KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 102
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1212
(785) 296-3201
www.ksde.gov

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To: Education Funding Task Force

From: Bert Moore, Director of Special Education and Title Services

Re: Special Education Questions

Below are responses to questions presented to the Kansas State Department of Education related to Special Education.

Paraeducators

1. How are Paraeducators (paras) defined for Special Education and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)?
    - Special Education (SPED) assigned paraeducators (paras) provide instructional or related services under the supervision of a licensed or certified special education professional in an accredited or approved special education program.
    - SPED paras have as a minimum requirement: to be a high school graduate (or GED certificate); and complete an orientation session addressing confidentiality, the services to be provided, and the policies and procedures of the local education agency concerning special education support.
    - SPED paras have required professional development that includes a minimum of 20 hours of paras employed through the first three consecutive years. Following the third consecutive year, SPED paras are required to have a minimum of 10 hours of professional development.
    - Allowable activities include instructional support under the supervision of a professional; participation in IEP meetings; attend parent-teacher conferences; student data collection and record-keeping; assisting the SPED professional with required paperwork; providing support to students with disabilities in general education classrooms; and supporting students with disabilities in general education environments as listed in student IEPs.
    - ESEA (Title) paras working in a Schoolwide Title I program must be highly qualified by passing an assessment, or hold an associate's degree, or acquire at least 48 college hours. SPED paras working in a Schoolwide Title I program must also hold one of these credentials to work in that building.
2. How do schools and KSDE ensure that special education paraprofessionals spend their time with special education students in mainstream classrooms?
    - SPED paras provide supports and services under the supervision of a licensed professional. Their work may include work in general education classrooms, support in

a special education classroom, community settings, home settings, or any setting as outlined in individual student IEPs.
    - SPED paras must complete "time and effort" logs. Only the time listed that serves IEP students is counted as special education eligible time to be reimbursed through Special Education Categorical State Aid.
    - KSDE Fiscal Auditors conduct annual audits of special education programs in Kansas. They work with the KSDE Special Education and Title Services team to remove paid hours of reimbursement.
3. How is paraprofessional time prorated so that special education funding is targeted to the intended purposes?
    - SPED para time is audited annually and auditors check "letters of employment" to ensure that paraprofessionals are hired to provide "special education" supports and services under a licensed professional.
    - Each para must complete a "time and effort" log which is audited by the KSDE auditing team.
    - The Categorical Aid system called Personnel Categorical Aid (PCA) lists all professionals claimed for reimbursement and includes any paraprofessionals assigned to work under each licensed professional.

Outcomes for Special Education students

1. How are outcomes for Special Education students measured?
    - The annual IEP is developed listing goals for all special education services. The goals must be measurable and monitored no less frequently than the progress of general education students is monitored.
    - Any student with a disability that the agency has evidence of regression over breaks in school days is entitled to Extended School Year (ESY) services. ESY services are designed to maintain the present level of performance of the child over breaks in school.
    - Students with disabilities are considered general education students first and must receive instruction to make progress in the curriculum. Students with disabilities receive the same measurement of outcomes as all other general education students with few exceptions. Some students with the most significant cognitive disabilities receive instruction using the Essential Elements which are aligned with grade level standards.
2. Does it measure effectiveness?
    - Effectiveness of outcomes is an annual process that includes progress made on grade level standards as well as progress made on IEP goals and objectives/benchmarks.
3. How do schools gauge what reasonable growth should be for varying exceptionalities?
    - The exceptionality is not used to gauge reasonable growth. The IEP is designed on an individual basis to meet the needs of identified students with exceptionalities.
4. What should Kansas be doing differently?
    - Establish a cohesive funding formula that considers all service models for special education services. For example, due to the change in how additional special education funding has been distributed to school districts since fiscal year 2024, Infant-Toddler

service providers working to provide Part C services have seen a reduction in reimbursement for staff providing services.
- Provide a more timely and predictable funding model based on staffing and student needs.
- Attract, retain, and support more professional education staff. This need is especially critical in special education and rural areas.

Additional Resources:

- *Kansas Special Education Process Handbook* (*https://www.ksde.gov/Portals/0/SES/PH/PH-complete.pdf*)
- *Kansas Special Education Categorical Aid Reimbursement Guide* (*https://www.ksde.gov/Portals/0/SES/funding/CatAid/ReimbursementguideFY26.pdf)*
- *Kansas Special Education Eligibility Indicators (https://www.ksde.gov/Portals/0/SES/misc/iep/EligibilityIndicators.pdf)*

For more information, contact:

Bert Moore
Director
Special Education and Title Services

Bert.moore@ksde.gov

(785) 296-4949