

SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

HOW FUNDING AND POLICY AFFECTS THE FUTURE AND LIVES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

CURRENT LEGISLATION:

In 1975 Congress passed the individuals with disabilities education act (IDEA). This legislation has four parts and **ensures free and fair public education to students with disabilities** who are eligible.



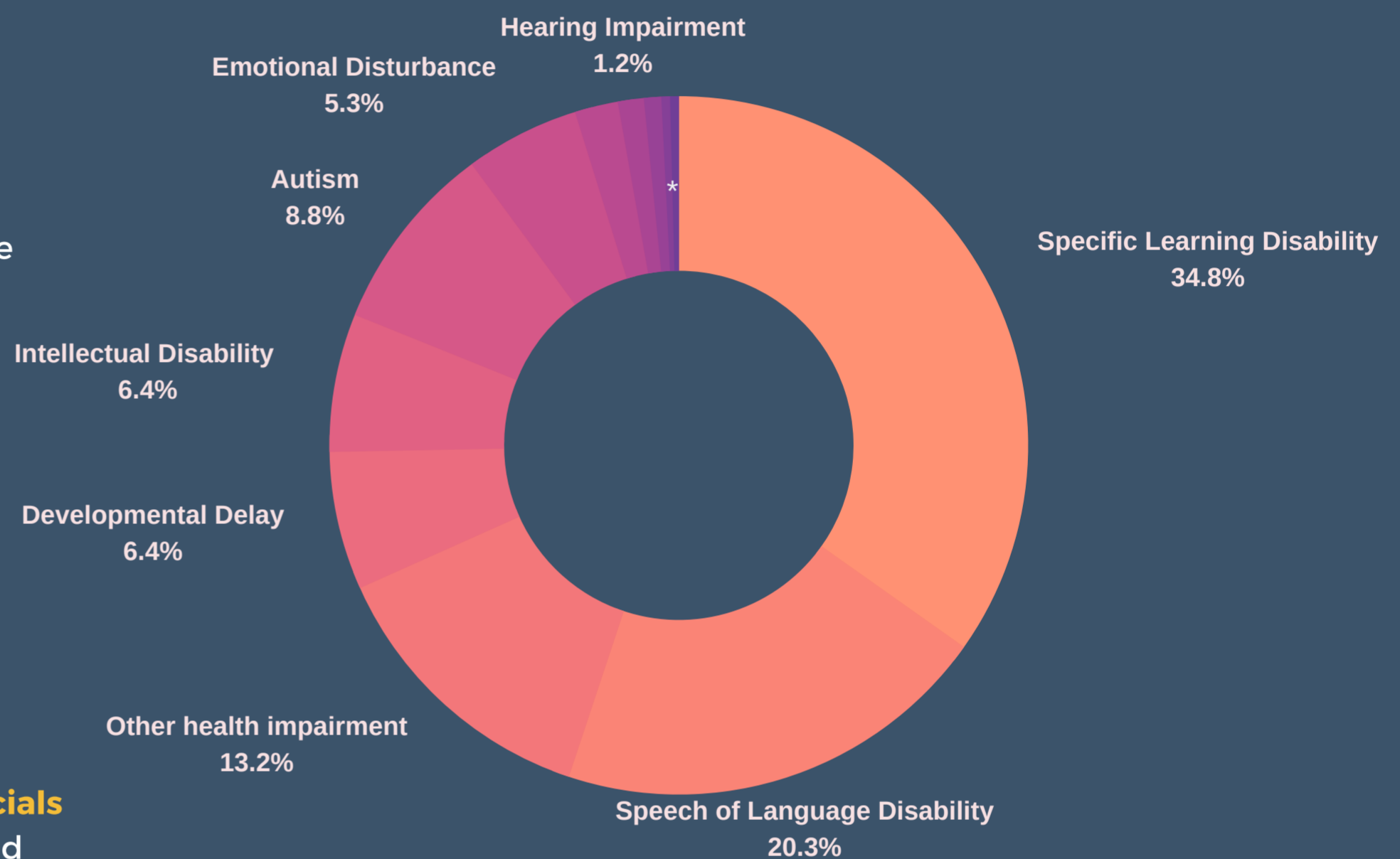
- A) Provisions of the legislation,
- B) The individualized assistance offered for each students
- C) Identification of children with disabilities,
- D) Means of improvement.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Idea recognizes **13 categories** categories of covered disabilities: Autism, deaf-blindness, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment. Currently under IDEA there are approximately **6.7 million students covered yearly** (1).

