



MERRIMACK SCHOOL DISTRICT (SAU 26)

Special Education Overview

A Report to the School Board: District Data Trends, Outcomes, and Continuous Improvement 10 -
19-2026

Presented by: Director of Student Services
Colleen Sliva, MEd.

Foundations of Special Education

Historical perspective and core protections for student equity



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Historical Context & Purpose

Special education guarantees that civil rights laws protect children with disabilities, granting equal access to public education tailored to individual strengths and requirements.

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

Federal statute ensuring eligible children receive early intervention and specialized education designed to prepare them for post-secondary education and career success.

FAPE & LRE Principles

FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education tailored to individual students at no cost to families.
LRE: Least Restrictive Environment educating students alongside general education peers whenever possible.



Special Education Eligibility

The federal and state 3-prong standard



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To qualify for an Individualized Education Program (IEP),
a multidisciplinary team must determine that a student meets
all three criteria simultaneously:

1

Documented Disability

Student diagnosis fits one of federal educational
disability classifications.

+

2

Adverse Educational Impact

Disability significantly impairs learning or academic
progress.

+

3

Need for Specially Designed Instruction

Requires specially designed instruction
unavailable through general accommodations.

District Prevalence Context

Understanding point-in-time metrics and [statewide comparisons](#)



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i Special Education data changes continuously. Data represents specific points in time tied directly to individual student evaluations, transfers, and specific learning needs.

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22%

Students with Disabilities w/ IEPs
(As of October 2026)

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

20.1%

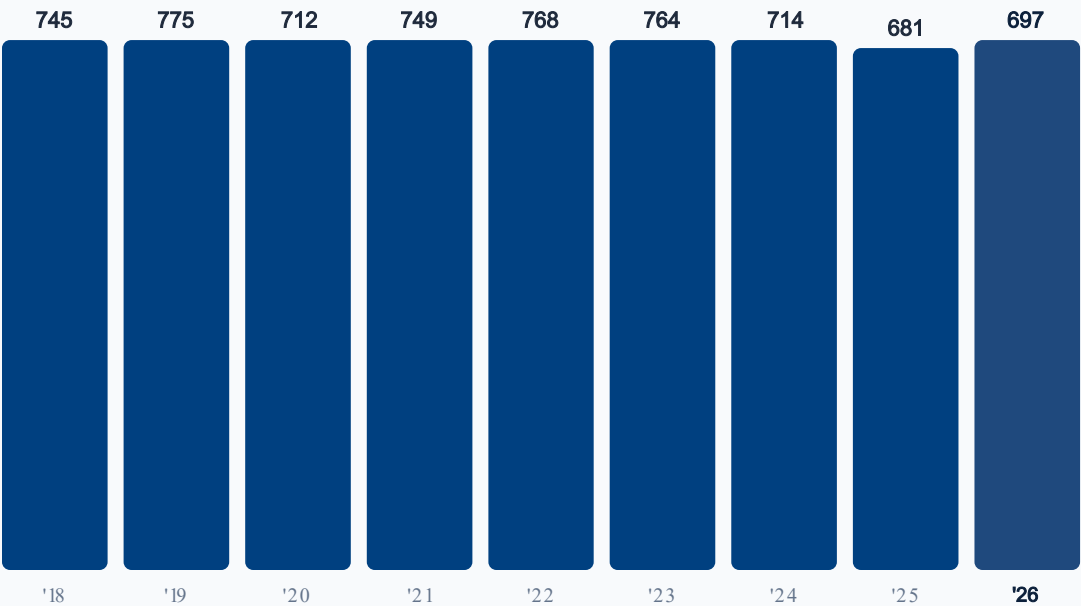
Statewide Average Students with Disabilities w/ IEPs
(As of October 2025)

Merrimack School District Special Education Enrollment Trends

October 1 federal report count of Students with Disabilities w/ IEPs (SWD) overtime (2018–2026)

Report Date	Ages 3–5	Ages 6–22	Total SWD
10-1-2018	111	634	745
10-1-2019	114	661	775
10-1-2020	87	625	712
10-1-2021	73	676	749
10-1-2022	89	679	768
10-1-2023	76	688	764
10-1-2024	91	623	714
10-1-2025	83	598	681
10-1-2026	50	647	697

Total SWD Student Count Trend



District Data Determination

How district compliance is monitored



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State education departments annually evaluate every local school district on its implementation of special education standards. State performance plan indicators and state metrics determine annual rating designations.

