

REGIONAL INCLUSIVE SERVICES

Providing essential education and related services for children with specialized, high needs disabilities to allow inclusion in their neighborhood schools and communities across Oregon.

Legislative Request:

- **Additional funding of \$10 million from the general fund for the 2021-23 biennium to begin to restore service levels reduced since 2009.**
- **Passage of LC 627 to examine Regional Inclusive Services and long-term adequate funding.**
- **To achieve adequate service levels, we estimate a need of an additional \$50 million in general fund dollars.**

Key Notes from the [Quality Education Model Report](#):

- Adjusting for inflation, total funding fell by more than 20% since 2007-2009.
- When adjusted for inflation, per student funding fell by more than 33 percent. With expected funding for the 2019-21 biennium of \$62.1 million, just 0.3 percent above the prior biennium, funding per student is expected to continue to fall.

21-23 Priorities:

In order to begin restoring services to 2009 levels, RIS programs would prioritize the following:

- Recruit and retain Teachers of the Visually Impaired, Teachers of the Deaf / Hard of Hearing, and Deafblind consultants
- Restore Autism services to 2009 levels (decreasing caseloads, increasing direct service and evaluation services)
- Increase capacity to support and engage families
- Increase student technology access

Regional Inclusive Services serves (Birth to 21):

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Blind and Visually Impaired
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- DeafBlindness
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Regional Inclusive Services ensures the students experiencing the disabilities above have access to their right to an education, extracurriculars and independence:

- Oregon's students who are Blind or Visually Impaired receive Braille instruction, visual concepts and tools to access general education curriculum.

- Educators serving students with Autism Spectrum Disorder receive highly specialized professional development to support students with complex needs often requiring behavioral intervention.
- Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing receive instruction in American Sign Language, literacy concepts and skills needed to participate in general education classrooms.
- Students experiencing Traumatic Brain Injury receive coordinated care from members of the Statewide TBI team.
- Students with severe Orthopedic Impairments are able to access critical, high-cost equipment tailored to their specific needs.
- Specialized Speech & Language Specialists providing instruction and access for communication such as eye gaze devices and educational/medical switches.
- Students who are Deafblind receive specialized instruction, accommodations, and modifications, supported by experts knowledgeable about their unique needs.

Advantage:

- Assembling regional teams with deep levels of expertise and specialized licensure, ensures Oregon students receive critical services despite national shortages of trained personnel.
- Creating an economy of scale to serve students with the most complex needs in Oregon in their neighborhood schools - regardless of size or location of district.
- Assuring quality and continuity of service for Oregon’s most complex and critically impacted children

Quality Education Model Report

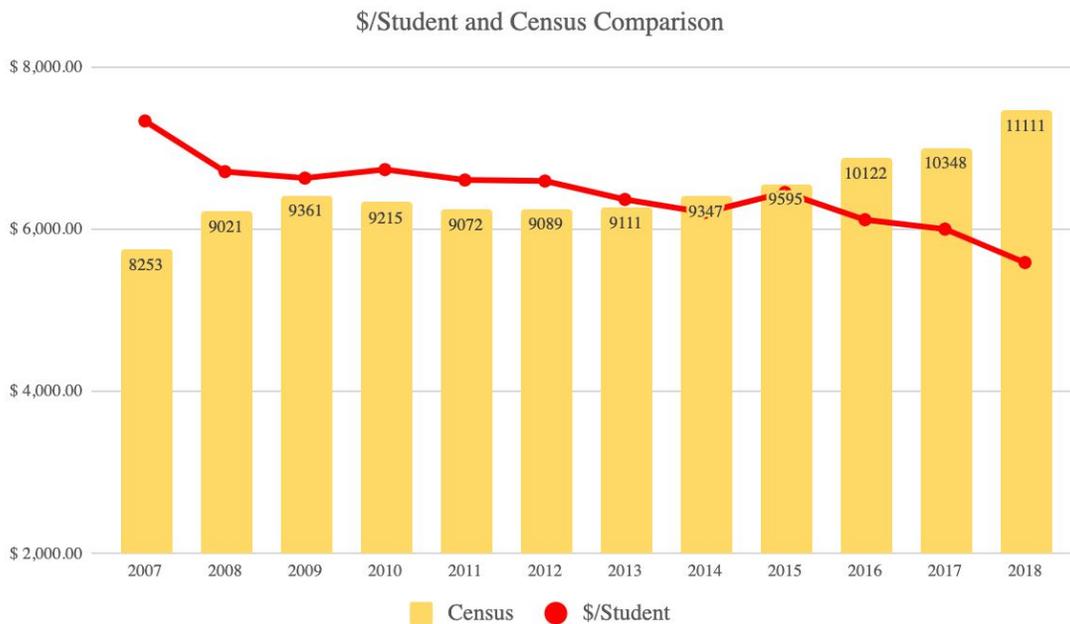
[Quality Education Model Report](#)

