

Good afternoon. My name is Kristin Shuck, and I am a special education teacher in Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools. Currently, I serve 22 students with diverse needs. We face a neverending struggle to find qualified, quality teachers for our students with special needs.

Kansas City, Kansas has a mix of students that receive pull-out services from the general education population, and students that are in a specialized program, where they receive a majority of their instruction in a special education classroom. These specialized programs serve our students with severe autism, and also intellectual and medical disabilities that preclude them from being able to be successful in the general education classroom full-time.

I have been seeing many districts post their financial situations when it comes to funding special education. The fact of the matter is, special education is federally mandated through IDEA. It is not optional, and districts cannot elect to cut positions or reallocate funding in special education. The result, then, is diverting money from the general fund to cover the gap created by the lack of full funding from the state. At state funding of 92%, the amount of money coming from the general fund was negligible. With the state providing less funding, the result is districts reallocating money that was meant for other things to special education. This creates a hardship for all students, not just some.

The reallocation may mean that textbooks are not replaced. It may mean that much-needed educational resources, such as manipulatives or decodable texts, are not purchased when they are needed. This creates a problem for teachers. In my own building, due to lack of resources, teachers are turning to Teachers Pay Teachers and other websites to find supplemental materials to help students learn and master a concept. While there are free resources available online, a majority of them are not of the caliber that we would want to use in our classrooms. So, we invest our own personal money to provide these resources for our students. But, what about the students that are in a classroom where the teacher does not have the means to pay for high-quality supplemental materials? Or the students that are shuffled from home to home, school to school, that are getting the same base concepts, but not the supplemental or authentic instruction that their new classmates have received? Through no fault of their own, they are behind because of a district funding problem.

In a conversation with one of our school board members recently, she shared with me that the goal of the Board of Education was ensuring that students across USD500 were receiving the same education with the same materials. They have this goal because they know our students are itinerant and move around a lot. Even though their home may change, the board does not want their learning to suffer. This is why we have adopted Guaranteed Viable Curricula for each subject/content area, complete with pacing guides. These documents help to ensure that our students do not experience gaps in their education.

While my district has not yet participated in the social media movement, Did You Know? Kansas Kids, two of the districts that are part of the Wyandotte Comprehensive Special Education Cooperative who have shared their information. In Piper, for the school year 2022-2023, \$4.1 million was spent on special education services. Of that, \$2.9 million came from special

education funding. That leaves \$1.1 million being reallocated from the general fund. Piper provided 29% of the funding for special education, which is an additional 21% that they were not expecting to provide.

My children attend school in Shawnee Mission Public Schools. They have recently shared on X that special education services required \$53.9 million in the 2022-23 school year. Of that, \$24.5 million came specifically from state aid. The other \$19.4 million, 35% of the funding, was reallocated from the general fund. That is money that could have been used for field trips or other authentic experiences.

Please do not allow the state of Kansas to continue to punish students for being exceptional, or not. Underfunding special education hurts everyone.