Special Education Budgeting in Israel: From the Dorner Committee Recommendations to Implementation of Amendment 11 to the Special Education Law

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Introduction

The special education budget has been one of the fastest-growing items in the Ministry of Education budget in recent years. This growth has been accompanied by ongoing public debates over the principles guiding its allocation among the various special education student populations and subgroups. These debates have found expression in measures taken by the Ministry of Education, in Supreme Court petitions by organizations of parents of students with special needs, and in the creation of a public committee, headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Dalia Dorner, to examine the special education system in Israel. The Committee’s three main recommendations, submitted in early 2009, were: (a) to give parents the right to choose their child’s educational institutional setting; (b) to link the student’s budget to their various disabilities and functional difficulties (physical, emotional, or cognitive); (c) to establish the principle of “the budget follows the child,” severing the connection between the budget allocated to the student and the educational institutional setting in which they are placed.

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In 2018, Amendment 11 to the Special Education Law was passed. Among other issues, the Amendment specifically and meaningfully addresses the budgeting method for students with special needs. In this paper, we will focus on the development of special education budgets, and on the distribution of budgets between the various special educational institutional settings (special education schools, special education classes in regular schools, and students with special needs integrated (mainstreamed) in regular classes). We will outline the factors that affect the size of the special education budget, and make several proposals for changes in the budgeting principles — recommendations that, in our view, may slow the almost uncontrollable budget growth and distribute it more equally and justly (at least from the perspective of parents referring their children to integrated frameworks).

Development of the Ministry of Education budget and the special education budget

As noted, recent years have witnessed substantial growth in the special education budget. Figure 1 shows the growth of the Ministry of Education budget in general, and specifically of the special education budget, compared with growth in the share of special education students out of the total number of students. Between 2005 and 2019, the Ministry of Education’s real budget increased by 94%, while the special education budget grew by 267%. The special education budget’s share in the total Ministry of Education budget rose from 7% to 13%, while the share of students with

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1 For a full and detailed discussion of these developments, see Blass, 2022. Here we will note only that, in the Ministry of Education’s estimation, the amendment will result in a situation where the vast majority of students with special needs are placed in integrated frameworks, while the separate frameworks will primarily serve students with more complex and uncommon needs. This change will promote substantial savings in the Ministry of Education budget.

2 Mainstreaming refers to a broad spectrum of options. These include: the student’s integration in a separate educational framework operating within the regular educational institutional setting, in a limited manner according to their needs; partial mainstreaming in a number of study subjects, with the student pulled out of class for assistance and special instruction suited to their needs; and full mainstreaming with the student studying throughout the day in the regular class and the special assistance coming to them. With regard to the term “regular,” while there may be some who are critical of the use of the term regarding an individual student, we use the term here to describe the class or the school for children without special needs that require additional budgets and benefits.
special needs climbed from 6.5% to 11%. What this means is that the
budget per special education student grew much faster than the special
education budget as a whole, not to mention the education budget generally.

How did this happen? The increase in the total Ministry of Education budget,
which was a real increase, stemmed partly from growth in the number of
students, and partly from large budget increases intended primarily to fund the
new labor agreements with the teachers, implementation of the Compulsory
Education Law for ages 3–4, class size reductions, increased differential
budgeting, and other programs of smaller budgetary volume. Regarding the
increase in the special education budgets, the answer is more complex. It lies
in the fact that the number of students with special needs has grown faster,
on the whole, than the growth rate of the general student population, with
differences in the rate of growth of different types of disability, in the treatment
costs for each disability, and in the cost of the educational institutional settings
of the students.

Figure 1. Special education students and Ministry of Education budgets

Notes: The graph refers to all special education budgets and is based on the relevant items as presented
in the reports of the Accountant General in the Ministry of Finance. Since no budget was approved in
2020 and the system operated on the basis of a continuation budget and the graph data end with 2019.
Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center | Data: Ministry of Education Budget; Accountant General reports;
Mabat Rahav (A Wide Perspective) website
Factors influencing the size of the budget for students with special needs

