

# Division of Academics – Department of Special Education – Budget Summary

## Overview of the Division

The Department of Special Education (DSE) is in the Division of Academics. The role of this Department is to ensure students with disabilities, birth to age 21, receive high-quality services within their homes, community, and/or school settings to improve outcomes for learners who receive early intervention and special education services.

The services of this Department are delivered through the budgets of the following programs:

- Countywide Services
- Speech, Language, and Hearing Services
- Special Education School-Based Services
- Early Childhood Special Education: Birth–Five
- Cedar Lane
- Special Education Summer Services
- Special Education Compliance and Nonpublic Services
- Special Education–Central Office
- Bridges

The Department of Special Education (DSE) promotes Equity in Action by ensuring that students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education that meets individual learner needs in the least restrictive environment. The DSE is committed to providing high-quality early intervention and special education services to improve outcomes for learners, birth to age 21. DSE leaders value and promote open, transparent, and accessible communication so that all stakeholders become partners in the work.

Over the past few years, the Department has reduced spending on materials, and worked toward maximizing staffing allocations, increasing professional learning opportunities, and decreasing case management workload through a variety of approaches. While striving to address all legal service hour requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the DSE continues to experience constraints in creating comprehensive programs and supports that could meet more complex student needs and reduce the potential for rising nonpublic placement costs due to lack of options within the existing continuum of services.

## Summary of Major Budget Changes for FY 2027

The budget for the Department of Special Education is increasing by a net change of \$27.5 million or 10.9 percent and increasing by 123.10 FTE positions compared to the current budget. This total change is the composite of budget additions for existing service commitments, employee compensation and benefits, and realignments. The specific amounts for each major budget grouping are:

- Existing Service Commitments – \$13.2 million and an increase of 95.10 FTE positions
- Employee Compensation and Benefits – \$11.9 million
- Priorities – (\$1.1) million
- Realignments – \$3.4 million and net increase of 28.0 FTE positions

A summary of budget changes for this division is provided below.

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## Special Education Strategic Plan

In July 2025, the Superintendent initiated the implementation of a multi-phased Special Education Strategic Plan designed to *Strengthen Learning and Instruction* and to better meet the needs of students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This plan was developed in response to the Board of Education's strategic review conducted by RTI. The FY 2026 budget allocated \$1.75 million to begin the increased investment required to support this work. Reorganization of services and staffing commenced in fall 2025. This initiative remains dynamic and adaptive, as the new leadership team continues ongoing assessment and evaluation. The requested FY 2027 budget includes the fiscal actions necessary to fully implement the staffing changes initiated in FY 2026, as well as an additional investment of funding in FY 2027 to support the continued development and implementation of process improvements.

## Existing Service Commitments

- \$8.9 million – To support the continued implementation of the Special Education Strategic Plan and other Special Education Costs
  - \$7.4 million and 84.1 FTE positions – To support staffing needs as outlined in the Special Education Strategic Plan Phase 1 actions in FY 2026 and Phase 2 for FY 2027. These additions are in the following programs:
    - Countywide Services Program 3320 – (0.5) FTE
    - Special Education School-Based Services Program 3321 – 74.0 FTE
    - Cedar Lane Program 3322 – 2.0 FTE
    - Early Childhood Special Education Birth-Five Program 3324 – 3.0 FTE
    - Speech Language, and Hearing Services Program 3325 – 3.6 FTE
    - Special Education-Central Office Program – 4.0 FTE
    - \$(215,376) and (2.0) FTE in Program 3330 – Removed (2.0) Technical Assistant positions included in the Superintendent's budget and the funding reallocated to the Communications and Engagement Program 0302 as part of the consolidation of translation and interpretation services.
  - \$1.5 million – To optimize the use of existing positions by converting position types to better manage special education programs and meet student needs including the conversion of:
    - 108.0 FTE Instructional Team Leader positions from 10 months to 11 months
    - 4.0 FTE Crisis Teachers to Board Certified Behavior Analysts
    - (2.0) FTE Physical Therapist positions to 1.0, 10-month Teacher and 1.0 Speech Language Pathologist
    - 1.0 FTE Autism Specialist to Facilitator (Autism)
- \$4.5 million in Program 3328 – For nonpublic placement tuition costs to meet projected enrollment growth and to meet the added expense for the cost shift enacted by the Legislature in 2025, resulting in the state paying less of the excess cost for eligible nonpublic student placements.
- \$853,634 and 11.0 FTE positions in Program 3324 – For the continued implementation of Blueprint Prekindergarten Expansion for Early Childhood Special Education Birth-Five.
- \$65,867 in Program 3321 – To meet contractual cost increases for various licenses and subscriptions in Special Education School-Based Services.

