

# *Resilience for the Future*



2021-2022

ANNUAL REPORT

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## Keystone Educational Collaborative

2 Shaker Road, Suite D215

Shirley, MA 01464

[www.keystonecollaborative.org](http://www.keystonecollaborative.org)

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# OUR MISSION

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The mission of Keystone Educational Collaborative is to unite our communities together to strengthen each individual students' growth for the future.

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# OUR VISION

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The focus of Keystone Educational Collaborative is to ***lock-in the foundation of our students' future with the tools of today*** by developing and providing high quality, cost effective, educationally related programs for special needs students, professional development and other services that strengthen and enhance the educational offerings of our member districts.

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# OUR PRINCIPLES

- We believe our programs and services should be of the highest quality and should continue to be responsive to the changing needs of our member districts.
- We believe that our students should be provided with the highest level of quality programs and services that will allow each of them opportunities to reach their highest potential and demonstrate ongoing, measurable progress and independence.
- We believe that all students should be challenged to learn in a caring, inclusive environment that respects diversity and values life-long learning.
- We believe all students should be provided educational programs and services in the least restrictive environment and we work closely with each district to return students to their home district whenever it is appropriate.
- We believe high quality; ongoing and relevant professional development is essential for growth and the success of the educational process.
- We recognize the need to involve and support families to facilitate the educational process.
- We believe student assessment and program evaluation are essential for continuous improvement.
- We recognize the need to support the social and emotional well-being of our students.
- We embrace collegiality and a sense of shared commitment and recognize that we accomplish more collectively than separately.
- We recognize and celebrate the unique contributions and accomplishments of everyone in our collaborative community.
- We encourage and accept a diversity of opinions to stimulate innovative and creative ideas and effective solutions.

*"It's your reaction to adversity, not adversity itself that determines how your life's story will develop."*

*-Dieter F. Uchtdorf-*

Dear Friends and Families,

*Keystone Educational Collaborative* has been synonymous with a quality specialized program that has always supported our exceptional students by meeting their evolving therapeutic and educational needs. Over the years, our program has continued to be fortunate to have the support of our twelve member districts, our families, and our communities to work collaboratively in encouraging our students to ***never stop the learning process***. Quality programming such as ours cannot rest on their laurels only but must remain vigilant for our students' educational future and therefore must embrace the need for change.

As one of the many educational representatives from your communities, we have strived to develop each child's abilities and have encouraged them to reach towards their fullest potential. With that mission for the future, we as an organization are aware that it is essential to reflect on ourselves to be able to move forward. By keeping your child's future at the forefront of our mission we as an organization have methodically planned and have taken that first pivotal step.

The pandemic has shed light on the pivotal roles that the entire educational community plays and the resilience that we all overcame in the interest of our student's future. There is no denial of the challenges that the past year has had on our students, our families, our members and our staff, but the Keystone community persevered and showed the utmost resilience to continue to service and challenge our most neediest students. With our primary mission ahead of us we will continue to carry that primary torch and develop the necessary therapeutic and educational tools for the future here today. As one of the many team members here within the organization I look forward to guiding this organization and your child's untapped potential into that future.

I hope that this year's annual report highlights the fabric of this organization and the quality programming from the collaborative and highlights the directions that we will be heading. All of these efforts would not have been possible without the support and dedication of all of the families, friends, member districts, communities, and our dedicated staff who are all part of the Keystone Educational Community.

Sincerely,

John J. Demanche,  
M. Ed, BCBA, LABA  
Executive Director



# KEYSTONE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS



School Committee Member  
Ellen Holmes  
Ashburnham-Westminster  
Regional School District



Superintendent Dr. Adam Renda  
Ayer-Shirley Regional  
School District



Superintendent Dr. Steven Meyer  
Clinton Public School



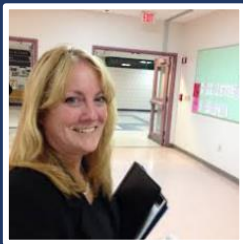
Superintendent Dr. Robert Jokela  
Fitchburg School District



Superintendent Dr. Mark Pellegrino  
Gardner Public Schools



Superintendent Paula Deacon  
Leominster Public Schools



Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Burnham  
Lunenburg Public Schools



Superintendent Dr. C. Casavant  
Narragansett Regional School  
District



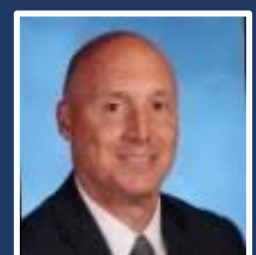
Superintendent Brad Morgan  
North Middlesex Regional School  
District



Superintendent Dr. Sheila Muir  
Quabbin Regional School District



Superintendent Richard Meagher  
West Boylston Public Schools



Superintendent Thad King  
Winchendon Public Schools

# Keystone Educational Collaborative

## Special Education Advisory Board

Ashburnham-Westminster RSD	Ms. Justine Muir
Ayer Shirley RSD	Ms. Tara Bozek
Clinton Public Schools	Ms. Loretta Braverman
Fitchburg Public Schools	Ms. Alicia Berrospe
Gardner Public Schools	Ms. Joyce West
Leominster Public Schools	Ms. Kimberly Woodford
Lunenburg Public Schools	Ms. Julianna Hanscom
Narragansett RSD	Mr. Matt Holloway
North Middlesex RSD	Mr. Brad Brooks
Quabbin RSD	Ms. Kristin Campione
West Boylston Public Schools	Ms. Sherri Traina
Winchendon Public Schools	Ms. Nicole Heroux



## Keystone Educational Collaborative Executive Board Sub-Committees

### Budget

Superintendent Mr. Thad King  
Superintendent Dr. Steven Meyer  
Superintendent Dr. Mark Pellegrino

### Personnel

Superintendent Dr. Sheila Muir  
Superintendent Dr. Mark Pellegrino

### Governance

Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Burnham  
Superintendent Mr. Robert Jokela

### Space

Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Burnham  
School Committee Member, Ms. Ellen Holmes  
Superintendent Mr. Robert Jokela

### Warrant Committee

Superintendent Dr. Kathleen Burnham  
School Committee Member, Ms. Ellen Holmes  
Superintendent Mr. Thad King

# Keystone Education Administration

Executive Director

Mr. John J Demanche

Business Manager

Ms. Terri Burchfield

KEY Program Administrator

Ms. Megan Ritter

KEY Program Administrator

Ms. Amy Foley

Keystone Elementary/Middle  
School Program Administrator

Ms. Julie Bragg

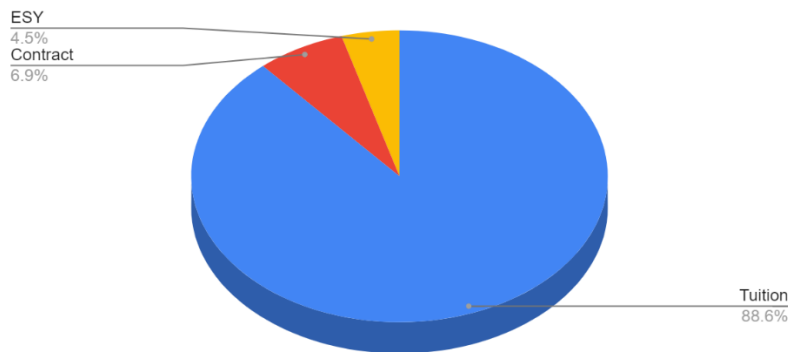
Keystone Academy Program  
Administrator

Mr. Gary MacCallum

# FINANCIAL AND ENROLLMENT DATA

The collaborative's primary revenue source continues to be predominately captured under the tuition revenue line for the students and the districts that we serve. The graphical display represents the organization percentage breakdown of the various revenue sources, as well as the gross revenue collected within the fiscal year. In retrospective comparison to the previous year, despite the fiscal constraints due to a health pandemic, the collaborative was still able to increase gross revenue by 2% from the previous year.

Revenue Breakdown 2021-2022

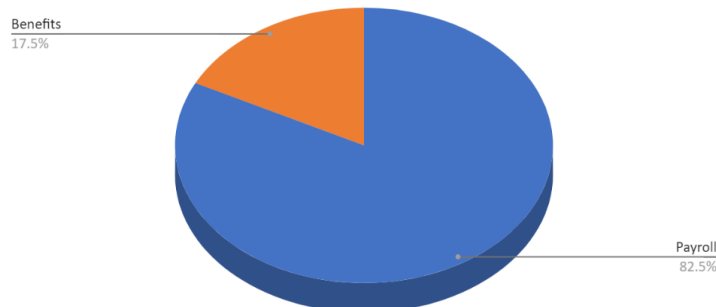


Primary Revenues 2020-2021		Primary Revenues 2021-2022	
Tuition	\$8,636,524	Tuition	\$9,041,377
Purchased & Contract Services	\$1,032,974	Purchased & Contract Services	\$701,708
Extended Year	\$369,705	Extended Year	\$459,040
TOTAL	\$10,039,203	TOTAL	\$10,202,125

## EXPENSES

Operationally, the collaborative reallocates over 83% of its gross revenue back into the heart of the program, which is the employee salaries/benefits and the professional development of staffing. The remainder of the collaborative expenses cover operational occupancy for our students in the areas of leased educational sites for classrooms, which is 7% of revenue.

Payroll and Benefits



## OPERATIONAL OCCUPANCY

Member		Non-member	
Ayer-Shirley	\$40,000.00	98 Adams Street	\$ 279,403.00
North Middlesex	\$180,469.00	2 Shaker Road	\$ 41,882.00
Winchendon	\$8,000.00	360 Electric Ave	\$ 30,000.00
Total	\$228,469.00	Total	\$ 351,285.00

During the fiscal year, the Collaborative leased a portion of 360 Electric Avenue in Fitchburg for the first part of the year. The Collaborative purchased the building in October 2021 and began preparing the building to accept more students through the spring and summer of 2022.

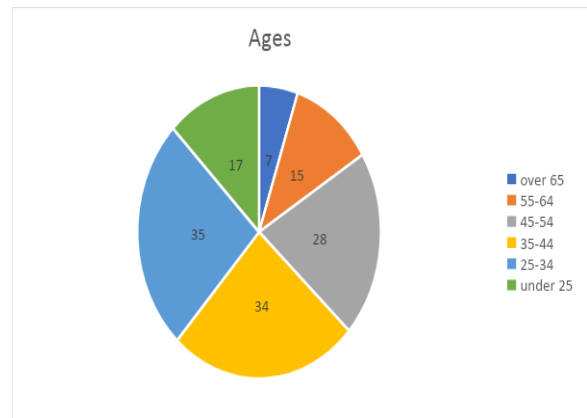
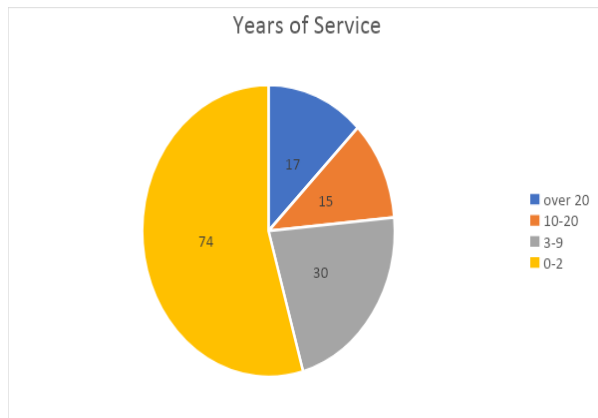
# STAFFING INFRASTRUCTURE

The collaborative continues to acknowledge that the heart of the program is based upon the quality of staffing and their impact with our students. For this reason, the collaborative continues to allocate organizational roles that will have direct correlation impact with student outcome. Based upon the graphical display below, **93%** of the staffing roles have daily direct contact with our student population that we serve and the subsequent staffing percentage support students through ancillary services. This number includes the reclassification of 10 paraprofessional positions to more highly trained Registered behavior Technicians to provide highly needed classroom support.