Total number of students with special needs in the education system

The factor with the greatest impact on the size of the special education budget is the number of students designated as having “special needs.” While the overall number of students (the total number of students minus special education students) grew between 2005 and 2019 by 29%, the number of special education students (in both integrated and separate frameworks) increased by 122%. As far as we know, there is no reasonable explanation for this. By way of comparison, between 2010 and 2018, the number of special education students in the US grew by only 7%, while these students’ share in the total student population rose from 13.2% to 13.7%. During the same time period, Israel showed an over 50% increase in the number of special education students, with the share of these students rising from 8.3% to 10.4% of the total student population.3

The question of why the number of special education students has grown four times faster than the total number of students requires in-depth research that we cannot conduct at this stage. However, since it is hard to assume that this represents true growth in the number of students suffering from various disabilities, there may be a number of possible causes for this phenomenon:

- Increased societal awareness of differences between students and of society’s responsibility to serve all of its members.
- The designation of some students as “students with special needs” who, in the past — rightly or wrongly — would not have been so designated.
- A true increase in the number of students suffering from various kinds of disabilities.
- Weaker Ministry of Education control and oversight of student assessments and of the placement of students with special needs in the various special educational institutional settings.4

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3 See the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) website.
4 Among other reasons, the 2018 Amendment to the Special Education Law was added in order to place Ministry of Education supervisors at the head of the placement committees, rather than local authority personnel. See also the speech delivered by Israel Teachers Union Secretary-General Yaffa Ben-David at the annual conference of education department directors in Eilat, February 2020.
Distribution of students with special needs among special educational institutional settings

The second most important factor in terms of impact on the special education budget is that of the distribution of special education students among the various educational institutional settings. Special education students study in one of three settings: separate special education schools, separate classes in regular schools, and mainstreaming. Each has its own budgeting system.5

1. Special education schools and separate classes in regular schools — budgeting per class. In this budgeting method, the Ministry of Education administration determines the service level that is required — and that the education system is able to fund — for a class of students with a specific disability, and budgets that class accordingly.

2. Students with severe disabilities mainstreamed in regular classes — budgeting per student. A differential budgeting method in which each student receives an aide in accordance with their disability and level of functioning, as well as additional assistance in the amount of 2.7 weekly hours of various services (beyond what each regular student in the school receives).6

3. Students with mild disabilities mainstreamed in regular classes — in order to address these students’ needs, the school receives a global addition of hours on the basis of 5.4% of the number of enrolled students times 1.55 weekly hours.7

Why is each educational framework budgeted differently? In general, students are placed in frameworks based on the type of disability and level of functioning: the lower the student’s level of functioning and the more severe the disability, the greater the chance of their being placed in a separate framework. Thus, students with severe disabilities and low or moderate-low levels of functioning will study in a special education school, students with other severe disabilities and moderate-low or moderate-high levels of functioning will study in separate

5 For more on this topic, see Blass, 2022.
6 “Weekly hours” is a budgetary term denoting the average annual wage cost of a teacher’s work hour. This sum was recently calculated as around NIS 8,000.
7 For example, a school with 100 students will receive an additional 8.5 weekly hours (5.4% of the number of students times 1.55 weekly hours per student), which is equivalent to 1/4 of a teacher position (a full-time primary school teacher position is 36 weekly hours).
classes in regular education, while most students with moderate-high and high levels of functioning will be mainstreamed in regular classes. This breakdown is also meant to justify different levels of budgeting for students with differing levels of disability and functioning studying in different frameworks.\footnote{8} The problem is that this principle is not always upheld, and, in reality, students with similar disabilities and levels of functioning are budgeted at different levels, while students with different disabilities and levels of functioning receive the same budget. There are a variety of reasons for budgeting differences, but ultimately, even now, more than a decade after the Dorner Committee submitted its recommendations (Dorner Committee, 2009), students studying in special education schools are generally budgeted more generously than students with similar disabilities and similar levels of functioning studying in separate classes in regular schools, and even more so relative to students mainstreamed in regular classes.\footnote{9}  

Figure 2 shows the distribution of special education students between the three frameworks for the period 2005–2019. Changes, when they occur, are generally very small. Throughout the period in question, 55%–58% of students with special needs attended integrated frameworks, while 42%–45% studied in separate frameworks, half in special education schools, and half in separate classes in regular schools.

