

Celebrating 50 Years of Special Education!

November 29, 1975 – November 29, 2025

This fall marks a *historic milestone*—the 50th anniversary of Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA).

Signed into law on November 29, 1975, this landmark legislation guaranteed that every child—regardless of ability—has the right to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

Fifty years later, we celebrate how far we've come and the incredible dedication of our Special Education teachers, service providers, paras, and leaders who continue to bring this promise to life every single day in Durango School District.

Because of YOU, students are seen, supported, and celebrated for their unique gifts and potential. 

50 Amazing Ways We're Living the Promise in Durango Schools

Here are **50 reasons to celebrate** the impact of special education in our district — from innovative programs to everyday moments that transform lives:

Academic and College/Career Readiness Growth

1. **MS World Language grade C or better: 56% → 95.7%**
2. **MS Social Studies grade C or better: 69% → 74.5%**
3. **HS Social Studies grade C or better: 72% → 84.7%**
4. **Graduation Rate: 83% → 87%**
5. **SAT 11 (Meeting College & Career Readiness Benchmarks, Reading/Writing): 13.6% → 22.2%**
6. **SAT (Students meeting or exceeding grade level standards, Reading/Writing): 22.3% → 30.9%**

7. Passed AP Exam/Concurrent Enrollment Class: 53.8% → 70.4%
 8. HS Students completing Industry Certification: 17.5% → 26.5%
 9. HS Students completing CTE Pathway ('21-'22 → '24-'25): 0% → 11.1%
 10. CMAS Language Arts (Meeting or Exceeding Standards, 2021–2025): 11.4% → 15.8%
 11. CMAS Math (Meeting or Exceeding Standards, 2021–2025): 7.3% → 10.5%
 12. Portrait of a Graduate (Artifacts Submitted, 2023–24 → 2024–25):
 - Courageous Leader: 6% → 20%
 - Creative Problem Solver: 22% → 38%
 - Agile Thinker: 21% → 41%
 - Confident Communicator: 18% → 33%
 - Empathetic Collaborator: 34% → 43%
 - Resilient Risk Taker: 25% → 46%
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Inclusive Practices and Instructional Alignment

13. SSN Programs at each level aligning around high-quality instruction and independence.
14. Comprehensive SSN and AE coaching cycles for continuous growth.
15. Co-Teaching Cohort 1 success and expansion to Cohort 2.
16. Strong collaboration between general and special education teams.
17. Development of Continuum of Services across the district.
18. Positive Behavior Supports embedded across programs.
19. New District Behavior Team supporting behavioral health alignment.
20. Durango Schools Inclusive Practices PD Calendar expanding opportunities.
21. Building district model sites for inclusive excellence in SSN programs.

- 22. Implementation of standards-aligned and research-based curriculum for individualized learning.**
 - 23. Expansion of AAC training for all staff.**
 - 24. Development of para-educator training to strengthen instructional support.**
 - 25. Clearer roles and communication systems among SLPs, OTs, Psychs, and teachers.**
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Student Empowerment and Transition

- 26. Student-led IEP meetings becoming a new norm.**
 - 27. Strengthened transition planning at every level.**
 - 28. Grades 11–12 and Pathways 18–21 Transition Program expanding community partnerships.**
 - 29. Collaboration with local employers for community work experiences.**
 - 30. Common Grounds Café experiences connecting learning to life.**
 - 31. Pathways at FLC for alternative teaching and postsecondary exploration.**
 - 32. Development of pathways for para to teacher licensure.**
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Family, Community, and Partnerships

- 33. Implementation of daily communication tools for families.**
- 34. Creation of Parent Surveys to elevate family voice.**
- 35. Launch of Durango Specialized Programs Volunteer Process.**
- 36. Inclusion of students in Unified Sports district-wide.**

- 37. Partnerships with 7 local community preschools to create placement options for students with disabilities.-offering parents choice and normalizing inclusion.**
 - 38. Collaboration with CDE consultants for program alignment.**
 - 39. Collaboration with CDE and districts across the state and nation to elevate innovation.**
 - 40. Cross-district collaboration fostering shared learning.**
 - 41. Community partnerships creating real-world learning for students.**
 - 42. Student success stories featured in local media.**
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Systems Leadership and Continuous Improvement

- 43. Successful CDE compliance and results monitoring outcomes.**
 - 44. Creation of the SPED ILT to guide systems-level improvement.**
 - 45. Implementation of Abbreviated Day policy aligned with HB24-1063.**
 - 46. Development of feedback systems amplifying staff and parent voice.**
 - 47. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) driving improvement.**
 - 48. Growth of staff wellness and recognition initiatives.**
 - 49. Portrait of a Graduate alignment visible in all programs.**
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Celebrating Our Shared Purpose

- 50. And—most importantly—the joy, laughter, and growth of every student we serve.**
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 **Here's to the Next 50 Years!**

As we honor this milestone, let's recommit to the vision that began in 1975:

A future where every student, of every ability, is empowered to learn, grow, and thrive.

Thank you, Team Durango, for carrying that vision forward with passion, heart, and excellence every single day.

Happy 50th Birthday, Special Education! 🎂 🎈