Administrative/Support staff	7%	11
Psychologist/BCBAs/Counselors	7%	11
Teachers	24%	36
Paraprofessionals	43%	65
Allied Health (PT, OT, SLP)	19%	29
		152

# STAFFING TENURE

The collaborative's strategic investment in our students through our investment on human capital has not only been correlated by student outcomes but has also been parallel with employee tenure. Based upon the graphical display, the collaborative has **32%** of its employee that have in turn invested over 5 years of service to the mission and the philosophy of the program.



Employee Tenure		
< 1 year	34%	52
1-5 years	32%	49
5-10 years	9%	14
10-20 years	14%	21
20+ years	11%	16
		152



# EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The collaborative continues to have a reputation for providing high-quality, cost-effective programs and services to our member districts. We provide an annual cost comparison survey to our Board of Directors to demonstrate and ensure that we continue to be in alignment with our mission. Additionally, the collaborative conducts a satisfaction survey of our Special Education Administrators annually to ensure that it vision of cost effective does not counterbalance our mission of quality programming. Annual survey collects data across our members on how satisfied they are with our programs and to determine how responsive the collaborative has been in meeting our districts and family's needs.

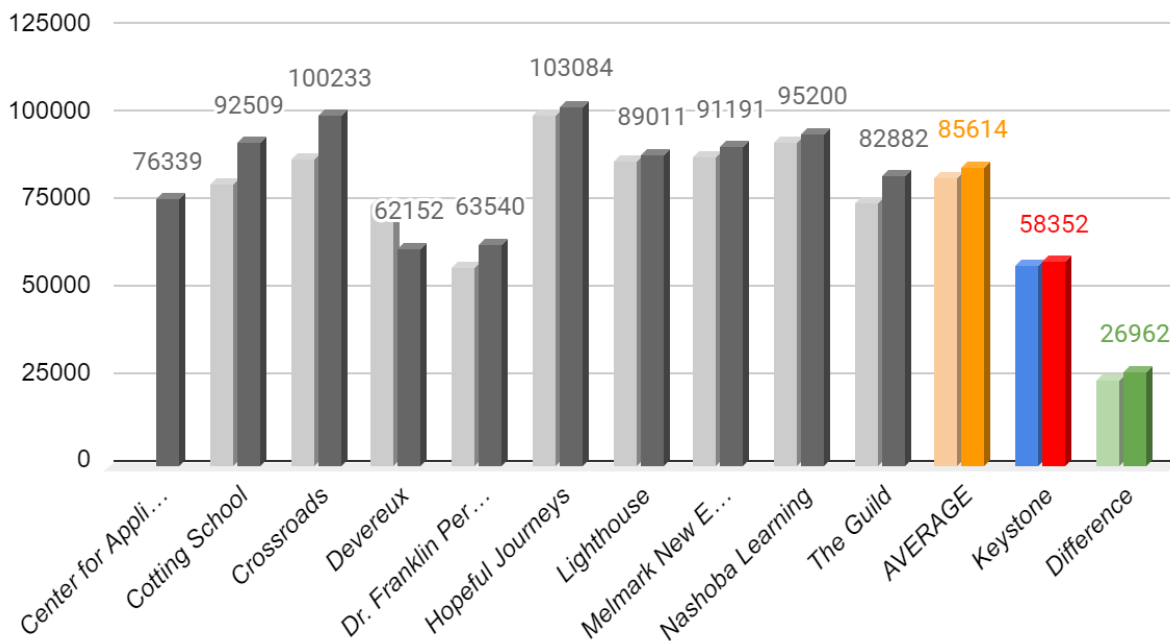
## COST COMPARISON

The collaborative's special education programs continue to remain highly cost effective relative to private special education programs serving students with similar special educational needs. Every year the collaborative does a cost comparison with similar private special education programs serving similar students located within one hour of north central Massachusetts (when possible). Prior to these comparisons being made, the collaborative works with the Special Education Advisory Board to ensure that comparisons are fair and represent private schools that districts would have sent students to if the collaborative programs were not available. The following graphical display breaks down the daily and annual rate for each of the programs that we have within the organization. The comparison programs were identified based upon similar population, educational and therapeutic methodologies, and based upon historical comparisons. The final graphical display represents the overall cost benefit that our members and nonmembers have by referring students to the collaborative.

# KEY PROGRAM

## Cost Analysis

Key Program Annual Rate Comparison

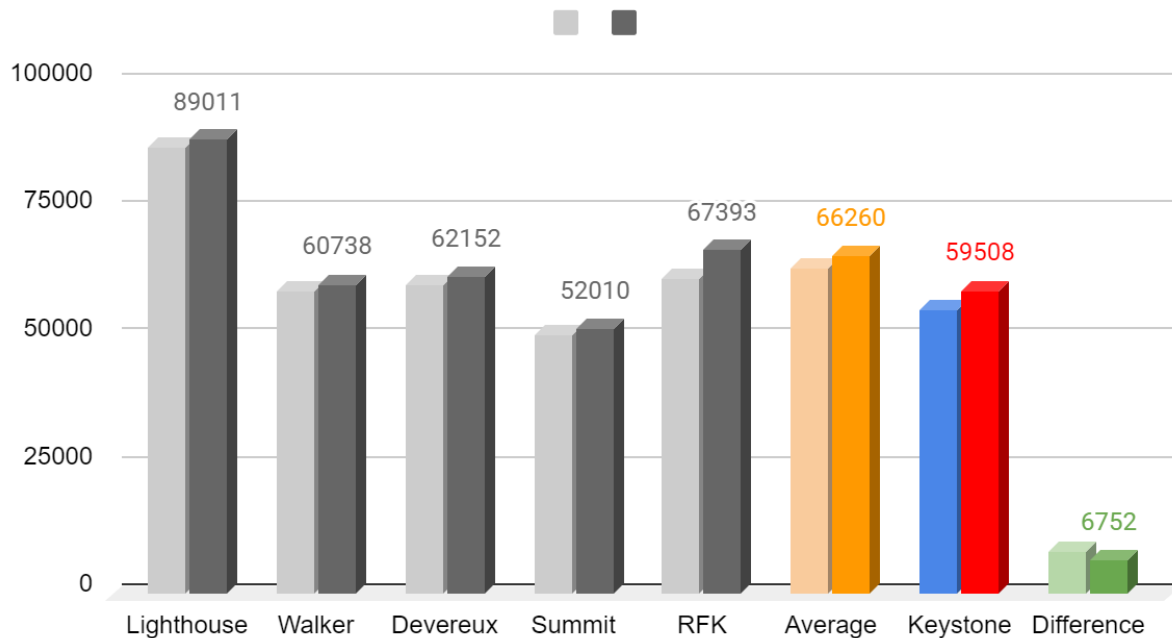


Daily average rate for MAAPS comparable programs within a 1 hr. radius is **\$483.91** **per day**. Keystone Educational Collaborative supplies an annual savings of **\$26,962**.

Daily average rate for AAPS comparable programs within a 1 hr. radius is **\$93,563.00** **per annual year (180)**.

# KEYSTONE EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTARY MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM Cost Analysis

## Key Elementary/Middle Annual Comparison

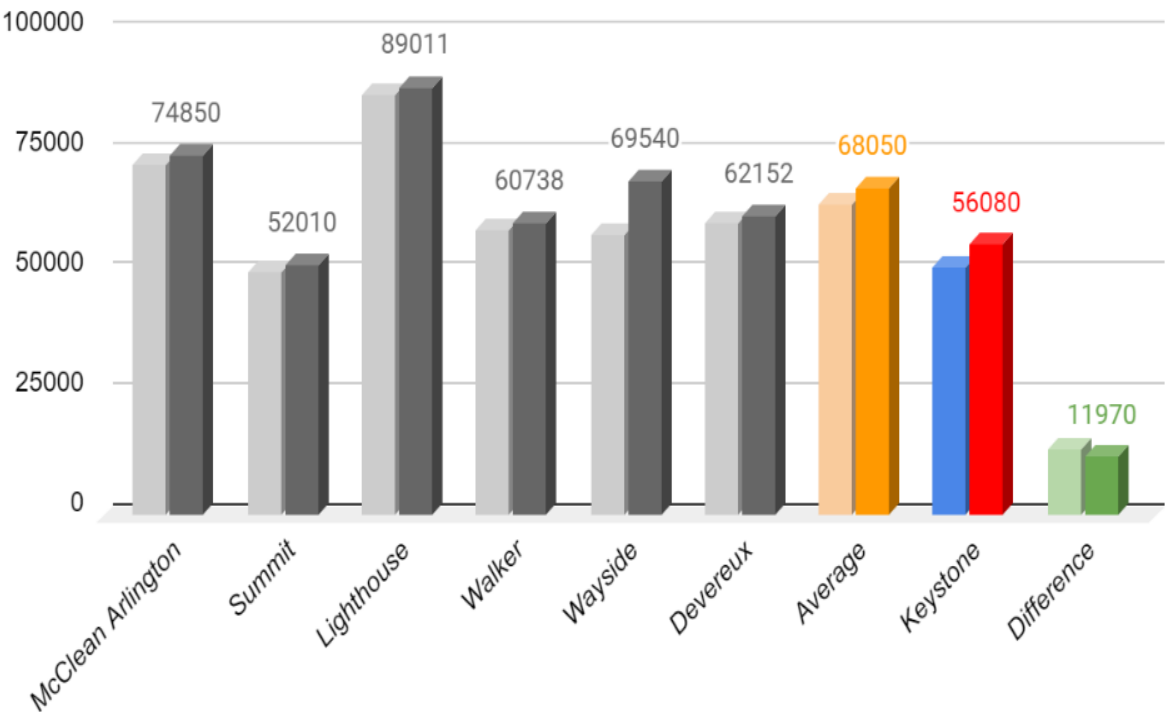


Daily average rate for MAAPS comparable programs within a 1 hr. radius is **\$332.77**  
**per day**. Keystone Educational Collaborative supplies a savings of **\$6,752**.

