

Preschool Special Education Funding

I would like to ask the Assembly Member/Senator to support an increase in the reimbursement rates for preschool special education programs and evaluations by ten percent in the State budget.

There are a growing number of preschoolers with disabilities who are going without the class they need because inadequate reimbursement rates have created a shortage of these vital programs.

Many preschoolers with disabilities participate in universal prekindergarten classes or other non-specialized early childhood education programs where they receive supplemental services.

However, some preschoolers with more significant disabilities may need a preschool special education classroom setting because the school district has determined that a universal prekindergarten class or similar early childhood setting cannot meet their educational needs.

Preschool special education classes offer smaller class sizes and have special education teachers trained to educate students with greater challenges.

We know that research repeatedly shows that education related interventions have the greatest impact for children with disabilities when they are in their early years of neuro-development.

These early interventions save us money down the road when a child is functioning well and needs less services.

Over the past several years, more than 60 preschool special education programs around the State have closed, including more than 30 in New York City. Many of these programs have pointed to the State's insufficient reimbursement rate, making it hard for them to recruit and retain special education teachers and run high-quality programs.

NYSOTA Talking Points

New York State Occupational Therapy Association

Increasing the reimbursement rate is necessary not only to stop more programs from closing, but to help support programs so that they can open more classes for children who are still waiting for a seat

Occupational therapy practitioners in a preschool setting work together with teachers and parents to improve a child's cognitive, motor, and communication skills. They may also address issues to help children develop play and sensory processing skills.