

National Study of Special Education Spending (NSSES) Enrollment Data Guide 2026-27

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Overview

Thank you again for your participation in the **National Study of Special Education Spending!** It is now time for you to compile and upload your student enrollment data.

As a reminder, these data will be used to select a sample of approximately 3-10 students from selected schools in the study. Once your student enrollment data is sampled, we will be contacting schools and asking NSSES-designated School Coordinators to provide the name of the staff person most knowledgeable about the selected students' educational program to complete the Student Resources Survey (SRS).

Help Desk

If you have questions before or while compiling your data, we are happy to set up a call at your convenience. Please contact us at NORC-NSSES@norc.org or 888-872-0626.

Uploading Your Data

Once you have prepared and reviewed your data for quality, you will upload it to a secure portal in the **Institution of Education Science's (IES) Data Center**. You should have received a **unique link via email from NORC-NSSSES@norc.org** to upload your data. If you cannot find this link or have questions, please contact us!

- Use your secure IES Data Center portal link.
- Multiple files and .zip files are supported; however, they must be uploaded **one at a time**.
- Uploading a file with the same name will overwrite the previous version.
- Files cannot be viewed or downloaded once uploaded.
- For additional step-by-step portal instructions please see pages 10-11 below.

Preparing Your Data

We have included a detailed table (below) along with a checklist that describes the specific data fields that are needed to select students for the next part of this study. It is important that you provide complete data for each of these fields. If at any point you have a question regarding specific data elements, please contact us. We are here to help support you during this process!

FAQs

A. What type of student data are you requesting?

Please see the detailed table below for the required data elements. Districts/schools will be asked to provide enrollment data for the following three types of students:

- a. **Students with Disabilities (SWD)** enrolled in the entire district as of October 2026.
- b. **General Education (GENED)** and all other (non-SWD) students enrolled in the schools in our sample. You were provided with a list of your selected school(s).

- c. **All out-of-district students** (students publicly placed by your local education agency (LEA) into a private school or residential school or homebound or hospital setting).

B. Why are you requesting data for so many students?

NSSSES is a nationally representative study designed to produce national estimates of special education spending. To support student selection and ensure that study findings are representative of students, schools, and districts across the United States, districts are asked to provide enrollment data for all students with disabilities districtwide, all students enrolled in selected schools, and all out-of-district students publicly placed by the district.

C. Our district/school uses a different code frame/categories than what you have provided.

If your district uses different codes or categories, please provide a description of the code frame used in your system when submitting data or contact us before uploading. We can work with you to find a solution.

D. We don't have access to some of the information you are requesting.

We understand that not all districts and schools store their data the same way, and in some cases, may not track certain elements. Contact us if you cannot provide an element and we can discuss a solution.

E. You have asked for ALL special education students across the district, but also the data for ALL students in the selected schools. Should we include the special education students twice?

No, you can include them just once. If removing duplicate students creates additional burden, let us know and we can de-duplicate after we receive and review your data.

F. For some students I am missing some requested information. Should I leave these fields blank?

We have provided specific instructions for how to handle unknown or missing data in the table below.

G. Do we have to use the exact MS Excel template that you have provided?

No. However, we request that you maintain the column order and headers that we have provided in the MS Excel template to avoid data issues and clarification questions.

List of Data Elements

The following table provides detailed information about how to prepare each data field we are requesting. Following this section is a **checklist** to help you review your data prior to uploading. We request that enrollment data be provided using a Microsoft Excel file (.xlsx or .xls) whenever possible. If providing data in Microsoft Excel format is not possible, you may also submit a .csv file.

Data Element Needed	Description of Data Element	Notes
1. District NCES ID	7-digit number. Unique NCES ID numbers are assigned to schools and districts when they are initially reported to the U.S. Department of Education by the state education agency (SEA).	If you need to search for the district NCES ID please use this website: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/districtsearch/
2. School NCES ID	12-digit number.	If you need to search for the school NCES ID please use this website: https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/
3. District Name		
4. School Name		
5. Student's First Name		
6. Student's Middle Name		
7. Student's Last Name		
8. Student ID		
9. IEP indicator	Does the student receive special or related services through their Individualized Education Program?	If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSES@norc.org prior to submission.

