

IV. SPECIAL EDUCATION

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Special education services are provided directly to students by local school districts and are funded from federal grants, state appropriations, and local dollars. All special education services are delivered in accordance with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) developed for each special needs student as required by federal law. Among other things, the IEP contains goals and objectives for student achievement, placement information, and a description of the supportive services necessary for a student to benefit from special education.

The Nevada Department of Education (NDE) oversees special education programs provided by school districts. State authority, responsibilities, services, and direction to local districts are outlined in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) Chapter 395, “Education of Persons with Disabilities,” and in Chapter 395 of the *Nevada Administrative Code*. To a great extent, both the NDE and local school districts are bound by federal legislation and regulations governing the provision of services to students with special educational needs.

The special education student population in Nevada has grown at an annual rate of over 6 percent over the last five years and it has increased at a faster rate, since 1992, than has the general student population. Special needs students now comprise about 9.7 percent of the total school population (ages 6 through 17). This 9.7 percent enrollment figure is lower than the nationwide average of 11.3 percent for special needs students.

In 2000-2001, the average cost, statewide, for educating a disabled student in Nevada was \$14,260 per year, which includes the expenses for general education classes, special education programs, and related services. For the 2000-2001 school year, the total cost to educate students with disabilities (including general education costs) in Nevada was \$255 million paid from a combination of federal, state, and local dollars.

In Nevada, special education services are funded from a combination of local, state, and federal sources. State support is provided through the Distributive School Account (DSA) in two forms. First, the DSA includes an appropriation for the actual number of teachers in the previous fiscal year, including special education teachers, at the current average salary and benefit level plus a percentage

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“roll-up” for salary increases and student enrollment growth. This amount plus the amounts for other educational expenditures are used to determine a per-pupil basic support guarantee from the state to local school districts. In addition, the Legislature funds a certain number of “units” for special education allocated to school districts each year. A unit is defined as the salary and benefits for one special education teacher. The unit funding can only be used to support special education teacher salaries and benefits.

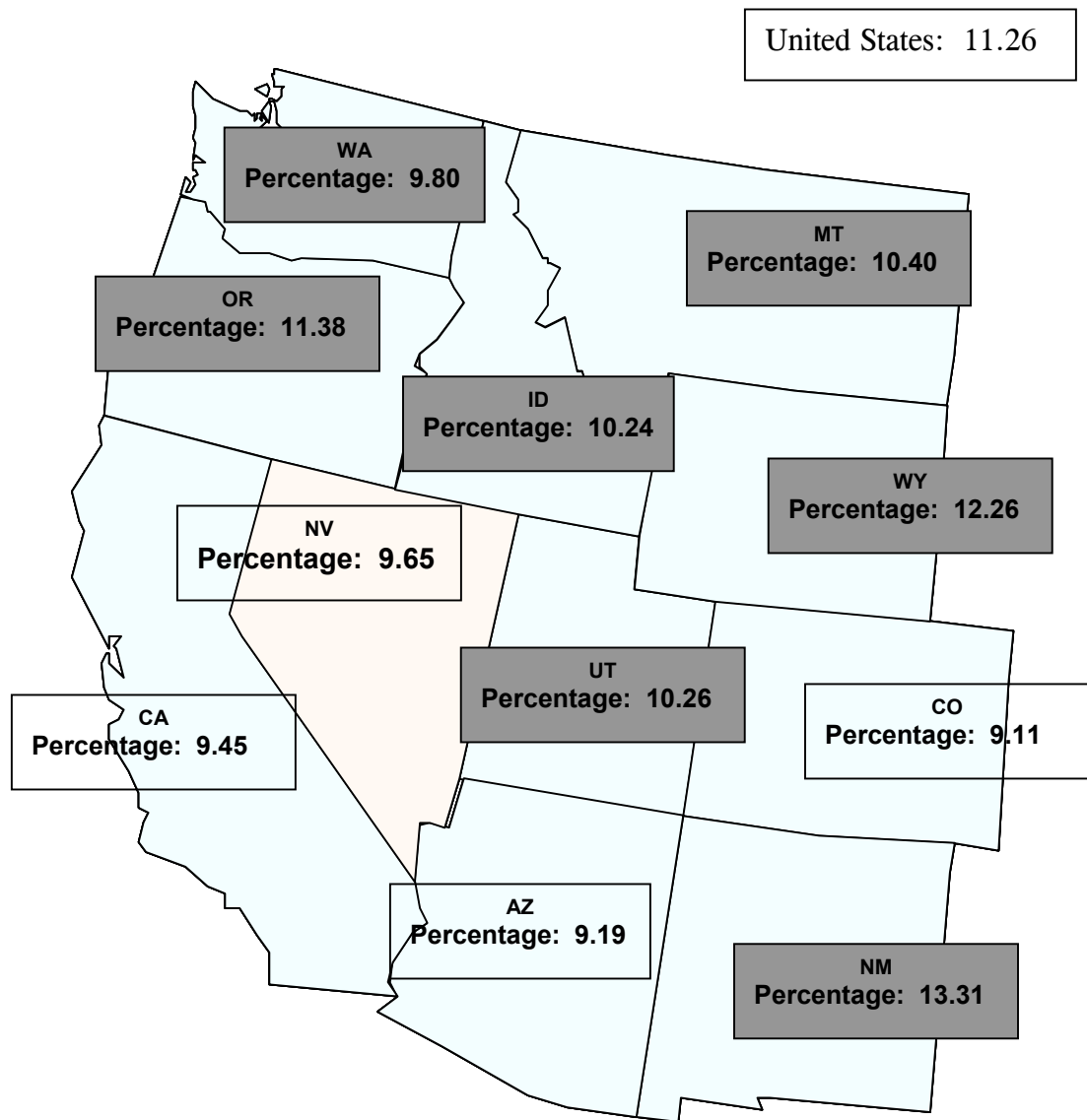
The Legislature funded 2,402 units in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001-2002 at \$29,977 per unit for a total of \$72,004,754. In FY 2002-2003, 2,514 units were funded by the Legislature at \$30,576 per unit for a total appropriation of \$76,868,064.

