

Special Education Task Force Report

The Special Education Task Force was commissioned by the School Committee and formed in the fall of 2006. The group included representation from the following groups:

- Board of Selectmen – Bob Eubank
- Finance Committee – Steve Colwell, Cindy Russo (replaced by Bob Thurston)
- Special Education Parent Advisory Council/Community – Sue Tokay
- Community Representative – Keith Cheveralls
- Will Verbits – School Committee Liaison
- School Administration – Charles Horn (Special Education Director), Thomas Jefferson (Superintendent, Chair), Lorraine Leonard (Finance Director).

The goals of the Special Education Task Force were to:

- Provide a summary statement which would serve as a “definitive” compilation of information;
- Help community members and town officials gain a deeper understanding of special education;
- Help understand and work to eliminate scapegoating which currently surrounds special education;
- Provide recommendations which address the realities of special education funding;
- Identify cost saving measures, including an understanding of the system of checks and balances currently in operation;
- Develop recommendations to help address the unpredictability of special education funding.

Over the course of 15 months the group reviewed myriad reports and data sources. Broad categories of discussion and analysis included the following:

- legal requirements governing special education and a history of their evolution;
- current strands of programming offered by Harvard and the number of students served in each disability;
- the specific processes and conditions which lead to a referral and potential placement in special education;
- the process by which a student moves from an in-district to an out-of-district placement;
- the structure and function of educational collaboratives, such as the Concord Area Special Education Collaborative (CASE) of which Harvard is a member;
- review of transportation services provided independently and through the CASE Collaborative;
- results of a survey of recent spending patterns and best practices we distributed to all cities and town in Massachusetts;

- a comparison of Harvard to both similar and neighboring communities with respect to comparative expenditures and students served in varying types of programs;
- detailed financial reports analyzing historic spending patterns which are available on the Department of Education web site;
- state reports examining historic spending trends across the Commonwealth;
- state and federal roles in funding mandated special education services.

Through this report we hope to provide findings and recommendations which may be considered in concert with other data sources available to the community. Those sources include the aforementioned Special Education Program Evaluation Report, the Coordinated Program Review conducted by the Department of Education in the winter of 2007-08, and the yet to be completed independent audit report commissioned by Town Meeting in March of 2007. The Special Education Task Force endorsed the independent audit and hopes that its findings and recommendations will serve to enhance and expand upon those identified in this report. Listed below is a summary compilation of our committee's findings and recommendations.

Findings:

- 1. An analysis of special education costs indicates that Harvard is in line with most communities. Increases and expenditures in Harvard over time are consistent with both state averages and a reference group of like communities.**

Recommendation: Harvard should continue to seek out best practices which will serve to simultaneously improve student services and control costs.

- 2. The overall percentage of students on Individualized Education Programs in Harvard is near the state average. The number of students in out-of-district placements, while having decreased significantly in the past five years, remains above the state average and the average of a reference group of similar communities.**

Recommendation: The number of out-of-district placements should be determined by the number of students for whom we cannot meet their needs within the district. There is no optimum or ideal number. We recommend that the district continue to focus on ways to help students currently being educated in Harvard to remain here. This might best be realized through a combination of professional development, program development, and capital expenditures when necessary.

- 3. The creation of the integrated preschool has helped lower the current, and potentially the future, number of out-of-district placements. A financial analysis indicates that the per pupil cost of educating a student in the Harvard Preschool is significantly less than the cost of tuitioning the student to a placement outside Harvard.**

Recommendation: Maintain the current integrated preschool program and continue to seek ways to provide within the elementary school for those students who have been identified as eligible for preschool special education services.

- 4. The Concord Area Special Education Collaborative (CASE), of which Harvard is a member, is able to provide programs at tuitions much lower than most other private special education schools.**

Recommendation: Continue membership in CASE and work within the organization to develop more programs which can be housed in public schools, providing opportunities for integration.

- 5. Both survey data we collected and reports that we studied pointed to the importance of a strong seamless link between regular and special education as being essential for any system which attempts to meet the needs of all learners. Regular education initiatives that address the varying needs of all learners benefit all students, regardless of whether or not they require special education support.**

Recommendation: Provide expanded opportunities for all staff to receive training in approaches which will help provide regular education teachers with the skills required to support all students within the classroom. This would include initiatives that address the varying needs of all learners (i.e. the Differentiated Instruction model) along with ways to use classroom technology to more effectively share information.

- 6. The Acton Boxborough work entitled “A look at the Costs and Drivers of Special Education” (pages 44-49 refer) stimulated frequent discussions within the Task Force around the benefits and significance of a philosophy and culture of inclusion. It was felt, however, with some improvement noted, that such a philosophy and culture was only partially embraced within HPS. It is important to note that special education services are provided within the context of the general education program. If the general education program is supportive and accepting of differences, then special education services can be provided in an efficient and effective manner.**

Recommendation: The School Committee and administration leadership must first work to accurately discern the current reality of the philosophy and culture at work within Harvard Elementary School and The Bromfield School. A vision of an inclusive philosophy and culture should then be evolved with participation from key stakeholders. Thereafter, school leadership should be charged with ensuring it is understood, embraced and acted upon daily by all within their purview.

- 7. Progress in medical science over the past three decades has resulted in a dramatic increase in the complexity of medical conditions now present within our schools.**

Recommendation: The district must remain current in its training and knowledge of practices and support systems available to address complex medical cases as they arise.

- 8. Small districts such as Harvard often lack the critical mass of students necessary to create additional in-district offerings or specialized programs in a cost efficient manner.**

Recommendation: Adjust planning annually to allow for the potential of needed programs as possibilities present themselves. Such planning will involve staffing needs, training needs, and capital expenditures. In some instances collaboration with neighboring districts may be more efficient and economical than going through a collaborative.

- 9. Both the state and federal governments have fallen woefully short in their pledge to provide communities with funding to meet the mandated requirements of special education.**

Recommendation: Town officials, administration, and citizens alike need to continually lobby legislators and Congress to address the unmet promise of funding special education. Requirements generated by changing regulations and statutes continue to add to the cost of providing special education. Current Chapter 70 funding and other governmental revenue sources do little to help towns meet the financial burden of funding mandated programs. A concerted local effort, along with our support of organizations such as the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, and the Suburban Coalition will be necessary if we are to reshape the structure of state and federal support for Special Education.

