

# Effective and Efficient Management of Resources



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**Book 4: CASE Leadership Series  
for Special Education Administrators**



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ISBN 978-0-9827005-4-9  
Printed in the United States of America

## About CASE

The Council of Administrators of Special Education, Inc. (CASE) is an international professional education organization affiliated with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). Members are dedicated to the enhancement of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of each individual in society.

Those receiving special education services are individuals who possess basic rights and responsibilities and who command respect at all times. Special education embraces the right to a free, appropriate public education.

The mission of CASE is to provide leadership and support to members by shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education worldwide.

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# Foreword

As noted in book two of this series, *Trends and Issues Affecting Special Education and the Provision of Special Education Services*, building a bridge between district-level policies and procedures and building-level services and programs has been a hallmark and major responsibility for the special education or pupil personnel leader. This book will help you be more effective in this role. Legislation can seem dry at times but may be some of the most important reading you will do this year.

As a special education leader, your role is designed to help meet the needs of students in special education. In order to do this effectively, you will need to understand the priorities and obligations of the federal government and how to develop and create systems and programs to ensure your district is addressing those priorities and obligations. This is one of many ways to help ensure that all teachers have the resources to meet the needs of the students in their classes, which then leads to those students becoming active and contributing members of society. Education is the foundation of our society; building that foundation is the essence of what you do as a leader.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a series of summary points. The nature of the topic of this book is technical, but important. These summary points will serve as a future reference when assistance on a specific topic is needed. There is also a glossary to help with all the terms a special education leader needs to know.

Finally, this book is one in a series that has been developed by CASE to help support, mentor, and develop new leaders. CASE recognizes and strives to meet the needs of all special education leaders and the scope of duties this entails, from leadership to management. Please watch for future resources that can support you as you move through your career in special education leadership.

# 3 Funding and Budget Development

Prior to the enactment of IDEA, as many as one million children with disabilities were excluded from educational services. The IDEA now guarantees that any child who has been identified as eligible for special education will have access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE). The primary challenge of the program now is to improve the quality of the education provided so children with disabilities can, to the maximum extent possible, participate in the general education curriculum, meet the same rigorous standards that have been established for all children to help prepare them for college and a career, and be prepared to lead productive, independent, adult lives. Providing services costs money. For some students with very intense needs, it may take a lot of money.

There are three main revenue sources that districts use to provide services for students with disabilities: local, state, and federal funds. A portion of local and state tax dollars will be allocated toward the education of students eligible for special education. Federal funds come in the form of the IDEA grant as well as some preschool funding. Each state will have a different formula for distributing funds to provide for the needs of students receiving special education. It will be important that you work with your state's department of education to fully understand the regulations governing special education funding and how the money is distributed.

## Local and State Special Education Funding

General fund dollars the district receives from the local tax base provide the foundation of the special education programs in most states. Each LEA will use a portion of these local tax dollars to develop and implement these programs. LEAs are then able to use the state and federal money to supplement the program that is based on the local dollars. Wyoming is the exception, as the state pays the total cost of all special education expenses.

There are multiple ways states distribute money to LEAs to support such programs. Examples include pupil weights, resource-based, percent reimbursement, flat grant, census-based, or actual expenditures. The definitions for each are listed below:

**Pupil weight:** Funding (either a series of multiples of the general education amount or tiered dollar amounts) allocated per student in special education that varies by disability, type of placement, or student

need. Or funding (either a single or multiple of the general education amount or a fixed dollar amount) allocated per student in special education.

**Resource-based:** Allocating specific education resources, such as classroom units or teachers. This is determined by prescribed ratios of staff-to-students, which may vary by student needs, disability, or placement type.

**Percent reimbursement:** A percentage of actual or allowable expenditures determines funding.

**Census based:** A fixed dollar amount per total enrollment or average-daily membership (ADM).

**Flat grant:** Amount of funding is fixed per unit or student.<sup>19</sup>

There are positives and negatives for each of the different funding methods. For example, the positive to the pupil weight method is the ability to vary the resources by need level. The negative is that there may be an incentive to classify students in more separate locations, indicating they have a more severe disability. It is very important for special education administrators to learn the different types of funding mechanisms for special education for their respective state as this will drive all reporting and resource management for your district related to the costs of special education services.

## Meeting Eligibility and Compliance Standards

The regulations now make clear that an LEA may meet the compliance standard using one of four methods, and that SEAs must permit LEAs to do so. The four methods are:

1. Local funds only.
2. The combination of state and local funds.
3. Local funds only on a per capita basis.
4. The combination of state and local funds on a per capita basis.<sup>20</sup>

It is also established that a LEA may change methods to establish compliance from one year to the next. LEAs may meet the compliance standard using alternate methods from year to year.

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<sup>19</sup> U.S. Department of Education, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.



## Federal Special Education Funding – IDEA Grant

The federal government provides funding for grants allowed in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The purpose of this money is:

- To ensure all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.
- To ensure the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected.
- To assist states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities.
- To assess and ensure the effectiveness of efforts to educate children with disabilities.<sup>21</sup>

However, in order to receive this funding, states and local districts must provide a free and appropriate public education to students with disabilities ages 3 through 21. This may vary depending on state law. Some states are not required to serve students ages 3 through 5 or 18 through 21, and therefore some choose not to.

Most of the federal funds provided to states must be passed on to LEAs. A portion of the funds may be used for state-level activities. Any funds not set aside by the state must be passed on to LEAs. These sub-state allocations are made in a fashion similar to that used to allocate funds among states when the amount available for allocation to states increases.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) also requires each state to maintain its level of state financial support for special education and related services from one year to the next. This requirement is commonly referred to as the state “maintenance of effort, or MOE.” IDEA also contains a local “maintenance of effort” requirement. Under this requirement, each LEA must maintain its total expenditures, including state and local contributions, on special education from one year to the next.

<sup>21</sup> 34 C.F.R. 300.1