The amount allocated for each unit falls short of the actual costs of salaries and benefits for special education teachers, who normally have more education and experience than other teachers. This requires school districts to use money from the local general fund to pay the difference between the amount funded by the state and the actual cost of providing special education services. Some money is available from federal sources and grants, but it has historically been very small. Last year Congress funded 15 percent of the total cost – the most it has ever contributed; originally it promised the states that it would fund up to 40 percent of the cost.

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PERCENTAGE SERVED

WESTERN STATE COMPARISON: PERCENTAGE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION CHILDREN (AGES 6-17) SERVED UNDER IDEA – 1999-2000 SCHOOL YEAR



Source: 23rd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), May 2002



Higher Percentage Than Nevada

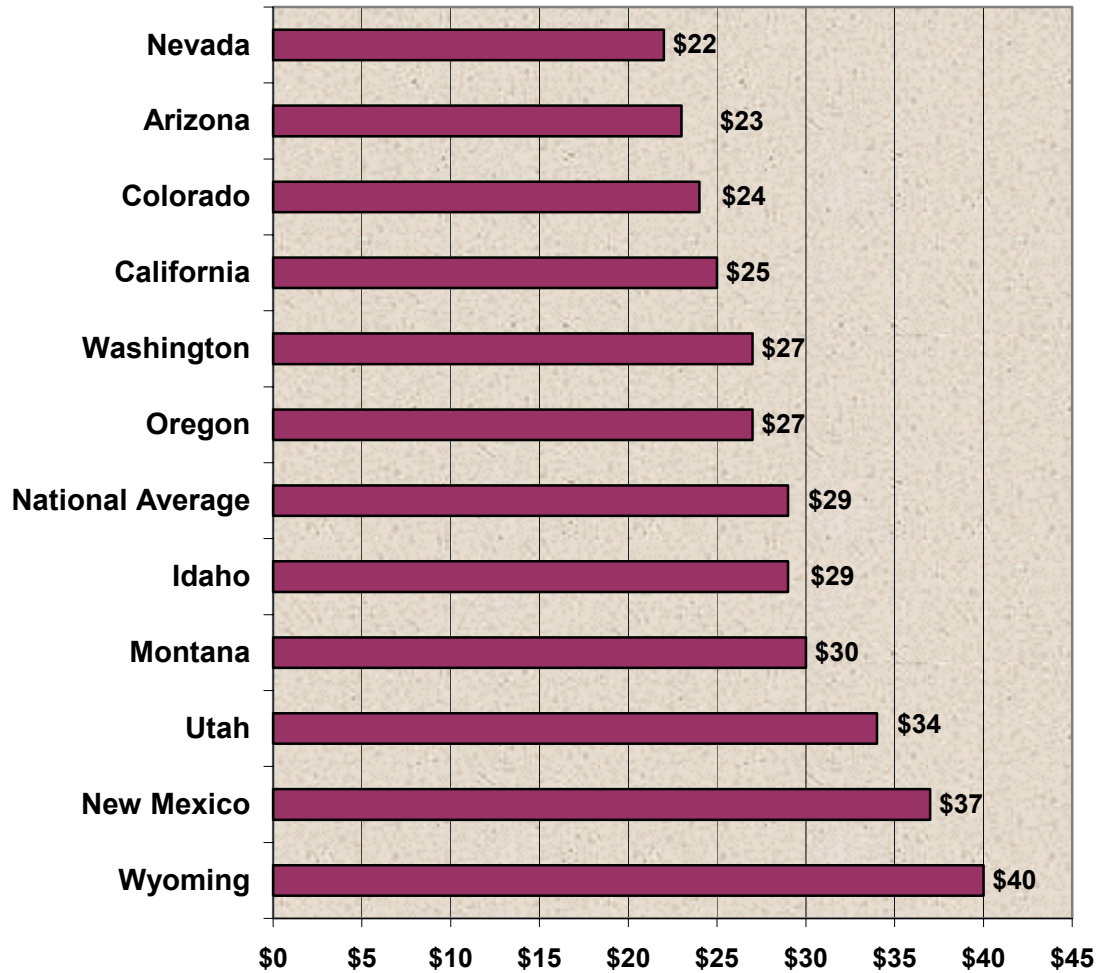


Lower Percentage Than Nevada

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SPECIAL EDUCATION GRANTS

**Per Capita Total Federal Government
Special Education Grants to States in 2002**

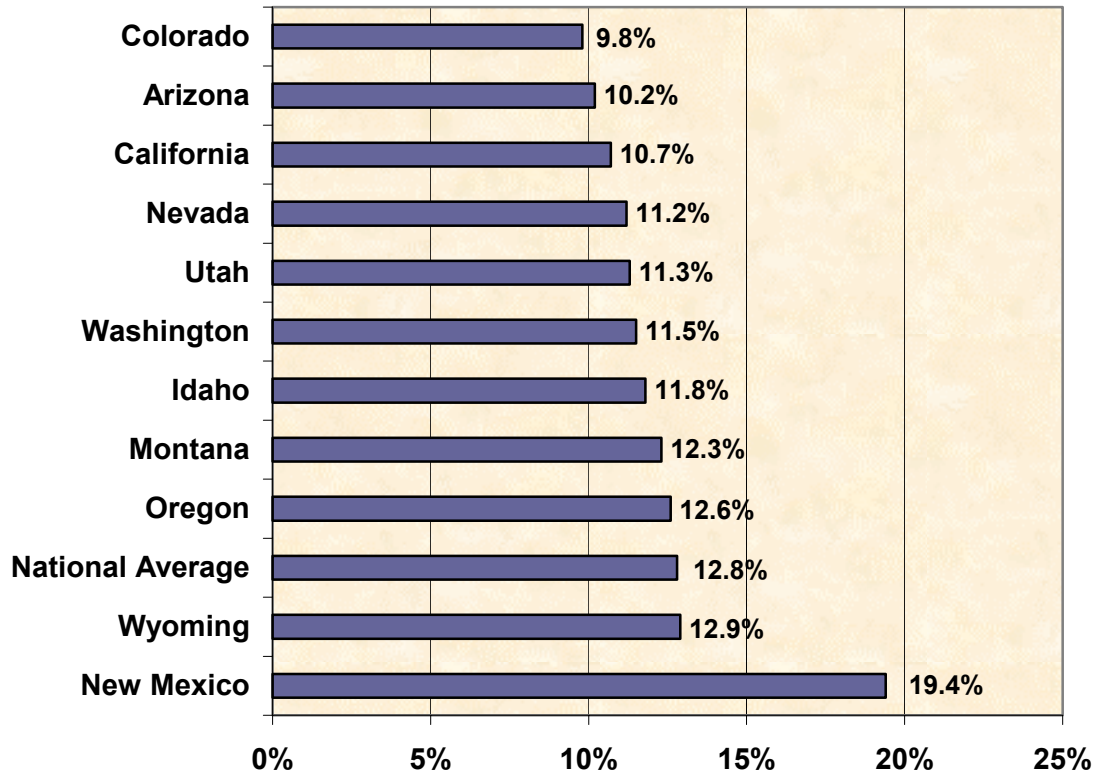


Source: U.S. Department of Education, *FY 2003 State Tables*, in *Education State Rankings 2002-2003*.

