

An analysis of special education funding in the United States reveal that costs have escalated significantly over the past 25 years

Pennsylvania

Until the 1991-1992 school year, Pennsylvania funded 100% of the "excess cost" of special education. Regional service agencies played a large role in the operation and implementation of special education programs. Implementation of the special education reforms which began in 1990 emphasized the instructional needs of students and reduction in direct state support for intermediate units (regional service agencies). The first programmatic change was the development of instructional support teams (IST) for all school districts; although additional costs were incurred due to ISTs, they were designed to be phased in and paid for within 10 years. The goal of ISTs was to more appropriately define those students in need of special education by consulting individuals closest to the student, such as the student's teacher, the principle, and a specially trained instructional support teacher. The ISTs proved successful in the first year of implementation in which special education placements were reduced by 48%.

The second programmatic change was a system that decreased the reliance upon intermediate units and channeled money directly to districts based on the average daily membership of students. The change combined the old excess cost system with a new census based funding system. Similar to Oregon the reform was intended to increase district control of funding decisions.

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