

*The Top 10 Factors for  
Building and Supporting  
Successful Programs*



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# 10. Know everything you can about your current out of district placements.



- Analyze your five year out-of-district placement trends by level and disability type.
- Know your out-of district costs as a portion of your total budget special education budget.
- Analyze your costs for obvious variations.
- Compare your costs to similar districts.

# Current Outplacement Trends

- Highest numbers of out-placed students have emotional disabilities or are on the autism spectrum
- Outplacements of student on the autism spectrum continue to increase, while others are holding steady or declining.
- Highest proportion of students by disability type that are out-placed are students with vision or hearing impairments, or students with multiple handicaps.

Source: Use of Out-of-District Placements by MA Students with Disabilities, Hehir et al., 2013

## Data for Ourtown, Massachusetts

	<b>In-district Sped costs</b>	<b>Public Tuitions</b>	<b>Private Tuitions</b>	<b>Total Sped Budget</b>	<b>Tuition /Total Sped</b>	<b>Sped/ Total Budget</b>	<b>Sped Student Eligibility</b>
2004	1,950,523	1,211,288	1,724,298	4,886,109	60.0%	19.1%	13.0%
2008	3,340,450	2,297,498	2,122,282	7,760,583	57.0%	24.0%	19.0%
2013	3,942,450	2,554,775	3,124,521	9,622,746	59.0%	25.2%	15.9%

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/finance/statistics/>

Comparison data for Anytown MA with like communities for FY '13

District	Per Pupil Expense	Tuition/ Sped Budget	Sped Budget/ Total Budget	% Sped Eligibility
Ourtown	\$16,993	59.0%	25.7%	15.9%
Toptown	\$20,579	34.0%	15.4%	14.7%
Lowtown	\$13,864	34.5%	26.1%	17.7%
Sametown	\$12,548	27.8%	26.3%	16.7%
State	\$14,021	30.8%	20.9%	17.0%

Source: MA DART and School Finance Comparisons

## 9. Know your current high needs students within the district.



- Keep a running list of high profile, high risk students, including those at-risk for outplacement.
- Analyze the costs for keeping these students within district.
- Analyze the effectiveness of your existing programs.

# Sample Program Review Questions

- Are the district needs the same as when the program started?
  - What are the goals of the program?
  - Has the nature of the student needs changed since the program was developed?
- Are program resources adequate in terms of staffing, training and materials?
  - Does the instructional approach represent current evidence based best practice?
  - Is the staff well supported in terms of training and access to appropriate materials.

# Sample Program Review Questions

- Are the structures and decision making rules about the program effective?
  - Are the right students being identified for the program?
  - Does the schedule allow for adequate instructional and planning time?
- Are the students achieving the expected learning outcomes?
  - How is progress measured for these students?
  - Are they meeting the identified goals of the program?



## 8. Determine the sustainability of the group for the new program.



- Consider the minimum number of students that is feasible.
- Consider the possibility of tuitioning-in students from neighboring districts or returning students from out of district placements.
- Consider the pipeline of students with similar needs.

## 7. Know the regulatory requirements.



- Know class size and age-span requirements.
- Know licensure requirements for teachers.

# State Regulations

## **603 CMR 28.06(6)**

- For students who spend less than 60% of their time in a separate setting, class sizes may not exceed 16 students with a special educator and 2 aides.
- For students who spend more than 60% of their time in a separate setting, class sizes may not exceed 12 students with a special educator and an aide.
- During the school year, up to 2 students may be added to the class for that year only, upon approval by DESE of a waiver.
- The age span for students in an instructional grouping may not exceed 48 months without prior approval through the waiver process.

# Federal Regulations

## **34 CFR Section 300.18**

- When a special educator is the sole teacher of a subject, that special educator must be highly qualified in that subject area.

For more information on how special educators can be highly qualified, go to:

[http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/title-ia/hq/hq\\_faq.html?section=sped](http://www.doe.mass.edu/educators/title-ia/hq/hq_faq.html?section=sped)

## 6. Review other placement options first and calculate the cost of a new program.



- Review local collaborative options, including scope, tuition and transportation costs.
- Review local private school options, including the attractiveness of the placement, the range of services, the tuition, and the transportation costs.

# Transportation Costs

- The average daily cost on Massachusetts for operating a special education transportation vehicle was \$215 per day in FY12.
- Assuming multiple students in a single vehicle, the average cost per pupil ranges from approximately \$12,000 to \$18,000 per year.
- Solo riders may cost as much as \$40,000 per year.