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STUDENTS WITH IPES

**Percent of Public Elementary and Secondary School
Students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
in 2001**



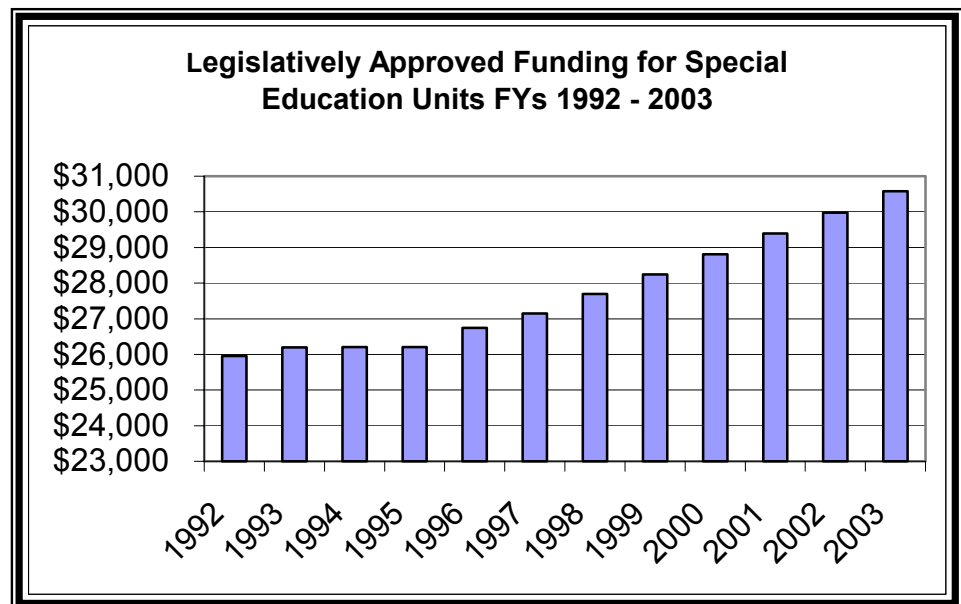
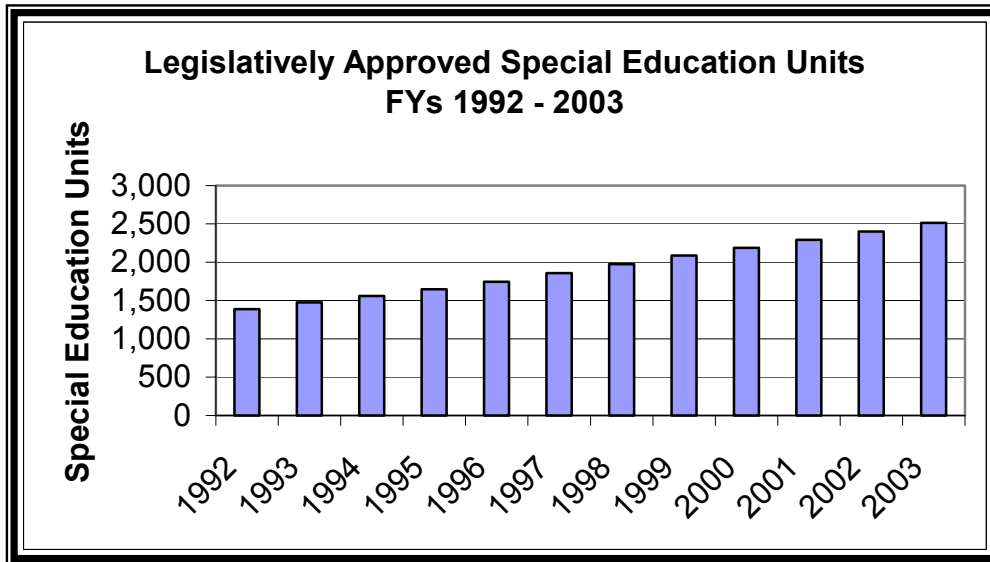
Source: U.S. Department of Education, NCES, "Overview of Public Elementary and Secondary Schools and Districts: School Year 2000-2001," in *Education State Rankings 2002-2003*.



