

### What is IDEA?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the main federal program that provides state and local aid for special education and related services for children with disabilities. IDEA requires states to provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities so that they can be educated to the greatest extent possible along with all other children. IDEA was created to help states and school districts meet their legal obligations to educate children with disabilities, and for the federal government to pay part of the extra expense of doing so.

**Fact:** Today, more than 6.5 million children receive special education services (13% of all public school students).<sup>1</sup>

### How do schools receive IDEA funding?

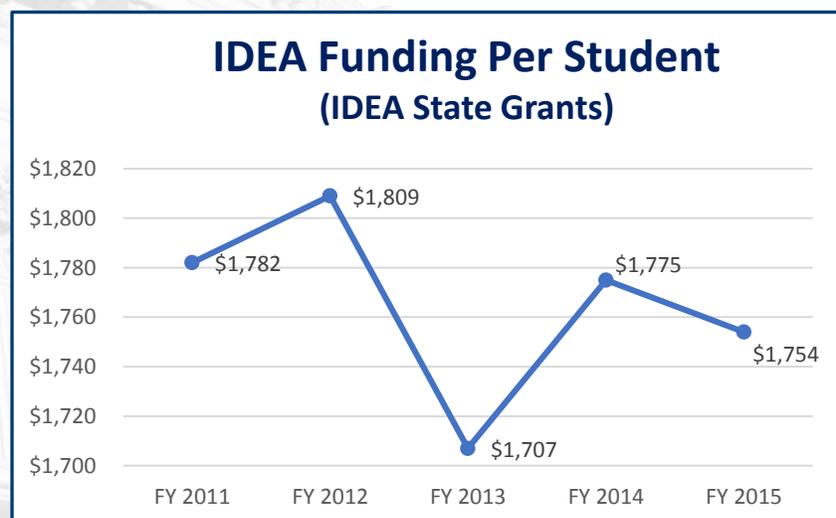
States and school districts receive IDEA funding based on a formula that takes into consideration the number of students that need special education services, the age of those children and the current level of state support for special education services.

**Fact:** In fiscal year 2017, federal funding for special education grants to states totaled \$12 billion.

### How is IDEA funding used in schools?

School districts may use IDEA funds to hire special education teachers and administrators, offer professional development to special education personnel, and purchase supplementary aids, services and specialized equipment and devices to assist students with disabilities.

**Fact:** IDEA authorizes the federal government to fund 40% of the excess cost of educating children with disabilities. However, Congress has never met this commitment and federal funding for special education currently only covers 16% of the total cost.



<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved July 26, 2016, from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>.

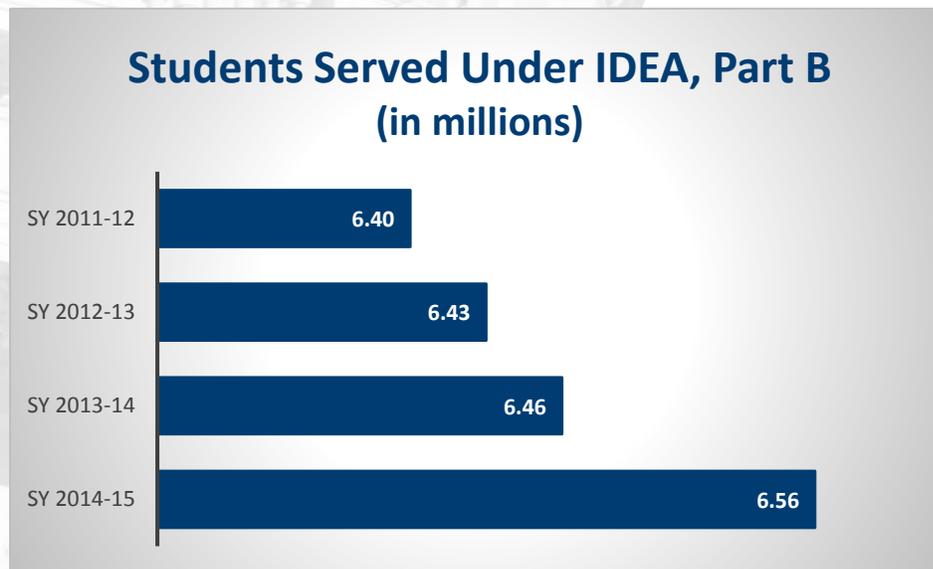
### Why should parents care about IDEA funding?

IDEA empowers parents and families of students with disabilities to be actively engaged in their child's education. A key program within IDEA is the Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs), which assist parents in the development of their child's individualized education program (IEP), as well as assist parents in obtaining the appropriate information about the range, type and quality of programs, services and resources for children with disabilities both in school and at home.

**Fact:** Every state has at least one PTI Center and some states also have Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs), that focus on reaching underserved populations, accounting for more than 100 PTI Centers and CPRCs nationwide.

### Why should parents be concerned about the future of IDEA funding?

In recent years, IDEA state grant funding has remained around the same level, even though the number of students with disabilities attending public schools has increased by more than 2%. The disparity between current IDEA funding levels and the additional cost of ensuring that all students receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) means that the federal government has essentially enacted cuts to the IDEA program.



**Fact:** Federal funding for students with disabilities has decreased by more than 6% since 2010.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Leachman, M., Masterson, K., & Wallace, M. (2016). After Nearly a Decade, School Investments Still Way Down in Some States. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*, 5.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, *Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, selected years, 1979 through 2006; and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) database, retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/osepidea/618-data/state-level-data-files/index.html#bcc>. National Center for Education Statistics, *Statistics of Public Elementary and Secondary School Systems, 1977-78 and 1980-81*; and Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 1990-91 through 2013-14. (This table was prepared October 2015.)