

Hello,

I am a special education resource teacher in the Olathe School District. I work with students with a variety of academic and social disabilities at the elementary level. I am writing this regarding funding of special education at the state level.

1. Staffing of paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals are one of the most valuable staff in a building. They help with providing services to students as part of the child's IEP. Due to low pay, it is becoming increasingly difficult to hire and retain paraprofessionals. Most people would not want to be hit, kicked, yelled at, and spit on for \$15 an hour.
2. Stipends for special education staff. We are in a special education crisis. This past semester, several special education jobs in Olathe went unfilled. This is happening in districts throughout Kansas. Enrollment in special education continues to increase, resulting in overwhelmed staff and a high rate of teacher burnout. Educators have suggested additional stipends for teachers who are responsible for de-escalation of violent students. Olathe does not have funds to pay stipends.
3. Funds taken from the general education fund. I cannot speak to the entire budget for OPS. I can look around my school building and see the lack of funding. One example is student seating. The district is unable to provide enough chairs for each student. Most of them are older chairs and they frequently brake. Fortunately, we have many resourceful teachers who utilize outside funding resources. I have personally purchased both adult and student chairs for my classroom. I would be interested in knowing how many members of the state legislature have purchased the chair they are currently sitting on.

Sincerely,  
Trisha Hunter  
Resource Teacher  
Ravenwood Elementary