



# North Dakota Legislative Council

Prepared for the Special Education Funding Committee  
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## RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS - BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM

Section 1 of House Bill No. 1530 (2025) ([appendix](#)) directs the Legislative Management to study special education teacher shortages, circumstances, and collective needs. The study must consider:

- Special education teacher workload, including:

- Significant and inequitable disparities in caseload numbers and complexities between educators;

- Addition of students to a special education teacher's workload throughout the year without consideration of impact on students' needs and teachers' workload;

- Lack of a subjective formula for teaching, workload, and case management assignments;

- Unsatisfactory policies and formulas adopted without special educator involvement, adequate training, or with general or vague language; and

- Burdensome workloads threatening compliance with student individual education plans and state and federal law.

- Special education student and staff safety, including:

- The unmet need for accessible, understandable, and effective emergency and crisis plans, procedures, protocols, and trained personnel available to implement them;

- Lack of training in de-escalation techniques and preventative strategies and necessary protective equipment;

- Lack of training in the use of protective equipment and restrictive procedures;

- Uncompensated time for planning and implementing behavior intervention plans (BIP) separate from teacher preparation time;

- Lack of adequate space to meet the needs of students demonstrating violent behavior;

- The unmet need for additional highly qualified paraprofessional support in situations involving students with violent behavior; and

- The inequitable treatment of injured staff who must use sick leave or unpaid leave due to injuries that occurred at work.

- Special education paraprofessional management duties, including:

- Additional expectations that education, training, and professional development of paraprofessionals are an obligation of the special education teacher;

- Additional requirements that special education teachers schedule and annually evaluate paraprofessionals;

- Inadequate availability of highly qualified paraprofessionals;

- Inadequate training in management of paraprofessionals; and

- Failure to provide additional time and compensation for paraprofessional management duties.

- Special education paperwork requirements and supports, including:
  - Lack of compensation for extensive federal, state, and disability-related required paperwork;
  - Lack of compensation to attend individual evaluation plan evaluation meetings outside the teacher's workday or during teacher preparation time; and
  - Lack of additional time, training, mentoring, administrative and professional support, and assistance necessary to manage mandatory reporting, compliance, and due process issues and requirements.
- Additional or broader considerations, pertinent data review, and plans for remediation of inequities, including projected costs and implementation timetables.

The North Dakota Protection and Advocacy Project, North Dakota United, Designer Genes of North Dakota, Inc., several special education teachers, and others offered testimony in support of House Bill No. 1530. No testimony was offered in opposition to the study. Proponents indicated a hope for the study to lead to policy reforms that enhance support for special education professionals and in turn, the students they serve.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Special education is a system of teaching designed to support each student who has a disability according to the student's individual circumstances. Students who receive special education often have disabilities that affect their ability to learn in a typical classroom environment, including learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, speech or language impairments, emotional or behavioral disorders, physical disabilities, and developmental delays. Special education teachers, general teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialists provide individualized instruction, support, and services to help each student access the general curriculum and reach their unique full potential.

Although the state is primarily responsible for the provision of education, special education delivery must comply with federal laws, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which protects the rights of students with disabilities and ensures eligible students receive free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment possible. An individualized education program, which is a legally binding document outlining a student's unique needs, learning goals, and required support, must be developed for each student eligible for services under IDEA.

To help a student with a disability achieve academic success, an educational professional may provide more intensive and individualized instruction in a general education classroom or alternative setting, including accommodations or modifications. A student also may require supportive services, including psychological services, speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, social work services, transportation, and school health services.

#### **Students with Disabilities**

Approximately 15 percent of students in the state receive an education under IDEA, which is equivalent to the national average. The percentage of public school students who receive special education services has risen over time due to a number of factors, including better and earlier identification of students who need additional support. As of December 2024, there were approximately 18,415 students in the state with a disability.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This figure includes 1 child with deafness, 4 children who are deaf and blind, 1,152 students with an emotional disability, 141 students with a hearing impairment, 724 students with an intellectual disability, 2,182 students with autism spectrum disorder, 2,771 students with a noncategorical delay, 3,163 students with a health impairment, 36 students with an orthopedic impairment, 3,080 students with a speech impairment, 5,057 students with a specific learning disability, 64 students with traumatic brain injury, and 40 students with a visual impairment.