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UNIT FUNDING

Nevada: Special Education Unit Funding Fiscal Years 1992-2003



Source: Nevada Legislative Appropriations Report, September 2001

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UNIT FUNDING

Nevada: Special Education Unit Funding
Fiscal Years 1994 – 2003
(Number Approved and Unit Amount)

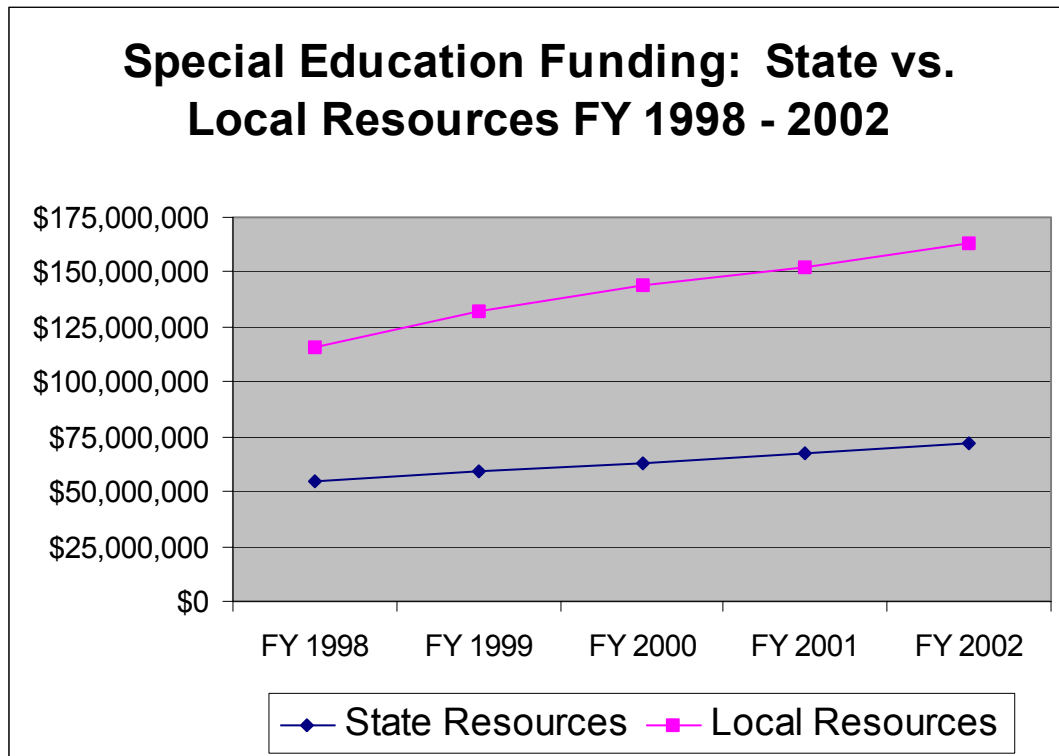
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Legislatively Approved</u>
2003	2,514 @ \$30,576
2002	2,402 @ \$29,977
2001	2,291 @ \$29,389
2000	2,186 @ \$28,813
1999	2,088 @ \$28,248
1998	1,976 @ \$27,694
1997	1,857 @ \$27,151
1996	1,746 @ \$26,740
1995	1,645 @ \$26,208
1994	1,560 @ \$26,208

Source: Nevada Department of Education

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NEVADA: SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING STATE VS. LOCAL RESOURCES

