

Why “Rethink” Special Education in California

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Overview: three reasons to rethink special education

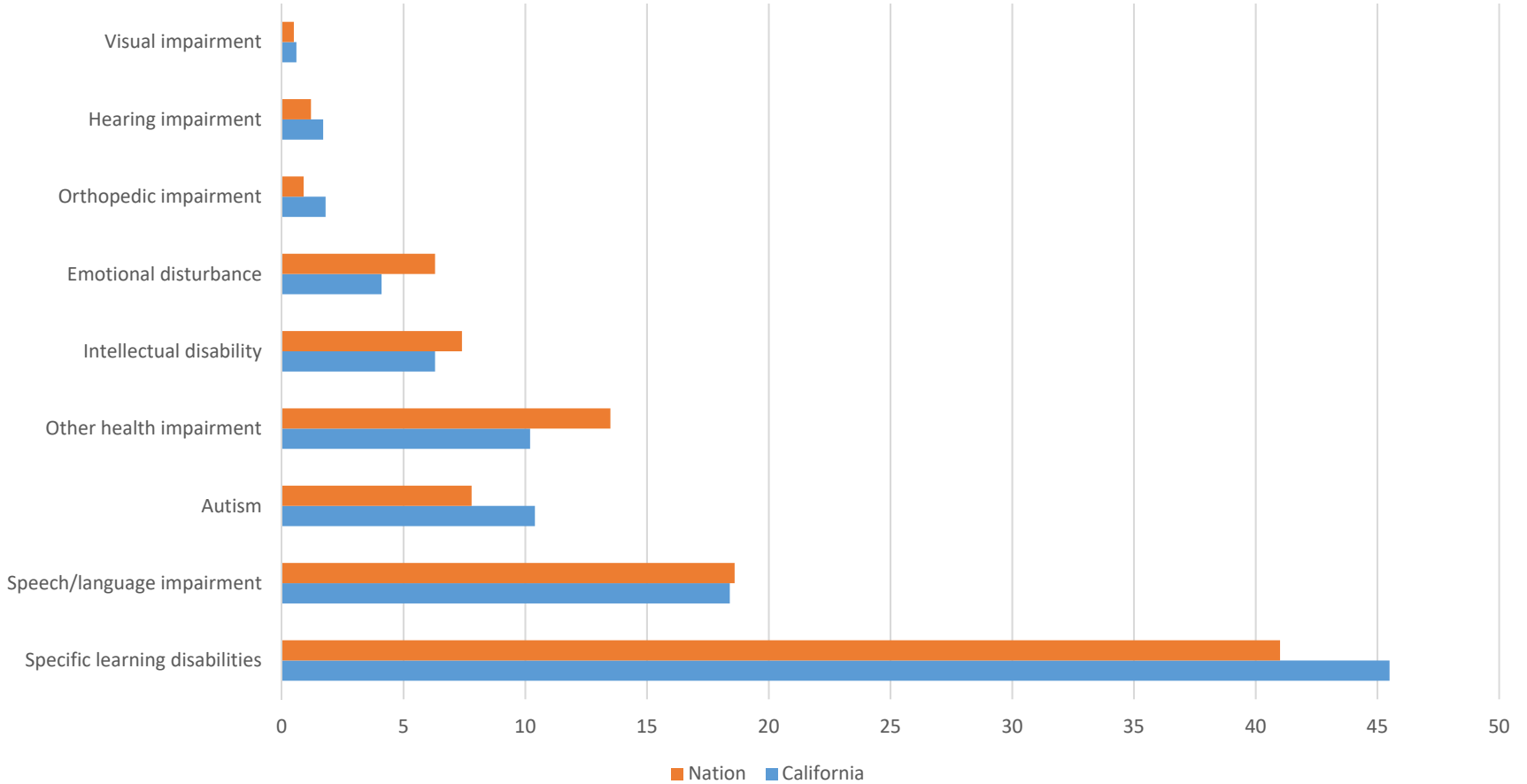
- A snapshot of special education in California: many students, big dollars, and mediocre outcomes
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: federal constraints and opportunities
- Special education finance, policy, and governance in California: room for improvement
- Recent reform rumblings

A snapshot of special education in California: student numbers

- Approximately 740,000 students with disabilities or 11.5% of the student population (13.0% nationally)
- Distribution of disabilities
- Disproportionality

Distribution of disabilities

Percent of children with disabilities by category



A snapshot of special education in California: spending on spec ed

- \$13.170 billion in special education spending (2015-16)
- \$3.820 billion in state general fund appropriations (29%)
- \$1.210 billion in federal funds (9.2%)
- \$8.140 billion in local contributions (61.8%)

