

Dear Special Education Task Force Members,

I worked for several years as a Paraprofessional in the Shawnee Mission School District. The population I worked with had various communication and behavioral disorders. Many of the students would benefit from Music Therapy and Speech Therapy, but we never had more than one therapist that we shared with other schools. This often meant students with the greatest needs received reduced hours of therapy, or therapy was combined with other students.

But, the reason why I left this job was due to the unsafe conditions. My final year in our self-contained classroom was terrifying--the four adults (1 teacher with 3 paras) was insufficient. The behaviors we were seeing were worse than we had ever seen, with double the students we should have been supporting.

I left that job in 2011. SPED has not been fully funded since.

SPED needs to be fully funded. We need adequate staff to provide a safe space for learning. We need more therapy and support to help unlock a world for students needing to find their 'voice' and students who go to school to get the emotional, educational, and therapeutic support they need. We shouldn't be pulling from the General funds to pay for SPED, which impacts all students' needs.

Imagine if we could meet the needs of every student, Gen Ed and Special Ed.

Let's 'Make Kansas Great Again'.

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