

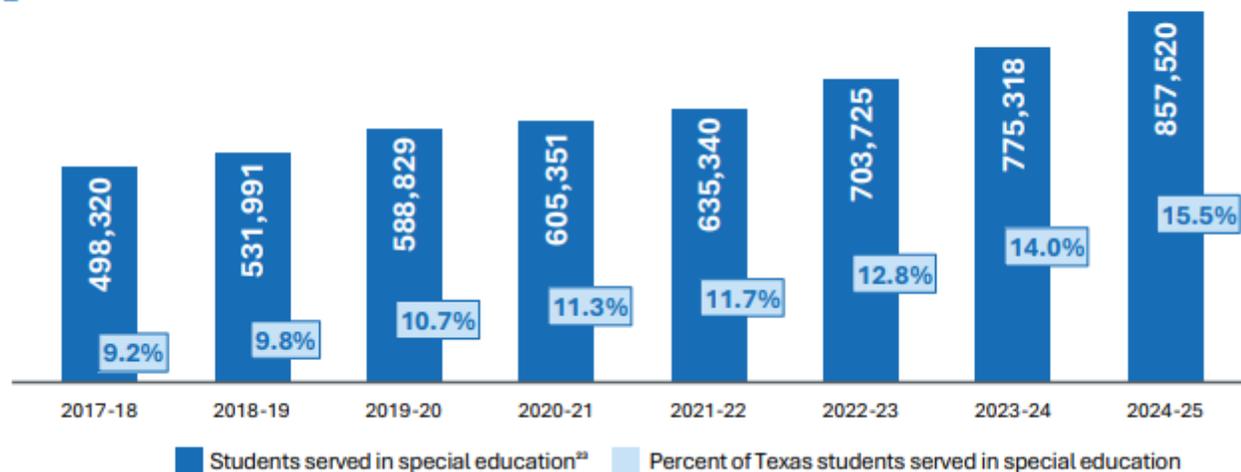
# Special Education trends in Texas and HISD

MARCH 2026

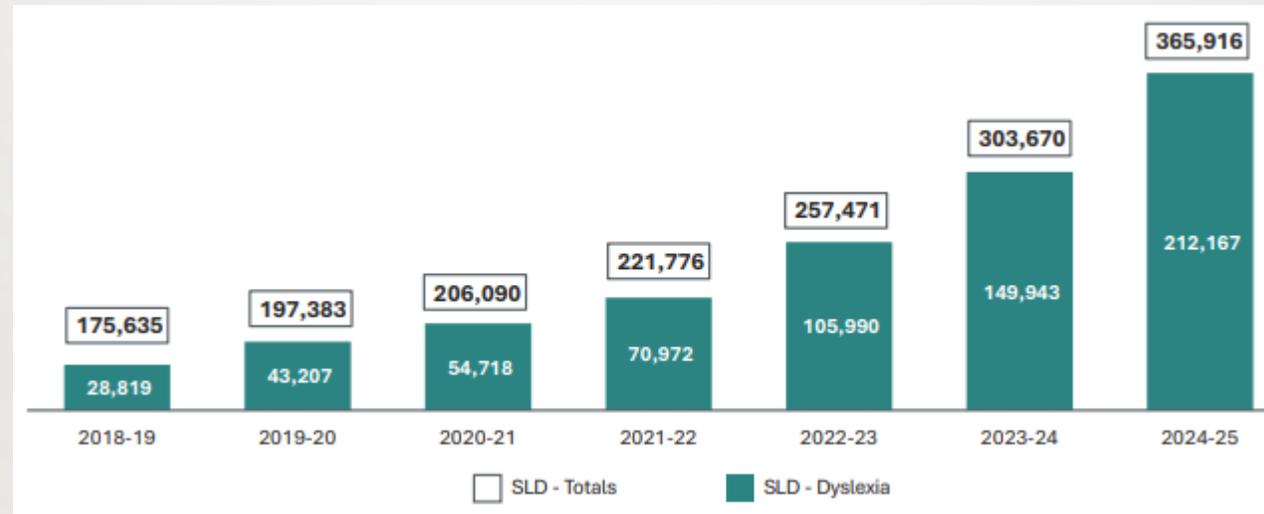
What happened yesterday is history.  
What happens tomorrow is a mystery.  
What we do today makes a difference.  
Nick Saban