- 10. The CASE Collaborative provides an economy of scale and efficiency in providing transportation. Yet, special education transportation costs continue to be a substantial component in the overall increase in special education expenditures.**

Recommendation: Continue to seek efficiencies in operation through the CASE Board of Directors and lobby through the mechanisms listed in recommendation #9 to have transportation costs included in circuit breaker reimbursement.

Special Education Survey Data Analysis

The Special Education Task Force surveyed superintendents in all of the cities and towns in Massachusetts using the listserv provided by the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS). The questions we asked were the following:

Question 1: In the past five years have special education costs in your community risen faster than the rest of the school district's operating budget? If so, which parts of the program drove that increase?

Question 2: What program(s) or procedures has your district put in place that you feel are most effective at helping to control special education costs while providing excellent services to students on IEPs?

We received responses from 18 districts and a number of individuals representing larger organizations. Included in the responding districts were four regional school districts. Below is a summary and discussion of the data we collected.

Question 1

The most representative response to the question came from Paul Andrews, Director of Professional Development for MASS. He stated the answer was, "a huge yes". He and several others referenced a report entitled *Special Education Finance Policy* authored by Dr. Sheldon Berman written for MASS and available on the organization's web page. Dr. Berman's report addresses a longer time span than our question. His finding was that between FY90 and FY05 that district spending rose 156% for special education and only 89% for regular education. Commensurately, in the period from FY90 to FY04 per pupil costs for special education rose 115% as compared to 71% for regular education.

Not surprisingly, data from survey respondents tended to echo the state data. All but three districts did indicate that special education costs were rising more rapidly than regular education costs.

At the local level these increases were attributed to a variety of sources. The most frequently recurring causes were the Three Ts -- tuition, transportation, and 1:1 tutors/instructional aides. Some respondents also cited costs for program development for students with emotional disabilities and those on the autistic spectrum, hiring qualified staff for increasing numbers of students who required service, and increasing need for ABA therapy. Two districts commented on an increase in the number of unilateral placements and expenses which had fallen to the district from them. One town described a particularly unusual situation in that during the past year extreme budget issues resulted in large class sizes and public perception (parents) that students were not receiving the support that was needed. As a result there was a flurry of both referrals to special education as well as unilateral placements which the district ended up paying for as part of legal agreements.

Question 2

While the source of increased costs appears to stem primarily from the 3Ts, programs that helped control costs while providing excellent service could be described as the 3Is – in-house programming, inclusion, and improvements in intervention and curriculum. Predictably, the most frequent response was the development of in-house programming to address needs presented by

larger numbers of children. These included integrated pre-school, ED programs, and programs for autistic children. The data from one town highlighted some key points. “We are constantly exploring the development of new in-district models and also working with collaboratives to build programs. The challenge is having a large enough cohort of students with similar disabilities to make it cost-effective to develop new programs. Our best efforts are always placed in the direction of keeping students, to the greatest extent possible, in high-quality district programs.”

Several communities cited initiatives in regular education that benefited all students, including those with special needs. One strand of responses tended to focus on improved literacy instruction and assessment (which also resulted in better identification and earlier intervention). Other districts commented teachers who have embraced a focused professional development effort around differentiated instruction and have applied their learning across the board to meet student needs.

Findings and Recommendations for Harvard

- Harvard is not alone in facing significant increases in special education costs.
- Transportation costs have been a hardship for Harvard and many communities. Inclusion of transportation in the circuit breaker is a recommendation that should be supported. (see report for other recommendations)
- Most of the increase in school spending since educational reform has been absorbed by special education spending. We as a community should continue to initiate and support efforts to reform state funding to provide a higher minimum state contribution and to revise the circuit breaker reimbursement formula.
- Amounts identified in foundation budget are inadequate to meet special education needs
- Children are entering our schools with significantly greater needs which are often identified at an earlier age. A funding solution is needed that does not blame the children or those working with these children and does not place the primary burden on local communities, but addresses the real causes of the problem. Berman, 2007).
- The areas identified in recent years by Harvard as meriting focus (integrated pre-school, greater emphasis on literacy instruction, three tier intervention) are consistent with those identified in other communities.
- Harvard should continue to examine where programs can be developed which might potentially reduce out-of-district placements.
- Training will be needed for regular education teachers as students on the autistic spectrum more fully matriculate through the grades.
- Professional development which strengthens the skills of regular education teachers in their ability to differentiate instruction should be provided.

October 22, 2007

Harvard Public Schools

Special Education Out of District Transportation Report and Recommendations

To: Special Education Task Force
Prepared by: Keith Cheveralls.

The following report is prepared with the benefit of having met, on two separate occasions, representatives from the Concord Acton Special Education collaborative (C.A.S.E), including executive directors and transport manager.

Overview

Harvard Public Schools (HPS) is required to provide transportation services for all children attending out of district educational facilities as identified in and supported by an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Additionally, where specified in the IEP, school districts provide transportation services appropriate to the disability of each child such as wheel chair equipped vans and specialized care and accompaniment. In Harvard's situation, all transportation expenditures are incorporated into the overall Special Education budget and more specifically are recorded in the Town of Harvard, Budget Report – "line #03005 53214 Sped Transport 1464". Summary expenditures for 2004 > 2007 inclusive are attached as Schedule A.

Transport Options

Harvard currently offers two modes of transport for our out of district students;

- a) **Mileage Reimbursement** – this is offered to parents and families choosing to "self-transport" children to their respective learning establishments. The reimbursement rate is based upon regulatory guidelines of the Dept of Education, Special Ed, and requires approval at the Special Education Administrative director level. On a per mile/student basis, it is likely the most cost effective single mode of transportation.
- b) **C.A.S.E Collaborative** – As a member of C.A.S.E Harvard avails itself of the transportation services provided to member districts (Note – there are twelve member districts, including Harvard, of which ten districts utilize the transport services. The remaining two districts provide their own transport). In discussions with representatives of CASE, it is appropriate to state that they were all extremely helpful, open and candid in their comments. Facts, figures and modus operandi thus gleaned are summarized below in bullet point format.
 - ◆ Member school districts are represented on the CASE Board of Directors typically by the district superintendent. School district business managers are also separately represented at various levels of discussion regarding CASE matters.