## Special Education Teachers

### Critical Need

The state is facing a workforce shortage in the K-12 education field, including a critical need for certain content areas, including special education. In the 2022-23 school year, 8.3 percent of special education positions in the state remained unfilled or irregular. Of 1,684 total special education teacher positions in the state, approximately 74 positions were unfilled and 66 were irregular, including many teachers in irregular positions who were on a plan of study to become properly certified.

There may be individuals residing in the state who have the credentials to teach special education but are not teaching or teaching in a regular classroom. Minnesota schools reported a shortage of 500 special education teachers when the state's licensing records revealed 1,500 licensed special education teachers were working in regular teaching roles.

### Overwhelming Caseloads

A recent survey indicates 86 percent of teachers in the state are overwhelmed by their special education workload. The extensive paperwork, legally required evaluations and meetings, personnel management of special education paraprofessionals, and other duties in addition to teaching are creating unsustainable workloads, driving professionals away from careers in special education. Additionally, special education teachers frequently manage the most extreme behavioral disruptions occurring in schools, which must be managed in accordance with federal law applicable to students with disabilities.

### Leaving the Profession

A recent survey indicates 44 percent of special education teachers in the state are considering leaving the profession. Turnover in these positions exacerbates the workload requirements for the special education professionals who remain. For some special education teachers in the state, student caseloads reportedly have doubled during their career.

The critical shortage of special education teachers is widespread. On the national scale, approximately 50 percent of special education teachers leave the profession within the first 5 years of teaching. Forty-five percent of schools nationwide reported a vacancy for a special education teacher and 78 percent reported difficulty in hiring special education staff. Approximately 46,000 special education teachers leave the profession each year, while teacher preparation programs are training fewer than 30,000 new teachers to replace them.

National roundtable discussions have revealed special education teachers are leaving the field due to role ambiguity, disconnection, poor staff collaboration, lack of autonomy, lack of knowledge, lack of respect, feeling undervalued, unmanageable workloads, poor work-life balance, and burnout.

### Highly Qualified Teacher Requirements

To address the shortage of special education teachers, some states have attempted to reduce certification requirements, but IDEA prohibits a state education agency from waiving the special education or related services personnel certification or licensure requirements on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis. Under IDEA, states are required to establish and maintain qualifications to ensure special education personnel are adequately prepared and trained.

Federal law permits special education teachers to become certified through alternate routes if specific federal standards are met. Special education teachers pursuing certification through an alternate route must work as a teacher for no more than 3 years without full certification, hold at least a bachelor's degree, receive high-quality, sustained, and classroom-focused professional development before and during teaching, participate in a structured supervision or mentoring program, and demonstrate satisfactory progress toward full certification as required by the state.

### Special Education Licensure

The Education Standards and Practices Board supervises the licensure of teachers and sets standards for teacher preparation programs in the state.

There are six ways to obtain special education licensure:

- A regularly licensed teacher may pass a Special Education Praxis test and apply for the Major Equivalency Praxis Testing Endorsement;
- A regularly licensed teacher may obtain a temporary 1-year endorsement for up to 3 years with a Plan on File Endorsement, including enrollment in special education courses and a request from the teacher's school administrator;
- A regularly licensed teacher with a minor in special education may teach special education;
- An individual with a bachelor's degree may pass the American Board tests for elementary education and special education;
- An individual with a bachelor's degree and 30 credits of special education coursework may apply for an Alternate Access License; and
- A regularly licensed teacher may complete the coursework for a Special Education Minor Equivalency Endorsement.

The following specific special education endorsements are available: early childhood special education, educational diagnostician specialist, emotional disability special education, gifted and talented education, hearing impaired special education, intellectual disabilities special education, special education behavior specialist, special education minor equivalency, specific learning disabilities, strategic special education, and visually impaired special education.

A speech-language pathologist license requires a master's degree, with an approved transcript and passing Praxis test score or a current and valid speech-language pathology license from another state.

### **Paraprofessional Certificates**

Paraprofessional certification is the responsibility of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), which reviews and issues several types of paraprofessional certificates.

#### **Special Education Paraprofessional**

A paraprofessional is an individual who provides instructional support under the direction of a professional teacher. Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support to individuals with disabilities must complete 20 hours of inservice training within 1 year of employment.

