

School Funding Interim Commission Draft Final Report
Amendment #7 (Rep. Kelker) on various sections related to special needs

1. Page 3, lines 18-21.

Strike: lines 18 through 21

Insert:

- Special education and special needs—the commission heard testimony as to the financial difficulties faced by districts and special education cooperatives and recommended an increase to the state special education payment as well as further study of reliable funding for gifted and talented and real costs vs. funding of special education.

2. Page 19, line 12, following “content area.”

Insert: Special education cooperatives, that by definition serve smaller schools, have difficulty attracting specialized related service personnel like speech/language pathologists, physical and occupational therapists, and school psychologists.

3. Page 24, lines 26-28.

Strike: “Rather” on line 26 through “ANB.” on line 28

Insert: Rather the amount appropriated by the state is based on the assumption that about 10% of the public school population will be identified as having disabilities. Based on their ANB, school districts receive two types of block grants, an Instructional Block Grant and a Related Services Block Grant. Smaller districts that belong to cooperatives turn over their block grants to the cooperatives that provide special education services. Local districts, however hire their special education teachers. Depending on the mix of special education students they have, districts may receive additional funding to reimburse them for providing specialized services for complex, high cost students and cooperatives receive additional funding for staff travel and coop administration.

4. Page 25, line 12, following “20-9-326, MCA.”

Insert: Special education costs go up with inflation in the same way that costs for general education go up. Because special education is a mandated service, when special education is not given an inflationary increase, the cost of higher expenses due to inflation has to be borne by the general fund in school districts.

5. Page 26, line 43, following “life skills.”

Insert: Special education state and federal law that has been in place since 1975, requires that special education students with severe disabilities receive education tailored to their needs which means that they receive life skills instruction from the time they are identified as having disabilities until they graduate from high school. Because the costs of providing services for this student population usually exceed the state funding and the proposed program is voluntary, it is unlikely that the number of districts providing this opportunity will increase dramatically.