# Statewide special ed enrollment

## Special Education Enrollment



## Number of students statewide who qualify as SLD for Dyslexia

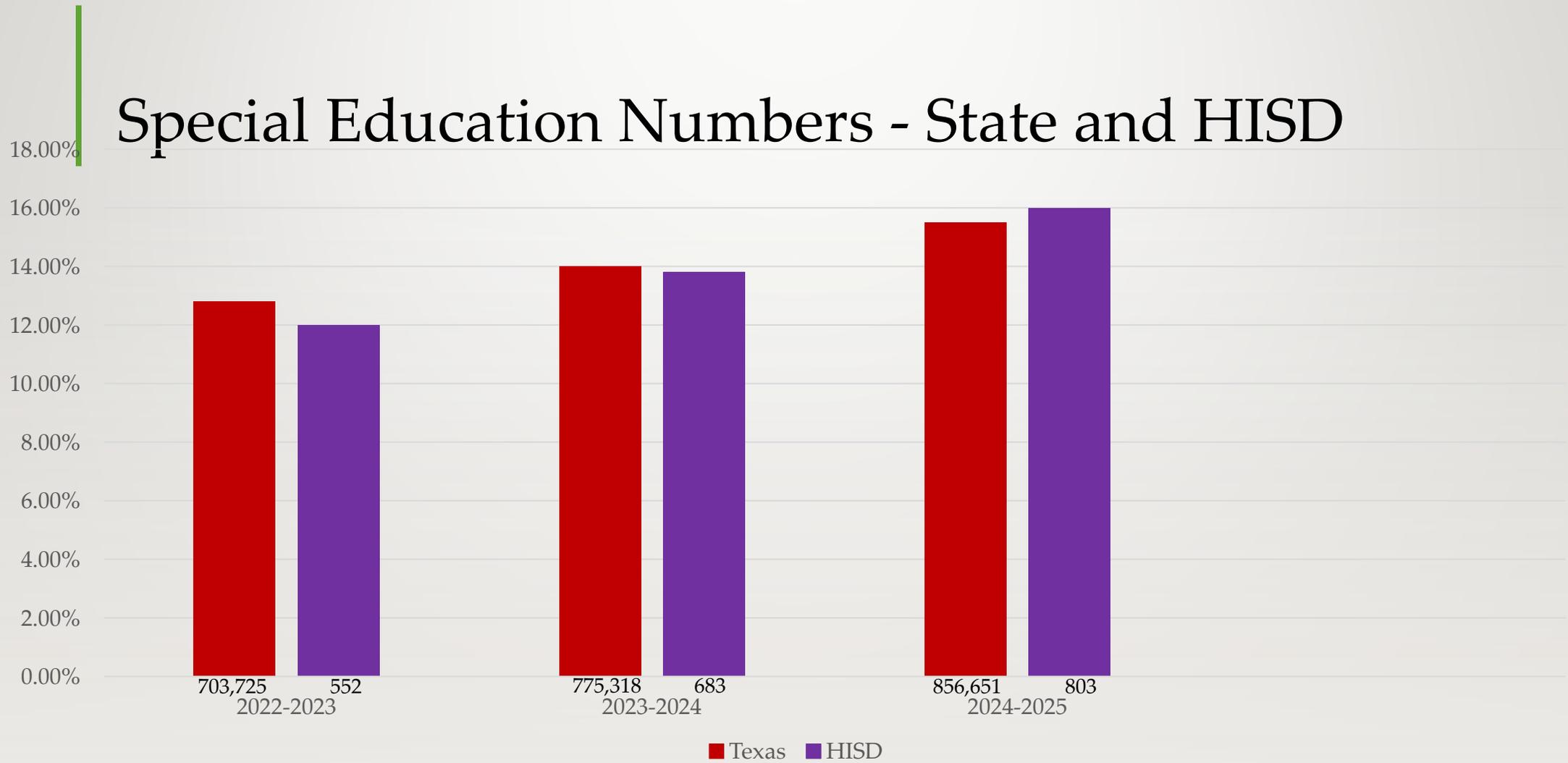


# The state of the state

## Enrollment Trends & Statistics

- Rapid Growth:** Enrollment has jumped roughly **72%** over the last seven years, rising from 498,320 in the 2017-2018 school year. The percentage of students served jumped from 9.2% (17/18) to 15.5% (24/25)
- Dyslexia Surge:** The number of students identified with dyslexia receiving special education services has increased by more than **636%** over the last six years, partly due to legislative changes like HB 3928, which requires dyslexia to be evaluated as a specific learning disability.
- Historical Context:** This growth follows the removal of a controversial **8.5% cap** on special education enrollment that was in place until approximately 2017. The state was found out of compliance with federal standards in 2018 but was declared back in compliance by the U.S. Department of Education in 2023.
- Evaluations:** Special Education evaluations (FIIE) have increased over 130% since 2012-2013.

# Special Education Numbers - State and HISD



# Initial referrals and transfers over 3 years

initial referrals are decreasing



# MAKE IT MAKE SENSE

Problematic because:

- It is too lengthy to serve families effectively
- What began as a straightforward procedural safeguard has evolved into a high-stakes legal enterprise—one that consumes time, money, and personnel that should instead be directed toward instruction and support.
- Studies consistently conclude litigation produces winners and losers, but does not translate into better academic achievement (Gomez et al., 2022; Zagata, et al, 2023).

Total Number of IDEA Complaints Received Over Time for the State



## Celebrations!

- 1.) Initial referrals are decreasing
  - Tier one strategies are effective
  - SIT meetings are serving the intended purpose
  - MTSS meetings are more intentional with their processes
  - Decrease in number of students flagged on Dyslexia screeners
  
- 2.) CPT meetings:
  - We piloted a CPT process this year to support our Elementary structured learning classrooms. This consists of meeting *weekly* for brief, targeted meetings with SL teachers. Around the table are providers of OT, PT, Speech, School Psych, a campus administrator, and myself. This facilitates the provision of support while upholding accountability. We have learned a lot!
  
- 3.) We (including TVA-H) were 100% compliant on our SPP Indicators 11 (a), 11 (b), 12, and 13.
  
- 4.) Having an OT and PT on staff has been a game changer! Thank you!



## Goals for the near future:

- 1.) Continue to build on the success of the CPT meetings
- 2.) Focus on training first year SL teachers to address specific strategies and foundational practices
- 3.) New software system to learn
- 4.) Navigate the voucher program
- 5.) Promote parent training opportunities
- 6.) Focus on paraprofessional training for inclusion classroom and SL classroom environments
- 7.) Increase transition opportunities for secondary students.