

# National Study of Special Education Spending (NSES) Study FAQ

*National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance at IES*

## Purpose

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is developing a new National Study of Special Education Spending (NSES). The NSES will provide national estimates of what states, districts, and schools spend to provide special education and related services to students with disabilities.

Federal policy has long committed to cover a portion of the added costs of special education and related services that must be provided to students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), but there is little national data on what states, districts, and schools actually spend. The most recent spending estimates are nearly 25 years old, and in the past two decades, there have been significant shifts in the number and composition of students with disabilities and in the policies and conditions under which they are identified and served. Federal, state, and local policymakers and education leaders urgently need up-to-date national estimates for what is spent to provide special education services to inform their funding policies and budgeting for special education. The study will estimate spending on students with disabilities, what key factors influence that spending, and whether federal funding is close to IDEA's target of covering 40% of the added costs of special education.

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### Who is conducting the study?

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within ED has partnered with the [American Institutes for Research](#) (AIR), [NORC at the University of Chicago](#) (NORC), and [Allovue](#), a PowerSchool Company, to design and implement the study.

### How will data be kept secure?

Information collected from states, districts, and schools for this study comes under the confidentiality and data protection requirements of the Institute of Education Sciences (The Education Sciences Reform Act of

## NSES Pilot Study

The first stage of the study will take place as a smaller-scale pilot in the 2024-2025 school year, in anticipation of a larger, full-scale national study in the 2025-2026 school year.

In the pilot, information will be collected from a nationally representative sample of approximately 50 districts and 317 schools about what is spent to educate students with disabilities and to operate special education programs and comply with federal and state laws.

Your participation is very important to help build a national picture of special education spending. As recipients of IDEA funding, districts are expected to participate in studies such as this one (Education Department General Administrative Regulations Section, 34 C.F.R. § 76.591).



2002, Title I, Part E, Section 183). ED and its data collection partners follow strict procedures for data storage and the protection of participants' confidentiality. All data will be collected through secure, online systems, including secure file transfer protocols when necessary. Individual responses to survey questions will not be shared with anyone outside the study team. All the information may be used only for statistical purposes and may not be disclosed, or used, in identifiable form for any other purpose except as required by law (20U.S.C. §9573 and 6 U.S.C. §151).

## What data will participants provide?

In both the pilot and the full study, data collection includes:



### Special Education and General Education Student Enrollment Data

Districts will be asked to submit student enrollment data. These will be used to identify a sample of students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) as well as a sample of general education students. An average of 3 to 4 total students per school will be selected. School staff will be asked questions about these students.



### School Student Resources Survey

School staff will complete a survey about the instruction and services each sampled student receives as well as student need. The survey will be divided into sections corresponding to different general and special education services, related services, and other academic interventions and supports. Each section will be completed by the staff member(s) who are most knowledgeable about the sampled student, such as classroom teachers, special education coordinators, or related services providers.



### District Student Services Survey

District officials will complete an online survey about their special education service delivery models and resources used to administer special education programs and comply with federal and state special education laws.



### District Financial Data and Fiscal Officer Survey

District officials will be asked to submit data from their financial and personnel information systems and complete a survey about aggregated special and general education spending.

## What is the study schedule?

Outreach to sampled districts will begin in July of 2024. School outreach and student enrollment data and financial data collection will begin in fall 2024. Surveys will be administered in early 2025.



July 2024

Outreach to sampled districts



Fall 2024

School outreach and student enrollment data and financial data collection



Early 2025

Administration of surveys

## What are the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the pilot study?

States, districts, and school-level staff all play a critical role in the success of the pilot study:

Level	Role and responsibility	Expected time commitment
<b>State</b>	Communicate with districts in their states to prepare them for outreach from AIR and NORC starting in summer 2024	2-3 hours
<b>District</b>	<p>Coordinate with the NORC outreach team who will be seeking approval to conduct the pilot</p> <p>Assist with notifying schools about the district’s decision to participate in the pilot study</p> <p>Provide NORC with special education student rosters (template will be provided)</p> <p>Provide financial data</p> <p>Complete 2 LEA surveys</p>	8-10 hours
<b>School</b>	<p>Coordinate with the NORC outreach team who will be seeking school participation approval</p> <p>Identify a School Coordinator who will work with NORC to ensure all components of the study at the school level are completed. Includes prompting teachers to complete surveys, assisting with identifying the appropriate staff to complete a survey (teachers, aides, guidance counselors, case managers, etc.), and providing student enrollment data as needed</p> <p>Complete Student Resources Surveys (On average, schools will be asked to complete 3-4 student surveys)</p>	<p>4-6 hours for school coordinator</p> <p>1.5-2 hours per student survey</p>

## Is there payment for participation?

Yes. You will receive a token of appreciation for the time it takes to coordinate and complete surveys and provide administrative data. Districts will receive \$500. Schools or school coordinators will receive between \$150 and \$300 depending on study design factors and the number of student surveys completed. Staff who complete the Student Resources Surveys or Student Services Surveys will receive \$60 for each completed survey. Payments will be made via electronic gift cards.

## Who should I contact if I have questions about this study?

More information about the study can be found at <https://air.org/project/NSSSES>. Study staff at NORC can be reached by phone at 888-872-0626, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. (Central Time). Study staff are also available to answer your questions via e-mail at [NORC-NSSSES@norc.org](mailto:NORC-NSSSES@norc.org). You may also contact the study Principal Investigator, Tammy Kolbe, at [NSSSES@air.org](mailto:NSSSES@air.org).

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