

LADSE—60 Years of Service to Children and Youth

The LaGrange Area Department of Special Education (LADSE) began as a pilot project in 1956, an initiative led by its first Executive Director, C. Lewis Martin.

By May of 1957, LADSE was established by the State of Illinois as the first special education joint agreement, or cooperative, authorized to assist 14 public school districts in the delivery of special education services to students with disabilities—services that were not yet required by federal law.

It was not until November of 1975 that Congress passed the Education of All Handicapped Children Act, allowing all students with disabilities, ages 3-21, access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education.

The most recent federal law mandating special education and related services to students with disabilities is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, called IDEA.

In 1957, LADSE's 14 districts enrolled 23,433 students and LADSE provided special education classroom instruction to 122 students in 12 classrooms located in five member districts.

In 1966, LADSE began operating the Secondary Deaf and Hard of Hearing program for students in the DuPage West Cook region, serving up to 80 students from 25 or more districts on an annual basis.

In 2017, LADSE's 15 member districts enrolled 23,486 students, 3248 of whom were entitled to special education and related services provided by either district or LADSE personnel.

In 2017, LADSE provided specialized classroom instruction to 185 students in 20 classrooms which were located in seven member districts and in two community settings. In addition, LADSE provided vocational instruction to 208 district students in district classrooms and community settings.

In the summer of 2017, LADSE will provide specialized instruction to 250 eligible preschool or elementary students and 20 high school students.

In 2017, LADSE provided more than 20 types of support services designed to help students, who have or are at risk of disabilities, achieve improved outcomes in district classrooms and in community settings.

In 2017, LADSE partnerships included two funding sources, the Illinois Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, and also the West Suburban Chamber of Commerce and Industry, area businesses, professional organizations, and institutions of higher education.

The primary purpose of LADSE is now to provide access to the wide range of specialized services and information necessary to make district services more complete, more personalized, and more effective for students who have or are at-risk of disabilities.

LADSE and its member districts completed 60 years of leadership, service, and innovation in the education of students with disabilities in public schools and in the transition of students who have disabilities into meaningful careers and adult life.