\footnote{8}{The separate frameworks are meant to include not only students with similar levels of functioning, but also students with similar disabilities, so as to provide optimal service to the students studying in them.}

\footnote{9}{This fact, which was discussed extensively in the Committee report, lay behind the recommendation made by the author of this paper, based on previous works (Blass, 2003, 2008), to budget each student in accordance with their disability and level of functioning, regardless of the framework in which they study.}
Figure 2. Distribution of special education students among educational institutional settings

Note: The data on the number of students in integrated frameworks until 2015 were taken from Weissblau (2015), while from 2017 on, the data were taken from the Ministry of Education Director General’s presentation at the annual conference of education department directors of February 2020. The data on the number of students in special education schools and in special education classes in regular schools were taken from the Mabat Rahav website. There are disparities between the data presented by the Director General and the data on the Mabat Rahav website.

Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center | Data: Weissblau, 2015; Ministry of Education Director General’s presentation; Mabat Rahav website

Another question is whether there have been real changes in the budget distribution between educational institutional settings. In order to answer this question, we divided the special education budget into three categories: budgets intended solely for students mainstreamed in regular schools; budgets intended solely for students studying in special education schools or in separate classes in regular schools; and budgets that cannot be assigned to any of these frameworks, which we divided between special education and mainstreaming, depending on their share of the population. It appears that, here as well, there has been almost no change. We found that, on average, 56% of the special education budgets have been channeled over the years to special education schools and to separate classes in regular schools, and 34% to mainstreaming. If we divide the remaining 10% by the same ratio, the result will be that 60% of the budget is allocated to students studying in separate
special educational institutional settings (serving only 40% of the students), while 40% is allocated to students with special needs who are mainstreamed in regular schools. What this means is that, throughout the period under study, a student with special needs attending a separate framework received 2.25 times the budget received by a mainstreamed student.

Distribution of the special education student population by disability

Aside from the surge in the number of students with special needs and their distribution across the various educational institutional settings, another important factor affecting the special education budget is type of disability. Due to the differing needs of students with different kinds of disability, there are, of course, differences in the budgets allocated to them. For example, vision or hearing impaired students need different aids and treatment than those required by students with autism or cerebral palsy.

The number of students with special needs grew from 111,515 in 2005 to 248,488 in 2019. Have the numbers of students with all disabilities changed at a similar rate? Figure 3 shows the rate of increase in the number of special education students studying in separate frameworks between 2005 and 2020, by type of disability. As we can see, while the entire special education population grew by a factor of 2.26, the number of students on the autism spectrum and with severe behavioral or emotional disorders — two disabilities for which particularly large budgets are allocated — climbed by a factor of 7.63 and 5.62, respectively. By contrast, the number of students suffering from multi-problem learning disabilities, the cost of whose treatment is much lower, climbed more slowly than the overall rate, and actually declined in recent years. Since each disability is budgeted differently, every change in the weight of the disabilities among the entire special education population has great budgetary significance.
Figure 3. The ratio between the number of students in separate special educational institutional settings in 2020 and the number of such students in 2005, by type of disability

As seen in Figure 4, the composition of students in separate special educational institutional settings has changed dramatically over the years in terms of type of disability. There has been a large rise in the share of students on the autism spectrum and with behavioral disorders, and a decline in the share of students with learning disabilities. Since the cost of providing services to students on the autism spectrum and with behavioral disorders is much higher than the cost of providing services to students with learning disabilities, there was a need to increase the special education budget in accordance with the changing needs beyond what would appear necessary from the increase in numbers of those in special education. According to an initial examination that we conducted, based on a comparison of the costs requiring special education budget coverage in 2005 (excluding mainstreaming budgets), had the student composition in terms of disability types been the same as in 2018, an 8% budget addition would have been needed in 2005.
Figure 4. Change in the relative shares of different disabilities in separate special educational institutional settings in 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020

Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center | Data: Mabat Rahav website
Until now, we have been concerned with students with special needs studying in separate educational institutional settings — special education schools or separate classes in regular schools. However, as we saw in Figure 2, these students account for only 40% of students with special needs. Now we will look at students with special needs who are mainstreamed in regular classes as well. Figure 5a and 5b show the distribution of special education students among the two framework types — mainstreamed and separate — in 2015, by type of disability. The graphs clearly show that a large majority of mainstreamed students are those with learning disabilities (61%), and that most of them are mainstreamed in regular classrooms (68%). The other learning disabilities are divided into two main groups: those in which a large share (40%–50%) of students are mainstreamed, and those in which a clear majority of students attend separate frameworks.