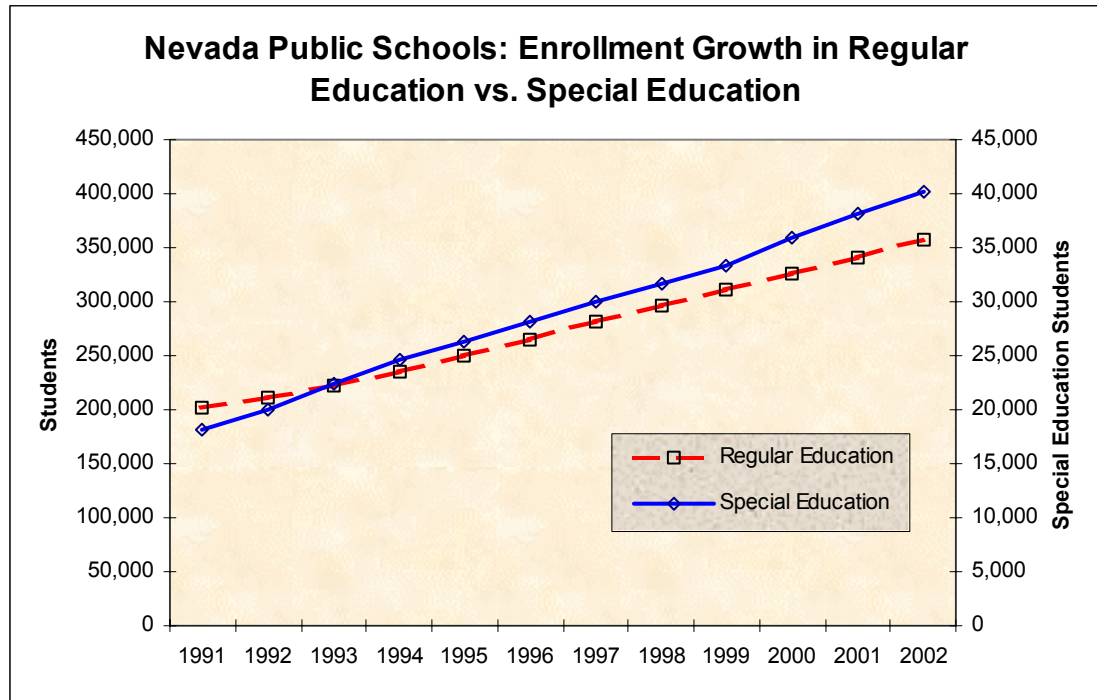


Fiscal Year	State Resources	Local Resources
FY 1998	\$54,723,344	\$116,198,395
FY 1999	\$58,981,824	\$132,014,493
FY 2000	\$62,985,216	\$143,861,090
FY 2001	\$67,330,199	\$151,949,548
FY 2002	\$72,004,752	\$163,313,519

Source: Nevada Department of Education

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School Year	Regular Education Enrollment	Percent Increase	Special Education Enrollment*	Percent Increase
2002	356,814	4.7	40,196	5.00
2001	340,706	4.6	38,165	6.00
2000	325,610	4.70	35,847	7.60
1999	311,063	4.87	33,294	4.90
1998	296,621	5.14	31,726	5.90
1997	282,131	6.45	29,946	6.20
1996	265,041	5.70	28,174	6.80
1995	250,747	6.30	26,345	7.00
1994	235,800	5.81	24,624	9.90
1993	222,846	5.21	22,402	12.20
1992	211,810	5.21	19,957	10.50
1991	201,316	7.75	18,065	9.80

