



# New Jersey School Boards Association

## **Financing Special Education in New Jersey**

New Jersey School Boards Association

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### **Statement of Work**

This study was commissioned by the New Jersey School Boards Association to address the following factors:

1. Local school district policies and practices related to the identification of special education students, the development of individual education programs (IEPs), and the placement of students in programs to meet the IEP goals.
2. Special education programs and services provided by individual public school districts through shared-service arrangements, by consortia of school districts, or by consortia of school districts and other public entities.
3. The actual costs of special education to local school districts in New Jersey resulting from state and federal statute and regulation.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted using an empirical approach to special education financing in New Jersey. Actual district data was collected from the New Jersey State Department of Education (NJ DOE) Division of Finance and the Office of Special Education Programs. This information was supplemented with a survey (Appendix A) sent to all districts and returned by almost half of them. The survey sought opinions on special education funding issues and data unavailable from NJ DOE sources. These data from the NJ DOE and Survey were compiled and analyzed for central tendency and the distribution of districts on various measures by state, region, district operating type and district factor grouping. This information was collectively analyzed to determine the status of special education service delivery in New Jersey.

Districts were asked to nominate exemplary special education programs for consideration. Districts were also asked to submit their policies and procedures for review. Federal and state regulations regarding special education were reviewed with respect to their impact on costs.

The New Jersey State Department of Education collects district information on special education through a variety of sources (Appendix F). The number of students with disabilities by classification and placement are collected each December on the Annual Data Report (ADR). The ADR report also collects information on special education staffing. A smaller ADR report is collected from receiving schools (special services school districts, educational services commissions, jointure commissions, regional day schools, private schools for the disabled and

shared time vocational schools. Longitudinal data were used to determine the trends in special education staffing, classification and placement rates statewide and by district.

Each October, the Division of Finance collects the Application for State School Aid from districts on the number of students with disabilities by funding tier and school level (elementary, middle and high school). It also collects an Audit Summary. The 2005 Audit Summary was used to examine the actual expenditures for classes, tuition, and support services. The NJ DOE also collects the Certificated and Non-certificated Staff Reports each October that list every staff member along with their experience, salary and job title. This information was used to establish the administrative and aide costs in special education. Longitudinal information on federal, extraordinary aid and state aid were collected. From these data staffing patterns, actual expenditures were compared with revenues from federal and state and local sources.