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# OSPI Special Education Update - December 2025

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Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Special Education

## Special Education Update

**December 2025**

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# Special Education Updates

## Celebrating 50 Years of IDEA

On November 29, we celebrated 50 years of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a milestone that reminds us how far we've come and how much work remains. Before IDEA, many children with disabilities in the U.S. were excluded from public education, separated from their peers, or placed in institutions. Washington's own advocates helped shape the original federal law, laying the groundwork for the protections students and families rely on today. Their leadership continues to guide our shared commitment to inclusion, access, and equity.

As we recognize this anniversary, we also acknowledge that IDEA's full promise is still unfolding. Students, families, and educators continue to face real barriers, and national discussions about shifting federal oversight raise new uncertainties. Through it all, Washington's commitment remains firm: special education is both a civil rights and an education law, and students with disabilities belong in our public schools, learning alongside their peers. We encourage you to watch [Assistant Superintendent Dr. Tania May's video message](#) reflecting on this historic moment and reaffirming our focus on supporting every child.

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## Inclusive Schools Week, December 8-12, 2025

This month, from December 8–12, schools across Washington are joining communities nationwide in celebrating Inclusive Schools Week—a time to reflect on our progress toward creating welcoming, equitable learning environments for every student and to reaffirm our commitment to inclusion. This year's theme, "Children First," is inspired by the Maasai greeting *Casserian Engeri*—"And how are the children?"—a reminder that the well-being of children reflects the health and future of an entire community. This theme challenges all of us to ask whether every child is reaching their full potential, whether our practices truly advance equity and access, and how we ensure students with disabilities are seen, heard, and valued in every aspect of school life.

These questions directly connect to the work of Washington's Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN), which partners with districts to expand inclusive instructional practices, strengthen access to general education, and build systems where all learners experience belonging. As we celebrate Inclusive Schools Week, we encourage schools and districts to highlight their inclusion efforts, reflect on how they center "Children First" in daily practice, and explore resources from both [Inclusive Schools Week](#) and the [IPTN](#) as we work together to ensure every student is supported, welcomed, and has the opportunity to thrive.

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## Grant Opportunity for Districts: Voluntary CEIS State Match (FP 167) – Applications Due December 12th

A new competitive grant opportunity is now open in the EGMS system under Form Package (FP) 167. This grant application is due December 12th and provides matching state funds to support districts in implementing Voluntary Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS). Voluntary CEIS allows districts to use up to 15% of their IDEA Part B funds to provide early intervening services for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (excluding preschool) who are not currently identified for or receiving special education services. Districts may engage in Voluntary CEIS at any time by submitting plans through FP 267 – Special Education: IDEA Part B. FP 167 specifically offers a state funding match for approved activities designed to improve educational outcomes for students. This [comprehensive Q&A](#) is included in the grant directions to support applicants. For questions, please contact Cassie Martin, Executive Director of Special Education, at [cassie.martin@k12.wa.us](mailto:cassie.martin@k12.wa.us).

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## 2026 Legislative Session

The 2026 regular session begins on Monday, January 12, 2026. It is a short session, lasting up to 60 days, with an expected end date of Thursday, March 12.

session ending up to 10 days, than an expected end date of Thursday, March 12, 2026. Prefiling for the 2026 session began on Monday, December 1, 2025. Stay tuned to [OSPI Special Education Bill Tracker](#) for regular updates on the status of bills impacting special education and to see when they are up for public hearings or passage votes.

If you have questions about anything legislature related, please contact [OSPI Special Education](#) with the subject line "Legislative Session".

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## New Leadership Positions – Join our Team!

OSPI's Special Education Division is hiring two Assistant Directors—critical leadership roles driving some of Washington's most important statewide improvement efforts.

Washington is in a moment of historic momentum toward more inclusive, coherent, and student-centered systems. These positions sit at the center of that work.

We're looking for leaders who can help advance:

- Statewide IEP implementation — shaping guidance, coordination, and systemwide change.
- Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) — strengthening TA and supporting districts across WA.
- IDEA general supervision & monitoring — ensuring programs truly support student learning and benefit.
- SLD/RtI modernization — helping districts shift toward evidence-based identification and instructional models.
- Program improvement & district capacity-building.
- Efforts to reduce restraint and eliminate isolation — ensuring safe, humanizing environments for every student.
- High-impact, equity-driven systems change from early childhood through postsecondary transition.

These are mission-driven roles on a collaborative, energized team, working on work that matters for students, families, and educators statewide. If you're passionate about inclusion, systems design, technical assistance, and improving outcomes for students with disabilities — this is your opportunity to lead at scale.

To apply, visit the links below:

- [Assistant Director, Oversight & Monitoring](#)
  - [Assistant Director, Technical Assistance & Program Improvement](#)
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## Honoring the Life and Legacy of Alice Wong

This month, we honor the life and legacy of Alice Wong, a visionary disability activist, storyteller, and founder of the Disability Visibility Project, whose work transformed the way our nation understands disability justice. Alice reminded us that *"Disability is not a bad word,"* and that true inclusion requires listening deeply to the voices of those most impacted. Her belief that *"Access is love"* continues to guide advocates, educators, and communities in building systems where every person is valued and empowered. We celebrate her profound contributions and carry her spirit forward as we work to ensure that Washington's schools are places where all students belong.

