

NAfME and the Music Education Policy Roundtable support full funding for IDEA.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that all students, regardless of ability, be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. When the first version of IDEA was signed into law in 1975, Congress authorized a federal investment to provide 40% of the additional cost to educate students with disabilities who were previously excluded from the public schools.

Unfortunately, this promise has never been realized, and the current federal contribution only amounts to roughly 13% of the expense. Congress must live up to its word and fully fund IDEA.

Congressional action to fully fund IDEA would provide opportunities to:

1. **Better support special education professionals and the students they serve.** Most IDEA funding is applied directly to personnel costs associated with employing special education teachers and specialized instructional support personnel. Shortages of special education professionals are felt across the United States, due in part to a high risk of burn-out and resulting low retention rates. Supporting these professionals would lead to schools that are safer, healthier, and more equitable for everyone involved in the learning process.
2. **Support additional training for all school staff, including music educators,** to address the needs of all students. Despite longstanding efforts by the music education profession to foster inclusive environments for all students, including those receiving services under IDEA, music educators continue to cite a lack of knowledge on effective inclusion strategies as a challenge in their practice. Music teachers have substantial contact with students receiving services under IDEA; for the few students who spend most of their day in a special education classroom, courses such as music may represent their only interactions with typical students and non-special education faculty.
3. **Reduce financial strain in school districts,** allowing state and local revenues to further support a well-rounded education for all students, including students with disabilities. According to the Association of School Business Officials International, the cost of IDEA compliance is one of the major financial issues challenging schools today.¹ While Congress has increased its recent investments in IDEA, these modest increases have not kept pace with rising costs, leaving school districts responsible for covering the difference. Full funding of IDEA would free up billions of flexible state and local dollars that could be applied toward supporting a well-rounded education, including music, for all students.²

1. ASBO International Legislative Agenda. ASBO International Legislative Agenda, Association of School Business Officials International, 2019.

2. IDEA Full Funding: Why Should Congress Invest in Special Education?" NCLD, nclld.org/news/policy-and-advocacy/idea-full-funding-why-should-congress-invest-in-special-education/.