# KEYSTONE ACADEMY PROGRAM

## Cost Analysis

Key Academy Annual Rate Comparison



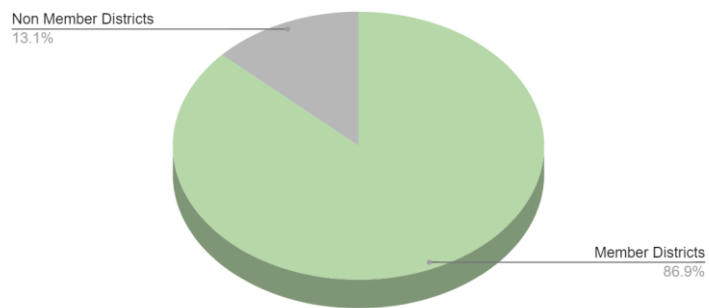
Daily average rate for MAAPS comparable programs within a 1 hr. radius is **\$340.99 per day**. Keystone Educational Collaborative supplies an annual savings of **\$11,970**.

# FINANCIAL AND ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

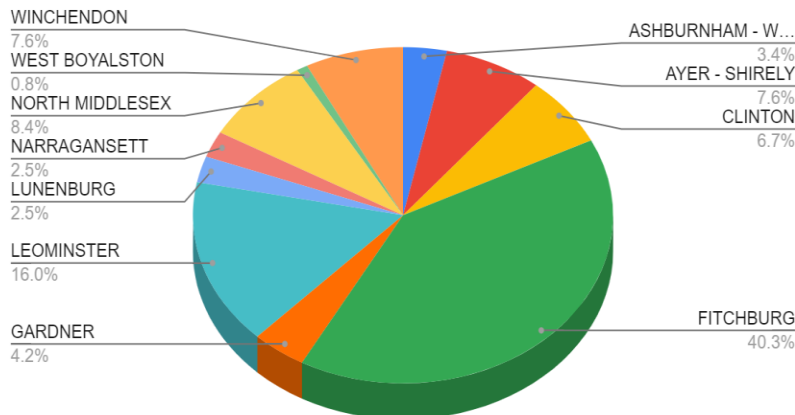
## MEMBER DISTRICTS

One of the primary purposes of the collaborative is to offer our member districts programming that complements and strengthens the member school's programs to best meet the intensive therapeutic and educational needs for students with disabilities. The following graphical display represents how all eleven of our members have been able to successfully gain access to the collaborative's highly specialized programming. This data also displays that the collaborative analysis of our current specialized programming design is what the member districts are looking for to complement their programming.

Collaborative Members vs Non



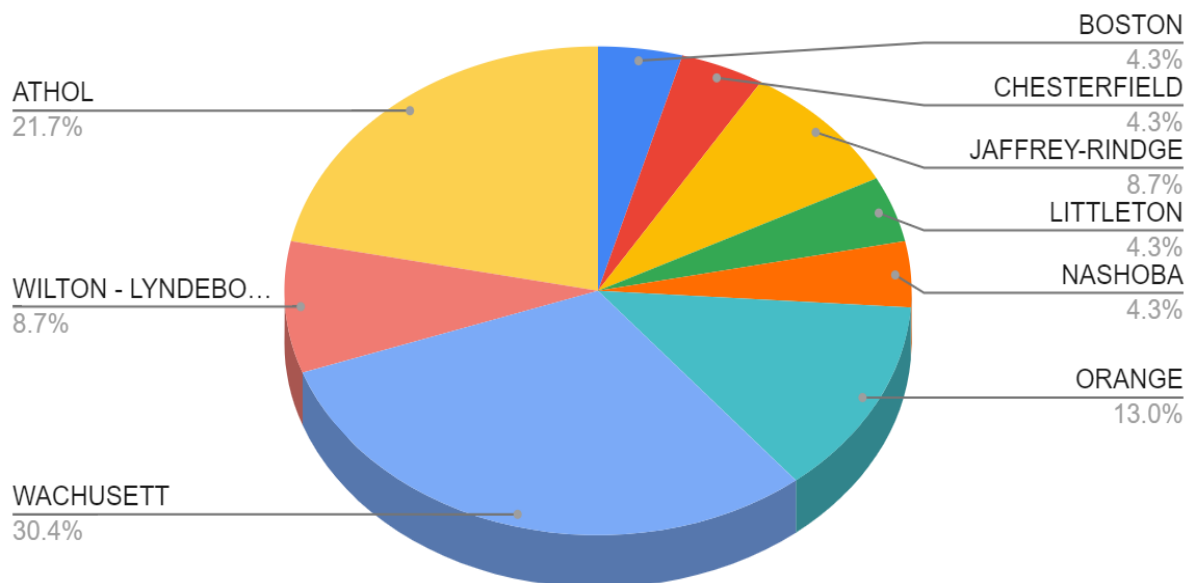
Member District Breakdown



# NON-MEMBER DISTRICTS

Our specialized programming has been designed to meet the intensive therapeutic and educational needs for students with disabilities and has been the primary focus within our members and within the collaborative. Our members are a large component of our organization, but as a collaborative we continue to try to supply a least restrictive environment for all students with specialized needs. The prior graphical display represents the overall **87%** of our educational and therapeutic programming and have been designated for our member district and their communities. Regardless of town boundaries, student's needs have always been at the forefront of this collaborative's mission and our members, and as such, we as a collaborative consistently do our best to also support students, families from our neighboring nonmembers. During this past year, the collaborative has been able to support a quarter of our population for nonmembers in hopes to keep their students closer to their own communities.

Non-Member Districts





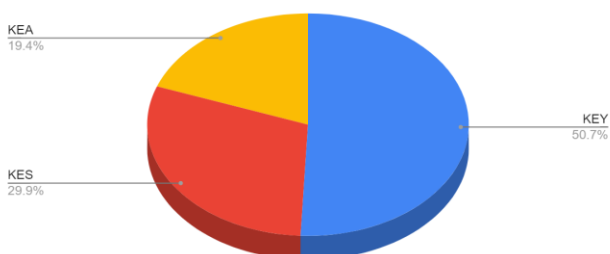
# PROGRAM BREAKDOWN

Based upon the needs of our member districts, specialized programming has been designed to support students with a wide range of disabilities. The following graphical display looks at the overall breakdown of the disabilities that we have supported within the program and the breakdown of those students with the programs we have identified. The collaborative will continue to analyze and support the member districts on the differentiation of the appropriate disability categories to better identify future programmatic needs.

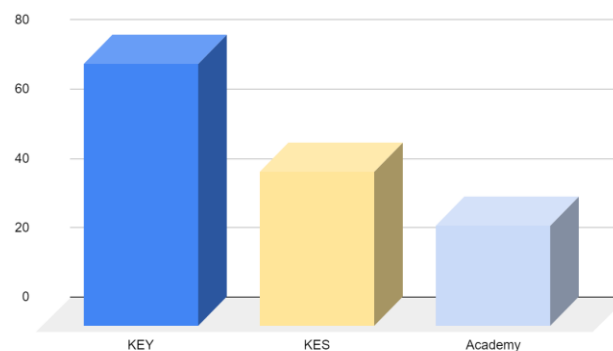
# PROGRAM ANALYSIS

The breakdown of disabilities category has assisted the collaborative in designing programs that are well suited to meet those students' individual needs based upon best practice. The following graphical display represents the percentage breakdown of students with the above stated disabilities and how they are supported within our current programming model. The secondary graphical display represents the average student frequency within each designated program.

Program Breakdown 2021-2022



AVG # Students Per Program





*"The future influences the present just as much as the past."*

~Friedrich Nietzsche~



# REVENUE BREAKDOWN

## KEY PROGRAM

Tuition	
Member	\$ 3,623,440.00
Non-Member	\$ 861,089.00
Total Tuition	\$ 4,484,529.00
Budgeted Tuition	\$ 4,020,562.00
Difference	\$ 463,967.00

## KEYSTONE ACADEMY PROGRAM

Tuition	
Member	\$ 1,351,036.00
Non-Member	\$ 374,974.00
Total Tuition	\$ 1,726,010.00
Budgeted Tuition	\$ 2,273,400.00
Difference	-\$547,390.00

## KEYSTONE ELEMENTARY MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Tuition	
Member	\$ 1,980,123.00
Non-Member	\$ 850,716.00
Total Tuition	\$ 2,830,839.00
Budgeted Tuition	\$ 2,737,368.00
Difference	\$93,471.00

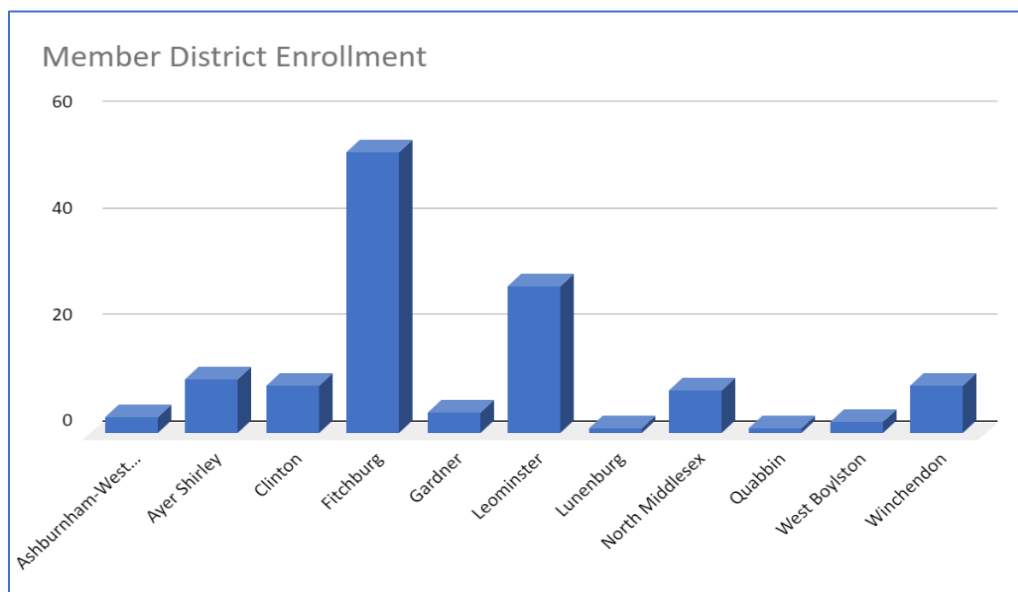
## EXTENDED EVALUATION

Tuition	
Member	\$ 219,999.00
Non-Member	\$ 47,218.00
Total Tuition	\$ 267,217.00

# TUITION REVENUE

Total Tuition	
Member	\$ 6,954,599.00
Non-Member	\$ 2,086,778.00
Total	\$ 9,041,377.00
Budgeted Tuition	\$ 9,031,331.00
Difference	\$10,046.00

Last year the collaborative committed \$800,000 towards the capital reserve to purchase a new building. \$815,000 is now reflected as capital assets in our equity line.



