



West Central Kansas

Special Education Cooperative #708

Sponsoring District: USD 489 Hays Member Districts: USD 388 Ellis, USD 395 LaCrosse, USD 432 Victoria
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Testimony before the **Kansas Special Education and Related Services Funding Task Force**

By **Kyle Carlin, Director of Special Education - WCKSEC**

Testimony provided on behalf of the West Central Kansas Special Education Cooperative, USD 489 Hays Public Schools, USD 432 Victoria Public Schools, USD 388 Ellis Public Schools, and USD 395 LaCrosse Public Schools

Friday, January 5, 2024

Chair and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony related to special education and related services funding.

Position: Supportive of the Kansas State Board of Education proposed increase to special education funding in the K-12 Budget and maintaining the current formula to determine how funds are distributed.

Testimony

WCKSEC supports the proposed increase of \$86.6 million per year over the next four years. While state law says that special education excess costs above federal funding amounts will be funded at 92% as a state, the actual funding for these costs has fallen to 69%. This gap means that local districts have to move additional money from their general funds to ensure students have the legally required services and supports that they need to make progress in their education.

The funding gap will only get bigger if action is not taken. In December 2018, The Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit (LPA) reported that the estimated cost of special education was between \$.94 and \$1.2 billion dollars. 5 years later, in their report published in October 2023, the LPA reported that the estimated total cost for students to meet goals in their individualized education programs to be between \$1.2 and \$1.5 billion annually. With these rising costs, it is inappropriate to discuss changing how excess cost is calculated without also talking about ways of increasing the funds provided by the state for this purpose.

It does not matter what the funds are called or where they move throughout a district's budget if the amount does not increase to adequate levels that are distributed equitably. Renaming dollars does nothing to help districts address market forces that make the hiring of specialized workers difficult. It does nothing to combat rising costs of health insurance, supplies, equipment, and curriculum.

Simply, if the state level of funding for special education was at 92%, WCKSEC would receive about \$1.7 million more each year. With the proposed phase in, we will receive about \$900,000 more with each increase. These amounts cannot be fixed with changes in nomenclature or accounting practices.