#### **Special Education Technician**

A special education technician is an individual who is authorized by DPI to conduct academic and behavioral screenings, document student progress, assist with regulatory paperwork, participate in multidisciplinary team meetings, prepare materials, assist with scheduling, and assist with maintaining space and equipment under the supervision of a special education teacher. Special education technicians must have completed 40 hours of special education college coursework and a two-credit transcribable minimum of 100 hours of fieldwork experience.

#### **Title I Paraprofessional**

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act, Title I paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or its equivalent and meet one of the following requirements:

- Obtained a working knowledge in reading, mathematics, and writing by completing 48 semester hours at an accredited institution of higher education;
- Obtained an associate's degree; or
- Met a rigorous and objective standard of quality, which includes a state-approved assessment of skills in reading, mathematics, and writing.

### **Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional**

A speech-language pathology paraprofessional must hold a North Dakota certificate of completion for speech-language pathology.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION LAW**

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

Public schools were not always required to provide education for children with disabilities. Some state laws once permitted schools to deny access to children with disabilities. Some children received a private education, but most were kept at home with family members, and children with severe disabilities were institutionalized. On November 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act [Pub. L. 94-142; 89 Stat. 773], now known as IDEA. Congress reauthorized IDEA in 2004 and most recently amended IDEA through the Every Student Succeeds Act [Pub. L. 114-95; 20 U.S.C. 6301] in December 2015. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires public schools to provide children with disabilities FAPE designed to meet each child's unique needs. Under IDEA, Congress declares, "[d]isability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act protects the rights of children with disabilities and authorizes the federal government to ensure states comply with the Act. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to issue an annual determination for each state, based on the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report. North Dakota currently satisfies the requirements and purposes of IDEA.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides states with formula grants for the excess costs of providing special education and related services, including for preschool children, and early intervention services for infants and toddlers. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act also provides discretionary grants to eligible applicants, including state educational agencies, tribal organizations, institutions of higher education, and other nonprofit organizations.

Rather than reauthorizing IDEA, many educational organizations are advocating for Congress to "fully fund" IDEA. Since its original enactment, IDEA has authorized federal funding to pay states 40 percent of the average per student cost for special education services. However, IDEA currently funds approximately 10 percent of those costs, or approximately \$1,810 per student. After initially introducing the IDEA Full Funding Act in 2023, United States Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and United States Representative Jared Huffman (D-Calif.) reintroduced the Act in 2025. The IDEA Full Funding Act would require increases in federal funding until the 40 percent pledge is fulfilled.

### **Individualized Education Program**

Under IDEA, each public agency must have an IEP designed to provide FAPE for each child with a disability at the beginning of each school year. Each child referred to the program must undergo an evaluation to determine whether the child is eligible for services, but only after the school obtains informed, written consent from the child's parent. A child eligible for services must be diagnosed with a disability adversely affecting the child's education under one of IDEA's 13 recognized disability categories--autism spectrum disorder, deaf-blindness, deafness, emotional disturbance, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, or visual impairment including blindness.

If a child is eligible for services, a meeting is scheduled with an IEP team assembled for the child, which includes the child, as appropriate, the child's parents, regular education teachers, special education teachers, and other specialists. An IEP must comply with detailed procedures established in IDEA and be developed in the child's IEP team meeting, during which the parents and student are encouraged to contribute as equal members of the IEP team. The IEP must include information regarding the child's

current performance, annual goals, special education and related services, participation with nondisabled children, participation in state and districtwide tests, dates and places for services, transition planning and services for post-school goals, rights upon reaching the age of majority, and measuring progress. The IEP team determines the student's placement, which must be in the least restrictive environment possible, which may include a regular or special class, a special school, the child's home, or a medical facility. Once the IEP is developed, it must be reviewed periodically and revised as needed by the IEP team.

### **Free and Appropriate Public Education - *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District***

On March 22, 2017, the United States Supreme Court clarified the standard for a "free and appropriate public education," *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District Re-1*, 137 S. Ct. 988 (2017), a term defined under 34 CFR 300.17 as special education and related services that are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge; meet the standards of the state educational agency; include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, or secondary school education in the state; and are provided in conformity with the child's IEP. The Court emphasized IDEA's focus on the individual child and asserted "every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives," rejecting the "merely more than de minimis" standard espoused by some lower courts. According to the Court, an IEP is not merely a form but a program that must be "constructed only after careful consideration of the child's present levels of achievement, disability, and potential for growth." The Court held a substantively adequate program of education is met if the IEP is "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances."

