

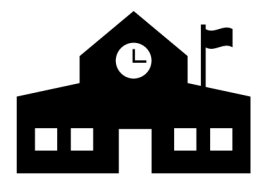
What is

An Approved Special Education School?



1. Welcome

Approved special education schools are a particular kind of private schools, they are independently run, typically by a board of directors as most are non-profit organizations, and they are "approved" by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to educate the Commonwealth's students.



Day School



Residential School

2. Approval and Regulation



ENVIRONMENT

Approved special education schools provide expertise and environments designed to meet specific needs as determined by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and as regulated by state agencies.



STRUCTURE



STAFF



POLICIES



PROCEDURES

3. Public or Private?



PRIVATE

Approved special education schools are private schools



PUBLIC

But the vast majority of students are public school students.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

When the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in general education classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily, students are sometimes served through a true public-private partnership with an approved special education school.

"QUASI-PUBLIC?"



No, approved special education schools are private schools. They are privately run and operated.

"PRIVATE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL?"



No, approved special education schools are highly regulated environments where the private school must meet many of the same requirements of the Massachusetts statewide curriculum and regulations. Services defined in the student's IEP must be met, and the rights of public-school students continue in the approved private school setting.

3. Why Approved?

Equal Rights, Excellence, and Expertise

Approval means the private special education schools must meet regulations 603 CMR 28.09, 603 CMR 18.00, and 603 CMR 46.00, as well as other pertinent federal and state education requirements consistent with the same requirements for public schools in Massachusetts.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) must approve the school's population and DESE conducts reviews to ensure the school remains in compliance. DESE and other state agencies also regulate the schools extensively, similarly to public schools.

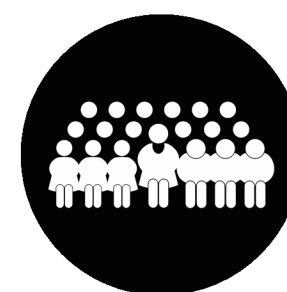
This ensures safety, transparency and accountability to the extraordinary students who attend.



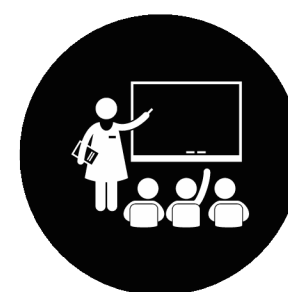
4. The Continuum

"Because LRE is determined by the student's individualized program of instruction and related services rather than by setting, IDEA requires that school districts create a continuum of alternative placement options."

-Vanderbilt University, IRIS Center



General Education Classroom



Special Education Classroom



Approved Special Education School or Collaborative*



Approved Residential Special Education School

5. Enrollment

Students are enrolled through their IEP placement process. Referrals are sent by the LEA to the private school for consideration. The school reviews the referral and determines whether they have the capacity, cohort, staffing, and programming to meet the student's needs at the time of referral.

School districts and caregivers can scan the QR code below to learn more about individual schools using the MAAPS online directory, available with Google Translate. Search by location, age, disability, and more. Link to school websites and get direct contact information:

Visit the online directory at maaps.org



What is



An Approved Residential Special Education School?

2. What?

Approved residential special education schools are: 24/7 educational settings for students with an identified disability(ies) who qualify for special education services and who require specialized environments, supports and services to meet the needs of their individual education program (IEP)

2. Who?

They partner with public schools to meet the federal mandate for Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Approval by DESE is contingent upon a

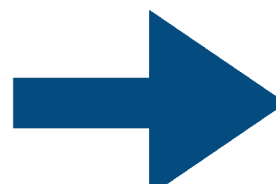
- proposed school model,
- designed to meet the needs of a specific approved population of students,
- which may include a variety of identified disabilities depending on the school.
- To meet criteria for admission at a particular school, a student's diagnosis and needs must fall within the approved category(ies) for which it is licensed.

2. How?

Students are referred for placement by their public school district, which also funds and monitors the student's IEP. Some students may receive private or DCF funding for some or all of their services, but the services, supports, and licensed program are the same regardless of the referral source.

Residential Special Education Schools provide a host of specialized supports, and if they are licensed to do so, may support and maintain students with significant mental and behavioral challenges. However, they are not an appropriate replacement for students who need acute medical intervention and monitoring or a locked, secure facility.

Youth who are enrolled in residential special education schools who present with acute mental health crisis presenting imminent risk of harm to themselves or others are referred to the emergency department, just as they would be for any other medical emergency.