The 4 Determination Categories:

CATEGORY 1

Meets Requirements

Fully satisfies all IDEA requirements and academic performance targets.

CATEGORY 2

Needs Assistance

Requires targeted technical support in specific assessment or operational areas.

CATEGORY 3

Needs Intervention

Requires formal state intervention strategies and program adjustments.

CATEGORY 4

Needs Substantial Intervention

Significant non-compliance requiring extensive enforcement action.

Merrimack Data Determination History

Annual NHED evaluation across four evaluation rubrics (2022–2026)



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Report date	Results based	Assessment	Compliance	Other factors	Overall determination
4-2022	Needs assistance	Needs intervention	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	Needs assistance
4-2023	Needs assistance	Needs assistance	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	Needs assistance
4-2024	Needs assistance	Needs assistance	Meets requirements	Needs intervention	Needs assistance
4-2025	Needs assistance	Needs assistance	Meets requirements	Needs assistance	Needs assistance
4-2026	Needs assistance	Needs assistance	Meets requirements	Meets requirements	Needs assistance

Key Takeaway: Merrimack consistently **Meets Requirements in Compliance** year after year. Results-based assessment measures reflect ongoing district focus areas.

Celebrating Student Outcomes: Exits

Positive exiting outcomes : Students primarily graduate with diplomas or transition back to general education

School year	Total students exited from special education	Diploma	Transferred successfully out of special education	Other: moving, earning a certificate of completion, or drop out
20-21	65	33	21	11
21-22	85	38	29	18
22-23	72	42	20	10
23-24	86	39	27	20
24-25	64	24	30	10
25-26	74	48	20	6

Parent Partnership & Feedback

Engaging families as collaborative partners in student growth



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MSD SEPAC

The Merrimack School District Special Education Advisory Council is well established, meets monthly with district leadership, and hosts or supports events to support families of students with disabilities.



Family Satisfaction

NHED Indicator 8 data highlights family satisfaction with feeling comfortable asking questions, evaluations and reports, transition planning, and being treated as an equal team member in the decision making process. The data reflects 78% of parents report schools facilitated parent involvement.



District Special Education Successes

Celebrating key achievements and continuous improvement milestones



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Determination Progress

Demonstrated tangible improvements in state data determinations, particularly maintaining 100% compliance standards.

MSD SEPAC Collaboration

Fostered a highly collaborative partnerships with families through our Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC).

Consistent Practices

Developing and implementing consistent district-wide special education practices driven by continuous improvement.

Professional Development

Active staff attendance at Department of Education and professional organization statewide training to enhance special education practices.

District Priorities & Next Steps

Strategic focus areas for continuous growth



Staff Retention & Expertise

Retaining and further developing our qualified, knowledgeable special educators and specialized service providers.



General Education Capacity

Building inclusive instructional skills among general education staff to effectively support all students in every classroom.

Image Sources



https://resources.finalsite.net/images/f_auto,q_auto/v1760104048/sau26org/z61n0estmxjdco0mhfv0/Merrimack_Logo3.png

Source: www.sau26.org



<https://queensonline.school.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/06/inclusive-education-courses-inclusive-classroom.jpg>

Source: queensonline.school.com



<https://media.istockphoto.com/id/177400275/photo/graduation.jpg?s=612x612&w=0&k=20&c=Qwj4o5gjMOt5KgnlGdHAjP3sr98WaSNH5RVI3Ij1s=>

Source: www.istockphoto.com