- ◆ An annual budget, including a separate budget for transport, is prepared, presented and approved by the Board of Directors. Current year budgets are formulated based upon t prior years student count.
- ◆ CASE’s core transport operating principles are founded around the values of student safety, quality of service, compliance and efficiency. Central to these operating principles CASE, through pooled resources, is able to offer services to its members on an as needed/on demand basis e.g. morning and mid day pick up/drop off as well as variable early release schedules.
- ◆ State regulatory standards limit each child’s one way time on a van to no more than one hour or less if so stipulated in the IEP.
- ◆ CASE currently provides transport service to 464 children from the ten participating districts, of which 19 children are from HPS.
- ◆ During any given year the total number of students transported By CASE has historically fluctuated.

	CASE Transportation		Enrollment History	
	BEGINNING		END	%CHANGE
SEPT (98)	183	June	241	31.7%
SEPT (99)	200	June	242	21.0%
SEPT (00)	239	June	270	13.0%
SEPT (01)	269	June	329	22.3%
SEPT (02)	304	June	354	16.4%
SEPT (03)	338	June	400	18.3%
SEPT (04)	349	June	474	35.8%
SEPT (05)	444	June	511	15.1%
SEPT (06)	439	June	501	14.1%
SEPT (07)	464			

- ◆ The 464 children attend 122 different programs requiring 100 different drop off points and a total of 86 different routes.
- ◆ From last year’s data, CASE purchased a total of 170,000 gallons of regular gasoline. This equates to a total of approximately 2,400,000 miles driven annually.
- ◆ Fuel is purchased on an annual fixed price contract (current basis = \$1.92 per gal) and typically represents a .30 cents per gal discount to retail pump prices. Also, CASE does not pay the State or Federal gasoline excise tax approx .40 cents per gal.
- ◆ 90 vans are currently owned and operated by CASE, 14 of which are wheel chair capable.
- ◆ Vehicle servicing and maintenance is outsourced to one of several facilities depending on location and requirements.
- ◆ Vans typically are replaced on a 5-year cycle via a competitive bid process.
- ◆ 89 drivers are employed working approximately 30 hours per week each. Drivers are all required to undergo a CORI check and to hold a class 7D license, renewable annually.

Costs are allocated back to each district utilizing a formula weighted by and factoring in such things as the number of children transported, the number of pickup drop off points as well as the location of programs based upon a zone system.

- ◆ . Harvard's current assessment equates to approximately 7.7% of the overall CASE transportation budget.
- ◆ The CASE budget is revenue neutral.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The CASE transport model is a large-scale operation and is regarded as the type of model around which other communities could pool resources to garner efficiencies (Ref; State grant of \$300,000 currently in trial). It is currently operating at our close to capacity.

Though not part of this study or report, the costs of establishing and running a Harvard independent transportation model would likely be prohibitive. Similarly, the potential for disruptive risks associated with considering any move to a third party provider (as was partially the case in 2004 –see schedule A), would need to be very carefully assessed against the quest for deeper efficiencies – see Assabet Valley article, Worcester T&G Oct 11th, 2007. In the further interest of transparency, however, the district may wish to entertain a competitive bid/RFP option.

Under any circumstance, it is the recommendation of this report that the district asserts a leadership role internally and within CASE based around the following observations and suggestions:

1. The costs (11% of total Special Ed budget) associated with transporting our children can act as an added impetus to continually strengthening in-district services in order to provide for more children. Similarly, given the apparent unilateral increase in Special needs across the Commonwealth, our district could explore the possibility of partnering with a neighboring district (Littleton?) to provide more services closer to home where Harvard alone cannot justify resources.
2. The very scale and complexity of the CASE model suggest efficiencies could be extracted by deploying sophisticated route management technology capable of processing the many variables. The superintendent, as Harvard's Board of Director member, should be encouraged to pursue identification and/or development of such software.

Special Education Financial Narrative

Out-of-District Expenses

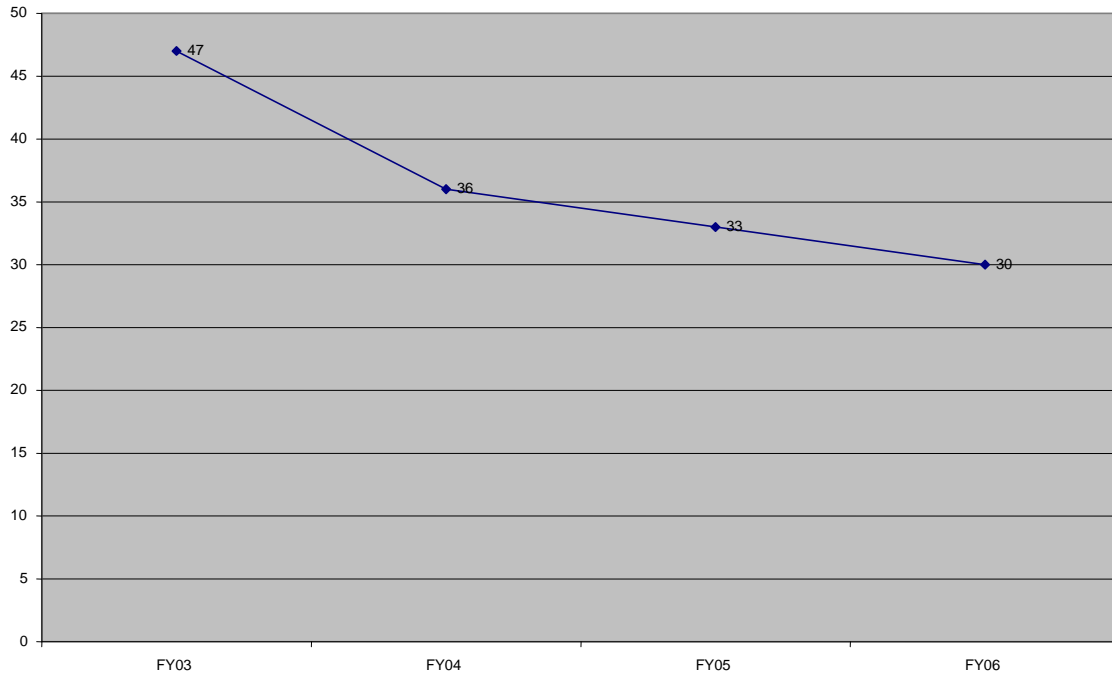
If Harvard is unable to provide an appropriate educational placement for a student eligible to receive special education services within the district, the student's special education Team must consider placement outside the district. Typically this placement involves either a *collaborative* program or one provided in a Department of Education approved *private school*.

