

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Challenges for Districts in Alaska

Presented by:

Kim Saunders

Assistant Superintendent

Kodiak Island Borough School District

ksaunders01@kibsd.org

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INTRODUCTION

KIM SAUNDERS

As a self proclaimed 'Kodiak Kid' I have spent my life being either a product of or contributor to the Kodiak Island Bough School District. This is my 25th year as a special education teacher, assistant director and director of special education services and and for the past 5 years have served as the Assistant Superintendent.

Through multiple roles I have spent my career in one way or another working through and within the challeges of funding for Special Education services.

I welcome questions, comments and further discussion at any time.
ksaunders01@kibsd.org or 907 486 7550.



SPECIAL EDUCATION OVERVIEW



Federal and State Law

Individuals with Disabilities Act is implemented in Alaska through statute and regulation. This is virtually an unfunded federal mandate.

Team Decisions

Legal mandate that a team of people review data to define student needs and write a plan to address those needs.



Student Needs

Drives the plan and requirements that a school must provide.

School Compliance

School Districts must provide the resources to address the student needs, written in the plan that defined by the team.



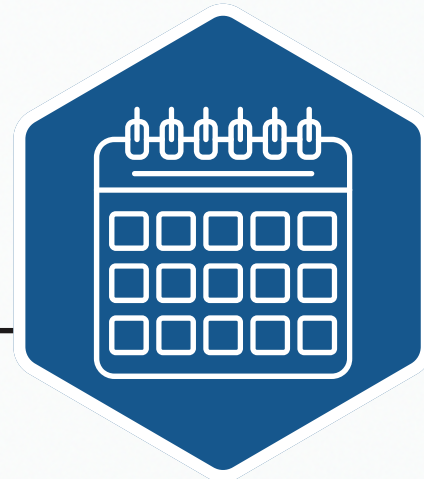
SCHOOL COMPLIANCE

School districts are required to provide what is written in a legally binding Individual Education Plan.



Individual Education Plans

These are written throughout the school year, based on when a student's needs are identified. Eligibility and needs are reviewed every three years minimally and the plan annually. Age 3 to 22.



Schools must respond no matter when in the year or location.

Students move, transition, become disabled, require new services, exit from services, are sometimes in state custody so are moved, age in, age out, migratory from rural and urban districts



The Individual Education Plan includes:

Special Education

- Academic services (Reading, writing, math, behavior, executive functioning, adaptive behavior)
- Related Services
- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Counseling
- Speech and Language Services
- Family Training
- Medical
- Interpreting









Staffing happens on a school year schedule.

Student needs are often anticipated but not known for certain so schools do their best to staff and be prepared with necessary services.

DEFINITION OF NEED



	Required Needs	Highly Technical
	Daily services from a special education teacher	Special Education Teacher Daily.
	Minimum of 1 related service	PT, OT, SLP, Counseling
	100% individualized care throughout 100% of the day	Ratio of 1:3 or 1:1 a full time aide with benefits for our district cost is 131,000 annually
	Two adaptive skills needed	Other than academics, often behavior, personal care, social skills or safety.
	Transportation	To and from school with attendant

Meets Criteria as a Student that requires an intensive level of need and the district can file for funding if attending during the October Count period.

NEEDS ARE NEEDS

Schools address them regardless of meeting a 'criteria' or funding



> Evaluation

Must have licensed/certified people in the roles required for evaluation. School Psychologists, Speech and Language, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy

> Low Incidence

Students with disabilities that require specialization and training or needs outside of a more 'typical range'

> Staffing

Individualized care is sometimes a cost at the expense of other priorities and/or not possible in a rural site. Staffing is a challenge in many entry level industries. Also, not highly paid positions.

> Special Education Teachers

Difficult to hire and retain, the teacher shortage is felt most in this area.