At the peak throughout the year the collaborative supported 21 nonmember students and supported an average of 43 students for our member districts.

# FINANCIAL POSITION

The net effect of all the revenues and savings in expenditures is a gain of \$40,033. This is derived from increased enrollments, nonmember tuition charges, and additional revenues to support Covid related costs. Savings were recognized through salaries and benefit costs for positions that were not filled. Some of the vacancies were covered through contract staff, and some could be accommodated due to the number of students who opted to attend remotely.

As the enrollments have been increasing, the Collaborative has been aggressively pursuing more permanent options for classroom space and has been building the capital reserve fund to enable us to proceed when an opportunity comes available.

At the end of June 2022, the Collaborative funds were:

Capital Reserve	\$ 832,275
Capital Assets	\$ 1,161,437
Unrestricted	\$2,854,454
Total net position	\$3,716,729





# SPECIAL EDUCATION ADMINISTRATOR SURVEY RESULTS

To continue to supply quality services and programming, the collaborative has conducted a satisfaction survey of our member district Special Education Administrators on an annual basis in September. The reference tool had been expanded from previous surveys to ensure accuracy regarding satisfaction from direct service providers, as well as satisfaction on the administrative support of the collaborative for its members. Since collaboration is essential in the work that we perform feedback from Special Education Administrators is critical to determining our overall effectiveness as an organization. Five out of eleven of our member districts Special Education Administrators were able to reply to the survey in which we have posted the results below. We acknowledge that the current climate of school reopening plans has hindered some of our member's ability to respond within a timely manner and their feedback will be embedded within an alternate format.

Prior to discussing the findings of the survey, the collaborative would like to comment on the recommendations that were supplied within the last year's survey.

## Recommendations:

- Psychologists hire to share with the districts
- More vocational options at HS level.

The collaborative acknowledged the overall recommendation for the program, as well as the need for the member districts, which had resulted in the collaborative taking the following actions across the 2021-2022 school year. The pandemic did supply some limitations on out comes but the collaborative assisted district in conducting district evaluations of special educational services and review of district protocols for multi-tiered supports. Based upon the findings of the evaluation, the collaborative was able to supply continued support and training on multi-tiered support and best practice protocols for students with special education students and programming.

In regard to the recommendation to expand the vocational opportunities within the collaborative, we were able to bring on board an additional wood shop teacher, a Rehabilitation Counselor and a Transition Specialist to assist in bringing their vocational

expertise and assessment knowledge to the collaborative to continue to guide us in supporting students into future vocational opportunities. Currently we have 75% of all working age students that either participate and work beyond the school day, volunteer work, job sampling, and other vocational opportunities that expose them to future work opportunities.

Unfortunately, the collaborative has thus far been unable to meet the need for specialty services such as school psychologists due to a long-standing shortage of qualified candidates, further exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic. Across the school year we were able to assist some of our members on cases in which the collaborative school psychologist was able to supply support in evaluation or analysis of the data that was collected by the district team.

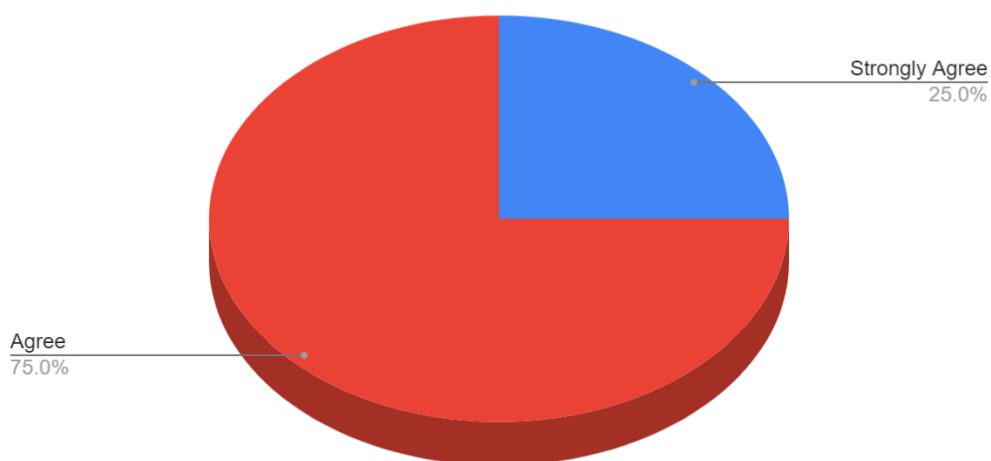


# SURVEY QUESTIONS

The summary results of this annual survey indicate that in 2021-2022 there was a high level of satisfaction with our special education programs and services and equally important, the collaborative continues to be a caring, responsive and effective organization that meets the demands of districts for efficient, effective and as a local educational option for quality services.

## QUESTION 1:

Has Keystone's current programs and services been effective in meeting the needs of the students that we serve?



## QUESTION 2:

Has Keystone's programs and services been cost effective for you as a member?

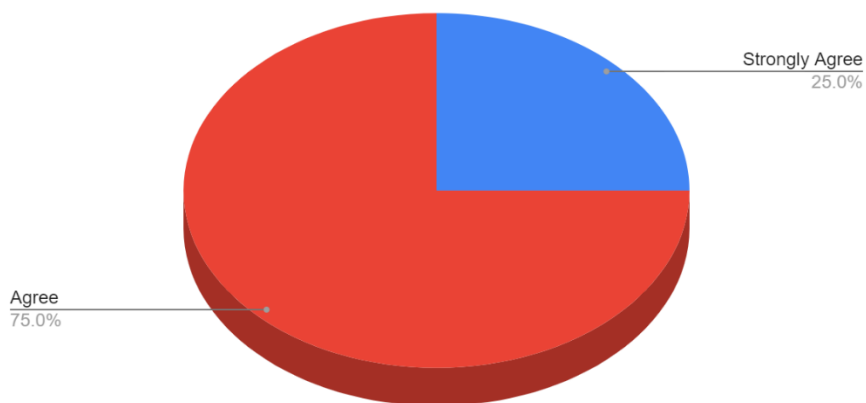
25% Strongly Agree

50% Agree

25% No Opinion

## QUESTION 3:

Do you feel it is important for your district that the Keystone program provides services that are located in the local district or in a district nearby?



## QUESTION 4:

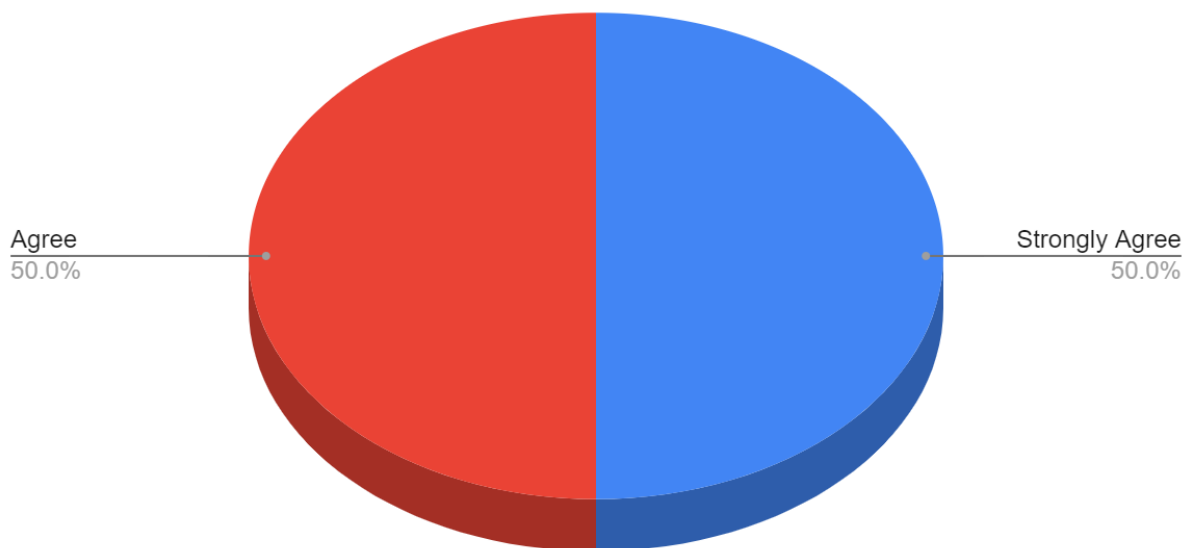
Do you feel that Keystone staff are experienced, skilled and knowledgeable in meeting the needs of the students they serve?

25% Agree

75% Strongly Agree

## QUESTION 5:

Do you feel that Keystone's Program Staff are responsive to the student's educational needs and to your families' needs?



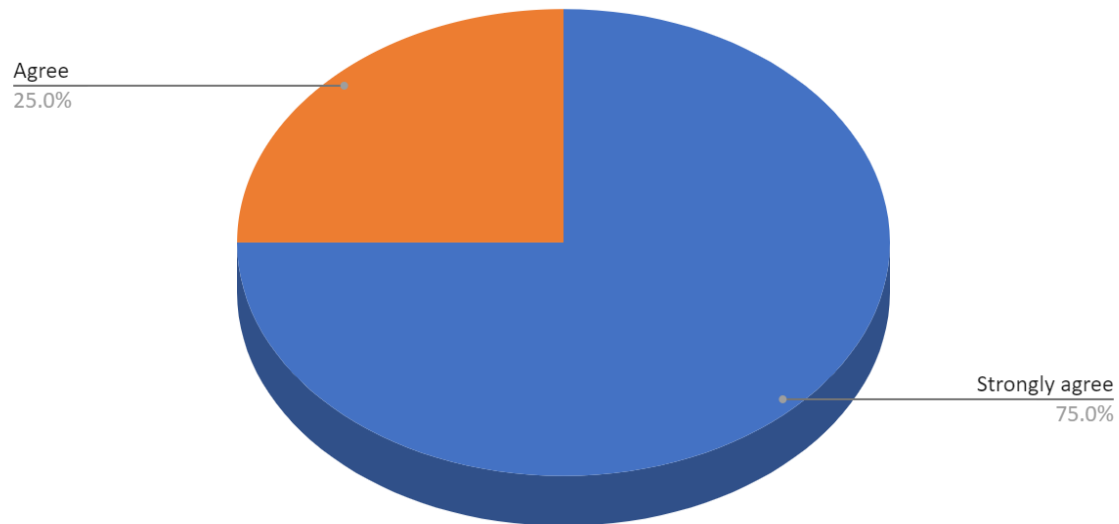
## QUESTION 6:

Do you feel that Keystone's Program Administrators are responsive to the student's educational needs and your families' needs?

25% Agree  
75% Strongly Agree

## QUESTION 7:

Do you feel that Keystone Administration is responsive to the needs of your district?



