



Low Incidence Disabilities Outreach Program

In **1986**, SESA's Low Incidence Disabilities Outreach Program was formed to offer rural and rural Remote Alaskans access to special education teachers with formal training and professional teaching experience with students who have low incidence disabilities (AS 14.30.600 – 14.30.650). Low Incidence Disabilities are rare and impact less than 1% of school-aged children. Since its inception, through trainings, on-site work, and distance delivery, SESA education specialists have used their knowledge and experience to help Alaska's school districts meet students' unique educational needs.

Our Mission

SESA provides consultation and training to support the unique educational needs of individuals and the Alaskan communities that serve them.

The following photos are just a few of the kids that SESA specialists have worked with in the past few years as they coached school staff in rural communities. We currently have active students in 51 of Alaska's 54 school districts.

The image to the right shows **Vision Impairment Education Specialist**, Angel Black, observing a student in southeast Alaska to offer educational recommendations to the school team while on-site. After each on-site visit, an anonymous satisfaction survey is sent to each recipient of the SESA report. Across 3 school years, an average 95.2% of Alaskans (672) shared that they gained knowledge about the disability and how to implement a strategy.



The image to the left is of **Multiple Disabilities Education Specialist**, Amy Topmiller, observing a student working with her teacher on a new prevocational task. School teams benefit from the cross-program collaboration that occurs often at SESA. For this student, Angel Black and Amy Topmiller worked together to determine and promote the student's visual attention (black background) and compliance (preferred seating). Prompting from the specialist was offered and then faded as the student began to understand what was being asked of her. They brought with them items from the statewide lending library for the school team to trial (e.g., Giant Texture Bead and Pattern Kit).

Since August 2025, SESA education specialists have provided **270** on-site consultations or trainings to 45 school districts. As of 1/20/26, the SESA Per Pupil Expenditure Cost Rate is **\$7,905.78**. Traveling in Alaska can be tricky. It is not uncommon for these education specialists to be weathered for multiple days away from home and their families. However, their commitment to the mission remains strong. Because of their dedication, Alaskan rural and rural remote school districts are given the opportunity to collaborate with an in-state special education teacher. At a time when teacher hiring and retention is difficult for every district, SESA educational specialists bring an average of 13 years of valuable teaching and consulting experience to offer across Alaska.

In preparation for a site visit to eastern interior Alaska, John Barrowman, **Autism Education Specialist**, visited SESA's statewide lending library to identify items (e.g., Go Talk 4+, Teeth Model, Toothbrush Timer, Self-Help Skills for People with Autism by Stephen R. Anderson) for school teams to trial. This helps save school districts' funds and increases the students' access to individualized communication and life skills resources.



As SESA specialists travel to every corner of Alaska, they not only have the opportunity to share their knowledge with students but with educators as well. SESA has a list of trainings on a wide range of topics that are available free to the Alaska school districts and can be offered by distance or in-person. **Emotional Disabilities Education Specialist**, Lyon Johnson, has frequently been asked to support complex cases and offer school and district-wide trainings throughout the school year.

Alaskan schools can depend on SESA to offer neutral, evidence-based, or best practice recommendations for both training and consultations at no cost to them. The image to the right is of **Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Specialist**, Abigail Steer, modeling a teaching strategy with the student for a school staff member on site.



In FY24, LID education specialists made a total of 185 trips to rural and remote Alaskan schools. In FY25, LID education specialists made a total of 168 trips to schools. As of 2/4/26, LID education specialists have made a total of 113 trips to schools. This data demonstrates that LID program prioritizes connecting Alaskans with specialized special education teachers within the annual budget.

Funding Need



The Low Incidence Disabilities Outreach Program is funded through a formula based on Alaska's total statewide enrollment or Annual Daily Membership (ADM) from the previous school year. As illustrated in Table 1: *FY2007 – FY2026 SESA's Funding Formula*, Alaska's ADM has decreased while SESA's LID caseload has steadily increased. Every year, education specialists are serving more children with fewer funds.

The program has funds for 13.05 FTE education specialists. To ensure school teams receive quality services, no more than 40 students are assigned per specialist. For current SESA's FY26 LID Budget, this equates to a maximum of 522 students served at any one time. Due to vacancies, SESA has staffed 11.7 FTE education specialists which means a maximum of **468** students served at one time.

During FY25, there were 19 students and school teams waitlisted in two LID programs for about two months before getting assigned to a SESA education specialist. This school year, there have been at least 14 students and school teams placed on a waitlist in the LID Autism Program. As of 2/4/26 there are 7 students still on a waitlist.

SESA's current funding formula is Previous Year's Statewide ADM x \$23.13. This rate, coupled with unprecedented inflation does not allow the addition of full-time positions to serve the rising referrals while maintaining competitive salaries.

With a funding increase to \$26.89 for the Low Incidence Disabilities Outreach Program this helps:

- Prevent LID program staff reduction.
- Increase LID program by about 3 staff.
- No waitlist or reduce the waitlist time.
- Increase on-site and individualized consultations in rural Alaska.
- Increase competitive salaries to hire and retain highly specialized special education teachers.



Table 1: FY2007 – FY2026 SESA’s Funding Formula

Statewide Enrollment	SESA Funding Rate	LID Count	FY	Historical SESA Funding	HB 246
					PY Statewide ADM x \$26.89
130,164	\$15.75	241	2007	\$2,072,312	
128,975	\$15.75	259	2008	\$2,072,312	
128,381	\$15.75	245	2009	\$2,031,304	
129,229	\$15.75	253	2010	\$2,026,100	
129,047	\$15.75	232	2011	\$2,021,600	
128,886	\$15.75	237	2012	\$2,025,955	
128,966	\$15.75	260	2013	\$2,029,953	
128,435	\$18.65	269	2014	\$2,405,207	
128,580	\$18.65	292	2015	\$2,395,317	
129,705	\$18.65	317	2016	\$2,398,020	
130,295	\$18.65	347	2017	\$2,418,993	
129,954	\$18.65	342	2018	\$2,430,008	
129,005	\$18.65	362	2019	\$2,423,645	
128,797	\$18.65	373	2020	\$2,405,942	
127,015	\$18.65	337	2021	\$2,402,061	
127,588	\$18.65	380	2022	\$2,937,864	
128,238	\$23.13	461	2023	\$2,951,038	
128,275	\$23.13	531	2024	\$2,966,146	
126,732	\$23.13	522	2025	\$2,967,004	
124,981	\$23.13	522	2026	\$2,931,304	
TBD	\$23.13	522	2027	\$2,890,820	\$3,360,750