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- \$35,802 in Program 3324 – For reclassification of positions.
- \$27,224 in Program 3328 – For additional transportation need related to enrollment for nonpublic services.
- \$(1.1) million – Year-over-Year Personnel Cost Change. This adjustment will appear in all program budgets that have budgeted personnel. A complete explanation for these changes is included in the Factors Influencing and Summary of the Budget in the Executive Summary section of the budget book.

## *Employee Compensation and Benefits*

- \$6.9 million – Placeholder for employee compensation increases subject to collective bargaining.
- \$4.6 million – Health Insurance cost increases based on preliminary actuarial estimates.
- \$392,166 – National Board Certification (NBC) teacher pay.

## *Priorities*

- \$(742,673) in Program 3321 and \$(448,246) in Program 3325 – Contract interpreter funds have been reallocated from Special Education School-based Services Program 3321 and Speech Language, and Hearing Services Program 3325 to Communications and Engagement Program 0302 as part of restructured approach to consolidate and improve interpreter services.
- \$27,716 in Program 3321 – To Strengthen Learning and Instruction.
  - For Woodcock Johnson digital licenses, Special Education School-Based Services Program 3321

## *Realignments*

- \$2.8 million and 24.0 existing FTE positions – Realignment of Bridges Program 3323 from Homewood Program 3402 in Division of Schools to Department of Special Education.
- \$598,135 and 10.0 existing FTE positions – Realignments into Special Education School-Based Services Program 3321.
  - \$422,780 and 5.0 FTE positions – Transfer of Special Education pooled teaching positions from Division of Schools, Program Support for Schools Program 3201 to Department of Special Education, Special Education – School-based Services Program 3321
  - 5.0 FTE Realigned to Special Education School-Based Services Program 3321, from Early Childhood Special Education: Birth-Five Program 3324 (5.0) FTE.
  - \$100,000 – Transfer of contracted labor from Special Education–Central Office Program 3330 to meet budgetary needs
  - \$70,000 – Transfer of wages workshop from Academic Support of Schools Program 3202 to meet budgetary needs
- \$200,000 – Transfer of budget authority from Transportation Program 6801 to Special Education Compliance and Nonpublic Services Program 3328 for special education transportation costs.
- \$(4,000) – Transfer from Speech Language, and Hearing Services Program 3325 to \$4,000 Countywide Services Program 3320 to meet budgetary needs.
- \$(82,013) and (1.0) existing FTE position – Transfer of Interpreter position from Speech Language and Hearing Services Program 3325 to Employee Labor Relations Program 0306 to meet ADA budgetary needs.

Summary schedules of these changes are presented in the following pages.

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SUMMARY OF FY 2027 REQUESTED BUDGET											
Program	Program Number	Approved Budget FY 2026	Budget Additions and Base Reductions	Total Realignments	Net Budget Changes	Net Budget Changes FTE	Superintendent Proposed FY 2027	Board Requested FY 2027	\$ Change From FY 2026	% Change from FY 2026	
Countywide Services	3320	\$ 16,645,065	\$ 686,727	\$ 4,000	\$ 690,727	(0.50)	\$ 17,348,549	\$ 17,335,792	\$ 690,727	4.15%	
Special Education - School-Based Services	3321	124,902,215	14,422,734	598,135	15,020,869	84.00	139,597,602	139,923,084	15,020,869	12.03%	
Cedar Lane	3322	8,426,216	627,223	-	627,223	2.00	8,749,139	9,053,439	627,223	7.44%	
Bridges	3323	-	120,797	2,804,250	2,925,047	24.00	2,931,811	2,925,047	2,925,047	0.00%	
Early Childhood Special Education: Birth-Five	3324	45,262,112	3,888,037	-	3,888,037	9.00	49,018,204	49,150,149	3,888,037	8.59%	
Speech, Language, and Hearing Services	3325	19,830,324	914,891	(86,013)	828,878	2.60	21,122,560	20,659,202	828,878	4.18%	
Special Education Summer Services	3326	2,572,440	9,971	-	9,971	-	2,582,411	2,582,411	9,971	0.39%	
Special Education Compliance and Nonpublic Services	3328	29,762,342	4,577,032	200,000	4,777,032	-	34,539,374	34,539,374	4,777,032	16.05%	
Special Education - Central Office	3330	5,793,783	(1,195,821)	(100,000)	(1,295,821)	2.00	5,161,992	4,497,962	(1,295,821)	-22.37%	
<b>Academics-Special Education Total</b>		<b>\$ 253,194,497</b>	<b>\$ 24,051,591</b>	<b>\$ 3,420,372</b>	<b>\$ 27,471,963</b>	<b>123.10</b>	<b>\$ 281,051,642</b>	<b>\$ 280,666,460</b>	<b>\$ 27,471,963</b>	<b>10.85%</b>	