Data Element Needed	Description of Data Element	Notes
	1: Yes; 2: No; Other classification, please specify.	Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.
10. Primary Classification of Disability Type	<p>LEA primary classification of disability type. Code set based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):</p> <p>AUT – Autism DB – Deaf–blindness DD – Developmental delay EMN – Emotional disturbance HI – Hearing impairment ID – Intellectual disability MD – Multiple disabilities OI – Orthopedic impairment SLD – Specific learning disability SLI – Speech or language impairment TBI – Traumatic brain injury VI – Visual impairment OHI – Other health impairment</p>	<p>If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSSSES@norc.org prior to submission.</p> <p>Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.</p>
11. Secondary Classification of Disability Type	<p>LEA secondary classification of disability type. Code set based on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):</p> <p>AUT – Autism DB – Deaf–blindness DD – Developmental delay EMN – Emotional disturbance HI – Hearing impairment ID – Intellectual disability MD – Multiple disabilities OI – Orthopedic impairment</p>	<p>If a student has more than one secondary disability classification, enter additional classifications separated by commas (example: DB, SLI).</p> <p>If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSSSES@norc.org prior to submission.</p> <p>Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your</p>

Data Element Needed	Description of Data Element	Notes
	SLD – Specific learning disability SLI – Speech or language impairment TBI – Traumatic brain injury VI – Visual impairment OHI – Other health impairment	system. If a student has no secondary disability, please use NA.
12. Out-of-District Indicator	For students with an IEP— Is student publicly placed by your LEA into a private school or residential school or homebound or hospital setting? <i>These students may be referred to as out-of-district students.</i> 1: Yes; 2: No.	If out-of-district students are stored in a separate system, a separate file can be provided. If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSSSES@norc.org prior to submission. Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.
13. Sex	Sex as listed in the LEA or school administrative record.	Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.
14. English Learner (EL) indicator	Does the student qualify as an English Learner based on state policies? 1: Yes; 2: No; Other classification, please specify.	If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSSSES@norc.org prior to submission. Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.
15. Student Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement (including outside of district)	LRE is Least Restrictive Environment and refers to the setting where a student with a disability receives their education.	If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSSSES@norc.org prior to submission.

Data Element Needed	Description of Data Element	Notes
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inside regular class 80% or more of the day 2. Inside regular class no more than 79% of the day and no less than 40% of the day 3. Inside regular class less than 40% of the day 4. Separate school 5. Residential facility 6. Homebound/hospital 7. Correctional facilities 8. Parentally-placed in private schools 	Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.
16. Student's grade level	Kindergarten through grade 12 or higher, or ungraded.	<p>Enter grade number, K for Kindergarten, or UG for ungraded.</p> <p>Please exclude students enrolled in preschool, prekindergarten, or early intervention centers.</p> <p>If your district has ungraded students or students with a grade higher than 12, please include them and reach out to NORC-NSES@norc.org to let us know how they appear in the data.</p>
17. Student's race	Race information as listed in the LEA or school administrative record. Prefer the most detailed classification if there are multiple classifications.	Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.
18. Student's ethnicity	Ethnicity information as listed in the LEA or school administrative record. Prefer the most detailed classification if there are multiple classifications.	Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.

Data Element Needed	Description of Data Element	Notes
19. Date of Birth	Date of birth as listed in the LEA or school administrative record.	Please use MM/DD/YYYY format.
20. Free or Reduced-Price Lunch (FRPL) or Economically Disadvantaged (ED) designation	<p>Does the student qualify for free or reduced-price meals or does the student qualify as economically disadvantaged?</p> <p>1: Yes; 2: No; Other classification, please specify.</p>	<p>If your district uses different codes or classifications than those listed, please contact NORC-NSSSES@norc.org prior to submission.</p> <p>Use NA when a field is not applicable. Leave a field blank only when information is missing from your system.</p>

Checklist Before Uploading Data

Please read through the items below before uploading your data to the IES Data Center portal. These checks will help reduce any follow-up needed with you.