**Figure 5a. Number of special education students in integrated and separate educational institutional settings, by type of disability, 2015**

10 Since we were unable to obtain more current data on students mainstreamed in regular classes, we will assume that, overall, the changes that occurred in the separate frameworks also took place among mainstreamed students in general, and among students with differential budgeting in particular.
The effect of defining students’ levels of functioning on special education budgeting

To the best of our knowledge, the education system currently has no reliable measurement tool with a unified scale to classify students with various disability types by their functional abilities. As noted previously, students with different disabilities can have similar levels of functioning (in academic and social terms), while students with identical disabilities may have different levels of functioning. The information available to us points to major differences in the distribution of students by level of functioning between the data gathered from a survey conducted by the Chief Scientist’s Office in 2012 that served as the basis for the RAMA\textsuperscript{11} level-of-functioning questionnaire, and the findings from a trial implementation of the Special Education Law amendment in the Northern District in 2019 as well as from the first year of the amendment’s

\textsuperscript{11} RAMA is the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education.
nationwide implementation. According to the RAMA questionnaire results, the percentages of students at the higher functional levels are much greater than those arrived at by the Eligibility and Assessment Committees. The lack of a credible answer regarding the source of these disparities between the situation reflected in the level-of-functioning questionnaire and the Eligibility and Assessment Committee’s decisions undermines the public, educational, and budgetary basis for Amendment 11 to the Special Education Law, which was intended to facilitate implementation of the Dorner Committee recommendations (again, the main objectives of these recommendations were to give parents of children with special needs the right to choose educational frameworks, to ensure budgeting according to level of functioning rather than disability alone, and to link budgeting to the child rather than to their educational institutional setting). The changes that emerged in the wake of Amendment 11 have expanded the definitions of students who study in integrated frameworks and receive personal service baskets; as a result, the number of mainstreamed students has changed, as has the budget allocated to them (Figure 6).

Figure 6. The mainstreamed students who benefit from personal and institutional service baskets

Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center | Data: Weissblau, 2020

12 For more on the 2012 Chief Scientist’s Office survey, the developments that led to Amendment 11 to the Special Education Law, and the Northern District trial, see Blass, 2022.
Transportation services

Transportation services constitute one of the largest items in the Ministry of Education budget (NIS 1.29 billion in the 2019 budget), and over 40% of that item is dedicated to the transport of students with special needs (Weissblau, 2015; State Comptroller, 2015). According to Ministry of Education rules, some special education students are entitled to transportation regardless of distance,13 while the remaining special education students’ transportation entitlement is distance-dependent, as with students in regular education (that is, they are entitled to transportation if they live more than two kilometers from their preschool or three kilometers from their school). Naturally, many special education students do not study at schools near their homes, and have much greater transportation service needs than do children without special needs. For example, seven local authorities transport students from distances of over 60 kilometers, while 3% of students in special education preschools are transported distances exceeding 25 kilometers to their educational institutional settings. The share of such students is particularly large among students with developmental intellectual disability — 12%. In the 2016/2017 school year, 1,972 students studying in special education schools — 6% of all special education students — were transported over 35 kilometers to their educational institutional settings (Weissblau, 2018, p. 4). Note that there are inconsistencies between data obtained from the various sources. For example, State Comptroller data indicate that, in 2012, 80,000 special education students received transportation services, while the figure for 2013 was 94,000 (State Comptroller, 2013). However, a report by the Knesset Information and Research Center puts the figures at 62,000 and 58,000, respectively (Weissblau, 2018). The differences appear to originate in a gap between those recognized as eligible for transportation services by the Ministry of Education, and those who actually received such services following pressure from parents on the local authority. Although the assured entitlement to transportation regardless of distance gives parents greater freedom of choice regarding the educational institutional settings their children will attend, this has major economic repercussions from the system’s perspective. Thus, any arrangement capable

13 Students eligible for transportation regardless of distance are children with severe intellectual disability and children who receive nursing care, children with paralysis and severe physical disabilities, children on the autism spectrum, children with severe emotional disorders or mental illness, children with multi-problem moderate or complex intellectual disability, children with deafness or hearing impairment, children with blindness or visual impairment.
of reducing the number of children studying in separate frameworks will lead to greater cost savings along with the added advantage of reducing the need for the construction of additional special education school classrooms.

