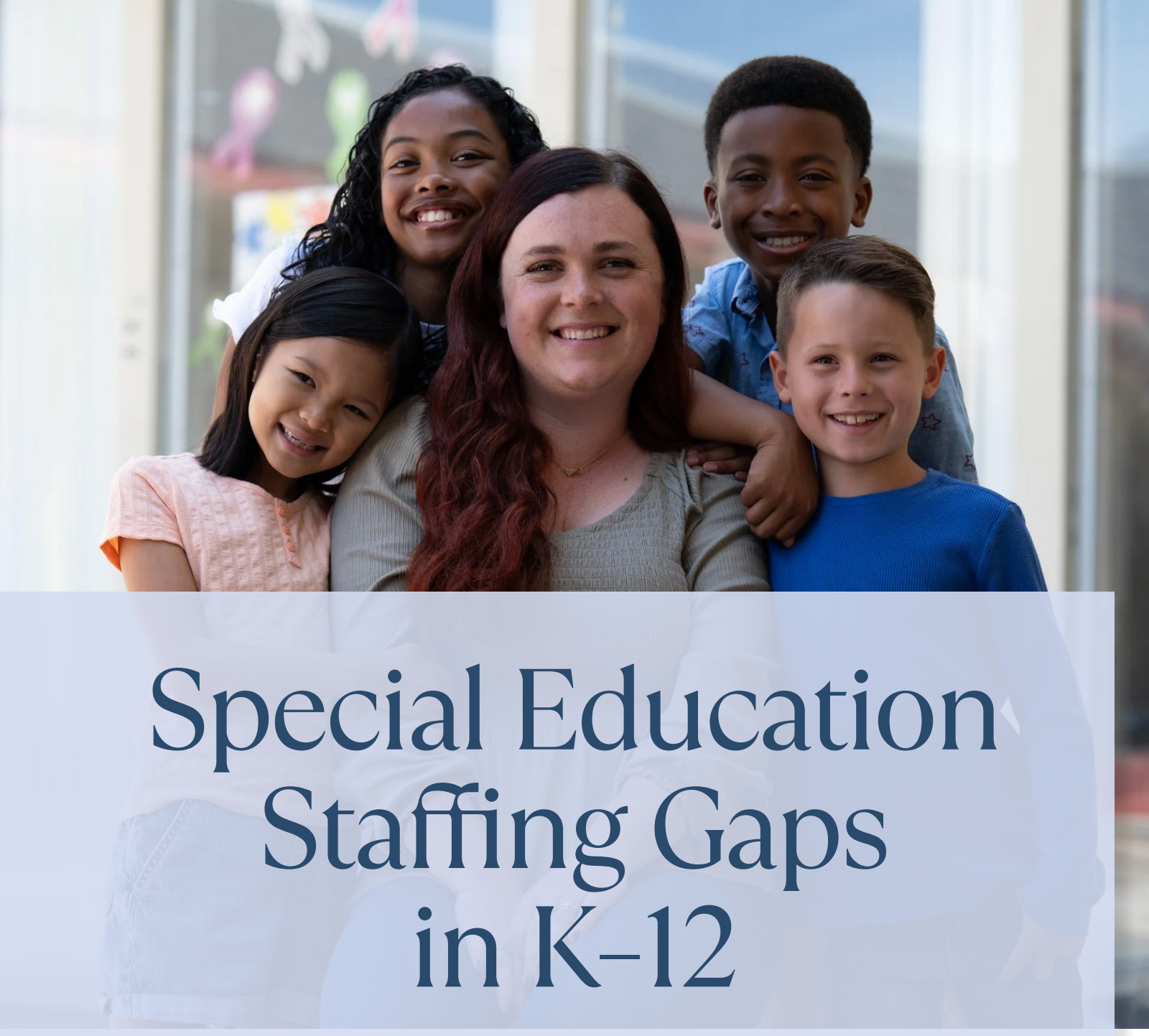




Special Education Staffing Gaps in K-12

From vacancy to impact:

how one unfilled role can affect services, compliance, and student support

Staffing Pressure Snapshot



74%

of schools with special education vacancies had difficulty finding fully certified teachers.



23%

of special education vacancies were not filled by fully certified teachers.



21%

of schools reported at least one special education teacher vacancy.



Vacancy Starts as a Hiring Gap

Hard-to-fill roles often include:



Special Education Teachers

IEP instruction, accommodations, progress monitoring



Speech-Language Pathologists

Communication services, evaluations, therapy minutes



School Psychologists

Evaluations, eligibility, behavior support, MTSS data



Occupational & Physical Therapists

Motor, access, and functional support services



Behavior Specialists / BCBAs

Behavior plans, intervention design, staff coaching



Vacancy-to-Impact Flow

One unfilled role can create a chain reaction across services and compliance.



Role Remains Vacant



Caseloads Expand

Staff absorb more students, meetings, paperwork, and service demands.



IEP Implementation Strains

Required supports become harder to deliver, track, and adjust.



Service Minutes Are Delayed

Students may receive support later, less often, or inconsistently.



MTSS Planning Slows

Data reviews, interventions, and support decisions can lose momentum.

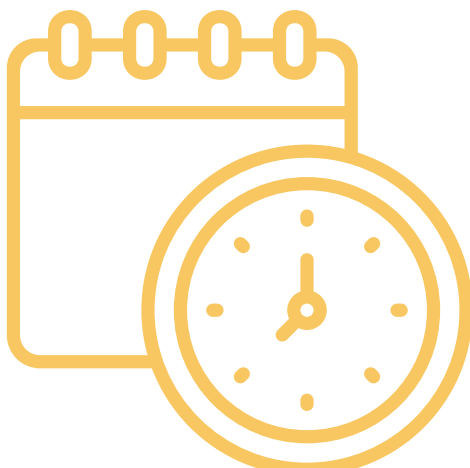


FAPE & IDEA Pressure Builds

Service gaps raise documentation demands, concerns, and compliance risk.

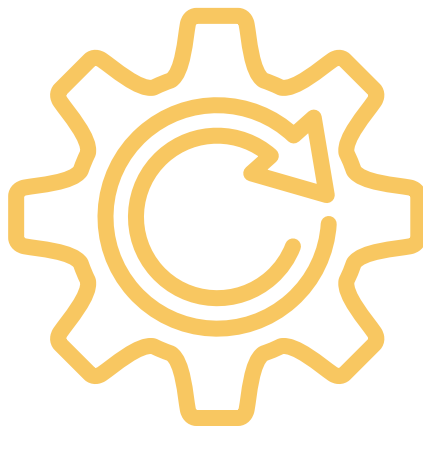


Proactive Plan vs. Reactive Coverage



Proactive Staffing Plan

- ✓ Identifies gaps early
- ✓ Builds role-specific coverage
- ✓ Protects service continuity
- ✓ Supports IEP implementation
- ✓ Reduces district instability



Reactive Coverage Model

- ✗ Responds after disruption
- ✗ Stretches existing staff
- ✗ Increases missed or delayed minutes
- ✗ Creates uneven support
- ✗ Adds compliance pressure

Filled specialized roles help districts maintain service continuity, support stronger IEP implementation, and reduce instability across student services.