WHO DECIDES WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

It is the **responsibility of parents, teachers, or other school officials** to identify a child they suspect to have a disability. Then the child must be evaluated by a multi-disciplinary staff to determine whether they would require special education (2).



*categories less than 1% not listed on graph



IS THERE RACIAL BIAS?

Recent research has shown that race or ethnicity is the most important factor in determining whether children are identified as having a disability. "Contrary to federal regulatory and policy efforts, **minority children have been less likely than otherwise similarly achieving White children to receive special education services** in the United States since at least 2003" (3). There is a misconception that post IDEA, minority children are more prevalent in special needs programs than white students, but minority students are only more likely to be identified as having a disability, but are less likely to be placed into special needs education programs (4).

IDEA ON RACIAL DISPARITY:

In 2004 Congress updated IDEA, tasking **state governments to establish their own ratios surrounding racial disparity in the number of special needs students**. **After the 2004 updates**, once states exceeded their ratios they must report it and spend **15% of their allotted federal funding on early intervention programs** addressing the racial disparity. However, due to both the lack of funding in IDEA and how Congress redistributed the funds to support the new program, school districts rarely met their set ratios in order to preserve their funding to help those already enrolled in special needs education. Thus, the new addition to IDEA in attempts to reach **racial equality in special needs programs in education failed** (5).



FUNDING: THE DOWNFALL OF IDEA



WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MONEY?

Congress promised to cover **40%** of the additional costs it would require to educate each student under IDEA. However, Congress has continually failed to meet that promise each year. Despite an increase in students enrolled under IDEA, in 2017 Congress only covered **14.6 %** of the cost, which was about \$12 billion (6).

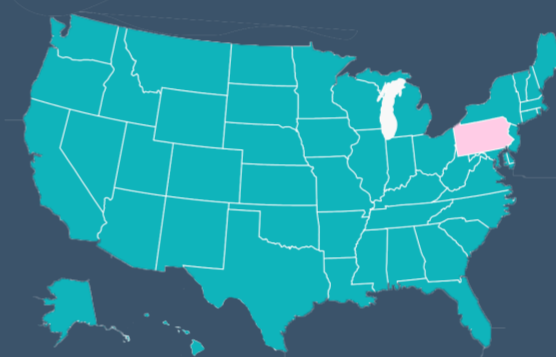
EFFECTS OF LACK OF FUNDING:

- Perpetuates racial discrepancy

Because IDEA was never fully funded schools are more likely to selectively put students into special needs education programs in order to maximize the money they have to spend on students. Also, schools who already lack funding, which are typically in lower socio-economic districts and have a majority of minority students are more prone to funding shortages. Thus, making minority students more endanger of not receiving the access to education IDEA promises.

- Teacher Shortages

Without proper funding teachers who are trained and qualified to teach special needs education cannot pay off their student debts and often find other higher paying occupations. When teachers leave it creates a shortage that other unqualified teachers must accommodate.



49 states reported a shortage in special education officials in their schools (7).

82%

Teachers said that they did not believe there were enough staff to properly meet students' individualized needs.

2X

Special needs education teachers are twice as likely to leave their profession in comparison to average teachers.

1:182

The national ratio of school psychologist is currently twice the recommended ratio of 1:500-700. There is an expected shortage of 15,000 school psychologists by 2020.

*Statistics compiled from (7)

MORE THAN

1/2

OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

SPEND MORE THAN

80%

OF THEIR TIME IN GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONGRESS

AMEND ACT TO ENSURE MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS CAN ADVOCATE FOR STUDENTS

Having a medical professional will reduce miscommunication between the state and the potential of the student

PROVIDE AT LEAST \$15 BILLION TOWARDS PART B OF IDEA (11)

This will provide more resources for schools to create and provide individualized assistance to students

PROVIDE AT LEAST \$1.6 BILLION TOWARDS PART C OF IDEA (10)

This funding will ensure schools do not have an incentive to deny admission based on identity factors.

SUPPORT THE TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM (9)

This will help relieve debt burden for teachers and decrease the amount of teachers who must leave the profession for economic reasons.

Education is a vehicle for self-empowerment, self-identity, employment, and independence. It should be accessible to all regardless of their ability.

Sources

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