A snapshot of special education in California: Student outcomes

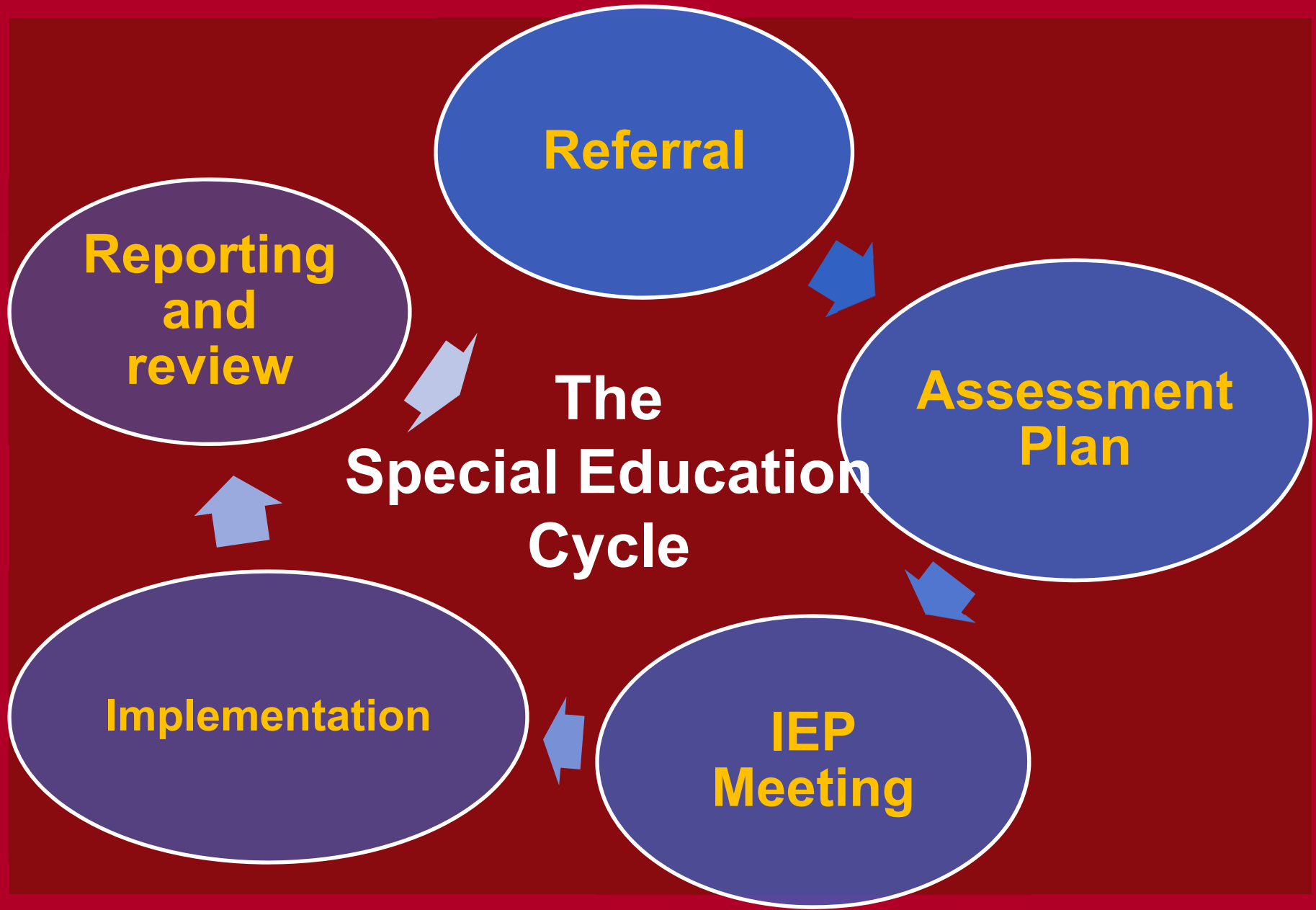
- 36% SWDs in special education classroom or school (26.4% nation)
- 65% graduation rate for SWDs compared to 80% of non-disabled peers (2014)
- 30%-70% of youth in the juvenile justice system have identified/unidentified disabilities
- Suspension rates
- 2/3 of the 228 Districts in need of assistance in part because of underperformance of SWDs

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: central principles

- Access to free public school
- Inclusion/integration
- Individualized planning
- Parent participation
- Due process protections

Free appropriate public
education in the least
restrictive environment

“FAPE in the LRE”



Rigidity (compliance,
process, paper)

vs.

Opportunity

- Special education is siloed
 - Teacher preparation
 - Funding (AB 602/SELPA vs. LCFF/Districts)
 - Instructional services
- Inadequate early childhood and pre-K services and interventions
- Teacher shortages
- Small districts and charter school challenges

- LCFF and dashboard implementation
- Advances in technology and biomedicine (particularly neuroscience)
- Recent attention
 - WestEd, “Lessons from California Districts” (2011)
 - Statewide Task Force on Special Education, “One System” (2015)
 - PPIC, “Special Education Finance in California” (2016)
 - CCTC teacher preparation/credentialing reform