The legal definition of the educational institution

There are also budgeting gaps based on the legal definitions of the schools. Recognized unofficial schools are budgeted at considerably lower levels than official schools. According to estimates by accountants on behalf of several recognized unofficial educational institutions, the budget allocated per student in recognized unofficial special education schools is two-thirds of the budget allocated per student in official special education schools. The main, though not the only, reason for this is that recognized unofficial schools are not included in the Ofek Hadash and Oz Letmura labor agreements. This discrimination is especially notable given that, according to the Chief Scientist’s Office survey, the share of low-functioning students studying in recognized unofficial educational institutions is larger than the share of such students in official institutions (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Distribution of special education students between official educational institutions and recognized unofficial educational institutions, by students’ level of functioning, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Functioning</th>
<th>Official</th>
<th>Recognized unofficial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate low</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate high</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center| Data: Cohen, 2015

14 See Chai, 2017.

15 Regular recognized unofficial schools attended by students with special needs, whether in separate classes or mainstreamed, are budgeted at lower levels as well.
The local authorities’ share

Besides the special education costs borne by the Ministry of Education, the state also invests in students with special needs via the local authorities. The latter bear the cost of 30% of teacher’s aide wages, some construction and maintenance expenditures, and 10%–60% of the cost of transportation services. Differences in the local authorities’ budgetary capabilities and differing attitudes regarding the importance of special education can have a considerable impact on local authority investment in this sphere.

Switching students with special needs who attend separate educational institutions to mainstreaming in regular schools might increase local authority expenditures on teacher’s aides, but it could also be expected to reduce their spending on transportation and on the maintenance of separate special education schools. In any event, the final outcome regarding local authority expenditure is unclear, meaning that the feasibility of students’ referral to separate educational institutional settings is not unequivocal from the local authority’s perspective. Thus, the claim that local authorities tend to acquiesce to the demands of parents who want to send their children to more expensive (separate) frameworks, or who want to obtain diagnoses and functional assessments that will secure more benefits for their children because they know that the local authorities do not bear the financial burden (the Ministry of Education will) seems a spurious one. In our estimation, the problem originates with the fact that the heads of the Eligibility and Assessment Committees, who prior to the Special Education Law amendment were local authority personnel, found it hard to withstand parental pressure, and is unrelated to the financial aspect of their decisions.

Where do we go from here?

To what extent can the special education budget be expected to keep growing? Will the coming years continue to see most of it allocated to students studying in separate educational institutional settings? In our opinion, if, in the wake of the new legislation, more high and medium-high functioning students are referred to integrated settings in regular schools, this will lead to real budgetary savings, for the following reasons:

16 For example, a Ramat Gan local authority report indicates that the Ministry’s participation in the cost of transportation services in 2015 amounted to 27% (NIS 5.5 million out of NIS 20 million). See the Ramat Gan Local Authority Auditor’s Report for 2015.
1. **Reduced teaching costs** – Special education students in separate classes study more hours per day, more days per year, and in much smaller classes than their mainstreamed counterparts. It is clear, therefore, that the expenditure per student in separate classes is much higher than in regular classes. The cost of the compensation that mainstreamed students have received up to now in the form of aide hours, inclusion hours, and “differential hours” for students with specific disabilities has generally been lower than the cost of the teaching and assistance hours in special education classes, though this has recently changed for students with certain disabilities (especially students with severe or moderate intellectual disabilities). Furthermore, each additional student in separate special education requires a much larger increase of teaching personnel compared with the student’s integration in regular education. The truth is that each additional ten students in separate special education commits the system to at least one additional classroom. In manpower terms this means at least three times the number of teachers than what is entailed in the opening of a regular class, and when children on the autistic spectrum are at issue — nearly six times the number of teachers is required. Finally, the wages of teachers in separate special education are higher. To all this, one may add the difficulty of recruiting suitable teaching candidates.