- ☐ You are providing data as a MS Excel (.xls or .xlsx) file whenever possible. If you only have access to Google Sheets, you can still save your file as another type by going to File>Download and then choosing “Microsoft Excel (.xlsx)”.
- ☐ All rows have a unique student ID (this field is not missing for students and there are no duplicates in the file).
- ☐ You have included all students who fall into any of the categories below:
 - students with disabilities (SWDs) for the whole district,
 - general education students for selected schools,
 - and students publicly placed by your district into a private school or residential school or homebound or hospital setting (out-of-district students).
- ☐ If data is provided across multiple files:
 - All files contain student ID or another identifier.
 - *If you are providing the SAME data elements for DIFFERENT students*, no students appear in multiple files.
 - *If you are providing DIFFERENT data elements for the SAME students*, all students appear in multiple files.
 - No data elements conflict across the files.
- ☐ All students with an IEP have a primary disability classification.
- ☐ Fields that are not applicable are listed as NA and fields are only left blank if that information is missing in your system.
- ☐ Columns are not left entirely blank unless you’ve reached out to NORC-NSSES@norc.org with an explanation.
- ☐ Preschool, prekindergarten, and early intervention center students are not included.
- ☐ If you are not sure how to align your data with the categories above, you’ve reached out to NORC-NSSES@norc.org.
- ☐ If you are including ungraded students or students with a grade higher than 12, you’ve emailed NORC-NSSES@norc.org to provide a description.
- ☐ Date of birth uses a MM/DD/YYYY format.

Detailed Instructions for Uploading Your Data

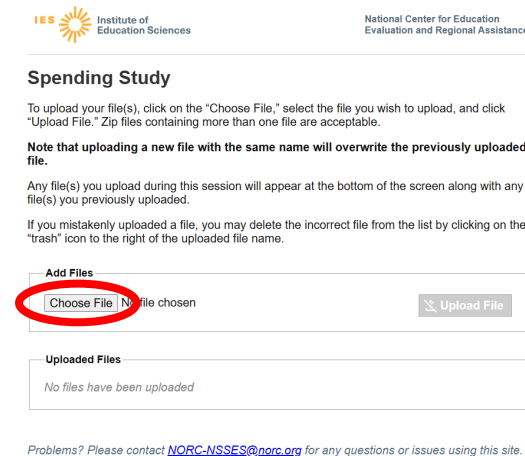
STEP 1: Access Your Secure Upload Link

Click or copy and paste your unique secure upload link into your browser. You should have received this link via email from NORC-NSSSES@norc.org. You will be taken to the following website. Select “Click here to continue” to be taken to the upload page.



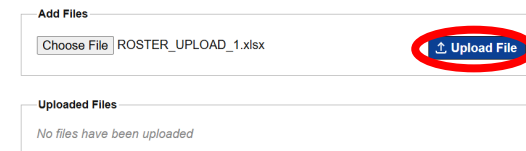
STEP 2: Upload Your File

At the upload page, click on “Choose File” and navigate to the file you wish to upload from your computer or mobile device.



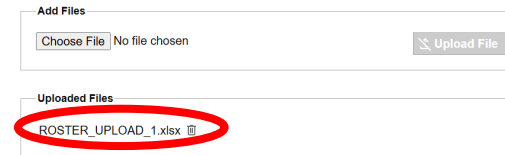
STEP 3: Confirm Successful Upload

Once your selected file appears on screen, click “Upload File” to begin the upload process.



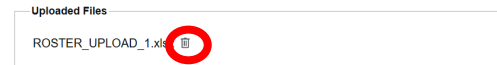
STEP 4: Upload Additional Files (If Needed)

After the upload is complete, the file will appear under “Uploaded Files” at the bottom of the screen. Please repeat steps 1-4 to upload additional files.



TIPS:

1. Multiple files and .zip files are supported; however, they must be uploaded **one at a time**.
 - **For Instructions for creating a ZIP file: On Windows: [click here](#) / On MacOS: [click here](#)**
 - Depending on file size it may take a few minutes to upload.
 - To maintain confidentiality, you will not be able to download or view the files once uploaded.
 - **Please note: Uploading a new file with the same name as a previously uploaded file will **overwrite** the previous file with the new one.**
2. All files you upload during the session and previous sessions will be visible at the bottom of the screen.
 - **If you need to delete any uploaded files** you may do so by selecting the trash can icon by the file name.
3. When you have finished uploading all files, please close the web page to end your session.
4. The team will review the data for completeness. We will reach out if we require any additional follow-up.



If you have questions while preparing your data, please contact the research team at NORC-NSSSES@norc.org or call our study toll-free number at 888-872-0626.