## QUESTION 8:

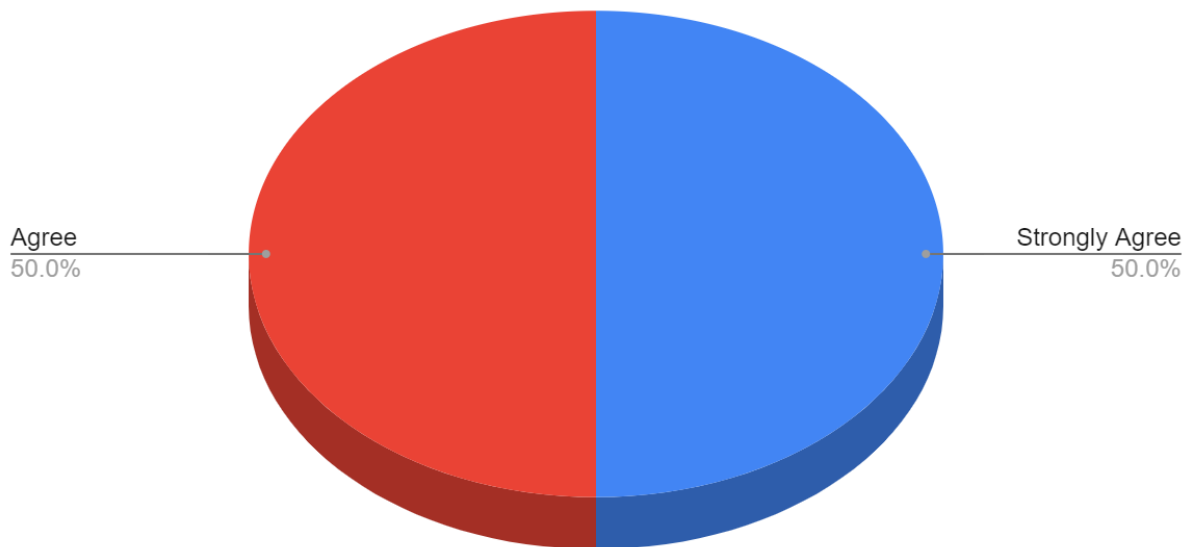
What would you suggest that our Keystone's Program Administrators could do differently to strengthen your program needs?

- Unsure.
- Very satisfied with this, I feel we have a strong relationship.
- Nothing at this time-happy with everything
- NA



## QUESTION 9:

Do you feel that the Keystone staff have provided services in a caring and respectful manner?



## QUESTION 10:

How likely would you recommend Keystone Programs to other district administrators?

50% Extremely Likely  
25% Very Likely  
25% Moderately Likely

## QUESTION 11:

Are you currently pleased with the new changes that the collaborative has made, and the new services projected in the upcoming year? Please comment.

- Very pleased with each program.
- Yes
- NA
- \* I think it would be better for the Executive Director to review new ideas with collaborative faculty/ staff and advisory board prior to implementation. It does not appear feedback on initiatives is wanted—not sure if that is accurate but that’s my perceptions
  - The Advisory committee is a collaborative process between the member districts and the collaborative, which informs the direction the collaborative is heading and solicits programming needs that the members districts seek. All feedback is from this committee is discussed and approved at the Executive Board meetings with member districts superintendents. Attendances to advisory meetings will assist the collaborative to further hear what members may need designed.

## QUESTION 12:

Can you suggest any services, supports or resources that would strengthen Keystone any further?

- NA
- None at this time other than magically being able to find school psychologist.
- More high school vocational opportunities, more community-based programming.

## SURVEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is such a lack of specialty providers for related services... that's always an area to try and expand
- Short term related services- e.g., school psychologist for when my current staff get overloaded

# PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

During the **2021-2022** academic year, the collaborative offered four unique programs designed to meet the needs of a specific student population, which complement and augment the educational programs and services of the member districts in a cost-effective manner.

- Keystone Alternative Elementary- Middle School (gr. K-7), is a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approved Public Day Programs. The program provides therapeutic and educational programming for students with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral obstacles, and complex mental health issues. Students within this program have been identified as needing special education services.
- Keystone Academy (gr. 7-12) is also a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education approved Public Day Programs. This specialized program provides therapeutic and educational and vocational programming for students with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral obstacles, and complex mental health issues. Students within this program have been identified as needing special education services.
- Key Program: ICAN, PREP PROGRAM & Learning for Life

The Key Program serves students who are aged 5-22 who are educated within public school settings and are substantially separate from member districts programming but have access to the least restrictive environment. The program serves students who have more complex, low incidence, cognitive, communication, related services, behavioral, academic, medical, and self-help needs that districts are unable to meet within the individual district. All the students in the Key Program have been found eligible for special education services



- Extended Year Services: All three of the collaborative's specialized Special Education Programs offer extended year services and programming that are appropriate for the specific student's needs.
- Extended Evaluation Program: The collaborative provides extended evaluation services to students who were referred by school districts. Students in the program attend either Keystone Academy or Keystone Elementary and Middle School and receive therapeutic and educational services as part of the school program. In addition, students in the Extended Evaluation Program received evaluation and assessment services as identified by the student's educational team and as requested by the sending district. During the extended evaluation period, the collaborative provides weekly updates to the sending district as well as the student's family regarding social, emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning within the new school environment. Students who completed the program received an evaluation package designed to help the district determine the appropriate placement and supports for that student. Students referred to the program may have previously been found in need of special education services, but others have not been found to need such services. While in the program, students are typically provided with educational evaluations, psychological, and behavioral evaluations and other assessments as determined by the referring team. Students attending the Extended Evaluation program are provided with evaluations designed to answer those referral questions brought forth by the sending district. Such evaluations might include assessment in the following areas: academic, behavioral, social/emotional, cognitive, speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, executive functioning, attention, and/or adaptive behavior. The overall goal for the Extended Evaluation Programs is to prepare students to return to the least restrictive environments and to provide districts with recommendations on how to provide services in such a setting.



# Keystone Alternative Elementary- Middle School Program

66 Brookline Road  
Townsend, MA 01469

## Philosophy

We believe that every child can learn and acquire the social skills required for success in school and in the community. We further believe that each child is unique, and that each child has the potential to make progress academically and emotionally.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the KEA Program is to help each child discover his or her strengths, improve coping mechanisms and develop social and academic skills. The goal of the program is to provide each student with the behavioral and academic skills required to return to a less restrictive educational setting.

## Student Population

The KEA Program's strengths are in its small size and high staff/student ratio. Students are placed in multi-age classrooms according to their developmental needs and academic skills. Students are referred to the program because they demonstrate challenging emotional and/or behavioral concerns. Students also present with learning and psychological challenges including but not limited to ADD/ADHD, Learning Disabilities, PTSD, PDD, OCD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

## Referrals

Referrals are made to the Program through the Special Education Directors of the sending school districts. Students may be placed within the Program on a long-term basis or for an Extended Evaluation Assessment.

## Referrals for Keystone Alternative School 2021-2022

Total referrals	47
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## Placement Referrals for 2021-2022

Students enrolled:	2
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## Extended Evaluation Referrals for 2021-2022

Students enrolled:	3
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## Transitions from Placement 2021-2022

Transition to Other Keystone Program:	6
Transitions to a more restrictive environment:	1
Transition back to in-district public school	4
Transition to lateral program	2

## Transitions from 45 Day placement 2021-2022

Transition to long-term placement at Keystone:	9
Transition to Other Keystone Program:	0
Transition back to in-district public school:	0
Transitions to a more restrictive environment:	0

## Program Staffing

Each classroom is staffed with a certified licensed teacher and an appropriate number (average = 2) of teacher assistants to allow for a low ratio of students to adults. The program staff includes several related service providers: Three School Counselors, Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language Therapist, and BCBA. These individuals provide individual and/or group therapy to each student, as well as consultation to staff based on student need and IEP service delivery. The clinician acts as a liaison to the sending school districts and is available to provide support to parents and guardians.

The Keystone Elementary program is located within the former Squannacook Elementary building in Townsend. We have an onsite Licensed Practical Nurse available to our students who is overseen by the collaborative Registered Nurse. Program Supervisor has overall administrative operational responsibilities for the Keystone Elementary- Middle School Program and works collaboratively with the Member District Administrative team and the Executive Director of the collaborative.

## Academic

Our elementary-middle school classes are taught in self-contained classrooms, which are K-7th grade students. All subject areas and specials are taught by the classroom teacher except for health and fitness classes. The middle school program comprises students in grades 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. This model provides a homeroom as a base classroom and include a rotating schedule for ELA, Math and Science. This model helps to prepare students to move from a self-contained classroom model to a model that helps students navigate more transitions and challenges of subject specific classrooms. These students continue to receive therapeutic support to meet the demands of a less restrictive middle school program.

All students are taught per their IEP and at their individual instruction level. The curriculum of the KEA Program is aligned with the MA Curriculum Frameworks with appropriate modifications and/or adaptations to meet the needs of individual students. Related services such as speech or occupational therapy are provided according to each student's IEP. Our students also participate in the MCAS process with appropriate modifications and/or adaptations for each student.

## Behavior Management Social Emotional Learning

Behavior Management at KEA Program is based on respect for everyone, setting appropriate and consistent limits, and reasonable and positive expectations. Students will be given as much positive reinforcement as possible to promote prosocial behaviors. A variety of positive reinforcement strategies are employed. Students receive reinforcement and awards on both individual and group levels.

Each class has a daily behavior chart point system, which enables the student to earn points or stickers for appropriate behaviors in the areas of academics, behaviors and adult and peer interactions. If the student has achieved 80% of possible points or stickers for the day, he or she may choose a prize/activity.



If needed, individual behavioral support plans are developed by each child's team in consultation with the Program Supervisor and/or counselor. The services of contracted Behavioral Psychologists are available on an as needed basis. Behavioral support plans and data are reviewed and updated routinely by the program staff.

## Community Based Instruction

We are continuing to safely develop plans to provide community-based instruction for all our students. This initiative will allow the students to learn and perform skills, from the beginning, in the natural setting and will eliminate the need for a student to have to generalize the skill from only one setting, or with one person, in the real-life setting. Although this initiative was limited this academic year due to COVID-19, we were able to utilize nature trails on the state forest land behind our school building. We have been fortunate to work closely with the Townsend Police Department and the Resource Officer, Mark Francis. He visits our program frequently and talks with the students and joins in some of our activities. He has coordinated with the Fire Department and other community members to have demonstrations of department vehicles and services including a police dog.

As part of our planning and development of CBI, we have been in contact with nearby state parks regarding various educational programming that they may be able to offer our students. We are excited to have our students take part in activities such as: snowshoe making, snowshoe hikes, nature walks, tree and animal identification, etc.





# Keystone Academy

98 Adams Street, Suite 201  
Leominster, MA 01453

The Keystone Program strives to educate students to possess the social skills required for success in school and in the community while creating a learning environment where students can feel comfortable and confident so they can be the best version of themselves.

Keystone offers a 180-day school program in addition to a five-week extended school year program.