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### Welcoming Risa Hess to the OSPI Special Education Team!

Risa has joined the OSPI Special Education Division as part of the Operations Team as an Administrative Program Specialist. We are so excited to have her. Please learn more about Risa below!

**What were you doing prior to OSPI?** Prior to joining OSPI, I was in district administration for a public charter network, where I supported documentation and funding for learners with specialized and intersectional needs. My undergrad



thesis was on increasing Diversity in STEM fields, with a focus on Early Learning activities, so I've always had a big heart for inclusivity.

I'm originally from Tacoma, and am an Air Force Veteran, so it's nice to be able to continue to serve in my hometown.

**What excites you the most about joining the team?** One thing that I loved about being in the schools was being able to witness beautiful transformations of self-confidence and goal-getting for learners with disabilities when their needs are fully met. Working with the OSPI Special Education data team, I'm excited to help an even larger community of students get the services and funding they need to thrive.

**What do you enjoy doing in your free time?** My 5th grader keeps me busy and feeling young! (6-7!) In the summer we like to go explore and geocache, and in the winter, we cozy up to read, read, read. My favorite shows are Star Trek and TaskMaster, and yes, I have spreadsheets for everything in my personal life too!

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## Program Improvement Updates

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

- Annual LEA Special Education Determination Levels - Updated
- OSPI Special Education Data, Fiscal, and Program Office Hours

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## Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Updates

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

- Form Package 213 Is Open for Participating Districts
- SPP/APR Season Update: Strengthening Early Childhood Outcomes Through Inclusive Systems
- Highlighting ECSE Myths & Facts to Strengthen Inclusive Early Learning Systems

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## Fiscal and Data Updates

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

- Special Education Personnel Employed & Contracted
- Special Education November Federal Child Count
- 2026 CEDARS Statewide Webinars – Register and Attend
- Secondary IEP Transition Components (Indicator B-13) Data Application (Newly Updated Resources)
- OSPI Special Education Data, Fiscal, and Program Office Hours
- Consent Received to Share Student Information with State Transition Agencies
- Safety Net Application Bulletin

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## Tips from the Special Education Division: Guidance on Nonpublic Agency Placements

OSPI has recently released on its [website](#) the new [Nonpublic Agency \(NPA\) Field Guide, Guidance for Special Education Administrators](#).

This field guide was developed to primarily support public school district personnel in understanding their placement and oversight responsibilities when students receive special education services at an authorized NPA. The guide, however, is available to the general public as a resource for understanding when an NPA placement is appropriate, how to navigate the placement process in Washington

placement is appropriate, how to navigate the placement process in Washington, and how to ensure compliance with state special education regulations.

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## Information from Our Partners

[Click here for this month's updates from the following partners:](#)

- WIDA Webinar: Webinar Recording on Supporting MLs with Disabilities
  - Special Education Technology Center Professional Development Opportunities
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## Reminders!

This section includes hyperlinks to important information shared in previous monthly updates.



- **The Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) has launched a new resource page** where educators, families, and community members can find **tools, data, and other resources** that promote meaningful inclusion.
  - Visit the [IPTN Resource Page](#) to:
    - Learn why inclusion matters and how it benefits all students;
    - Access valuable materials and training opportunities;
    - Explore state and district-level data to track progress;
    - Stay up to date on inclusion initiatives across Washington; and
    - Engage with the **IPTN strategic plan** and share best practices.

This resource hub is designed to foster **collaboration** among students, families, educators, and community partners as we work together to create **inclusive learning environments** statewide.

- **Special Education and Institutional Education Directory**

The [Special Education and Institutional Education Directory](#) is posted on the OSPI website. The directory is updated monthly on the first working day of every month. Submit changes to the [OSPI Special Education email](#).

Please note that districts must update their contact information with the Special Education office to receive emails sent out from the Special Education office. Updating your district's contact information in the Special Education and Institutional Education Directory does not update your district's information in EGMS or GovDelivery.

- **Got questions? Ask OSPI!**

OSPI has launched a new publication that invites all Washington residents to ask OSPI questions directly and get answers publicly. Named, The Study Session, this publication is an opportunity for families and community members to engage with OSPI on all things public education. It is published once per month on the OSPI Blog. [Click to learn more about The Study Session](#), including how to [submit questions](#).

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**ALL STUDENTS PREPARED FOR POST-SECONDARY  
PATHWAYS, CAREERS, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.**

Led by State Superintendent Chris Reykdal, OSPI oversees K-12 public education in Washington state. Our mission is to provide funding, resources, tools, data and technical assistance that enable educators to ensure students succeed in our public schools, are prepared to access post-secondary training and education, and are equipped to thrive in their careers and lives.



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