### **Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans**

A functional behavioral assessment (FBA) is a process designed to address a student's specific behavior interfering with the student's education. Behaviors such as tantrums, hitting, biting, verbal aggression, blurting out in class, not staying on task, and not staying seated affect the student's ability to participate and focus. If the student is removed from class, suspended, or expelled the student's education is further impacted. Exclusionary punishment for student behaviors deprives the student of access to instruction as well as behavioral support, which is likely to result in long-term problems for the student, including decreased academic achievement and increased absenteeism and involvement in juvenile justice.

An FBA examines what triggers the behavior, what consequences result from the behavior, and what the function or purpose of the behavior is. The function may be the attention the child receives, means to escape the task before them, or the facilitation of a sensory reaction. After the challenging behavior has been assessed, a BIP is created for the student. A BIP includes positive strategies to encourage acceptable behavior and may require modified instruction, various types of support or intervention, or a different environment.

An FBA is required in certain scenarios under IDEA. If a student with a disability is disciplined for behavior determined to be a manifestation of a disability, the IEP team is required to conduct an FBA and implement a BIP. If an FBA and BIP are already included in the student's IEP, the IEP team must review and modify them as necessary. Even if the behavior is not a manifestation of the child's disability, if a student is removed from their placement for more than 10 consecutive days, an FBA and BIP are required.

### **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a federal civil rights law protecting qualified individuals from discrimination based on disability by any program, entity, or activity that receives federal funds. Section 504 is enforced by the Office of Civil Rights, whereas IDEA is administered by the United States Department of Education.

Like IDEA, Section 504 contains requirements for FAPE for students with disabilities. However, there are important distinctions under each law. A disability under Section 504 is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. "Major life activities" is a broadly

defined term under Section 504, including physical and psychological functions such as seeing, hearing, speaking, sleeping, walking, standing, breathing, eating, caring for oneself, learning, concentrating, reading, writing, interacting with others, communicating, performing manual tasks, and functions of the immune system, digestive track, and respiratory and circulatory systems. Because of this broad definition, students who are ineligible for services under IDEA often qualify for a Section 504 plan.

Under Section 504, FAPE is the provision of regular or special education and related aids and services, designed to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities as adequately as the needs of nondisabled students are met, which is based on adherence to procedures governing educational setting, evaluation and placement, and procedural safeguards. School districts often use a written Section 504 plan to document the school district's identification of the needs of a student with a disability and the school district's plan to address those needs. Unlike IDEA, Section 504 does not require an IEP. However, implementation of an IEP is one method to meet the Section 504 FAPE requirement.

### **North Dakota Century Code**

North Dakota Century Code Chapter 15.1-32 governs many aspects of special education, including providing the state administrative structure for special education, which includes the employment of a Director of Special Education; requiring the establishment of a multidisciplinary team for each student with a disability; requiring the district of residence to pay for special education costs; and requiring dyslexia screening and intervention.

Chapter 15.1-32 provides a framework for school districts to join or form a multidistrict special education unit to plan and deliver special education services.

Chapter 15.1-34 governs boarding home care for students with disabilities.

### **North Dakota Administrative Code**

North Dakota Administrative Code Article 67-23 requires each school district to have a comprehensive general plan for special education; governs state funding for special education, including contracted services; provides guidance for applying for federal funding under Part B of IDEA; provides guidance for dispute resolution; provides a framework for a response to an intervention system used to evaluate students needs for services; and provides guidance for postsecondary transitions for students.

## **RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES**

### **Compensation**

In general, teacher salaries are less than other professional college graduate salaries. In many districts, special education teachers earn approximately equivalent compensation to regular teachers, despite the additional duties assigned to special education teachers. Teachers consistently cite low pay as a primary consideration for leaving the profession. In some states, teachers have seen increased pay through legislation or union action. Methods to provide increased compensation include minimum salaries, stipends, and bonuses.

### **Minimum Salary**

At least 25 states have introduced legislation aimed at increasing teacher compensation for all educators, including setting a minimum salary. South Dakota enacted legislation in 2024 raising the minimum teaching salary to \$45,000, which reportedly exceeded the average base salary in the United States. Iowa raised the minimum teaching salary to \$47,500 in 2024 and to \$50,000 in 2025. Virginia introduced legislation requiring public school teachers to be compensated at a rate equal to or above the national average and receive a 4.5 percent annual pay increase over 4 years.