## Description

Our *Keystone Academy* is an educational program that supports students between grades of 7-12, who present with significant social, emotional, and learning disabilities. These disabilities affect overall ability for academic success or ability to participate within the educational community available within their home districts. The *Keystone Academy* is a substantially separate school that focuses on the *whole child approach* regardless of the disability category. We acknowledge that some of our children today carry a larger emotional burden than students of the past, and that to navigate life's many challenges they may need more specialized support and guidance than was historically provided the goal of this full day program is to assist children in developing healthy relationships, skills to self-regulate their emotions, communication skills to advocate for themselves and their needs, working toward their full academic potential.

Within our trauma-sensitive community, Keystone focuses on the areas of *safety*, *respect* and *effective learning* as a foundation to participate in the daily routines and expectations of student life.

## Philosophy

We believe at the Keystone Academy that we need to focus on the whole child approach regardless of the disability category. We acknowledge that some of our children today carry a larger emotional burden than students of the past, and that to navigate life's many challenges we may need to supply them more specialized support and guidance than what was historically provided. The goal of this full day program is to assist children in developing healthy relationships, skills to self-regulate their emotions, communication skills to advocate for themselves and their needs, working toward their full academic potential.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Keystone Academy is to provide an educational experience for students with special needs that fosters academic growth, social responsibility, and emotional health. Keystone orients its programming and instruction around the three areas of safety, respect, and effective learning.

## Student Population

Students are referred to Keystone Academy because of being unsuccessful in general education, or as a step-down from a more restrictive setting. Students present with a variety of academic, social and behavioral challenges and/or emotional impairments requiring instruction in an adult-intensive, highly structured setting with small class sizes and consistent support, encouragement and praise. Typical conditions seen in the school population include but are not limited to general and specific learning disabilities, attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar, oppositional defiant disorder, autism spectrum disorder or a combination of these.

## Program Staffing

Keystone Academy initial staff professional development plan was to continue to increase student engagement and time on learning through further development of Universal Design Learning skills, utilization of classroom staff in more directed instruction of students and providing more opportunities for students to demonstrate mastery of concepts and applications.

Again, with the onset of school closure, staff professional development shifted focus to selection and orientation on the use of programs and learning tools that would effectively deliver remote learning experiences. In order to continue to provide individualized remote learning plans, the Keystone Academy staff became proficient in using Google classrooms, Zoom, IXL, Discovery Education, ck-12, Read-works, Kurzweil, and project-based learning. Additionally, staff assembled learning packets to offer students and families.

# Referrals

Referrals are made to the Program through the Special Education Directors of the sending school districts. Students may be placed within the Program on a long-term basis or for an Extended Evaluation Assessment.

Keystone Referrals		Enrolled	Not Enrolled	Extended Evaluation Referrals	Enrolled	Not Enrolled
High School	13	4	2 Referral Withdrawn by district 2 – No Available Cohort 3 – Alternative Placement 2- Parental Withdrawn	6	1	3-district held back referral 2-Alternative Placements
Middle School	12	8	2- Waitlisted 2-Referral Withdrawn	7	5	1-Hospitalized 1-Withdrawn by district

*\* Of the Six (6) students enrolled in the Extended Evaluation program this year, all remained enrolled at Keystone Academy for the remainder of the academic year.*

Keystone had four (4) seniors graduate with diplomas. Upon graduation, one student was working full-time job at AIS INC, two were in the process of seeking fulltime employment, and one enrolled at Mount Wachusett Community College.

Twenty-Seven (27) students left the program during this school year:

# Of students	Disposition
8	Returned to district programs
4	Graduated with a diploma
6	Family relocated
5	Transferred to more restrictive setting
2	Program closer to home (NH)
1	Charter School
1	Other collaborative (flight risk)

## Extended Evaluation

Extended Evaluation: Program students enrolled in the Evaluation Program are assigned to Keystone Academy classrooms and participate in daily school programs to facilitate assessment while with their peers. The full-time School Psychologist/Lead Clinician continued to be pivotal in evaluating all students enrolled in the Extended Evaluations and continued defining the assessment process and oversight of the written reports.

## Program Services

### Individualized Academic and Behavioral Programming

Keystone Academy adheres to the delivery of services accommodations and modifications described in a student IEP.

The Academy's tier one behavior system: students are monitored under a generalized reinforcement system. The middle school utilizes a daily point earning system as a gauge for students to determine success. Students earn points for success in the areas of effective learning, respect, and school safety. Point sheets are tabulated daily and converted into "school dollars" to be spent at a school store or saved up for a higher value reward.

Keystone Academy high school community utilizes a Level System as the fundamental structure to promote behavioral, social, and academic growth. The six (6) levels are sets of clear standards for an effective student. This system is instrumental in assisting students in setting and meeting goals, and in allowing students to monitor their own progress on a day-to-day basis in school.

### Daily Literacy Instruction

Keystone Academy continues to devote daily instructional time for the enhancement of skills in the areas of listening, reading comprehension, speaking, and writing. Student on or near grade-level skills participate in a novel-based curriculum. Struggling readers continue to benefit from the Lexia. This program provides the additional skill building in the areas of word recognition, vocabulary knowledge, syntactic knowledge and reading comprehension.

Academically, the Academy works closely with the referring districts to assure our high school students are taking and succeeding in the required course work and requirements to receive a district high school diploma.

## Technologically and Standards Based Academic Curriculum

With the move to our new location, Keystone Academy was able to acquire existing technology equipment (interactive whiteboards, computer network), increase access to online learning and bring technology into the classroom. This allowed the program to deliver standards-based curriculum with a wider variety of strategies and programming.

With the school closure as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the collaborative joined the state and the nation in supporting educators to develop and assemble high-quality educational materials to provide students with effective remote learning resources. Simultaneous with selecting educational platforms and programs, came training and implementation of distance learning strategies while working with families and caretakers to create manageable routines in the home that assured safety and well-being, materials and equipment and predictable on a weekly basis.

Technologically and standards based academic curriculum is offered throughout the year.

## Clinical Services

Two full-time School Counselors provide therapeutic clinical/mental health services through individual counseling, social skills groups, mediation, and conflict-resolution/problem solving skills. All students receive a 1:1 session as well as a social skills group weekly based on student need and IEP service delivery. Social Skill groups are co-facilitated by the two School Counselors.

Keystone Academy continued to benefit from ongoing psychiatric consultation.

- Student centered clinical reviews increased our knowledge and understanding of nature of an individual student and how to develop a clinically informed intervention plan.
- Professional Development and Program development consultation.

## Crisis Intervention

All staff are trained and certified in CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention. The program supports a hands-off policy unless indicated. Staff focus on identifying students' baseline character/traits, escalation cycles and disability-indicated features as a means to intervene early and de-escalate students early.

## Health and Wellness Awareness Education

In addition to health classes being offered, Keystone Academy also offers a variety of opportunities for physical education. In seasonally good weather, Keystone Academy visits local parks for hiking and exploration.

We have an outdoor area with a basketball hoop for movement breaks and pick-up games. Through memberships at the local YMCA and affiliation with the Boys and Girls Club of Fitchburg and Leominster we have sites in colder weather to offer sports, exercise and workouts.

After a two-year lapse, we again were able to partner with Making Opportunity Count (MOC) whose staff provide health education classes that are important to youth in our care.



## Functional Life Skills

To prepare students for post-high school pursuits, Keystone Academy provides instruction to assure a successful transition to college, career/trade training, world of work and/or independent living. Curriculum in Career Education and Math is geared to acquisition of financial literacy, including personal finance and budgeting skills. Development of student mastery in the area of activities of daily living are supported through cooking opportunities, meal planning and preparation; community exploration through field trips to local establishments, restaurants, reading a bus schedule planning a local trip utilizing public transportation.



## Vocational Skills Development

This year the Career Education Teacher position was enhanced to Transition Specialist (requiring the DESE approved Transitional Specialist endorsement). In addition to the classes, there is a greater emphasis on career exploration, job search and application, the development of positive work attitudes and work-related employability skills. More time is spent in the community exploring jobs and resources available for post high school pursuits.



# KEY Program

Lura-White Elementary School  
34 Lancaster Road  
Shirley, MA 01464

KEY Program  
360 Electric Avenue  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Leominster  
98 Adams Street, Suite 107  
Leominster, MA 01453

Ayer Shirley Regional High School  
141 Washington Street  
Ayer, MA 01432

Winchendon  
3 Memorial Drive  
Winchendon, MA 01475

## Philosophy

Our philosophy is that your child will experience a year full of success in the following ways:

Through specialized instruction, all children will experience growth across the following areas:

- Self-advocacy skills necessary to communicate effectively and at their highest level of complexity
- Self-reliance skills necessary to be as independent as possible.
- Academic skills, including literacy and mathematics that challenge in an attainable manner.
- Endurance and attitude necessary to participate in meaningful, productive work.

## Mission Statement

It is the mission of Key Programs, to partner with parents, professionals from sending school districts, and members of the community, to develop confident, capable, and self-motivated learners who are ready to return to a less restrictive school setting. The Key Program orients its programming and instruction around the three focuses of safety, respect, and effective learning.

The Key Programs promotes, supports, and celebrates the ideals of learning and critical thinking as lifelong pursuits and challenges students to acquire the skills necessary to meet the changing technical, social, and economic demands of our world. Further, it is the mission of the Key Programs to develop individuals who will respect the diversity of race, color, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or mental challenges.



# Student Population

The KEY Program continue to provide specialized services to students with special needs, in a public day school setting. Students present with profound deficits that impact their ability to function independently and make effective progress in the general education setting. All referrals made to these classrooms come through the child-study process where it was determined that the student required a more intensive educational setting, to make effective progress.

Students present with a variety of academic, social, and behavioral challenges. As some students are academically competitive, a large majority of students present with significant delays in cognition, self-regulation skills, motor skill deficits, as well as expressive and receptive language delays. In addition, some students present with significant medical needs that require direct nursing support throughout the school day. Students require a high level of adult supervision and assistance to keep them safe and implement all their educational goals and objectives.

Standard diagnosis Include:

- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Developmental Delay
- Down Syndrome
- Intellectual Disability
- Rare Genetic Disorders (Charge Syndrome, Wolf Hirschhorn Syndrome, Fragile X etc.)
- Multiple Disabilities (Autism/ADHD/Sensory Processing, Autism/Spina, Bifida/Intellectual, Autism/ODD)



## Program Staffing

Each classroom is staffed with a certified teacher and an appropriate number of paraprofessionals to allow for a low ratio of students to adults (2:1). The staff that support the KEY programs are professionally licensed, highly qualified, CPI certified and endlessly committed to our students and their families. Additionally, the KEY program has dedicated job coaches who assist the students in gaining vocational skills needed for life after graduation.