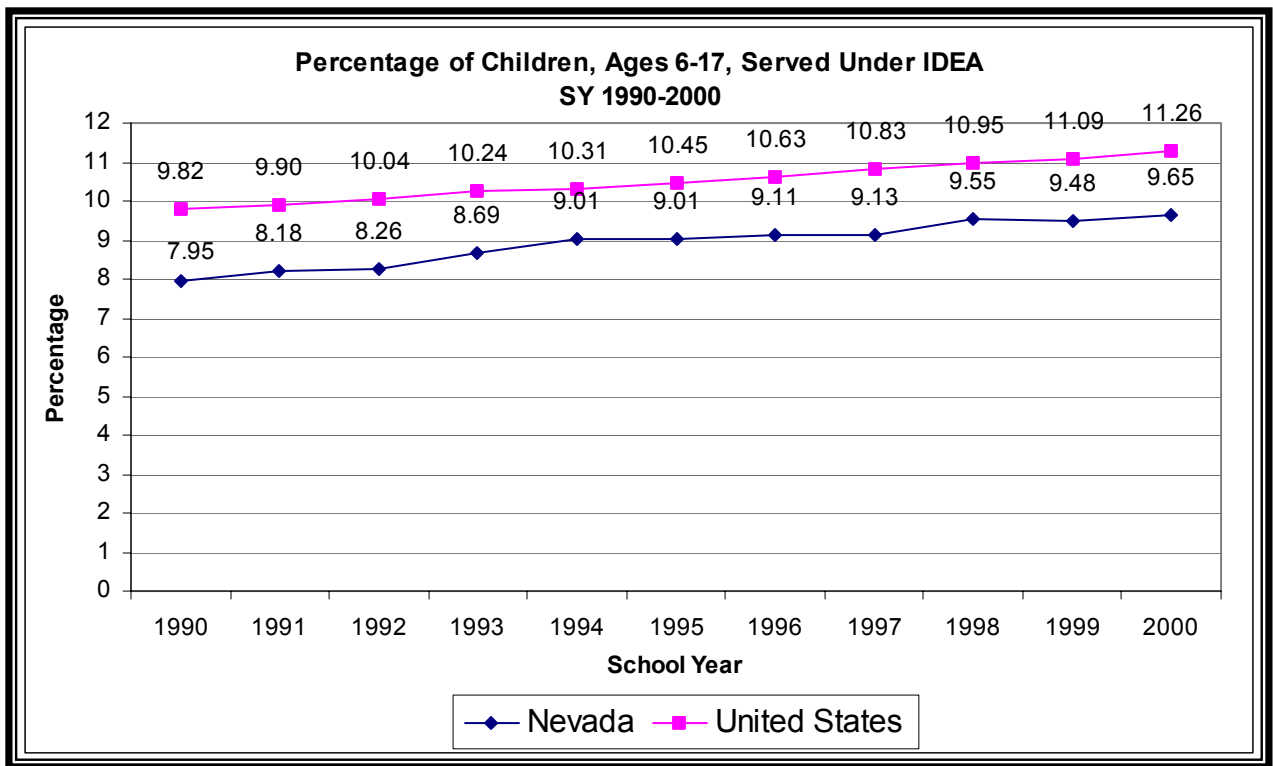
*Includes early childhood special education students

Source: Nevada Department of Education. *Research Bulletin*, March 2002

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IDEA – CHILDREN SERVED

NEVADA PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN (AGES 6-17) SERVED UNDER IDEA SCHOOL YEARS 1990-2000



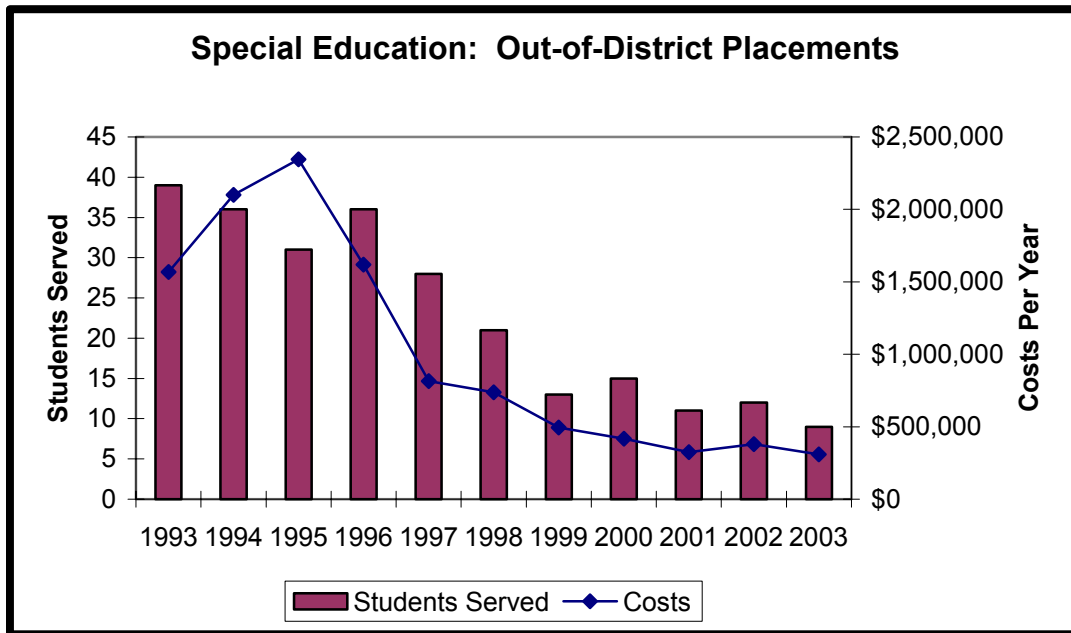
School Year	Nevada	United States
1990	7.95	9.82
1991	8.18	9.90
1992	8.26	10.04
1993	8.69	10.24
1994	9.01	10.31
1995	9.01	10.45
1996	9.11	10.63
1997	9.13	10.83
1998	9.55	10.95
1999	9.48	11.09
2000	9.65	11.26