### **Stipends**

Stipends are frequently used to pay teachers for completing duties exceeding contractual obligations. In the special education context, stipends may be appropriate for case managing a number of students exceeding a defined caseload limitation or a student with more complex educational, behavioral, or disability-related needs, particularly when additional administrative responsibilities are necessary. Sixty-

eight percent of districts surveyed in Texas reported incentivizing special education teachers with stipends ranging from \$200 to \$14,000. The Houston Independent School District recently increased the minimum salary for a special education teacher to \$80,000 and paid a \$1,000 stipend to all special education teachers.

### **Bonuses**

In 2020, Hawaii implemented a bonus policy, increasing all special education salaries by \$10,000. Additionally, the Hawaii Department of Education provides "shortage differentials" ranging from \$3,000 to \$10,000 to teachers in hard-to-staff schools. As a result, the salary of a first-year special education teacher in Hawaii employed at a hard-to-staff school increased from \$49,100 to \$67,100. The policy reportedly recruited regular classroom teachers to transfer into special education, especially in hard-to-staff schools, but did not affect retention. Other states and districts have followed suit. Fulton County School Systems in Georgia offered \$7,500 bonuses to fill special education vacancies in 2022.

### **Caseload or Workload Limitations**

Establishing appropriate special education caseload or workload parameters may promote a healthy work-life balance for teachers and ensure the needs of students are met. A caseload limitation limits the number of students a special education teacher is responsible for. Alternatively, a policy may establish parameters related to workload. Workload considers all responsibilities of the teacher and the extent of each student's individual needs, including student contact minutes, evaluation and re-evaluation time, indirect services, management of IEPs, travel time, and other services required in the IEPs of eligible students. Workload standards are often expressed in minutes or hours.

### **Caseload Limitations**

Students receiving special education and related services may be enrolled in general classes. In California, a resource specialist teacher provides support to students in the regular classroom and pulls out students as needed to supplement instruction. California law limits special education resource specialist caseloads to 28 students, but a waiver is not necessary for up to 32 students.

Following years of excessive caseloads for special education teachers, the San Diego Education Association's Union successfully negotiated a contract ensuring special education teachers' caseloads do not exceed 20 mild/moderate students or 12 moderate/severe students. Additionally, the contract limits the caseloads for deaf and hard of hearing educators to 20 students, speech-language pathologists to 55 elementary and secondary students or 40 early childhood students, and separate setting classes to 12 students. If the limitation is exceeded, the school district must reassign the additional students or offer additional compensation per student.

### **Workload Limitations**

Minnesota law requires school districts to establish a board-approved policy for determining workload limitations for special education staff based on student contact minutes, evaluation and re-evaluation times, indirect services, IEPs managed, travel time, and other services required in the IEPs of eligible students. This law applies to staff who work with students who receive direct special education for up to 60 percent of the school day. Minnesota provides specific caseload maximums for teachers of students who receive direct special education for more than 60 percent of the day, depending on the specific disability of the student and the severity of the disability.

### **Classroom Size Limitations**

Students with disabilities may be placed in a special education class instead of a regular classroom. Many states have caps on the number of students per class, often ranging from 6 to 12 students per teacher, depending on the severity of the students' needs.

New York law limits the caseload for a resource room teacher to 20 kindergarten through grade 6 students and 25 students in grade 7 and above. New York also limits teachers to working with no more than 5 students with disabilities at a time, or up to 12 students with disabilities in an integrated co-teaching classroom.

In New York, special education classes may have up to 6, 8, or 12 students per class per special education teacher, with one or more school personnel, such as a paraprofessional assigned. The ratio depends on the severity of the students' needs.<sup>2</sup>

The rule of thumb in a general education classroom is to maintain a 70/30 split, limiting the number of students with an IEP in each class to approximately 30 percent to ensure all students' educational needs are met.

### **Team-Based Staffing Models**

Team-based staffing models in special education offer a collaborative approach that takes the sole responsibility for providing education to a student with a disability away from the special educator and instead fosters shared responsibility between a team of special education teachers, general education teachers, and other special education support staff. Benefits of team-based staffing include increased individualized support for students, reduced teacher isolation for special education professionals, expansion of general teachers' knowledge of specialized pedagogy, community building, and increased compliance with student IEPs.

