Rhode Island Fast Facts

- 28,717 children and youth with disabilities receive early intervention and special education services provided by IDEA.
- There is a shortage of: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Educator, Early Childhood Special Educator, Elementary/Middle Special educator, Middle/Secondary Special Educator, Severe Profound Special Educator, Reading Specialist, School Counselor, Speech Language Pathologist, and School Nurse.
- 78 future special educators/early interventionists received financial assistance through IDEA Personnel Preparation since 2006.
- Rhode Island College received IDEA Personnel Preparation grants from 2008-2012.
- $199,906 from the IDEA Personnel Preparation Program was invested from 2008-2012.
- The Personnel Preparation Program is funded under Part D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

IDEA Personnel Preparation Program Increases the Special Educator Pipeline

Children and youth with disabilities – and their families – thrive when they have access to educators and professionals who are specially trained to address their complex needs. Unfortunately, there continues to be a chronic shortage of special education personnel in every state.

IDEA’s Personnel Preparation program recognizes this shortage and supports approximately 8,000 scholars annually, all of whom are preparing for a career to serve children and youth with disabilities.

65% of all Personnel Preparation funds go directly to future special education teachers, early interventionists, administrators, and researchers; serving as financial assistance that enables them to secure college degrees and gain expertise. Upon completion of the Personnel Preparation program, all recipients are required to “pay back” through two years of service in a high-need area for every year of federal support; a wise use of federal funding.
Rhode Island Based Collaboration Prepares Teachers to Address Needs of Students with Significant Disabilities

Rhode Island College-Paul Sherlock Center on Disabilities, Rhode Island Department of Education, Rhode Island’s Early Intervention program, and others teamed up to address the state-wide shortage of fully certified educators to teach students with significant cognitive disabilities. This collaboration increased the number of specially trained special educators who focused on students with the most significant needs.

Shrinking Federal Investment

Over the last three years, funding for IDEA’s Personnel Preparation program had decreased from $90.6 million in FY 2010 to $83.7 million in FY 2013.

As a result, fewer future special educators, early interventionists, and related service personnel are receiving the financial assistance needed to pursue careers focusing on children and youth with disabilities, thereby exacerbating the personnel shortage that exists in nearly every state.

Building better outcomes for children with disabilities – and their families – starts with skilled professionals who work on their behalf.

At a minimum, funding for IDEA’s Personnel Preparation program must be restored to its fiscal year 2010 amount of $90.6 million, although to truly address the personnel shortages, an increase in funding is needed.

Federal Funding for IDEA's Personnel Preparation Program (in millions)

- 2010: $90.60
- 2011: $88.50
- 2012: $88.30
- 2013: $83.70

65% of IDEA Personnel Preparation grants provide student financial assistance

90% of high poverty school districts report difficulty attracting highly qualified special educators

47 States and U.S. Territories have receive IDEA Personnel Preparation grants in last five years

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