2. **Reduced transportation costs** – As noted above, transportation costs are a major component of the special education budget, especially transportation to special education schools. The mainstreaming of students with special needs in regular education institutions would make this expenditure unnecessary for those who live near their schools, and would greatly shorten travel distances for those entitled to transportation regardless of distance, in addition to travel convenience and safety, reduced student time on the road, and a reduction in air pollution caused by the transport.

3. **Reduced construction costs** – Ministry of Education building plans show that the construction of a classroom in a special education school costs 26% more than the construction of a regular classroom. Since the number of students per regular class is three times larger than in special education, the cost of construction per student in special education is four times higher. Roughly, the transfer of 30 students from special education to regular education would “save” three expensive special education classrooms and require the construction of just one regular education classroom.¹⁷

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¹⁷ The Ministry of Education maintains that, per this calculation, moving 10,000 students from special education to integrated frameworks could save the entire required classroom addition.
Beyond any budgetary savings, however, it must be emphasized that implementing the law in a way that increases the share of students who study in integrated settings, while ensuring equal budgeting vis-à-vis students whose parents choose to place them in separate educational institutional settings, will realize the educational and social goals at the heart of the Dorner Committee recommendations as well as the declared goals of the Ministry of Education and other public agencies.

Conclusion

Recent years have seen the number of Israeli students recognized as students with special needs increase at a much faster pace than the overall number of students, with a corresponding rise in the share of the special education budget within the Ministry of Education budget. Despite a broad consensus among education professionals, researchers, and public figures regarding the educational and social importance of mainstreaming students with special needs in regular schools, mainstreamed students currently account for less than two-thirds of all special education students. The Israeli education system’s inability to enlarge the share of students studying in integrated frameworks is also notable given that many other countries have much higher shares of students with special needs mainstreamed in regular frameworks — indicating that very high levels of mainstreaming can be reached, depending on the prevailing educational approaches and social attitudes.

At present, the budget allocated to a large share of students studying in separate frameworks is greater than the budget allocated to students with the same disabilities and the same levels of functioning who are mainstreamed in regular frameworks. This despite Supreme Court rulings on the issue, the recommendations of a public committee that studied the matter in depth, and the 2018 Amendment to the Special Education Law. The oft-repeated claim that mainstreaming requires excessive public expenditure is unfounded; implementing the Dorner Committee recommendations would not necessarily require a budget increase. Indeed, the opposite is true — with proper management, it could actually result in major cost savings.

Why have the Dorner Committee recommendations thus far not been implemented? We have no explanation that is supported by hard facts, but two possible reasons can be put forth. One is the difficulty with which large administrative systems like the Ministry of Education adopt new ideas...
that force them to make far-reaching changes such as those entailed by the Dorner Committee recommendations. The other possible, and more realistic, explanation is that there are several groups that stand to lose from a reorganization of the special education system: the establishment entities responsible for separate education; parents of students studying in separate educational institutional settings who fear that their children’s transfer to integrated schools will reduce the budgets allocated to them; and teachers in regular education who fear that they lack the training to properly address the needs of special education students mainstreamed in their classes.

Legislation, however well-intentioned or appropriate, will not be enough to overcome these problems. In our estimation, there is a great deal of logic behind Amendment 11 to the Special Education Law, which calls for most students with special needs at high and medium-high levels of functioning to be integrated in regular educational institutional settings, and for separate frameworks to be reserved for students with low- and moderate-low functioning. These educational institutional settings will serve students with difficulties that are more severe or cannot be addressed in the regular settings; they will, accordingly, be budgeted at higher levels. But several conditions must be met if this approach is to be actualized. Firstly, even lower-functioning children studying in separate settings should be allowed — if their parents so desire — to attend regular schools with the full array of budgetary, educational, and social supports that they receive in the separate settings. Secondly, we must verify that the education system has reliable professional tools for determining levels of functioning, and that placement in the various frameworks is based solely on these tools. Parents of children with special needs must be satisfied that functional levels are determined through an objective process uninfluenced by budgetary-savings goals, and that the good of their children is the only consideration at play. Finally, before these changes are made, it is important that a dialogue be conducted with parent organizations, teacher unions, local authorities, and the professional cadre, and that the widest possible consensus be reached.
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