### **Incentivized Certification**

Scholarships, grants, loan forgiveness, and other incentive programs can lessen the financial burden of pursuing a career in education and encourage teachers to stay in the state. In North Dakota, there are several initiatives designed to recruit special education teachers. The various programs target students in high school, special education paraprofessionals, and current educators holding bachelor's degrees in education.

### **Educator Pathway Program**

From 2024 to 2027, the United State Department of Education Office of Specially Designed Services is using IDEA funding to pay for high school students to take dual-credit coursework through the Educator Pathway Program. The program includes five online courses that introduce high school students to the education field. Mayville State University, Minot State University, Valley City State University, and the University of Mary are participating in the Educator Pathway Program. Students can combine specific courses to earn a special education paraprofessional certification from DPI.

### **Paraprofessional to Teacher Pathway**

Minot State University offers a Paraprofessional to Teacher Pathway to currently employed special education paraprofessionals who have at least 1 year of experience and the support of their school administrator, special education unit coordinator or director, and a special education teacher. Program participants may continue working as paraprofessionals while earning a bachelor's degree in special education.

### **Resident Teacher Program**

The University of North Dakota offers special education teachers the opportunity to earn a master's degree in special education through a 1-year program consisting of online coursework and on-the-job training. The school district or special education unit pays for the program and the resident teachers earn a stipend and scholarship, but may be responsible for university fees, books, and some tuition.

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<sup>2</sup>For students with academic and behavioral management needs that interfere with instruction, one special education teacher and one paraprofessional may teach up to 12 students. For students with more intensive management needs requiring a significant degree of individualized attention, one special education and one paraprofessional may teach up to 8 students. For students with highly intensive management needs requiring a high degree of individualized attention and intervention, one special education teacher and one paraprofessional may teach up to 6 students. For students with multiple disabilities who require a program emphasizing habilitation and treatment, one special education teacher and one support staff for every 3 students may teach up to 12 students.

### **Traineeship Scholarship**

The Traineeship Scholarship is a scholarship awarded to current educators to retrain in graduate-level special education endorsement areas. There are a limited number of scholarships made available depending on the need of the special education unit, letters of recommendation, transcripts, licensure, and acceptance into a graduate program.

### **Speech-Language Pathology Loan Forgiveness Program**

The Speech-Language Pathology Loan Forgiveness Program recruits graduate-level speech-language pathology students at Minot State University, the University of North Dakota, and the University of Mary to work in North Dakota public schools. Up to 10 students receive \$10,000 each year they accept the award, which will be paid after the recipient completes a contract with a North Dakota public school district or special education unit.

### **Speech-Language Pathology Paraprofessional Scholarship**

The Department of Public Instruction awards 10 scholarships each year to students accepted into the speech-language pathology paraprofessional program at Lake Region State College.

### **International Teachers**

Some school districts in the United States are recruiting international teachers through J-1 and H-1B visa programs. This approach has the added benefit of diversifying the teaching workforce. Many teachers are recruited from the Philippines, India, and Jamaica. The J-1 visa is part of the United States Exchange Visitor Program, designed to promote cultural exchange. Teachers with a J-1 visa may work in United States schools for up to 3 years, with the possibility of an extension granting an additional 2 years. The H-1B is a nonimmigrant work visa for specialty occupations requiring at least a bachelor's degree. Teachers with an H-1B visa may work in United States schools for up to 3 years, with the possibility of an extension granting an additional 3 years.

## **SUGGESTED STUDY APPROACH**

In conducting the study of recruitment and retention of special education teachers, the committee may wish to receive testimony from:

- School administrators, special education teachers, and special education paraprofessionals regarding:
  - Special education teacher workload;
  - Student and staff safety;
  - Paraprofessional management duties;
  - Paperwork requirements;
  - Recruitment and retention strategies; and
  - Additional considerations;
- A representative of the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders regarding its membership's perspective on study topics;
- A representative of the North Dakota Special Education Study Council regarding study topics;
- A representative of North Dakota United regarding the Special Education Collective and study topics;
- The North Dakota Director of Special Education and other representatives of DPI regarding pertinent data, recruitment and retention strategies, including projected costs and implementation timetables, and other study topics;
- A representative from the Education Standards and Practices Board and institutions of higher education regarding licensure and study programs related to recruitment and retention strategies;
- A representative from the Office of Global Talent regarding recruiting international teachers; and

- A representative from the National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services or other advocates for special education professionals regarding pertinent data and recommendations for addressing personnel shortages.

ATTACH:1