



“It is the Commonwealth’s obligation to place each [disabled] child in a free, public program of education and training appropriate to the child’s capacity.”

- P.A.R.C. v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania,  
334 F. Supp. 279 (E.D. PA 1972)

**Special education funding ensures that students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education**

# What is Special Education Funding (SEF)?

**State funding for specific programs and services to enable students with disabilities to better access the general education curriculum**

- Premise: with appropriate supports, students with disabilities can and should be educated with non-disabled peers
- Provides school districts supplemental resources to basic ed funding to support students with disabilities
- Public schools must provide needed educational services to students at no cost to parents

# What is Special Education Funding (SEF)?

- Second largest K-12 education line item in state budget (after Basic Education Funding)
- About \$1.2 billion for 500 school districts
- Represents about 9% of all state funding to school districts

# Who Does SEF Affect?

## **EVERYONE!**

- Growing number of children are being diagnosed with a disability (currently about 16% of enrollment)
- Local communities must step up when state and federal governments don't pay their fair share
- Both of these issues are impacting local communities in PA

# How Does SEF Work?

**Like BEF, there are two components of SEF for school districts:**

1. “Base” funding (what the district got in 2013-14)
2. “Formula” funding (the district’s share of funding added after 2013-14; based on dynamic metrics)

# How Does the SEF Formula Work?

## Student-Based Factors

- tier of special ed services provided (low, intermediate, high)
- tier weights



Weighted Student Headcount (WSHC)