### DESE licensed staff

- 2 Administrator
- 14 Teachers

### Professionally licensed staff

- 5 Therapists, 3 SLPs, 2 OTs, 2 PTs
- 1 Therapy Assistant, 2 COTAs, 1 PTA
- 1 Family Support Coordinator
- 5 (1 RN & 4 LPN); plus 7 agency nurses
- 1 Rehabilitation Counselor
- 1 BCBA

### Highly Qualified Support Staff

- 32 Paraprofessionals
- 2 Job Coaches
- 1 Program Secretary

## Referrals

Referrals to the school are made by Directors of Special Education, Educational Team Leaders (ETL) or Out-of-District Coordinators from the student's home school district's Special Education Department. Upon receipt of the referral package (including all testing and IEP), a KEY Program Administrator will contact the district. If the student appears to be appropriate for the school, an appointment will be made to observe the student in his/her current educational setting, as well as an appointment for the student's parent/guardian to visit the KEY Program and participate in an intake interview. The referring school personnel, the KEY Program staff, and the student's current Team members, together with the parents/guardians, make the final placement decision

regarding enrollment. All students must have a current IEP and provide immunization records before starting at the KEY Program.

## Placement Referrals for 2021-2022

Students enrolled:	10
Parents chose another program	3
Parents declined intake:	7
Programs were full (waiting list)	1

## Transitions from Placement 2021-2022

Back to district:	6
Transition to another Keystone Program	0
Transition to another Collaborative Program	0
Transition to a more restrictive environment	3
Graduated/Transition to adult services:	3
Moved Out-of-State	2

# Program Services

## Individualized academic and behavioral programming

The KEY Program is an intensive language based program that utilizes applied behavior analysis (ABA) in conjunction with an interprofessional collaborative practice. Each classroom utilizes various instructional techniques including, discrete trials, small groups, hands-on and multi-sensory learning experiences, behavioral modification, and positive behavioral supports suitable for children with special needs. Daily living skills are incorporated within the context of the daily routine to teach safety, self-awareness, and independence. All students receive instruction that is individualized, aligning with their Individualized Education Plans, in a low student to teacher ratio environment (2:1).

Students in the KEY Programs participate in the MCAS process with appropriate modifications and/or adaptations for each student, either in a computer-based format or via the MCAS-Alt Portfolio. Possible modifications to MCAS computer-based testing include shorter periods with frequent breaks, small group administration, test administrator reading directions, and tracking for test items and scribing. Students who are unable to participate in a traditional pencil-to-paper test are expected to complete an MCAS Alt Portfolio Assessment.

## Related Services

Related services refers to developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that are required for a student with a disability to succeed in education; services include speech-language pathology and audiology services, physical and occupational therapy, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes.

The KEY Program currently utilizes an integrated therapy model to deliver therapeutic services to students. Integrated therapy incorporates the same therapy approach as “push-in” but adds additional structure to the relationships with teachers and overall process. In this service delivery model, supports are provided in the classroom, where the student is receiving instruction. Therapy is provided in a less restrictive setting and does not remove the student from the classroom or instruction. It also helps students to generalize their skills beyond the pull-out therapy setting and provides generalized benefits for all students and their teaching staff.

Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling as well as training.

Keystone related services providers are fully licensed to practice in the state of Massachusetts and are integral members of the educational teams. Related services are provided per each student’s IEP.

## Behavior management and social emotional learning

Each classroom teaching team meets weekly to discuss student progress toward educational targets as well as positive behavioral changes. Classroom data is analyzed and reviewed to determine if any adjustments need to be made to a student’s academic instruction or behavioral protocol.

Behavior management within the KEY programs is tailored to the individual child, with positive expectations put in place along with reinforcement to shape future behavior. A variety of reinforcement strategies are employed, including token economies, self-monitoring systems, and various contingencies.

Individual behavior support plans are developed and utilized for each student, and data is reviewed routinely by the program staff and the in-program board certified behavior analyst (BCBA).

## Community based instruction:

The KEY programs offer vocational training activities that support the development of a positive work attitude, job skills and work endurance. These activities include a mail run service between program sites, as well as community-based opportunities at locations including Tiny's Restaurant, Nashoba Park Assisted Living, Cell Treats at Phoenix Park, the Perkins School Laundry, Ayer Police Station, Pit Stop Barber Shop, and Spanish American Club.

Additionally, students access the local community to develop greater safety skills, community awareness, social exposure and career awareness.



# COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM SERVICES

## Services and Supports

To fulfill our mission of meeting the ongoing needs of our member districts the collaborative provided several services to districts that complement and strengthen district programs and supports. The collaborative has assisted districts by providing cost effective, long term and short term related services, offered extended year services, coordinated a virtual learning effort through the Edgenuity platform, provided home supports through the utilization of a telepresence learning robots (BEAM robots), helped to fiscally manage the Footsteps to Brilliance early literacy innovation zone, providing savings through a cooperative purchasing agreement for INTERFACE mental health referral services, providing cooperative purchase and management of Tobi Board maker and providing ongoing, high quality, professional development.

### Staff Training and Consultation

The collaborative staff continue to be recognized and utilized for their expertise within a variety of different disciplines by area school districts. During the 2021-2022 school year, the staff have formally provided support to our members in the areas of, consultation and evaluations to district staff on verbal de-escalation and physical management techniques, working with paraprofessionals and utilizing the ACES Curriculum tool for goal development task analysis and data collection, supplied a certifiable curriculum to allow staff the opportunity to become Registered Behavioral Technicians, support and consult to district experts in the areas of AAC needs, educational based adaptive equipment, as well as family based supports and trainings. The collaborative has also supplied their member districts with clinical and academic consultation by Board Certified Behavior Analysis and school Psychologist on individual student needs and larger program reviews.

### Extended Year Services

Many of the students that the collaborative serves require extended year services. In order to maximize efficiencies and provide for a greater range of activities the collaborative brings students from our KEY programs and students from our districts together in the Ayer/Shirley Schools for a five-week summer program. Students in our Academy Program and our KEA Programs attended summer programs in our Fitchburg and Townsend buildings, respectively. The programs run from Monday through Thursday and provide ongoing academic instruction, related services, and fun, yet functional, activities.

The collaborative's Extended Year Services are provided to any student from our districts who require the services of our programs and meet the criterion for acceptance, regardless of whether they attend the collaborative program during the school year or not. Rates for the Extended Year Program are based on the day rates, prorated to a shorter day and are more than competitive with private schools and providers.

## Related Services

The collaborative continues to provide related services to member districts in areas including, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, vision and orientation and mobility, BCBA, and psychological/ educational evaluations services. The collaborative related service staff, working in local districts, are able to supplement district related service providers, cover for short-term needs and, in some cases, provide all required therapy services for a specific related service required by the district. Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year collaborative related service providers worked in districts including Ayer-Shirley, Leominster, Gardner, Fitchburg, Narragansett, Clinton and Winchendon.

## Virtual Education

The collaborative continues to coordinate the Edgenuity Virtual Learning platform for districts participating in the regional virtual learning effort. The collaborative takes care of the billing with Edgenuity based on district usage and facilitates meetings and trainings with the designated district administrators. During the 2021-2022 school year 251 students took advantage of Edgenuity courses.

By participating in the collaborative sponsored cooperative purchasing agreement with Edgenuity participating districts were able to offer courses they might not have the economy of scale to offer individually and were able to retain students who might look at leaving the district because of unique academic requirements such as athletes participating at a level requiring them to be absent for parts of the normal school calendar. In addition, districts have been able to give staff experience teaching in a virtual environment and are acquiring the skills needed to manage larger numbers of students participating in virtual education.



## Edgenuity: Number of Students in attendance per semester

Edgenuity 2021-2022		
Ashburnham/Westminster	8 semester courses	\$2,000.00
	6 full-year courses	\$3,000.00
Ayer/Shirley	145 semester courses	\$36,250.00
Clinton	1 quarter course	\$75.00
	45 semester courses	\$11,150.00
Gardner	35 semester courses	\$8,750.00
West Boylston	18 semester courses	\$4,500.00
	2 full-year courses	\$1,000.00
		\$66,725.00

## Footsteps to Brilliance/North Central Early Literacy Innovation Zone

Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year the collaborative, continued our work with a number of member and non-member districts located along the Rt. 2 corridor and with the United Way/Community Foundation of North Central MA to support an Early Literacy Innovation Zone using the Footsteps to Brilliance (F2B) early literacy application. The collaborative continued to act as the fiscal agent on behalf of participating districts and enabled those districts to access grant funding from the United Way/Community Foundation. This funding from the United Way/Community Foundation paid for half of the cost for a five-year contract to provide the F2B application to the districts and their respective communities. Districts that participated in the funding through the collaborative included Clinton, Gardner, Narragansett, Winchendon, Lunenburg and Leominster. The collaborative was pleased to act on behalf of these districts to reach children and families in pre-k through grade 3 living in those communities and continues to look forward on analyzing the data collected to guide our members on the effectiveness of these programs.

The Early Literacy Innovation Zone is an innovative approach to increasing early literacy skills on a regional basis and could serve as a model for other regions across the country. This five-year project involved a commitment from districts and the United Way/Community Foundation of North Central to utilize an easy to access, multilingual, and effective technology application to improve reading skills in young children. By partnering with the United Way/Community Foundation the collaborative was able to save participating districts almost \$2,500,000 on the cost of F2B licenses over the course of the five-year United Way grant.



# PROGRESS TOWARD MEETING THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE AGREEMENT

Improving the academic achievement of all students in the least restrictive environment:

The collaborative continues to provide programs that offer rigorous curriculum and instructional practices that are tailored to meet the unique needs of each student and to comply with all elements of a student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). The collaborative services are provided by appropriately licensed and trained staff in the least restrictive environment as determined by the student's IEP team. The collaborative's KEY programs are located in public school settings and all students are provided opportunities for interaction with students in the least restrictive environment, general education settings as appropriate for the student's needs. Students in the KEA programs are provided educational and counseling services to provide them with the skills and knowledge required to return to less restrictive settings whenever possible. Keystone students participate in MCAS or MCAS Alternative Assessments with accommodations as determined by their educational teams. The collaborative continues to develop behavioral, transition and integration strategies to ensure that Keystone students more successfully benefit from educational services in less restrictive settings. The collaborative continues to support the North Central MA Early Literacy Innovation Zone which makes early literacy applications, through the Footsteps to Brilliance program, available to all children and families in the participating districts. The Keystone 2020 budget continues to include funds for a Transition Specialist to assist students to transition into least restrictive environments and an Integration Specialist to assist students in the KEY Program to take advantage of opportunities for inclusion with peers in the public-school buildings. Both positions continue to be developed to ensure the success for our students as well as the opportunity for our member districts being successful in receiving such students.

To develop and offer a variety of quality professional development opportunities to general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, school administrators and related service providers that are designed to enhance instructional practices:

Each year the collaborative Professional Development is offered based on the needs of our member districts and the collaborative's staff, as identified by the Advisory Board (Special Education Administrators), our staff and by our Board of Directors (Superintendents). In the past year, the collaborative offered two legal trainings provided by an experienced and respected school attorney, a training on effective strategies for dealing with anxiety in the educational setting, training on the ACES curriculum package and numerous restraint training to the collaborative's staff by one of four CPI certified instructors. The collaborative continues to remain responsive and proactive in addressing the specialized training needs of our member districts. The collaborative is a member of the Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives (MOEC) and continually provides information to member districts on professional development offered by a range of other collaboratives in the region that are often jointly planned by MOEC regional committees.