- Regional Programs are discussed on pages 22-23.
- "When adjusted for inflation, per student funding fell by more than 33 percent." (page 22)

Funding History:

2009-11 Total Funds: \$62,068,500
 2015-17 Total Funds: \$58,009,947
 2017-19 Total Funds: \$61,917,950
 2019-21 Total Funds: \$62,099,109
 2021-23 GRB \$61,000,000

The 2019-21 total funding was essentially the same as in 2009-11 and was only 0.3% (\$181,159) greater than the 2017-19 funding.



2019-21 Staffing/Students Served:

- Approximately 11,500 students (birth-age 21)
 - Autism Spectrum Disorder - 8400
 - Blind/Vision Impaired - 900
 - Deafblind - 150
 - Deaf or Hard of Hearing - 1700
 - Orthopedic Impaired - 1600
 - Traumatic Brain Injured - 250
- More than half of students have multiple regional eligibilities
- Majority of services cannot be provided by local school districts.

Impact of Funding Shortfalls

As a result of chronic funding shortfalls, Statewide Regional Programs have reduced staff by 10% (26 FTE) from 2018-19 to 2019-20 while serving 9% more students. This has resulted in reduced services to students in critical need. Increased costs alongside continued student growth resulted in additional service reductions in 2019-21.

Service reductions resulted in children sitting in classrooms without hearing aids; children who need Braille to learn not receiving materials; children not receiving specialized equipment for orthopedic impairment; children not receiving adequate services from Speech Language Pathologists and classroom teachers not receiving adequate training and support from Specialists to mitigate severe behaviors of children on the Autism Spectrum.

The GRB presents another biennium of program reductions for the students who require the most significant and complex services in Oregon.

Anecdotes Representing the Impact of Service Reductions:

- A rural district is unable to recruit and hire highly specialized staff to support a student with complex needs. Regional Programs are able to provide consultation and technical assistance, but are unable to fill the gap due to high caseloads. The student has been placed in special school out of state. Another district, in a similar situation, placed a kindergartener in a residential school program.

Family testimonials demonstrating the value of Regional Programs:

1. “Regional Services have been life changing for my family. Their highly skilled team provides services to my kids that helped them learn how to talk and hear, something I never thought possible. Both of my children have profound hearing loss and when we moved to Oregon several years ago, they could only communicate with sign language. They had never worn hearing aids that worked for them. I had given up hope on verbal communication. The staff fit them with a different brand of hearing aids and suddenly my kids were listening and starting to talk. Regional Services also established a deaf and hard of hearing program in many area schools that have specialists onsite to help the kids with everything ranging from academics to hearing assistive technology. One of the best parts is there are many other kids that go to school at these center schools who also wear hearing aids or have cochlear implants. There are so many options for my kids that I would have not known existed without guidance from Regional Programs. Both of my kids are both getting a high-quality education and thriving. I can sing my youngest to sleep at night, hear my older child tell a funny joke, and we all can read aloud together. I am deeply grateful and do not believe we could have arrived at this point without Regional Services.” ~Alexandra
2. “Almost 3 years ago, we adopted our daughter from Haiti. She is completely blind. She had little knowledge of navigating around with a cane and had not yet learned how to read Braille. Shortly after she came home, we began services with Regional Services. She has been receiving services from Regionals for over two years and they have helped her to learn to read and write Braille, as well as how to use her orientation and mobility skills. These services have been absolutely instrumental in helping our daughter to not only learn, but to thrive. They have given her the ability to become an independent reader just like her older siblings. She has not only been given the skills to navigate the world safely, but they have also taken the time to teach our family how to assist her. We know many of the regional specialists and each one of them have been so wonderful to our family and have provided us with so many helpful resources. We couldn’t imagine navigating all of this without them. We’re so thankful for everything they have done for our daughter through the services that they provide.” ~Mallory
3. “Regional Services have had a tremendous impact on the quality of education and resources my child receives. The program guided us through every step of the services process and allowed our daughter to receive proper education, and audiology services and speech therapy. The entire staff from the counselors, the deaf educators, the speech- language therapists, and audiologists have become our village of support allowing our daughter to make great strides and avoid falling behind academically, socially and vocally while keeping up with her

technology needs. We know for a fact the resources Regionals provides are of tremendous assistance to families with special needs children. We have met and connected with many other families who have also benefited from these important programs.” ~Ana