



South Park School District
Central Administration Offices
2005 Eagle Ridge Drive
South Park, PA 15129
412-655-3111 • Fax: 412-655-2952
www.sparksd.org

South Park School District

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING COMMISSION HEARING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2019

Members of the Special Education Funding Commission:

I would like to begin by thanking you for the invitation to present the impact of special education funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on the South Park School District. The changing special education landscape presents many opportunities and a few challenges for school districts today.

REVENUE

Since the 2012-2013 school year, the South Park School District has benefitted from a more than 14% increase in special education funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The average increase in funding per year has been approximately 2%. This school year, the South Park School District anticipated funding to reach \$1.29 million, which represents an approximate \$47,000 increase from the previous school year.

This increase in funding has helped to ease the burden on South Park Township taxpayers.

EXPENDITURES

While the South Park School District has experienced an increase of more than 14% in state special education funding, the benefit of this increase has been negated by a nearly 67% increase in special education costs over that same time period. The District's 2012-2013 special education expenditures in the 2012-2013 school year were approximately \$1.13 million. The budgeted special education expenditure total for the 2019-2020 school year was more than \$4.2 million. This cost includes approved private school tuition for students placed outside the South Park School District, in-district special education and gifted education services and special education transportation.

SPECIAL EDUCATION & THE DISTRICT'S BUDGET

The budgeted special education expenditures for the 2019-2020 school year account for approximately 12% of the South Park School District's \$35.5 million budget. As a comparison, special education expenditures accounted for approximately 9% of the South Park School District's budget in the 2012-2013 school year.

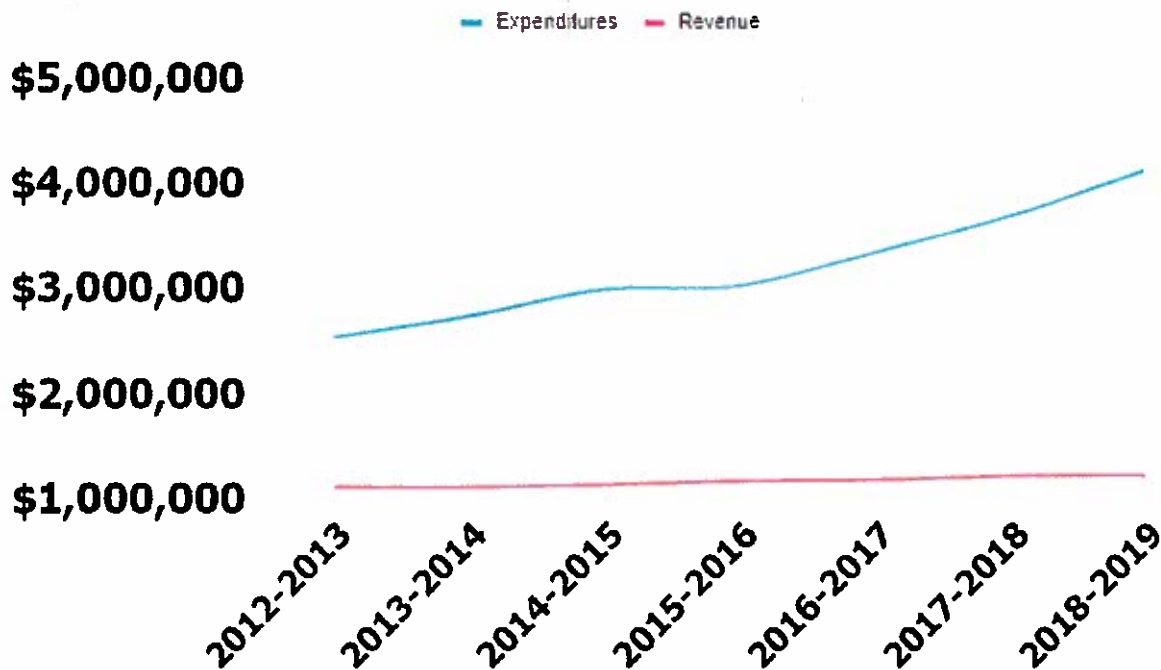


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STATE FUNDING

While the District was receiving fewer dollars for special education from the Commonwealth in 2012-2013, the disparity between state funding and district expenditures was just \$1.4 million. This school year, the South Park School District's special education costs are expected to be approximately \$3 million more than the support received by the State. State funding is covering 30% of the district's special education costs; whereas, State funding covered 44% of the district's special education costs in the 2012-2013 school year.

Special Education Expenditures & Revenue



ENROLLMENT

While the South Park School District has experienced an increase in special education expenditures, it has also experienced a slight increase in the percentage of special education students in the district. While the total number of special education students has remained relatively steady since 2012-2013, the percentage of identified special education students has increased as the district's total enrollment has slightly decreased. The South Park School District's special education department has seen a significant increase in elementary-aged students who required individualized instruction and care over the past few school years.



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COST SAVINGS

The South Park School District administration has worked to implement several cost-saving measures in recent school years. A district-wide student assistance program connects South Park students with the resources, groups and agencies that provide valuable support. The District has created four applied behavior analysis classrooms in our three school buildings which allow more South Park students to remain in District schools rather than schools outside the district. The addition of a school-based mental health provider helps us to identify and treat students more proactively. The District has also benefitted from shared transportation routes through its transportation provider. The cost to send one bus to an approved private school is approximately \$40,000 per year. If a student needs an attendant on the school bus for the ride to and from school, the cost to the District is an additional \$14,000 per year. By partnering with neighboring districts when possible, the transportation cost to the South Park School District is cut in half. However, sharing routes is not always possible due to route timing constraints.

CONCLUSION

While the South Park School District will continue to be as cost-efficient as possible in all areas, the District's Special Education Department will continue to serve our students and meet their needs through in-district services or outside placements. Our administrators, faculty, and staff help our students thrive and work diligently with the faculty and staff at approved private schools throughout Western Pennsylvania where South Park students learn and grow.

Once again, I would like to express my appreciation to the Commission for the opportunity to share South Park's special education story, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this critical subject.

