

Special Education Mandates

Testimony by James Bodziak, Superintendent, East Aurora Schools To NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief/Buffalo, N.Y./Oct. 30, 2008

- In East Aurora, we have approximately 21 professional staff (i.e., special education teachers, speech, psychologists) who provide mandated services. 3½ of these professionals are funded through Federal grants.
- Of 19 special education aides, 6 are covered through the grants.
- 40% of IDEA (federal Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act) funding was supposed to come to districts to help fund special education expenses. East Aurora receives approximately 12%.
- Professional Development costs to train teachers in various areas of special education needs continue to rise, with the district picking up the cost for the bulk of the training (i.e, Autism, Behavior Management, Asperger Syndrome).
- Movement toward providing special education services in the least restrictive environment is costly. The co-teaching model costs districts more because it supports special education students within the classroom. Funding from the State and Federal governments is lacking.
- Costs to provide special education services covered by Medicaid have escalated but reimbursement has not kept pace.
- School districts are now required to provide special education services to non-public schools with no additional funding from the State or Federal governments.
- Home Schooled Students – per the Governor’s directive, school districts must provide special education services to these students, with no additional funding.
- Impartial Hearing Proceedings – Costs for such hearings continue to rise (i.e., \$100 per hour and travel and lodging expenses for hearing officer).
- Acquisition of Assistive Technology Equipment and Software for special needs students is expensive and in many cases districts fund such equipment out of general fund allocations.