

OSPI Special Education Update - September 2025

Special Education Updates

New Grant Opportunities for Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

OSPI's Special Education Division is excited to share three new grant opportunities designed for LEAs to strengthen inclusive systems and practices:

Voluntary CEIS Match Grants Districts that choose to use a portion of their IDEA Part B funds for Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) may receive a state funding match to extend their investment. CEIS is designed to support students who are not yet identified for special education but can benefit from academic or behavioral support. Examples of how districts can put these funds to work include expanding early literacy supports, building stronger middle school math interventions, and refining multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) practices for identifying student needs.

Intensive IPTN District Grants Districts participating in the Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) will continue to receive targeted grant funding. These funds are designed to help districts address disproportionality and strengthen inclusive systems, with a particular focus on students who experience the highest levels of exclusion in Washington schools. State technical assistance providers will work with districts to create sustainable, long-term systems and practices that ensure all students have meaningful access to general education and grade-level standards. Ultimately, this work aims to create positive outcomes and foster true membership and belonging for every student.

Inclusionary Practices Pilot School Grants OSPI will provide funds to up to 20 pilot schools to serve as centers of excellence in inclusionary practices. Selected schools will receive enhanced funding (based on a 1.5 multiplier) over four years and will represent a range of geographic areas and enrollment sizes. To qualify, schools need to show strong leadership and faculty commitment to inclusionary practices—such as adjusting schedules for collaboration, planning transformational change, and embracing universal design for learning. Schools must also ensure all staff receive appropriate training, provide data on current or improving inclusion efforts, and describe how training and support will be sustained over time.

What's next? Keep an eye out for grant announcements. Some funds are formula-based (meaning districts/schools have already been selected), but additional opportunities are available. The OSPI Special Education team is available to talk through an option that might fit your context or help connect your district with technical assistance partners involved in these efforts in Washington.

Questions? Reach out to Executive Director of Special Education Cassie Martin at cassie.martin@k12.wa.us.

SLD Technical Assistance Papers

Washington state is taking important steps to strengthen how school teams evaluate students suspected of having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). For decades, many districts have relied on

the severe discrepancy model—a practice that has raised equity concerns and does not align with current research.

Over the next three years, Washington will phase out the discrepancy model and adopt more equitable approaches, such as Response to Intervention (RTI) within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) to ensure that students are evaluated in ways that better reflect their unique learning needs.

For more information, including detailed recommendations and timelines, visit our [Special Education Resource Library](#), where you can also find Technical Assistance Papers on SLD to guide your district's planning and stay tuned for additional supports and technical assistance that will be provided to partners across Washington schools.

Reminder: Services to Age 22

During the 2024–25 legislative session, Governor Ferguson signed [SSB 5253](#) into law, which extends special education services to students with disabilities until the end of the school year in which the student turns 22 years of age. **SSB 5253 goes into effect starting this school year—the 2025–26 school year.**

As IEP teams meet for annual IEP meetings for 21-year-old students who turn 22 during the 2025–26 school year and younger students who may need special education and transition services from 18 to 22, teams should consider what individualized services are needed, based on the student's unique, disability-related needs.

For additional guidance and links to other resources on individualized decisions around a student's graduation plan and transition services, see OSPI's [April 2023 Secondary Transition Tip](#).

Statewide IEP Feasibility Study posted

OSPI completed a legislatively-mandated feasibility study on the creation of a unified, statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) system. This study analyzed the current decentralized setup, identified challenges (including inconsistent quality, compliance issues, and disparities in family engagement), and assessed how a statewide system could improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The findings concluded that such a system is both feasible and essential to advancing equity, instructional quality, compliance, and inclusion across the state.

Why it matters:

- It provides the opportunity to facilitate a statewide approach that leverages IEPs in ways that prioritizes high quality instruction and improves outcomes for students with disabilities.
- A unified system would provide a consistent, student-centered platform.
- It prioritizes transparency for families and supports educators with data-driven insights, and elevates special education supports statewide.
- The study recommends moving forward with procurement and vendor selection to build a system that focuses on educational benefits, instructional improvements, and student outcomes.

Find the full detailed report here: [ospi-iep-feasibility-study.pdf](#) and stay tuned for more updates on the progress of the build out and implementation of Washington's statewide IEP system.

2025–26 Annual Activities Calendar

The Guide for Annual Activities, Reports, and Grant Packages for the 2025–26 School Year is posted to the Quick Links section of the [Resource Library webpage](#). This Guide informs districts of important activities, reports, and grant packages and includes: (1) the name, description and the date action must be taken by the district/educational service agency; (2) whether the activity, report or grant is required or optional; and (3) a list of what areas are impacted. Please note that the Guide is not inclusive of all possible activities, reports, and grants throughout the school year. If you have any questions about the Guide, please contact the Special Education division at 360-725-6075 or by [email](#).

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Program Improvement Updates

[Click here for this month's Program Improvement updates](#) on the following topics:

- Special Education Monitoring for 2025–26 (repeat)
- Disproportionality and Significant Disproportionality Notifications (updated)
- IDEA Correction of Non-Compliance Identified in 2024–25 (repeat)
- New Special Education Parent Survey – Spring 2026 (repeat)
- Upcoming Changes to the Annual IDEA Determinations and the Correction of Non-Compliance (repeat)
- OSPI Special Education Data, Fiscal, and Program Office Hours

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Updates

[Click here for this month's ECSE updates](#) on the following topics:

- Welcome Back! A Note from Candis Coble, 619 Coordinator
- Pyramid Model Consortium Trainings
- Get Your Piece of the PIE!
- National Training Opportunities
- New? Welcome, Here's What You Can Do

Fiscal and Data Updates

[Click here for this month's Fiscal & Data updates](#) on the following topics:

- Special Education Data, Fiscal, and Program Office Hours
- Join Us: OSPI IDEA Part B Subrecipient Fiscal Monitoring Open Door

Dispute Resolution Updates

[Click here for this month's Dispute Resolution updates](#) on:

- Welcoming Sound Options Cadre as Our New Mediation & IEP Facilitation Provider

Tips from the Special Education Division: Inclusionary Practices Resources

Where can I find practical tools for implementing inclusionary practices in my school or district?

OSPI's new [Inclusionary Practices webpage](#) is your hub for connecting with our agency's robust guidance, partner resources, and research supporting inclusion for all students. On this page, you can download technical assistance guides and connect with a statewide network of providers that can support your district in adopting and improving inclusionary practices. We hope you'll bookmark this page and share it with your teams and families. You can expect even more resources to be added over time as part of OSPI's ongoing commitment to inclusion.