A collaborative consists of a group of neighboring and/or similar communities. These districts band together to provide programs that meet their collective needs. Often collaboratives provide special education programs that a single district might not be able to provide. Placement in a collaborative is often the first choice of consideration for the student's Team when considering the appropriate placement for that student outside the school district. Because collaborative programs are typically housed within one of the member public schools, they offer the educational advantage of having the potential for interaction with peers in general education classes at that school, thus providing an education in a less restrictive environment. A financial advantage of collaborative programs is that they are non-profit organizations run by a Board of Directors consisting of representatives from the member towns. Costs for collaborative programs are typically much lower than for comparable private special education placements.

Harvard is a member in the Concord Area Special Education (CASE) Collaborative. Other member towns/districts include Acton, Acton-Boxborough, Bedford, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Harvard, Lincoln, Lincoln-Sudbury, Littleton, Maynard, Nashoba Regional (Bolton, Lancaster, and Stow) and Sudbury. The Executive Director of CASE is hired by the Board of Directors which includes the Harvard Superintendent of Schools. Members of CASE are charged annual assessment based on the number of students it sent to the collaborative two years prior. This billing model allows for an accurate prediction of costs for any given fiscal year. Part of our responsibility as a member of this collaborative is to provide classroom space annually for one CASE program. Currently there is a CASE program housed in Harvard Elementary School. If CASE is unable to provide a program needed by a Harvard student, the district may also tuition the student into a program run by another collaborative on a space available basis.

If a collaborative placement is neither available nor the most appropriate educational placement for a particular student, he or she may be placed in a DOE approved special education program. Such settings have specialized programs or support systems tailored to address particular needs or disabilities. Tuition costs for these students are reflected in the budget line 03005-54810 Out-of-district tuition.

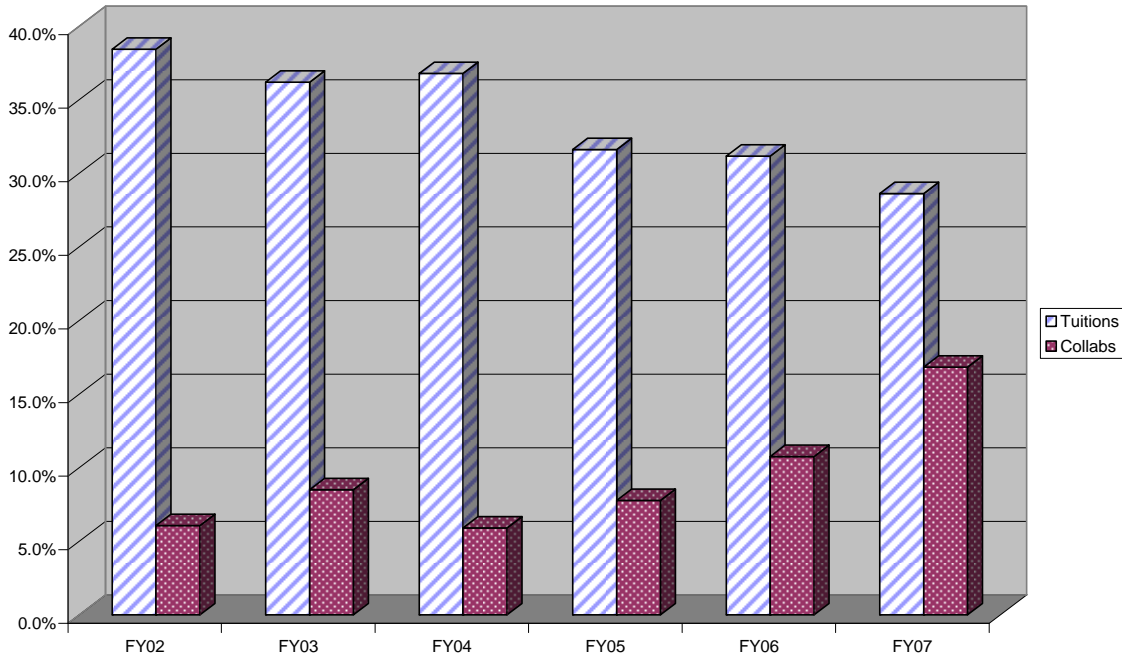
Graph One
Out of District Placements



Graph One Data Source: Harvard Special Education Department Data

Recent years have seen a decline in the number of Harvard students tuitioned out of district. One reason for this decrease is the creation of the integrated preschool. State and federal law requires that we identify and provide appropriate services for children with special needs beginning at age three and extending to age twenty-two, unless they graduate. Prior to the creation of our preschool our only option for students, aged three to five, that required specific programs was an out-of-district program.

Graph Two
Tuitions & Collaboratives as a % of Total Special Ed Expenditures



Graph Two Data Source: Town of Harvard Finance Database

The cost of tuitioning students to programs out of district has historically been a significant portion of the total special education expenditures. Examined over time, the percentage of the special education budget dedicated to tuitions in private special education programs and collaboratives has amounted to approximately 40% of the total special education budget. Graph Two shows the trend from FY02 through FY07 indicating a pattern in which collaborative tuitions have been increasing, whereas private tuitions are decreasing. Please note, however, that changes in CASE enrollments are not immediately reflected by commensurate changes in assessments. This is due to the previously mentioned billing structure. In the past two years (FY07 and FY08) there has been a decrease in the actual number of students enrolled in CASE by Harvard, a reduction generated mostly from students returning to programs within the district.

