

**ANNUAL REPORT 2020
PUPIL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

The Pupil Services Office oversees services to students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and the homeless. This involves the staffing and supervision of the teachers and related services providers, budgeting and providing the necessary teaching and assessment materials, arranging for transportation of the above students, as well as ensuring compliance to state and federal standards for Special Education, Civil Rights, and English as a Second Language programming.

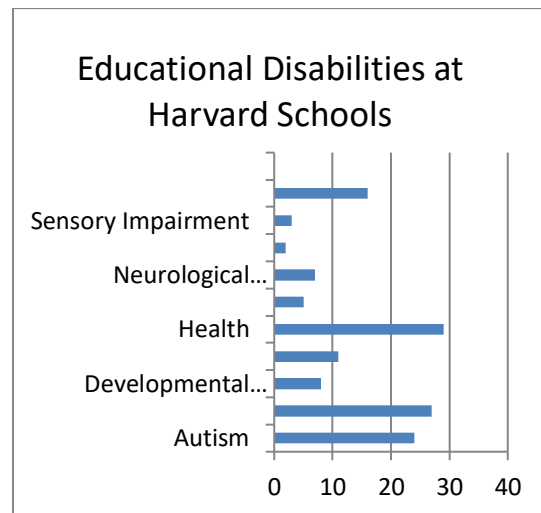
Special Education

This has been a very challenging year with the restrictions imposed due to the pandemic. In March, when the school buildings were closed, the Special Education staff quickly worked to provide resource lists, links and materials to parents. Within 2 weeks, they had pivoted to a remote model of services. Arrangements were made for families without devices and learning materials were assembled and send home. Staff volunteers helped to deliver the materials when families had limited means to do pick-ups.

In April, written Learning Plans were developed and emailed for each Special Education student outlining the student’s schedule of services and giving specific contact information to reach the special education teachers and service providers by the student or parents.

When we returned to the school buildings in September, the special education liaisons contacted each family to discuss parent concerns and to give them an opportunity to give input into the student’s schedules. In addition, parents of Bromfield students with more intensive special education needs were given the opportunity to attend in-person special ed. services four days a week. 100% of the IEP services were offered to all IEP students. After contacting the parents in September, a new Learning Plan for each student also sent home.

In addition, every family of a student with an IEP was invited to a Team meeting during the months before the holiday break. From September through December, parents of 127 pupils chose to meet with their team to review their child’s progress and to discuss how COVID 19 and the current school services have impacted their student.



In 2020, the District has provided Individual Education Programming to 150 students. 19 of these have graduated, transferred or moved. As of December 31st, the District currently has 131 students on IEPs. 22 of these students are in specialized programs or schools outside of our local schools.

The number of requested evaluations continues to be high. All testing was done with protocols in place which included careful sanitation of materials, the use of a rigid clear screen between the test administrator and student, the wearing of masks, and, until the weather prohibited, outside administration. From September to the end of December, the special education teams completed 30 evaluations and the associated meetings. Of these, a full half were initial evaluations, bringing our Team Meeting total to 142 from September to December 2020.

Special education staffing has been adjusted in the schools to meet the needs of the students and to provide a more inclusive climate. In January 2020, we opened a second integrated preschool classroom. The number of preschoolers with special needs had grown beyond the class size allowed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Also during the 2019-2020 school year, we began a co-teaching model at the Hildreth Elementary. At least one class at each grade level was taught with both a special education teacher and a regular education teacher. In this way, many of the students could be fully included in Reading and

Mathematics. As a result, there was more differentiated instruction and opportunities for student-teacher interaction within the classroom. At Bromfield, cooperative teaching occurred in the English and Math classes as well. There has also been an addition of services and a staffed class area to conduct social emotional learning sessions. It is unfortunate that with the necessity of assigning both regular and special ed. teacher to teach remote classes for the large number of students whose families chose the fully remote option over in-person classes, some of the co-teaching has had to be suspended during the pandemic. The limitation of classroom size in a time of cautious social distancing restricts both the number of students and the number of staff in the room. We look forward to the day when we can resume our inclusion/co-teaching methodology in our schools.

In 2020, we now have 2 Preschool Teachers, 3 Special Education Teachers, and a Special Ed. Teacher for the newly opened Sail specialized program for students with more significant cognitive and behavioral needs. For related services there are 2 Speech Pathologists, 1 Occupational Therapist, a School Psychologist and 1 Board Certified Behavior Specialist. At Bromfield, we now have 5 Special Education Teachers, a .5 Board Certified Behavior Specialist, a .8 Speech Pathologist, and a School Psychologist. Both schools have a dedicated Coordinator/Team Chair and we continue to contract out for Physical Therapy services. By increasing these

services and staffing, we have been able to bring back 4 students from out of district special programs, and to prevent outside placement of several other Harvard students. Increasing services is also of benefit to all our students, as inclusion experiences are a good predictor of later success for students with disabilities and of increased understanding and respect for differences in others.

English Language Learners

Our current number of students who are English Learners (ELs) and who require pull-out instruction by an ESL teacher is nine. At the same time, our teacher monitors and coaches 12 students who are considered Former English Learners (FELs). FELs must achieve a mastery score on the annual state-wide ACCESS test and be successful in their academics before being “graduated” to FEL status. The greater number of FELs over ELs is evidence of the success of these students and teacher.

Homeless Students

Recent years have seen an increase in the number of students who are homeless. When a student is relocated due to homelessness, the law requires that they are allowed to continue in the school which they last attended. Even if they are now in a new and stable home, they are permitted by law to continue until June in the school where they had begun the year. In 2019-2020, Harvard transported 9 homeless

students—either to schools in other cities and towns where the children had lived previously, or from outside towns back to Harvard when the students had moved from the shelter but wished to continue in the Harvard Public Schools. In this way, we comply with the laws, but more importantly, we also provide needed consistency in the educational experience of the students.

It has been an exceptionally challenging year. I thank the town, the School Committee, the Leadership Team, and especially Dr. Dwight for their support to keep our staff and students safe and for their efforts which have allowed us to continue to provide in-person, sensitive and quality education for all our students.

Respectfully submitted,
Marie T. Harrington, Ph.D.
Director of Pupil Services