Source: 23rd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), May 2002

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Nevada: Special Education – Out-Of-District Placements (Nevada Revised Statutes, Chapter 395)



Fiscal Year	Students Served	Costs
2003	9	\$310,000
2002	12	\$379,582
2001	11	\$325,560
2000	15	\$418,257
1999	13	\$494,989
1998	21	\$737,137
1997	28	\$814,228
1996	36	\$1,618,531
1995	31	\$2,345,885
1994	36	\$2,100,153
1993	39	\$1,568,065

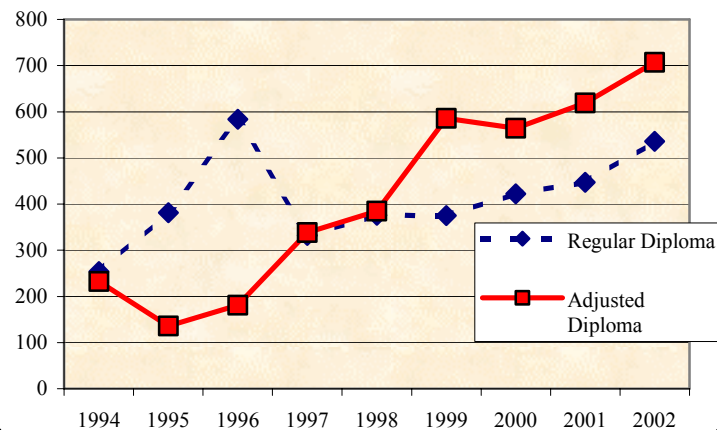
FY 2003 amounts are projections.
Source: Nevada Department of Education

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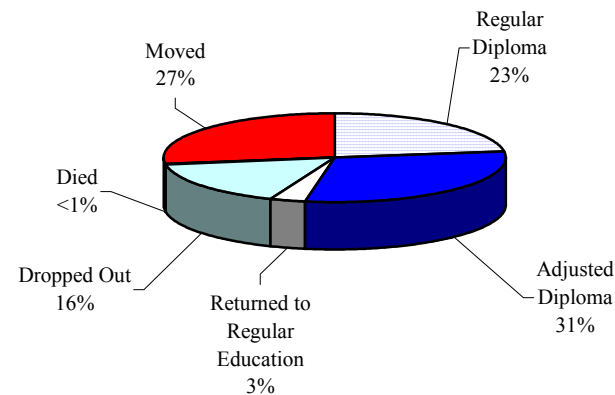
STUDENTS EXITING PROGRAM

NEVADA: NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF STUDENTS WHO EXITED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS SCHOOL YEARS 1993-94 TO 2001-02

Special Education: Regular Diplomas Vs. Adjusted Diplomas or Certificates SY 1993-94 to 2000-01



Percentage of Students Exiting Special Education Program By Category SY 2001-02



School Year	Total Students who Exited Special Education (ages 17 -19)	Regular Education Diploma		Adjusted Diploma or Certificate		Returned to Regular Education		Dropped Out (federal definition)		Moved	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1994	698	254	36%	232	33%	14	2%	116	17%	81	12%
1995	768	381	50%	136	18%	15	2%	83	11%	148	19%
1996	1,100	584	53%	181	16%	17	2%	174	16%	141	13%
1997	1,196	332	28%	338	28%	23	2%	201	17%	300	25%
1998	1,062	376	35%	385	36%	28	3%	81	8%	191	18%
1999	1,640	375	23%	586	36%	55	3%	278	17%	342	21%
2000	1,888	422	22%	564	30%	51	3%	382	20%	464	25%
2001	2,225	447	20 %	619	28%	74	3%	418	19%	664	30%
2002	2,357	536	23 %	707	30%	79	3%	385	16%	642	27%

Source: Nevada Department of Education, Office of Special Education, February 2003.