Cost Sharing and Reimbursement from the Commonwealth

Prior to FY03 the State reimbursed districts for half the cost of residential placements of special education students. Through the 50/50 Program, 50% of the residential placement costs were paid directly to the service provider by the State. While this provided some relief to cities and towns for costly residential placements, it did not cover reimbursements for non-residential day placements which represent the large majority of students placed out-of-district.

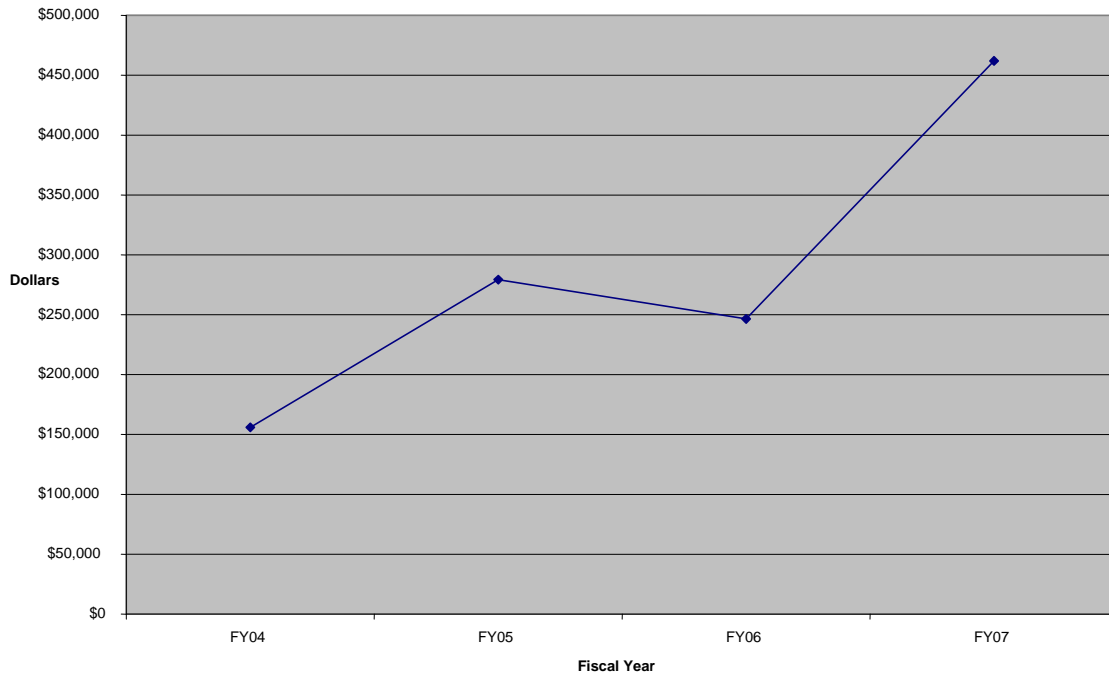
Beginning in FY04 the State began a reimbursement program entitled the *Circuit Breaker*. The *Circuit Breaker* program reimburses districts for up to 75% of the difference in cost of educating a special education student beyond the threshold of 4 times the *foundation budget*. The *foundation budget* identifies a base per pupil expense using a formula created by the Department of Education for purposes of determining basic education costs in their distribution of Chapter 70 aid. In FY07 the per pupil foundation budget was \$8,425. This figure continues to be adjusted upward annually.

For purposes of explanation, assume the tuition and related costs of a hypothetical student's placement are \$74,000. The district is responsible for the first 4 times the foundation amount (\$8,500 x 4 = \$34,000). Of the remaining \$40,000 the state will reimburse the district 75%, or \$30,000, with the district assuming the remaining balance of \$10,000. In this example the district assumes responsibility for \$44,000 total while circuit breaker reimbursement is \$30,000. Transportation costs for individual special education students are not eligible for circuit breaker reimbursement. (note: organizations such as Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents (MASS) and Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) have endorsed and lobbied for a change in the circuit breaker formula that would include transportation costs. This Task Force endorses that change.)

\$74,000	tuition and related costs
<u>-\$34,000</u>	4x foundation budget – district cost
\$40,000	balance
<u>-\$30,000</u>	75% - state reimbursement
\$10,000	25% - district cost (for a total of \$44,000)

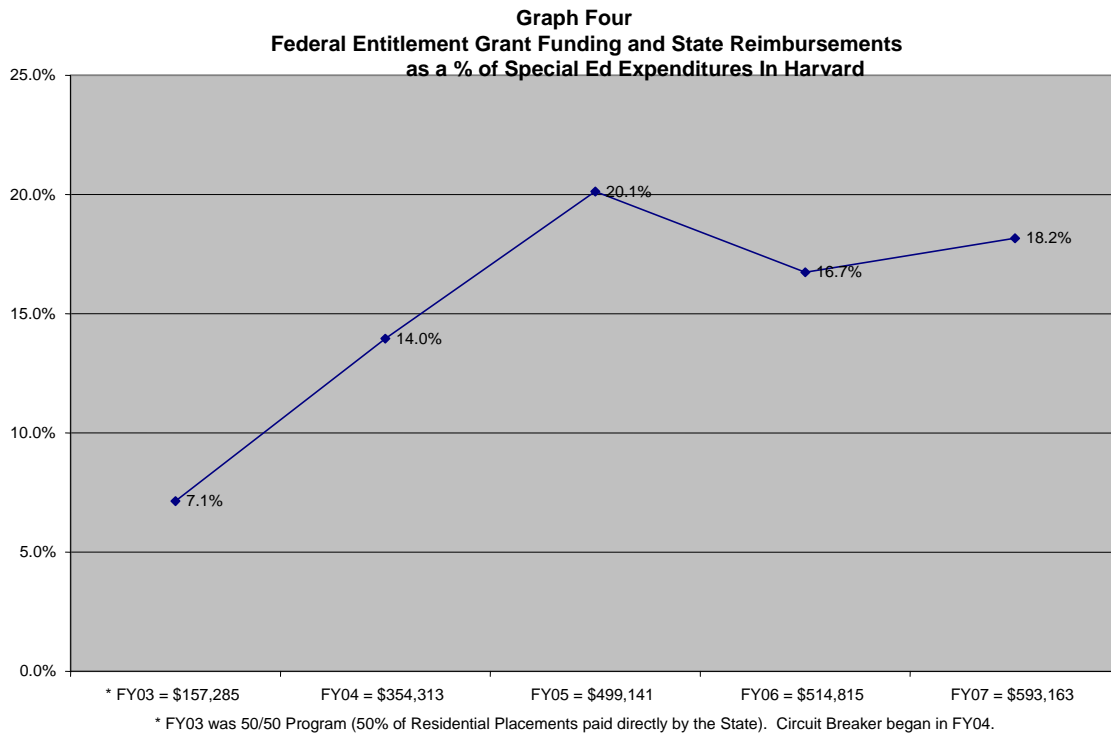
The district is eligible to receive Circuit Breaker reimbursement for any special education student, regardless of placement, assuming that the total district cost of educating the student exceeds the threshold of 4 times the foundation budget (currently \$34,000). Districts receive Circuit Breaker reimbursement based on eligible expenditures from the previous year. One drawback of the delayed reimbursement model is that the district must assume responsibility up front for the first year of eligible costs.