## District-Based Factors

- sparsity and size
- income/poverty level
  - tax effort
  - tax capacity

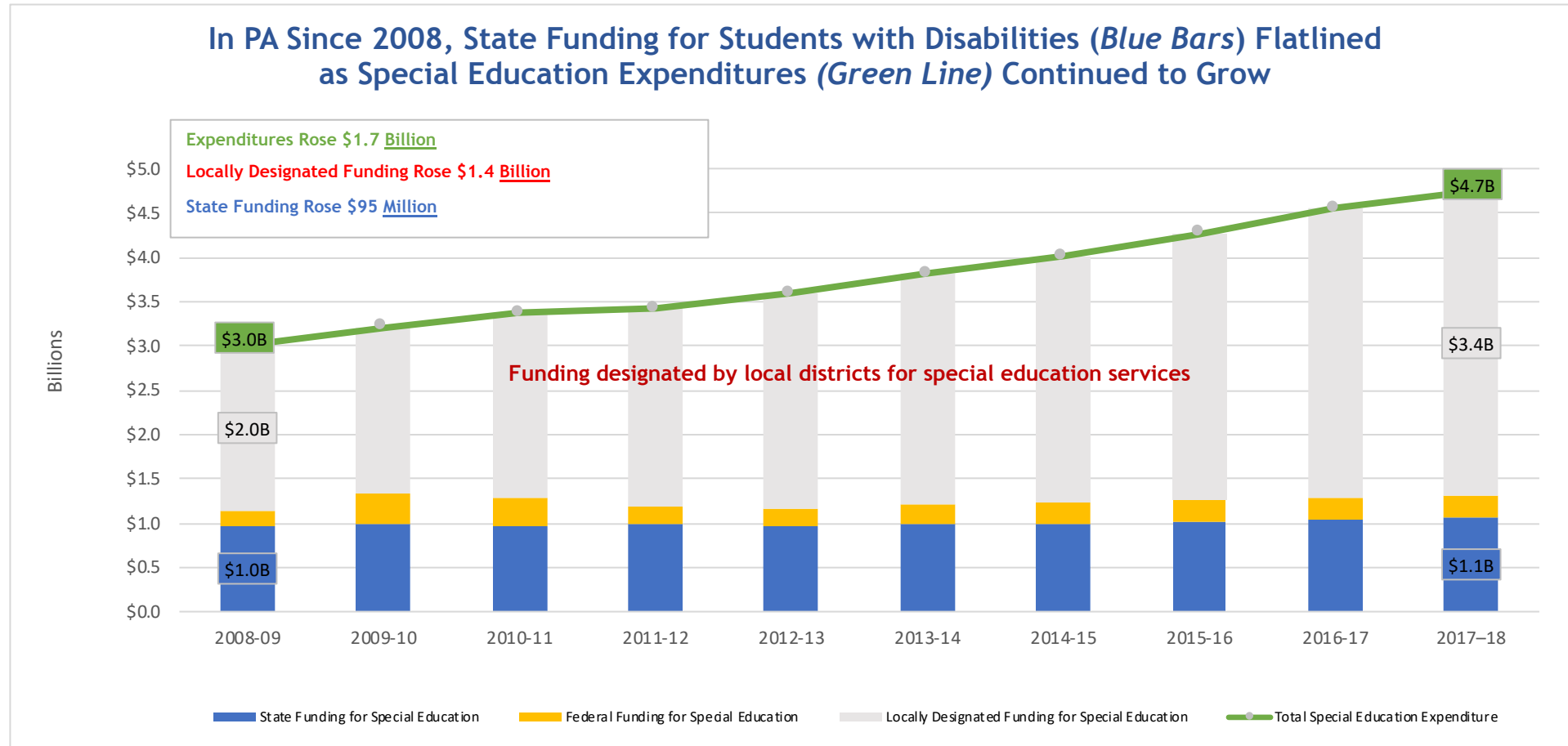


Adjusted Weighted Student Headcount



School District's Share of Funding

# How is SEF Measuring Up?





# How is SEF Measuring Up?



**PENNSYLVANIA**  
2008-2018

## **CHAMBERSBERG AREA SD**

**\$7.4 million** = ↑ special ed costs

**\$471,000** = ↑ state funding

**\$6.9 million** = local budget gap

## **WILLIAM PENN SD**

**\$10.1 million** = ↑ special ed costs

**\$535,000** = ↑ state funding

**\$9.6 million** = local budget gap

# What Should State Officials Do?

## **Commit to significant, sustained increases in SEF**

- \$50 million SEF increase in the 2019-2020 State Budget was significant – but not enough
- District costs increased by 3 times that amount last year
- Total special education costs increased by \$1.7 billion since 2008
- Annual increases of at least \$100 million needed

## **• Improve the SEF formula**

- Bipartisan Special Education Funding Commission reconvened last year to make recommendations to the SEF Formula
- Failed to issue report that was mandated to be released November 30, 2019

# What Can You Do?




Still Shortchanging Children with Disabilities:  
State Underfunding of Special Education Continues


October 2019


- **GET INFORMED:** Read our report at [bit.ly/spec-ed-report-2019](http://bit.ly/spec-ed-report-2019)
- **GET SOCIAL:** Invite your friends to “Like” PA Schools Work on Facebook & Follow on Twitter
- **SIGN UP** for PA Schools Work email updates
- **CALL/WRITE Gov. Wolf and your legislators** to discuss the importance of greater state investment in Special Education

**Katie Yost**  
**Director of Government & Chapter Relations**  
**The Arc of Pennsylvania**




 1007 Mumma Road, Suite 100

 Lemoyne, PA 17043

 717-234-2621

 W: [www.thearca.org](http://www.thearca.org)

 T: @TheArcPA


 E: [kyost@thearca.org](mailto:kyost@thearca.org)

**Reynelle Brown Staley**  
**Policy Director**  
**Education Law Center - PA**


**EDUCATION**  
**LAW CENTER**


 1800 JFK Boulevard, Suite 1900-A

 Philadelphia, PA 19103

 267-825-7710

 W: [www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org)

 T: [@edlawcenterpa](https://twitter.com/edlawcenterpa)

 E: [rstaley@elc-pa.org](mailto:rstaley@elc-pa.org)