Reports and white papers

# Colorado's BOCES: Five Years of Students with IEPs

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Students with IEPs ages 3 to 21 in Colorado rose from 106,884 in 2020-21 to 121,001 in 2024-25, 13.2% in four years. This brief sets out the counts for the 17 BOCES that report as special education administrative units, and where their students learn.

In Colorado, special education is reported by administrative unit. A large district is its own unit; most rural and small districts report together through a Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES). This brief reads the federal IDEA Section 618 files for the five latest school years and sets out what they show for the state and for the 17 BOCES that report as administrative units. Every figure comes from the files listed under Sources.

## The statewide count

Across every Colorado administrative unit, students with IEPs ages 3 to 21 rose from 106,884 in 2020-21 to 121,001 in 2024-25, an increase of 14,117, or 13.2% in four years. The count rose every year: 106,884, 109,006, 113,288, 117,909 and 121,001.

In 2024-25, 69 administrative units reported a count and none was suppressed. In 2020-21, 66 reported and 2 were suppressed by the publisher to protect student privacy, so the earliest total leaves those 2 units out.

## The 17 BOCES

Together the 17 BOCES reported 10,748 students with IEPs in 2020-21 and 11,916 in 2024-25, an increase of 10.9%. Twelve of the 17 reported more students in 2024-25 than in 2020-21. The largest increase was East Central BOCES, from 1,331 to 2,000.

Two counts need a note before they are compared across years. In 2024-25, Steamboat Springs became its own administrative unit and reported 379 students with IEPs, so Northwest BOCES's 2024-25 count is not comparable to earlier years. Santa Fe Trail BOCES's count fell by 191 between 2020-21 and 2021-22; the federal file does not say why.

Each BOCES, 2020-21 and then 2024-25:

Blue Sky BOCES: 224, then 211

Centennial BOCES: 1,043, then 1,059

Colorado River BOCES: 647, then 810

East Central BOCES: 1,331, then 2,000

Education reEnvisioned BOCES: 595, then 716

Mountain BOCES: 530, then 562

Northeast BOCES: 771, then 795

Northwest BOCES: 666, then 371 (see the note above)

Pikes Peak BOCES: 589, then 712

Rio Blanco BOCES: 177, then 177

San Juan BOCES: 1,018, then 1,124

San Luis Valley BOCES: 796, then 990

Santa Fe Trail BOCES: 769, then 651

South Central BOCES: 567, then 628

Southeastern BOCES: 426, then 499

Uncompahgre BOCES: 229, then 225

Ute Pass BOCES: 370, then 386

## Where students learn

In 2024-25, 9,260 of the 10,920 school-age students with IEPs in the 17 BOCES (84.8%) were in general education classes 80% or more of the school day. Statewide the share was 80.9% (90,140 of 111,407). Across the nation it was 67.9%.

## What this brief does not show

These are counts of students, not of the staff who serve them. The federal files do not say how many special educators, related service providers or paraprofessionals each BOCES employs, or how their weeks are spent. The 2020-21 counts were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students with IEPs means students ages 3 to 21 served under IDEA Part B.

Each BOCES has its own page in the Observatory, with its figures beside the state and the nation.

## Sources


U.S. Department of Education. (2021). IDEA Section 618 Part B Child Count and educational environments, LEA level, school year 2020-21. Read through the Observatory on October 6, 2026. data.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (2022). IDEA Section 618 Part B Child Count and educational environments, LEA level, school year 2021-22. Read through the Observatory on October 6, 2026. data.ed.gov

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U.S. Department of Education. (2024). IDEA Section 618 Part B educational environments, LEA level, school year 2023-24. Read through the Observatory on October 6, 2026. data.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (2025). IDEA Section 618 Part B Child Count by disability category, LEA level, school year 2024-25. Read through the Observatory on October 6, 2026. data.ed.gov

U.S. Department of Education. (2025). IDEA Section 618 Part B educational environments, LEA level, school year 2024-25 (school age). Read through the Observatory on October 7, 2026. data.ed.gov

The Special Education Observatory. Colorado: students with IEPs and where they learn, 2024-25. www.pulseforeducation.com