Approved Residential Education Schools



Educational Programs
DESE, EEC
Placed through special ed referral and funds*



Youth with complex physical, mental, behavioral challenges



Students with identified disabilities within DESE approved license



Maintain with special ed services, supports, and environment



Conduct day school programs and community access



Medical Facilities
DMH
Placed through medical referral and insurance



Medical treatment, staffing and supervision



General population



Crisis stabilization



Secure, locked facility for safety

*Some also contract with DCF for residential time, but functions and populations and services do not change..

Understanding

Out of District Placement and Funding in Massachusetts



1. The Child

It all starts with the student:

- Needs are identified
- A plan (IEP) is developed
- Services are determined



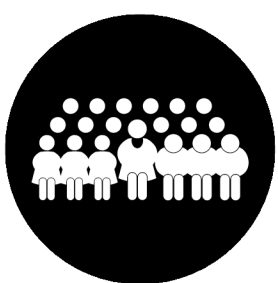
The Team considers all aspects of the student's proposed IEP and determines the appropriate placement to provide the services

Their decision must be based on:

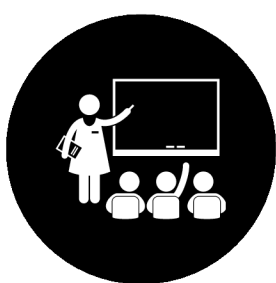
- the student's IEP, including the types of related services,
- the types of settings where those services are to be provided,
- the types of service providers,
- and the location where those services are to be provided

Massachusetts Regulation 603 CMR 28.00

2. The Continuum



General Education Classroom



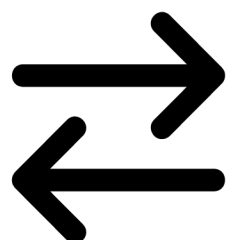
Special Education Classroom



Approved Special Education School or Collaborative



Approved Residential Special Education School



The Continuum of Special Education Placement

If an in-district program cannot provide the services on the IEP, the placement Team will identify an out-of-district placement.

"Placement options are fluid... Further, placements can change over time based on factors such as changes in a student's progress or needs. For some students, the general education classroom is not necessarily the least restrictive setting."

-Vanderbilt University Iris Center

Student placement options and approved special education schools can be found at maaps.org/school-directory

Approved special education schools are subject matter experts in the fields in which they serve.

3. The Commonwealth

The decision to place a child in the setting that is most appropriate for their needs should be based on the I.E.P., **not the cost.**



When an **approved special education school** is determined to be the least restrictive environment for a student, Massachusetts helps districts protect the integrity of the IEP process. Students with significant special needs are **not just the responsibility of one school district**, but rather the collective responsibility of the Commonwealth.

4. The Circuit Breaker

In 2004, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts created the groundbreaking **Special Education Circuit Breaker** account, which significantly reimburses school districts for the cost of out-of-district special education schooling.



Districts pay a baseline cost for all students. For Circuit Breaker, the baseline cost assumes that educating a student with special needs will cost more than for a general education student. Currently, through CIRCUIt BREAKER, the state reimburses **75%** of costs school districts pay above that baseline.

5. The Call to Action

Each year, to ensure that districts are reimbursed from the Special Education Circuit Breaker, the state legislature has to approve funds for the account in the state budget. **This funding is not guaranteed, and significant advocacy needs to be done to ensure that students receive the services they need, and districts are supported.**

JOIN THE ACTION NETWORK at maaps.org to advocate for these important funds



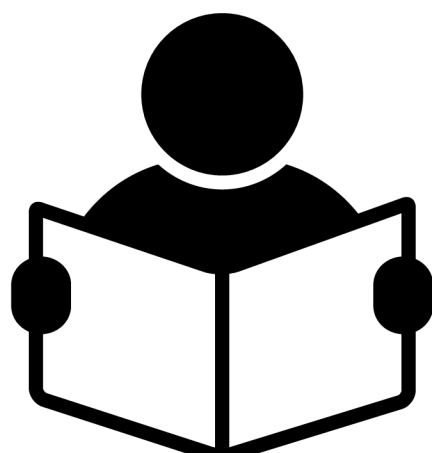
How Placement

Decisions are Made



It all starts with the student:

