



Lexington Public Schools

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To: Paul B. Ash, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

From: Mary Sullivan Kelley, Ed.D., Director of Student Services
Supervisors of Special Education: Elizabeth Billings-Fouhy,
Jim Russo, Maura Johnson, Denise Oldham, and Kathleen Meagher
Barbara Bennett-Fortier, Out-of-District Coordinator

Re: PreK- Age 22 Special Education Services

Date: November 28, 2006

Introduction

During the past ten years, the cost of Lexington's special education program has increased and decreased, as a percentage of the total school budget. In 1996, the total cost of special education was 17.2% of the total school budget. The cost of special education increased to 19.5% in 2000, decreased to 17.5% in 2003, and increased to 19.9% in 2005. In 2005, the average statewide cost for special education was 18.9% of the total school budget.

During this past year, the cost of out-of-district placements has significantly increased in Lexington. The three primary factors were: an increase in the number of students placed in out-of-district schools, an increase in the number of students requiring more intensive placements, and an increase in mandated tuition rates. In order to explain these increased costs and what steps we might take to reduce future costs, this report is divided into four sections.

1. **Local and State Trends in Special Education** – This section shows the growth of special education in Massachusetts and its fiscal impact during the past fifteen years. Lexington's special education program is also compared with ten similar school systems in our geographic area.
2. **Current Range of In-district and Collaborative Placements for PreK-12 Students with Mild to Significant Special Needs** - The purpose of this section is to describe the current range of special education programs in the Lexington Public Schools.
3. **Current Range of Out-of-District Placements for Elementary Through Age 22 Students with Significant Special Needs** – Some students require highly specialized educational programs in private day and residential settings. This section describes the six types of private day programs and an overview of services at residential schools.
4. **Recommended New or Expanded Programs** – In order to provide a continuum of services and reduce the need for some out-of-district placements, some new or expanded programs are recommended. For each proposed program, the cost of the new or expanded program is compared with the projected tuition and transportation costs if no program is established.