**Graph Three
Harvard Circuit Breaker Receipts**



Graph Three Data Source: Town of Harvard Finance Database

Graph Three shows the history of Circuit Breaker receipts Harvard has received since FY04. The substantial increase in receipts for FY07 is primarily due to several placements new to the district in FY06. While the total number of out-of-district placements has not increased in recent years, the total out-of-district tuition has grown as a result of increased tuitions. In FY07 the district also received \$209,405 in extraordinary relief. Districts are considered for extraordinary relief, if their out-of-district tuition cost grew by over 25% in any given year.



Graph Four Data Source: Town of Harvard Finance Database

Graph Four (Federal Entitlement Grant Funding and State Reimbursements as a % of Special Education Expenditure) shows that between FY03 and FY05 grant funding increased not only as a total dollar revenue, but also as a percentage of special education expenditures. Since that time there has been a slight reduction in the percentage despite an increase in actual dollars. This demonstrates that in Harvard the reimbursements from the Circuit Breaker have not kept pace with the overall increase in costs. Across the State Circuit Breaker reimbursement covers only 11.5% of special education spending.

Table One
Comparisons in Special Education Expenditures
between Harvard and Other Communities

	2006/2007 10 th grade ELA (English/Language Arts) pass rate (%)	2006/2007 10 th grade Math pass rate (%)	# of students on IEPs (district total) October 2006	% of students on IEP's October 2006	Per Pupil In-District Expenditures Special Ed FY2005 (most recent year available)	Median Home Value 2006 (\$\$)
“High MCAS towns” with special ed pop between 150 and 250						
Cohasset	98.1/93.2	97.6/91.4	171	11.3	25,820	825,126
Harvard	98.6/100	96.9/100	203	14.9	9,312	629,546
Hull	82.5/91.5	78.7/92.3	204	16.2	15,878	417,944
Millis	97.3/95.5	96.9/93.8	199	14.9	12,616	380,804
Rockport	94.6/97.1	86.9/86.6	211	19.9	14,859	550,415
West Bridgewater	96.6/94.2	98.0/94.6	140	11.4	19,015	352,555
“Neighboring Towns”						
Ayer	88.4/92.2	84.2/85.6	223	17.1	18,086	296,635
Littleton	93.2/93.1	89.8/89.3	262	16.5	16,420	415,767
Lunenburg	92.5/94.5	90.5/92.6	260	14.0	9,658	304,179
Maynard	89.6/93.3	87.6/91.8	215	15.5	16,942	354,013

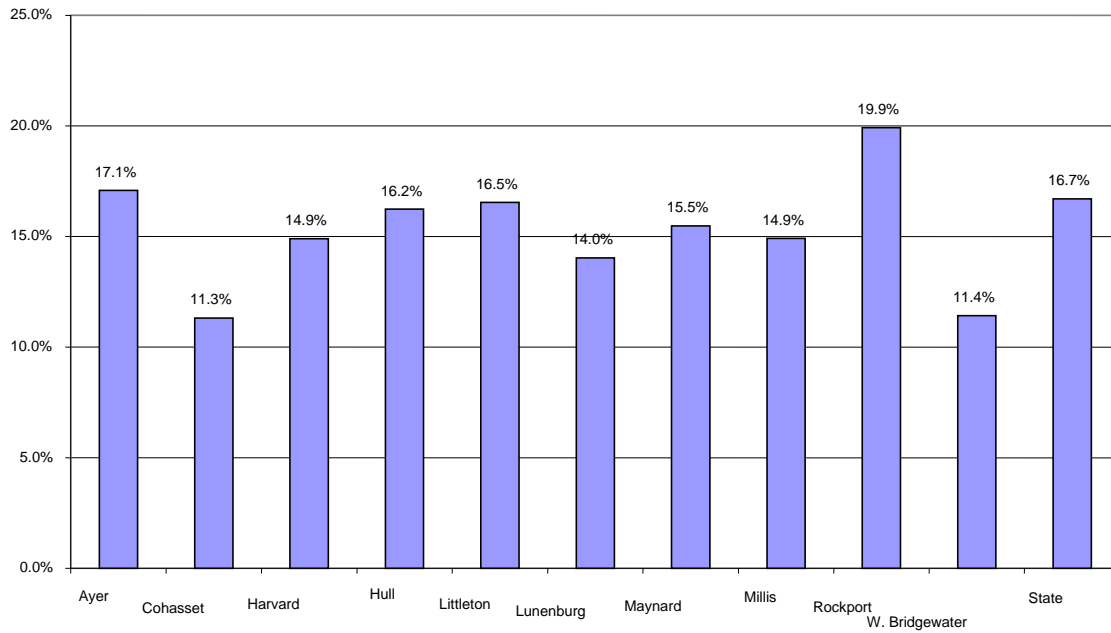
High MCAS towns						
Acton	98.0/96.7*	96.9/96.1*	397*	13.5*	15,118	542,140
Boxboro	98.0/96.7*	96.9/96.1*	397*	13.5*	15,118	565,638
Carlisle	98.2/98.6*	95.6/98.6*	183*	14.1*	20,932	825,035
Concord	98.2/98.6*	95.6/98.6*	183*	14.1*	20,932	922,372
Dover	99.3/99.1*	99.3/99.5*	111*	10.2*	23,116	1,125,323
Lincoln	97.7/97.5*	95.6/95.3*	271*	16.5*	18,155	1,053,265
Sherborn	99.3/99.1*	99.3/99.5*	111*	10.2*	23,116	770,925
Sudbury	97.7/97.5*	95.6/95.3*	271*	16.5*	18,155	702,816
Wayland	98.8/97.4	98.5/98.0	486	16.8	18,185	690,898
Weston	98.5/98.4	97.9/96.0	368	15.2	19,134	1,339,054

