Special education is the education of children with disabilities.

Schools are required to provide special education services to every eligible child and must provide the needed accommodations, no matter the cost.

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act was passed in 1975, the law included a commitment to pay 40% of the average per-student cost for every special education student. That commitment has never been met.

Congress currently funds IDEA at less than 18%. Since 1975, the unfunded federal portion has cost local schools and taxpayers more than $300 billion.

Pennsylvania previously provided funding to schools for all special education costs. In the early 1990s, a new system was adopted that distributes special education funding to school districts based on a formula that assumes all costs are equal rather than allowing for real differences in school district needs.

Since the 2002-03 school year, state funding of all special education services in Pennsylvania has increased by $252.5 million.

Education of students with disabilities does not end with the traditional school year. Public schools are required to continue services for some students beyond the routine 180-day school calendar to ensure that they do not lose acquired skills due to breaks in service.