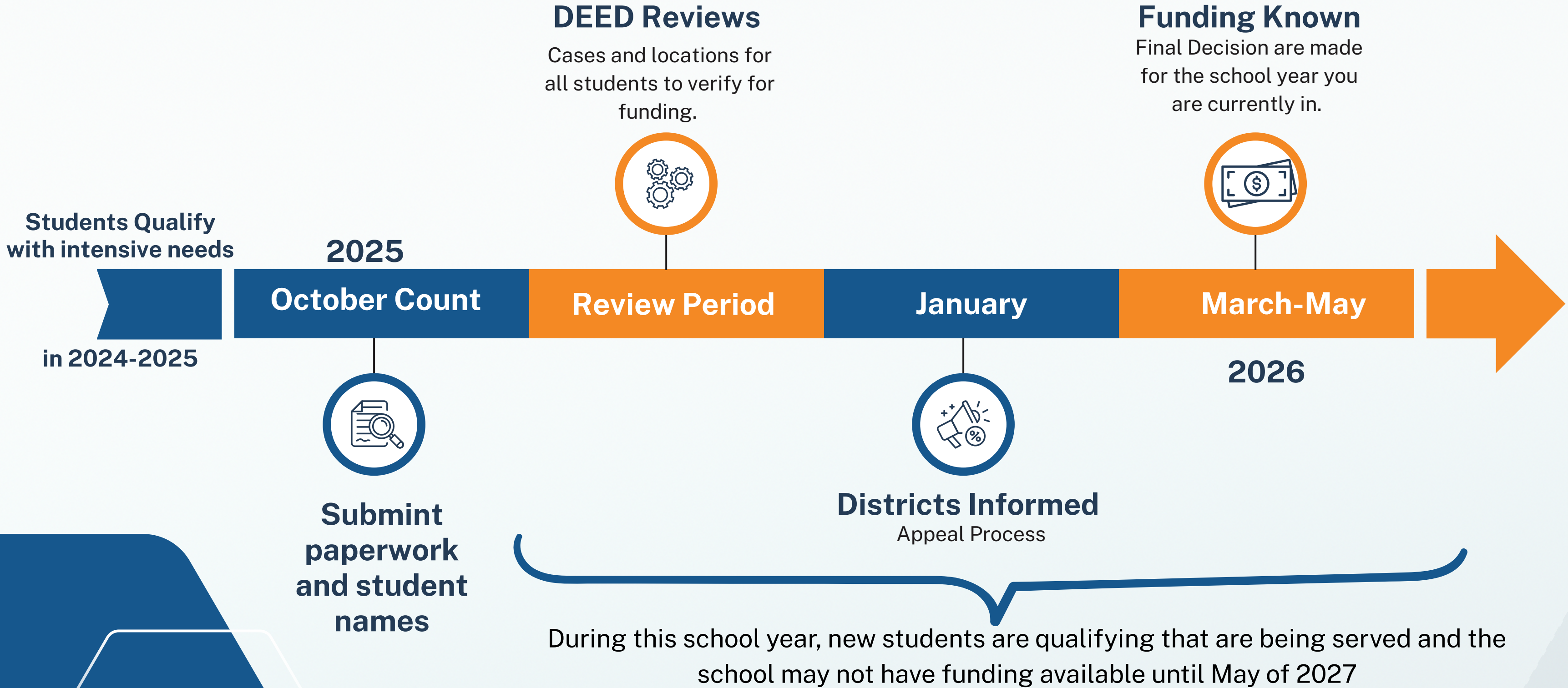
> Related Service Providers

Difficult to staff, retain, and are often expensive to contract and coordinate.

> Students with intensive needs

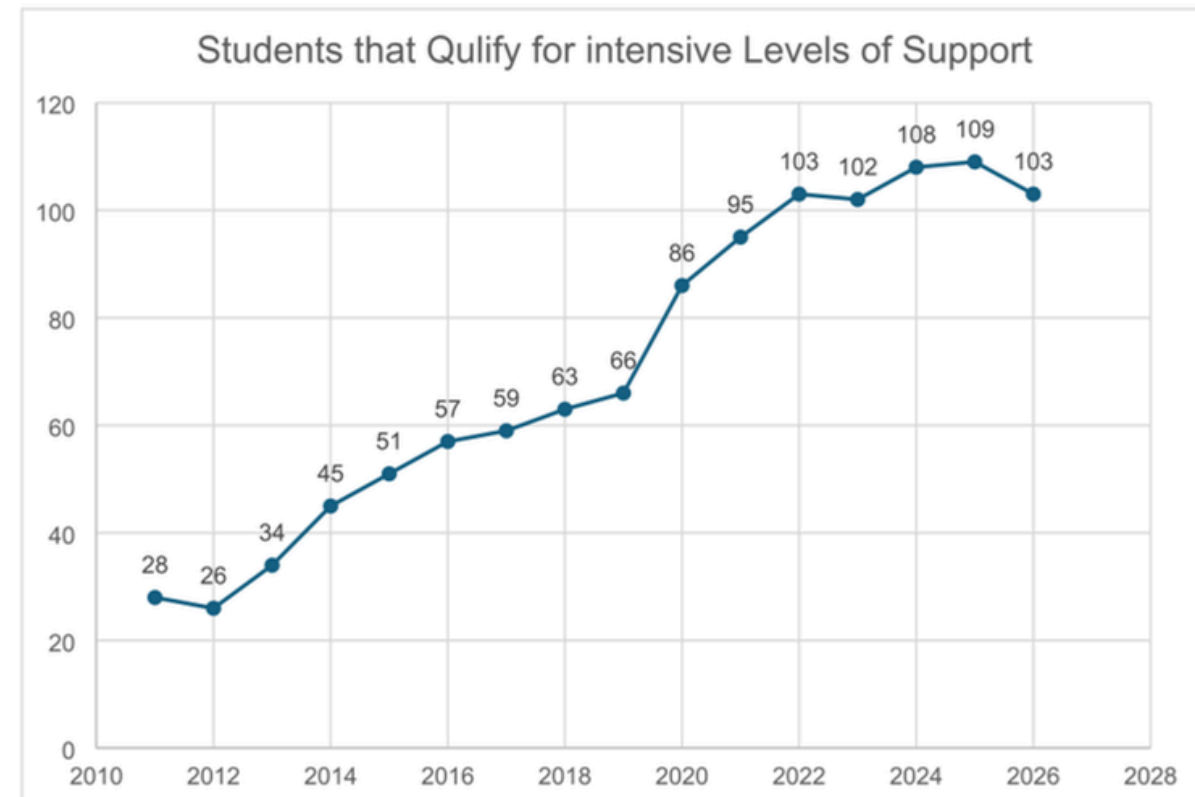
Student needs are often even more complex than the criteria for funding.

INTENSIVE FUNDING



CHALLENGES

Percentage of Students in KIBSD who have IEPs	
2019-2020	12.7
2020-2021	13.1
2021-2022	14.7
2022-2023	15.5
2023-2024	16.7
2024-2025	19.8
2025-2026	21.0



Consideration	Needs
Staffing Shortages	Apprenticeships, grow your own programs , state collaborative programs for internships & opportunities to become related service providers from in state.
Timing	Early hiring is helped by stable and predictable funding
Funding doesn't cover cost	Cost of Special Education services are increasing as student needs are increasing, inflation and cost of contracted services is higher due to high demand.
Federally and State mandates	Student needs exist regardless of Special Education regulations not being funded, schools must address the students we have when we have them.
International Hiring Closed	One pathway many districts were using in this area was international hiring and this is no longer an option.

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS



QUYANAA



ksaunders01@kibsd.org



907 486 7550



722 Mill Bay Rd.
Kodiak, Ak. 9615