- Needs are identified
- A plan (IEP) is developed
- Services are determined

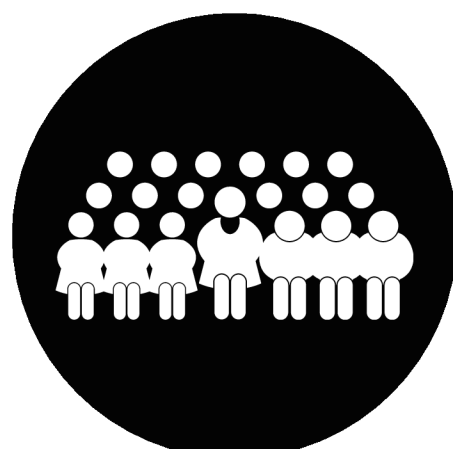
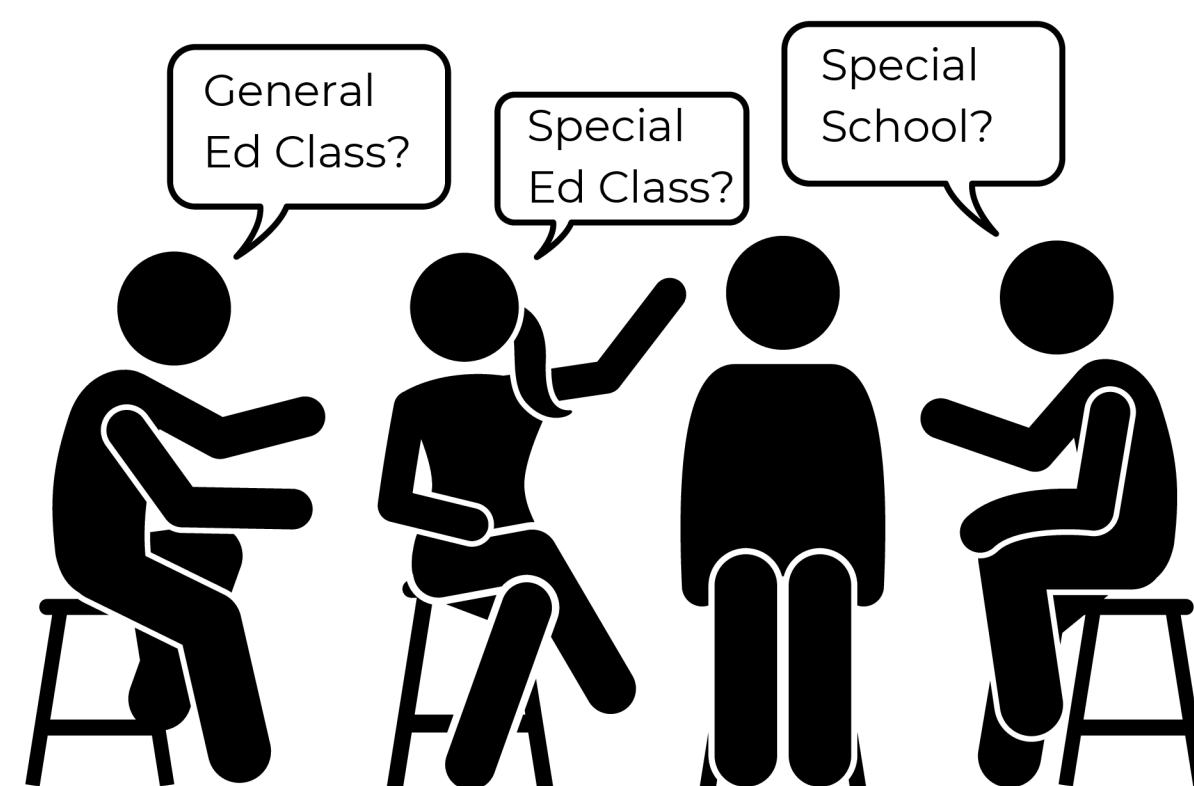


Massachusetts law 603CMR 28.00

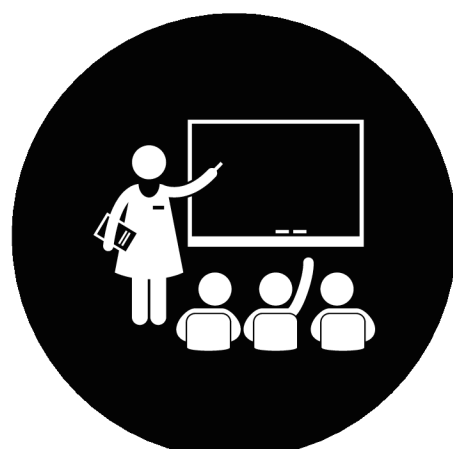
Their decision must be based on:

- the student's IEP, including the types of related services,
- the types of settings where those services are to be provided,
- the types of service providers,
- and the location where those services are to be provided

The Team considers all aspects of the student's proposed IEP and determines the appropriate placement to provide the services



General Education Classroom



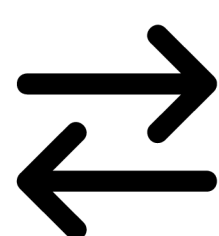
Special Education Classroom



Approved Special Education School or Collaborative



Approved Residential Special Education School



The Continuum of Special Education Placement

At the placement meeting, the district and the parent report on the investigation of in-district and out-of-district options.

