



FEDERAL FUNDS TO NEW YORK CITY: INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

Overview

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which originated in 1975 and was most recently amended in 2015, guarantees a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment possible to children with disabilities and provides federal funding to support that mission (Assistance Listing Number 84.027). It details programs and responsibilities related to the identification of special education students, the development of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and the implementation of these programs. IDEA funds pass through the State Education Department (NYSED) and are allocated by the City’s Department of Education (DOE) to schools based on census and poverty data.

While these funds can only be used to serve special education students, any program that implements services mandated by a student’s IEP can be supported with IDEA funds. Allowable IDEA expenses include school aide or paraprofessional services, school psychologists, other related services as required by a student’s IEP, professional development for school staff and parental education. Funds may not be used to provide services to which all students, regardless of disability, are already entitled; however, IDEA funds can be combined with other sources to fund allowable expenses.

The President has ordered the eventual closure of the federal Department of Education. The full dismantling of the Department will require congressional approval, as would the cessation of most federal education aid, including IDEA.

City Funding

The City’s fiscal year (FY) 2026 preliminary budget includes \$291 million in federal IDEA funding in FY 2025 and in each year thereafter. This accounted for 13.9 percent of the January Plan’s total federal education aid and 5.7 percent of the DOE’s dedicated special education spending. Since January, the City has increased budgeted IDEA funding by \$13.5 million, bringing total IDEA revenues to \$304 million. Out-year projections remain at the lower levels assumed in the January Plan.

IMPACT

- In FY 2025, NYSED allocated \$302 million in IDEA funding to New York City;
 - This does not include \$44 million to be allocated for students whose parents had unilaterally placed them in non-public schools and \$10 million rolled over from the previous fiscal year.
- These funds aid 228,363 students aged 3-21 and 30,862 pre-school children aged 3-5.
- The majority of DOE’s \$300 million IDEA allocation was used to support staffing;
 - \$124 million is allocated to support 29.8 percent of the personnel costs for nearly 8,500 paraprofessionals in 1,375 schools citywide (see Figure 1).
 - A further \$71 million supports 47.9 percent of the salaries and fringe benefits of 1,116 school psychologists citywide.

FIGURE 1
Number of Paraprofessional Positions Supported w/IDEA \$

Borough	# of FTE Paras	Number of Schools	IDEA Funding
Bronx	1,345	312	\$19,681,298
Brooklyn	2,914	432	\$42,633,142
Manhattan	1,165	244	\$17,046,033
Queens	1,745	315	\$25,535,398
Staten Island	1,293	72	\$18,910,802
Citywide Total	8,462	1,375	\$123,806,673

Source: NYC Department of Education