Source: MOEC Special Education Transportation Report, 2013

# Tuition Costs

- The average FY15 cost of a special education day placement for a school year only (excluding summer) is \$55,890. The range is \$34,200 to \$114,500.
- The average FY15 cost of a full year special education residential placement \$204,760. The range is \$130,000 to \$298,000.

Source: In-State Special Education Tuition Prices, FY2015, Operations Services Division,  
Executive Office of Administration and Finance

# Develop a Draft Budget

- Determine essential staffing and teacher to student ratio.
- Include necessary materials and technology.
- Include necessary professional development and support
- Assume a target number of students
- Develop a proposed per pupil cost.



# Sample Budget: Therapeutic Middle School Program

Program description: Self contained classes in academic majors, opportunity for inclusion as appropriate, therapeutic structure

Program size: 7 students, grades 7 & 8

Program expense:

Staffing: \$ 190,000

1.0 FTE Special Educator

1.0 FTE Content area teachers

3.0 FTE teaching assistants

.5 FTE Social worker

Materials: Technology and academic materials \$ 8,000

Professional development: \$ 10,000

Summer planning

Consultation

Total Program Cost \$ 208,000

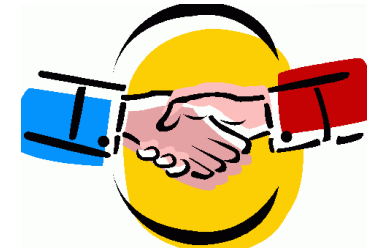
Per Pupil Program Cost \$ 29,700

## 5. Have a long term plan for space.



- Review enrollment trends to determine if an existing space will be available for a few years.
- Be creative, but avoid sub-standard space.

## 4. Consider collaboration.



- Look to partner with your local collaborative if any variables are problematic.
- Look to collaborate with private special needs schools on a consulting basis.

## Two current examples:

- A district/collaborative partnership that shares responsibility for staffing.
- A district/private school partnership that uses the consulting expertise of a private school.

### 3. Engage parents early and often.



- Be clear about the advisory role of parents.
- Review the plan with likely parents for feedback and follow-up.
- Use the 50% rule when returning students from out-of-district.

# Tips for Parent Engagement

- Ask for parent input, but be clear (nicely) about who has final decision making responsibility.
- Present finalized plan for review, and be prepared to explain what is included in the plan and why.

## 2. Create the program



- Identify the goals of the program and learning outcomes for the students.
- Identify the range of appropriate students.
- Create procedures to identify, enter and exit students from the program.
- Ensure appropriate resources, especially at start-up.

# Create Buy-In By Planning

- Understand the factors that affect program implementation.
- Plan carefully by engaging stakeholders.
- Assume that no amount of knowledge will make every decision clear.
- Pay attention to relationships as well as planning.



# 1. Get started!



- Publicize.
- Create a team with explicit training; do not assume that teaming is intuitive.
- Check in frequently for needs, issues and successes.
- Sweep the boundaries.
- Gather formative evidence and refine the program.
- Gather evidence of progress against program goals to endorse the program.

# A Word about Effective Teams

In effective teams, team members:

- Speak up without worrying about negative reactions from team mates.
- Collaborate based upon mutual respect and shared goals.
- Take risks based upon mutual trust and belief that there is learning in failure.
- Reflect about their practice based on open and honest communication.

# Thoughts on Implementing

- Understand the context and impact of a change in programming.
- Demonstrate three kinds of leadership.
- Have a positive response when people fail.
- Use leaders other than yourself to market the program.
- Put structures (not people) in place to sustain the program

*Remember that a new program  
causes a disturbance in the Force, so  
be prepared.*

## Once Again, The Top 10

10. Know everything you can about your out-of-district placements, and aim for no surprises.
9. Know your current high-needs students, and consider revamping existing programs.
8. Determine the sustainability of the group, and remember that the right number depends on your needs.
7. Know the regulatory requirements, and build them into your costs.

6. Review other placement options, and know the true cost of each program.
5. Have a long term plan for space, and remember that location matters.
4. Consider collaboration to share the risks as well as the rewards.
3. Engage parents, and remember that they are your clients.

2. Create the program, and use the planning process to get buy-in.
1. Get started, and remember that a new program creates a disturbance in the Force.

*and finally, keep smiling!*



**Questions or Comments?**

**Thank You!**

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