

Special Education



Special Education Principles, Laws and Funding:

In order to allow citizens with disabilities, underprivileged citizens and gifted citizens to receive adaptive education and fully develop their abilities, Taiwan has already set up the “Special Education Act” and relevant branch laws to appeals for assessment, diagnosis and guidance, examination services, support services, professional teams, education subsidies, and assistive educational devices. Taiwan is also upholding the spirit of equal opportunities present in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) under the United Nations, and continuing to promote inclusive education and least restrictive environment while offering full support services under the concept of special education. In 2016, the Ministry of Education set aside a budget of NT\$10.3 billion for special education, or 4.5 percent of the total education budget. Of that sum, NT\$9.9 billion is devoted to education for students with disabilities, and NT\$400 million for gifted education; in addition, municipal and city and county governments have allocated NT\$23.8 billion for special education, amounting to 5.8 percent of the total education budgets for local governments,

including NT\$21.9 billion to spend on education for students with disabilities and NT\$1.9 billion for gifted education.

Special Education Placement and Categories:

Meeting global trends, Taiwan promotes inclusive education, so the majority of special education students will be placed in the average school. The three types of classes include centralized special education classes, decentralized resource rooms and itinerant counseling classes, but special education services can also be offered as special education cases during usual classes. In preschool education, compulsory education, senior secondary education and higher education, special education services will be offered at each level. The 13 categories of special education are intellectual disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments, communication disorders, physical impairments, cerebral palsy, health impairments, severe emotional disorders, learning disabilities, multiple impairments, autism, developmental delay and other disabilities. There are six categories for gifted education: intelligence, scholarship, arts, creativity, leadership and other areas.

Schooling Opportunities:

In respect to non-discrimination and equal opportunities in education for students with disabilities, the elementary and junior high school levels are compulsory education, so after the needs of the students have been determined, they will be placed in the appropriate schools and classes. After graduation, they will move up into senior high schools, vocational high schools or junior colleges through adaptive counseling placement, exam-free admission or specialty enrollment. In order to increase the opportunities for students with disabilities to attend universities, colleges and junior colleges, the government has added tests to the original channels, and rewards schools organizing their own separate admission exams for students with disabilities. Each type of admission exam offers related services, such as early entry, longer examination time, enlarged-type writing, Braille or voice playback for exam questions, Braille computers, transcripts for the answers, examination locations for limited amounts of students or on an individual basis, or other necessary services.

Numbers of Students and Classes in Special Education:

In SY 2016, a total of 2,453 schools had established 5,238 special education classes for students with disabilities, while 28 special education schools had formed 687 classes. The number of students in special education totaled 135,858, including 118,310 students with disabilities, with 13,711 students enrolled in universities, colleges and junior colleges and 104,599 in schools below the senior secondary school level (including preschool). Of those, 98,450 or 94 percent study at average schools and 6,149 or 6 percent at special education schools. Of the 98,450 students at average schools, 85,846 or 87 percent attend regular classes, resource rooms and itinerant classes, while 12,604 or 13 percent were placed in centralized special education classes. As to gifted education, there were 17,548 students at the levels below senior secondary school, with 375 regular schools having formed 947 classes for gifted students.

Supporting Services for Special Education

Offering the necessary supportive services for special education students in an inclusive education environment is an extremely important element for their learning and for the development of their potential, so the government and the schools all offer various types of supportive services. In SY 2015, the number of professional services extended to assist special educations totaled 98,000 person-times. The services included physiotherapy, occupational therapy, language therapy, psychological counseling, hearing ability management, and social work. More than 20,000 teaching assistants have been appointed to assist students whose disability level is rather serious. More than 2,700 persons made use of almost 5,000 assistive educational devices helping with vision, hearing, movement shift and position, reading and writing, communication, computers and the like. Special books have been offered to students who are visually or learning impaired, including 7,500 books with large-size characters, 8,500 audio books and 2,500 Braille books. In addition, the government and the schools also offer scholarships, subsidies and cuts in study fees, and subsidized accessible vehicles or transportation fares, while funds have been earmarked to improve the barrier-free environment on campus.

Vision

In future, no matter whether in special education for students with disabilities or in gifted education, the principles of “diversity” and “flexibility” will be enhanced, while the aim will be to strive for “excellent quality” and for “performance.” The needs of students will form the basis, the students’ rights will have priority, and the students’ positive development will be of the highest importance. The Ministry of Education will continue to establish a positive and friendly education environment, broadening special education related professional teams and manpower to assist resources, strengthening each type of special-education administrative support network, implement the transition work for each level of education, in order to raise the study quality of students, and realize the aim of adaptive and suitable education. ■