• denotes regionalized high school district: Acton-Boxboro, Concord-Carlisle, Dover-Sherborn, Lincoln-Sudbury
Table One Data Source: All data but median home value from DOE website <http://www.profiles.doe.mass.edu>. Median home values from <http://www.mass.gov> “At a Glance”

For purposes of comparison we identified three groups of towns. The first group was identified which included “high MCAS towns which serve between 150 and 250 students on Individualized Educational Programs”. We applied this methodology using the assumption that districts serving like-sized special education populations would have similar opportunities and restrictions in development of specialized programming. This group includes Cohasset, Hull, Millis, Rockport, and West Bridgewater. A second group was “neighboring” non-regionalized communities of similar size. Towns included were Ayer, Littleton, Lunenburg, and Maynard. In the third group it is assumed that larger communities can more easily create a higher degree of in-district programming. These communities were ones with very high MCAS, regardless of their size or if they were regionalized. This group includes Acton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Dover, Lincoln, Sherborn, Sudbury, Wayland, and Weston. (Note: with the exceptions of Acton and Boxborough, each of these communities has a higher median home value than Harvard.)

This comparison Table 1 shows us that Harvard is in an unusual position of being small and non-regionalized, with consistently very high MCAS scores. The data indicates that most other communities with very high MCAS scores have either regionalized their school systems, are significantly wealthier (as measured by median home values) and/or large enough to support a higher degree of in-district programming than Harvard.

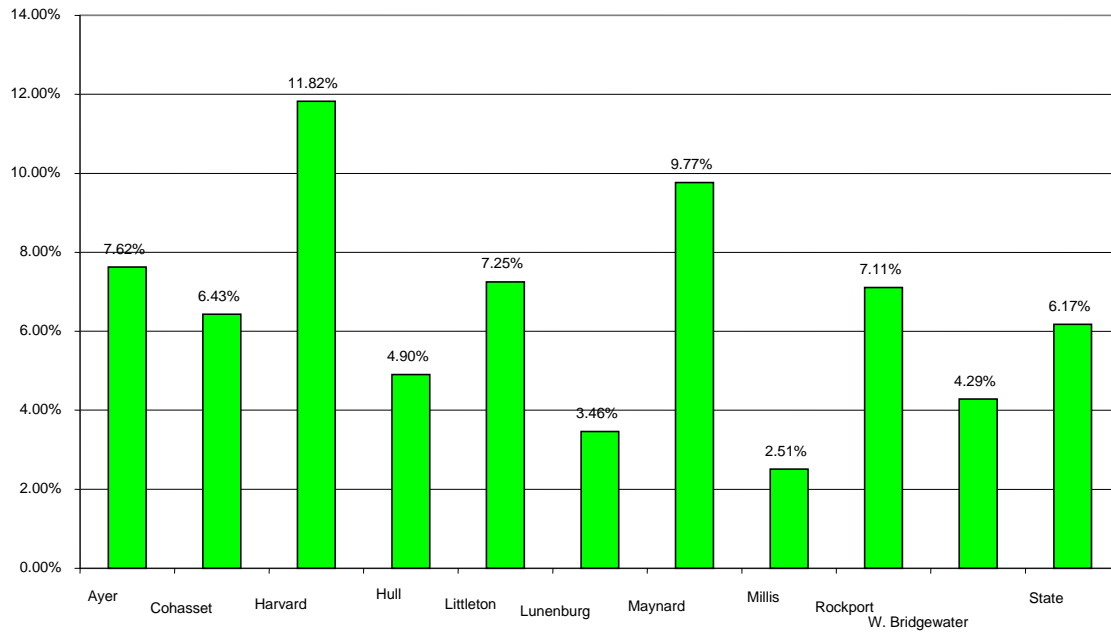
Graph Five
10/1/06 Special Ed Enrollment as % of Total Enrollment



Graph Five Data Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll> "Special Populations"

Graph Five compares the percentage of students on Individualized Educational Programs in Harvard with comparison Groups One and Two. Harvard's percentage (14.9%) of students with Individualized Education Programs was slightly below both the average of the comparison groups as well as the state average.