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SUMMARY OF FY 2027 BUDGET CHANGES BY PROGRAM AND SUMMARY GROUPINGS										
	3320		3321		3322		3323		3324	
PROGRAMS	Countywide		Special Education		Cedar Lane	FTE	Bridges	FTE	Early Childhood Special	
	Services	FTE	Services	FTE					Education: Birth-	Five
Blueprint-Prekindergarten Expansion	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ 853,634	11.00
Reclassifications-Requested	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,802	-
Special Education Compliance and Nonpublic Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education-Contracts	-	-	65,867	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Education-Enrollment Service Levels	49,939	0.50	7,666,672	74.00	276,557	2.00	-	-	435,654	3.00
Special Education-Other	(147,296)	(1.00)	1,044,718	-	25,728	-	12,167	-	471,978	-
Year over Year Personnel Cost Change	62,598	-	(632,679)	-	(123,285)	-	(21,508)	-	(181,687)	-
<b>Subtotal Existing Service Commitments</b>	<b>(34,759)</b>	<b>(0.50)</b>	<b>8,144,578</b>	<b>74.00</b>	<b>179,000</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>(9,341)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,615,381</b>	<b>14.00</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS</b>										
Blueprint-National Board Certification	\$ 309	-	\$ 240,954	-	\$ 19,166	-	\$ 1,550	-	\$ 130,187	-
Employee Compensation-Placeholder	478,040	-	3,816,102	-	248,962	-	80,828	-	1,344,582	-
Health Insurance	243,137	-	2,936,057	-	180,095	-	47,760	-	797,887	-
<b>Subtotal Employee Compensation and Benefits</b>	<b>721,486</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,993,113</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>448,223</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>130,138</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,272,656</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>PRIORITIES</b>										
Partner with Families & Community	\$ -	-	\$ (742,673)	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
Strengthen Learning & Instruction	-	-	27,716	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Subtotal Priorities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(714,957)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL BUDGET ADDITIONS</b>	<b>686,727</b>	<b>(0.50)</b>	<b>14,422,734</b>	<b>74.00</b>	<b>627,223</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>120,797</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,888,037</b>	<b>14.00</b>
<b>REALIGNMENTS</b>	<b>4,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>598,135</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,804,250</b>	<b>24.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(5.00)</b>
<b>DIVISION TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 690,727</b>	<b>(0.50)</b>	<b>\$ 15,020,869</b>	<b>84.00</b>	<b>\$ 627,223</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,925,047</b>	<b>24.00</b>	<b>\$ 3,888,037</b>	<b>9.00</b>

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SUMMARY OF FY 2027 BUDGET CHANGES BY PROGRAM AND SUMMARY GROUPINGS										
	3325		3326		3328		3330			
PROGRAMS	Speech, Language, and Hearing Services	FTE	Special Education Summer Services	FTE	Special Education Compliance and Nonpublic Services	FTE	Special Education - Central Office	FTE	Total	Total FTE
Blueprint-Prekindergarten Expansion	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ 853,634	11.00
Reclassifications-Requested	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	35,802	-
Special Education Compliance and Nonpublic Services	-	-	-	-	4,529,356	-	-	-	4,529,356	-
Special Education-Contracts	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	65,867	-
Special Education-Enrollment Service Levels	307,557	2.60	-	-	-	-	(1,362,054)	2.00	7,374,325	84.10
Special Education-Other	105,581	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,512,876	-
Year over Year Personnel Cost Change	(179,191)	-	(341)	-	6,758	-	(30,610)	-	(1,099,945)	-
<b>Subtotal Existing Service Commitments</b>	<b>233,947</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>(341)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,536,114</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,392,664)</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>13,271,915</b>	<b>95.10</b>
<b>EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS</b>										
Blueprint-National Board Certification	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ 392,166	-
Employee Compensation-Placeholder	796,157	-	8,322	-	26,988	-	141,123	-	6,941,104	-
Health Insurance	333,033	-	1,990	-	13,930	-	55,720	-	4,609,609	-
<b>Subtotal Employee Compensation and Benefits</b>	<b>1,129,190</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10,312</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40,918</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>196,843</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>11,942,879</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>PRIORITIES</b>										
Partner with Families & Community	\$ (448,246)	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ -	-	\$ (1,190,919)	-
Strengthen Learning & Instruction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	27,716	-
<b>Subtotal Priorities</b>	<b>(448,246)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,163,203)</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>SUBTOTAL BUDGET ADDITIONS</b>	<b>914,891</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>9,971</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4,577,032</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(1,195,821)</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>24,051,591</b>	<b>95.10</b>
<b>REALIGNMENTS</b>	<b>(86,013)</b>	<b>(1.00)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>200,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(100,000)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,420,372</b>	<b>28.00</b>
<b>DIVISION TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 828,878</b>	<b>2.60</b>	<b>\$ 9,971</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 4,777,032</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ (1,295,821)</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>\$ 27,471,963</b>	<b>123.10</b>