprehensive picture of the funding needs for all children with disabilities who receive special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in Arizona's public education system. This cost study will encompass a sample of school data from public charter and district schools in all 15 counties.

Phase I: Winter 2021

Task 1 Special Education Statewide Demographic and Staffing Trend Analysis

By studying student demographics and evaluating teacher and related service provider vacancies, Task 1 will identify how student population, identification, and reported IDEA eligibility have changed since 2010. Additionally, Task 1 will examine the impact of the special education teacher and related service provider shortage on special education.

Phase I: Winter 2021

Task 2 Analysis of Transportation Direct Costs and Trend Data

By comparing actual route costs to the per mileage funding model, Task 2 will determine the actual cost of special education transportation and how special education transportation needs have changed between 2010 and 2019.

Phase I: Winter 2021

Task 3 Analysis of Out of State and Private Placement

Using a sample of local LEA data, Task 3 will identify the cost for out-of-state and private placement options compared to the state funding formula.

Phase I: Winter 2021

Task 4 Analysis of ESA Costs as a Component of Statewide SPED Costs

By aggregating statewide data for ESAs, Task 4 will determine statewide ESA cost as one component of the overall special education costs for Arizona's public education system.

Phase 2: Spring/Summer 2022

Task 5 Analysis of Special Education Direct Program Costs

By examining the actual costs of special education instruction and IEP identified services, including teacher and related service provider pay and expenses associated with serving students with disabilities, Task 5 will determine the actual costs for providing public education to special education students compared to the current funding model by disability.

Phase 3: Summer/Fall 2022

Task 6 Program Design Evaluation and Financial Analysis

By calculating the total cost for delivering identified program models based on staffing and components for each program, Task 6 will identify the cost and benefits for various program models on a continuum of services.