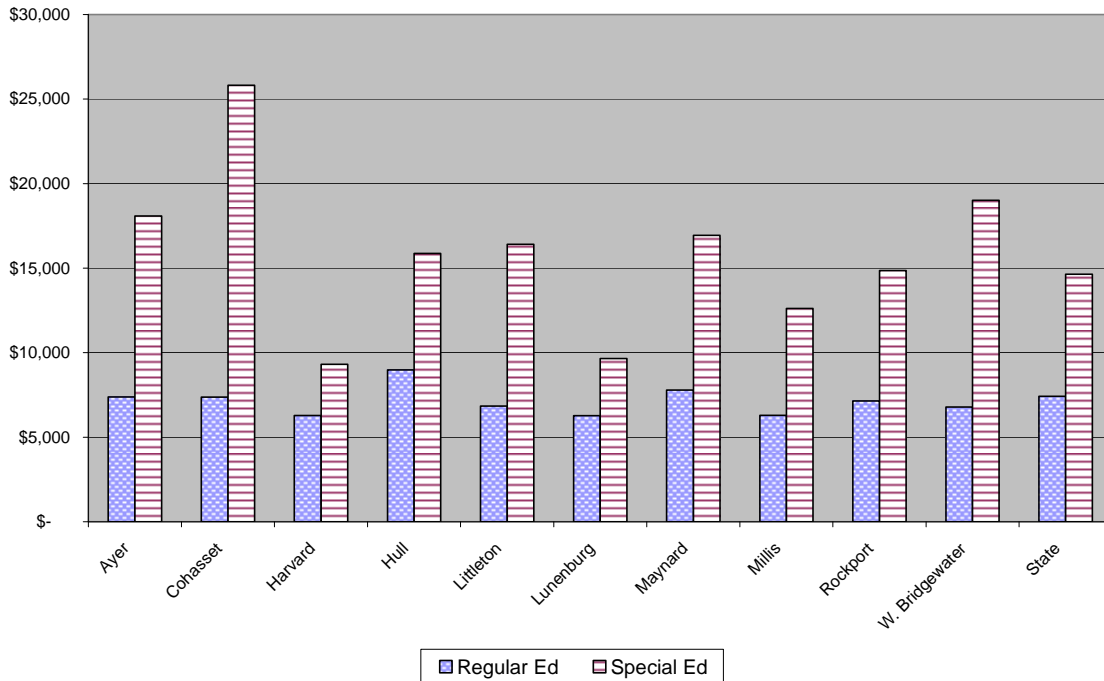
Graph Six
Out-of-District Placements, % of Total Special Ed Enrollment



Graph Six Data Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/infoservices/reports/enroll> "Educational Environment"

Graph Six compares the percentage of students in out-of-district placements as a percentage of the total special education enrollment with comparison Groups One and Two. This data shows us that Harvard has a higher percentage of out-of-district/total special education population than both the comparison groups and the state average. This gap still exists despite the decline in the number of out-of-district placements identified in Graph 9. There is no ideal percentage or number of students who should be placed out-of-district. Rather, placement must be determined based on the student's Individualized Education Program and the district's ability to address the student's needs within the district. Given the small size of our district, statistical fluctuations in percentages can be caused by a relatively small number of students. However, this comparative data does support the recommendation that the district continue efforts to lower the total number of out-of-district placements through providing additional programming and services within the district.

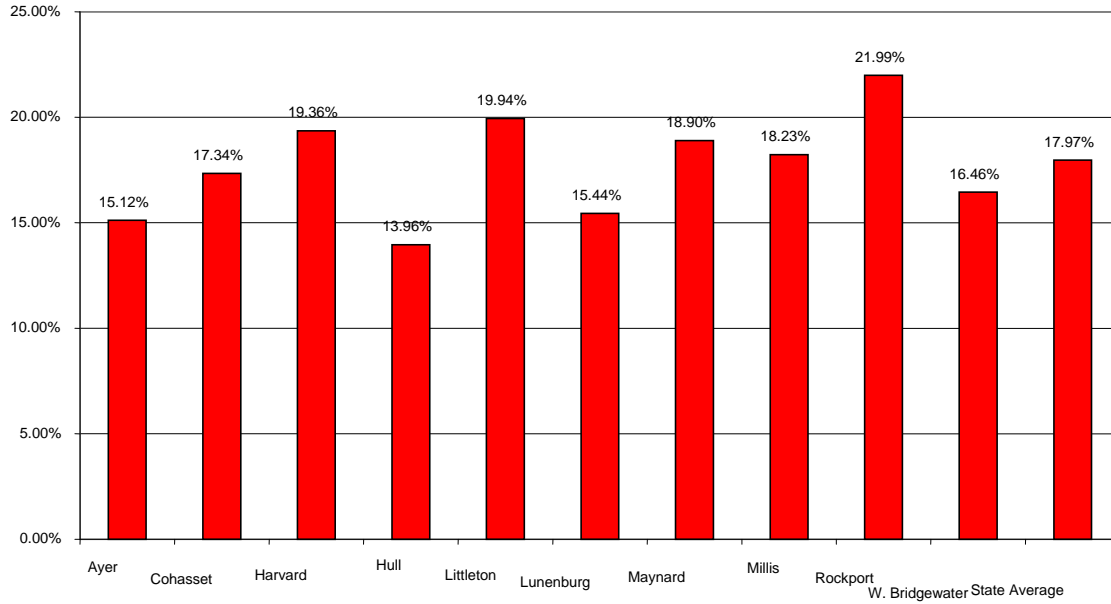
**Graph Seven
FY05 Regular Ed vs. Special Ed Costs**



Graph Seven Data Source: <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/statistics>

The Department of Education annually collects extensive spending data from each district. From this data the DOE publishes financial reports on how a district is spending its money and tracks the amounts spent for both regular and special education related expenditures. This reporting model examined out-of-district costs separately and thus, they are not included in the category of special education per pupil spending. Graph Seven (FY05 Regular Education vs. Special Education Per Pupil Costs) shows that Harvard's regular and special education costs not only in line with, but often less than, comparison groups and state averages. If we consider this data in concert with Graph Six we can draw the conclusion that in that particular fiscal year Harvard had a higher percentage of students out of district than comparative communities, but spent less money in district on a per pupil basis than those same communities. The school district did not expend funds in an out-of-district program to meet their education's needs.

Graph Eight
FY00 - FY06 Averaged
Special Ed Expenditures as a % of Total School Budget



Graph Eight (Special Education Expenditures as a % of Total School Budget, FY00-FY06 Averaged) shows Harvard to be slightly above the averages of comparison groups and the state as a whole. The methodology of averaging over six years allows for a comparison over time while removing the annual volatility.

Note: The percentage of Special Education Expenditures as a total of the entire school budget may be a function of how well the total school budget is funded.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE NARRATIVE
LIST OF APPENDICES**

- A. Harvard Public School System, Special Education Program Evaluation Report, School Year 2005-2006
- B. A Parent's Guide to Special Education
- C. The Impact of Special Education on Education Reform: A Case Study of Massachusetts
- D. Questions for the Special Ed Task Force from the Harvard SEPAC, December 2006, Revision 2
- E. State Averages of Special Education Expenditures
- F. List of Estimated Time Necessary to Conduct Assessments by HPS Staff
- G. List of Estimated Time Necessary to Provide Weekly Services by Disability
- H. Special Education Task Force Data