If an in-district program cannot provide the services on the IEP, the placement Team will identify an out-of-district placement.

“

"Placement options are fluid... Further, placements can change over time based on factors such as changes in a student's progress or needs. For some students, the general education classroom is not necessarily the least restrictive setting." - Vanderbilt University Iris Center

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Understanding

School District Reimbursements for Out of District Placement



Laws and Student Rights

- Both federal and state law require every student to be provided a “free and appropriate public education” (FAPE)
- Most students have their special education needs met in the public-school setting.
- A small percentage of students will attend educational collaboratives, or state-approved private special education schools

Approved Special Education Schools are licensed and approved by the state.



IDEA

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Approved special education schools collaborate with the public districts to meet the districts’ special education mandates.

Costs and Growing Needs

Costs are related to the special education needs and services of the students.

Special education costs are directly related to services as required by the students’ learning needs, and special education students are among the most vulnerable students in the Commonwealth.

Special education is funded at a variety of levels:

- ✓ LOCAL
- ✓ STATE
- ✓ FEDERAL



19.4% of MA students, nearly 1 in 5 (and rising), receive special education services, compared to 15% nationally.

The past 10 years have seen a nearly 6x increase in the rate of autism diagnoses alone.

MA DESE 22-23 Census and National Center for Education Statistics, 2021-22 school year data

State Reimbursements

Massachusetts specifically funds local districts for out-of-district students:

2023-2024

Massachusetts will reimburse districts 75% of all costs for the tuition over the set minimum spend per year, plus transportation.

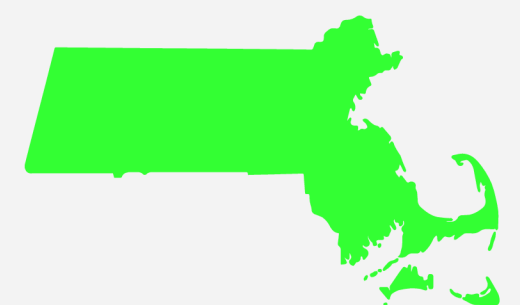


Local: Base cost for a Special Ed Student, whether public or private, plus 25% of additional cost

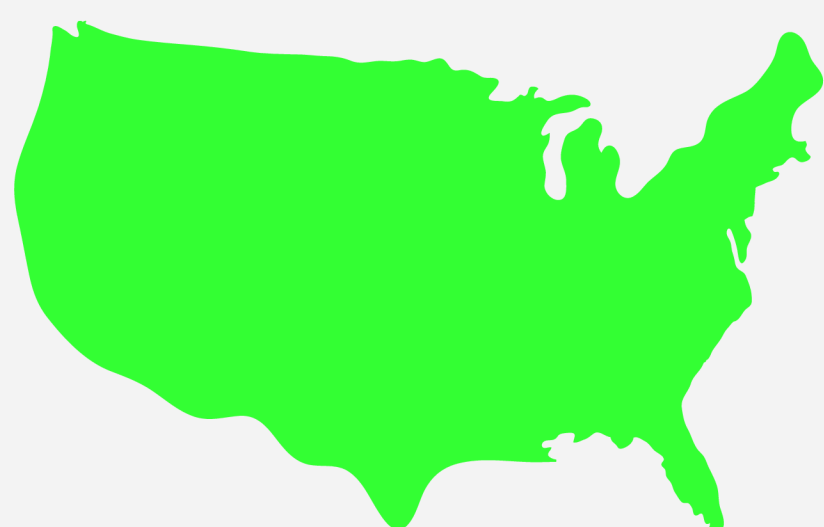
2024-2025

In FY24 and FY25 the Commonwealth has allocated an **additional \$95 million reimbursement** to districts for out of district tuitions to cover the inflation cost increases to out of district school tuitions

State: 75% of additional cost



Federal Reimbursements



Districts also receive federal funds via the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). The federal funding mechanism is a critical part of the Commonwealth’s delivery of our constitutionally assured “free and appropriate public education.”

Join MAAPS in advocating for more federal funding through IDEA and improvements to the federal formula.