The collaborative continues to partner with the Federation for Special Needs Recruitment and Training Support Center (RTSC), LEA Special Education Surrogate Parent Recruitment Training Project which allowed Keystone staff and staff from our member districts to attend RTSC trainings at a discounted rate.

To provide other educationally related programs, supports and services to our member districts and surrounding communities that are of high quality and cost effective, as directed by the Keystone Board of Directors:

The collaborative continues to provide educationally related programs, supports and services by offering both public day programs, The KEA Programs both serving students with social emotional and learning disabilities, and substantially separate programs in public schools, the KEY Program for students who are on the autism spectrum or for students who have significant intellectual or developmental disabilities. The collaborative continues to offer extended year services for students. The collaborative provides extended evaluation services at all of the programs.

The collaborative has begun to explore how to best support our districts as they respond to the complex needs of students with significant mental health needs. The Board approved two new positions for the 2021-2022 school year, a Transition Specialist who

will work with districts to help successfully transition students to and from the most appropriate placements and an Integration Specialist who will assist the collaborative classroom teachers in the KEY Program and district staff to integrate students with significant developmental and behavioral issues into general education classrooms.

The collaborative remains flexible and responsive in meeting the needs of our districts by providing high quality professional development offerings that are local, are cost effective and are presented by knowledgeable and respected experts. We have been able to meet the needs for both short- and long-term related service providers of our districts and provide licensed, skilled and experienced physical therapists, teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility therapists. The collaborative continues to offer access to “telepresence learning devices” (robots) to districts for short term use and/or purchase for students who are unable to attend school but want to maintain a “presence” in their home school. VGOs telepresence learning devices (robots) have allowed students who were unable to attend school due to illness to participate in classroom activities by live telepresence. The current health pandemic has opened a new extensive technological opportunity to our districts which unfortunately has made these devices somewhat obsolete but an area that the collaborative will explore further to support the members and their students.



# PROGRESS TOWARD STRATEGIC PLAN

“The Strategic Plan will position the collaborative in such a way that we can create new opportunities for growth, remain financially stable and strong and continue to be responsive to our students, their families and our districts.”

This Collaborative Strategic Plan is a blueprint for ensuring that the collaborative continues and expands its role as a dynamic and flexible organization in responding to member district needs. Planning activities took place between April-October 2016. The primary objective of the Executive Board and administrative team throughout the planning process was to ensure that stakeholders and member public school districts had ample opportunity to provide input into the plan design as well as the final product. Focus group sessions with the Executive Board, Advisory Board, Keystone staff, administrators and Steering Committee allowed for individual, small group and large group participation. The focus groups provided both qualitative and quantitative data which developed into 5 Strategic Target Goal Areas approved by the Executive Board.

## 1. Program Development and Strengthening

- a. Strengthen S/E and mental health supports/programs
- b. Create a continuum of supports for medically fragile students

## 2. Facilities

- a. New location for ED/BD programs
- b. Review 3-year space options for Central Office and Public Day Programs
- c. Explore purchasing or leasing facilities, Capital Planning

## 3. Marketing and Branding

- a. Further development of the Keystone Brand
- b. Development of strategic marketing plan
- c. Update the Keystone website

## 4. Staff Development

- a. Seek and retain high quality staff
- b. Provide high quality, research-based professional development

## 5. Inter-district Professional Development

- a. High quality, research-based PD
- b. Create collaborative PD Coordinator position
- c. Create on-going inter-district PD Advisory Committee

## Goal 1:

In February of 2017, the collaborative formed a Mental Health study committee consisting of district staff, a consulting psychiatrist, a school psychologist, a representative from the Department of Mental Health and the collaborative staff involved in our extended evaluations and alternative programs. Over the course of the 2018-2019 school year the MH study groups recommendations were presented to the Board and in the Spring of 2019 the Board approved the addition of a Transition Specialist and an Integration Specialist positions to be added to the FY 2020 budget. Job descriptions for both positions were developed based on recommendations from the group.

The MH study group identified the INTERFACE Referral Service of William James College as an organization capable of providing supports to families in our districts and Keystone entered into an agreement with INTERFACE and five districts, Leominster, Lunenburg, North Middlesex, Ayer/Shirley, Fitchburg and Winchendon to provide referral supports to those districts and the communities they serve. The collaborative was able to save each participating district over by offering to provide regional support for INTERFACE outreach in the communities.

Quarterly analysis was conducted on the 2-year project and the investment directly correlated with a significant percentage of investment going to the students of the community that were serviced by our members in addition to other community members. As the pandemic and the increasing need for mental health support has exhausted many resources that districts have utilized such as Interface, it has opened the door for new opportunities to further strengthen the current system through other vendors. The collaborative will continue to work with member districts on expanding various different vendors to support their needs.

The collaborative's goal in creating a continuum of services for our medically fragile population has made significant headways in the purchase of a building in Fitchburg, MA, which has availed the opportunity to design classrooms and allocate resources to support this specific population of students. The collaborative has also worked in being able to solicit some state-of-the-art technology in the form of a robotic gait trainer to assist some of the medically fragile students that have limitations in ambulating and or learning the motor process of ambulation due to their disabilities.





<https://www.telegram.com/story/news/local/the-item/2022/10/13/keystone-educational-collaborative-robot-teaches-students-how-walk/8237052001/>

## Goal 2:

During the **2019-2020** school year the collaborative conducted an analysis on the growing demand for students entering into the high school age grades and the demand to differentiate the growing population of students with cognitive impairments and their needs for academic and vocational exposure. The data indicated that the growing number of internal students within our Key Program: “Learning for Life Program,” which supported students predominantly in the area of entry-mid academic and life skills did not represent the increasing referrals of mild to moderate cognitively impaired students that still required a robust academic program, as well as marketable vocational exposure. The Board of Directors approved the conversion of the lower half of the 98 Adams Street program to be designed as the “PREP” Program to support those student’s needs. Formal requests and licensure had been submitted and approved by the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education on July 20, 2020.

During the 2021-2022 school year, the collaborative was able to procure its first property within one of our member districts. The centralized location in Fitchburg MA, is a single level 24k sq ft. structure that was a great opportunity for the KEY Program to expand and grow. The opportunity allowed the collaborative opportunity to consolidate financial and human capital resources by limiting the previous 6 sites down to 3 sites with over 75% of the student census located at the new site. The program can expand overall students it supports, supplies us the opportunity to support some of most significantly impacted students with more long term educational and therapeutic care.



## *If you build it, they will come...*

The collaborative's desire with the Board's support to strategically plan for the collaborative long-term future continues to require current analysis of procuring an additional educational site. Currently, we are conducting a cost-benefit analysis of procuring a permanent site for 1-2 of our programs within the local community. Leasing options within our members vs. remodeling or long-term commercial lease is currently underway within the collaborative. The current health pandemic has resulted in the accessibility in commercial and specialty properties which will avail the collaborative and members the opportunity to have options that they can call their own. Based upon the graphical display below our primary budget lease expenditures are within our member sites, but two components of our programs are within one single separate site. If the collaborative were to combine two of our comparable programs under one roof (Keystone Programs) that would take into consideration 78% of the lease revenue that could go towards a permanent location, which in turn will supply the collaborative and all of its members a cost-effective quality program that has the opportunity to support more students and families. The collaborative will work towards strategically planning these options within the upcoming fiscal year.

### Goal 3:

In December of 2019, with the departure of the former Executive Director, Dr. Richard Murphy, supplied the new Executive Director, John Demanche the opportunity to analyze all the data and look at the program and its features. Based upon all the data collected and notes reviewed, the previous rebranding team was brought back together for the new proposal as ***"Keystone Educational Collaborative."*** In March 2020, the Executive Board approved the rebranding to the newly identified name. Formal request and modification of the Amended Agreement was submitted and approved by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in July 2020. Keystone Educational Collaborative's approved mission and name has redefined the program and aligns the direction of the organization for the future. This change has resulted in the collaborative taking the opportunity to embrace change and to redefine its programs names, differentiate some of the programs to be reflective of what we do versus labeled as a disability that we serve, as well as the opportunity to redefine and shape our websites so that it was not only user friendly from an organizational perspective, but was user friendly for our members and the families that we serve.



All formal applications were submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and were approved as of July 2020. The new site was launched on August 1 which reflected the change for the future as *Keystone Educational Collaborative*.

#### Mission

*"to unite our communities together and to strengthen each individual child's growth for the future by locking-in the foundation of their potential with the educational tools of today"*

#### Goals 4 & 5:

Continued support across the 2021-2022 school year, with all the changes within the infrastructure of the organization, analysis was conducted on the staff development and the district professional development opportunities, while still staying within the philosophy of "quality and cost effective". The findings of the analysis indicated that for the organization to accomplish these goals that a robust internal infrastructure would need to be created to support the program and the members more consistently and along a unified continuum of content. During the year, the collaborative brought together a team of experts that have supplied and supported our members on district and program base scales with vision to expand and support further district needs within the upcoming years. The collaborative has brought on the following:

BCBA: The clinical knowledge of these members, who have been systematically hired and identified at a variety of levels (e.g., teachers, consultants, and paraprofessionals undergoing the BACB requirements, have opened up an opportunity to not only support our students internally within the program, but has been utilized by our members for program review and individual consultation. The team has created a *RBT approved course sequence* through the BACB which has trained up some of our paraprofessionals to acquire this licensure with a 90% exam pass rate. This course sequence content is available for our members to utilize with their staff and a secondary course is under development for teacher based non-licensed course. The creation of this program has maintained staff retention for staff that want to professionally grow and develop as well as supply quality staff support to our students and families.

DPT: The collaborative brought on board a doctoral level Physical Therapist to oversee internal and contracted services with an overarching drive to ensure best clinical practice in the field of physical therapy to support students in the educational environment. Current analysis indicated that the collaborative was identical to the norm in most educational environments in the field, which indicated that the therapy service providers varied based upon the various degree requirements of licensure over time. By bringing on board this level of a member, the collaborative is underway to supplying a consistent methodological treatment best on clinical practice to our members that

contract these services, while also supplying those members within the department the professional development of current treatments. The collaborative will continue to support research on best practice and will be supporting our members by having the contracted DPT become certified as a MOVE Curriculum instructor who will be able to supply our members and families with an empirically based curriculum to support students with physical disabilities to be supported within the least restrictive environment.

**School Psychologist:** The collaborative brought on board an internal school psychologist role to assist with students' referrals for Extended Evaluations and for re-evaluation purposes for students placed within the program. This resource has supplied further educational and social emotional support for our students and districts as means to supply what is best practice in educational research. The collaborative was very systematic in this hiring process and selection and was able to acquire someone that not only had expertise within their own discipline, but also abilities to head up the SEI curriculum that was acquired by the collaborative that was researched based and CASEL approved (Positive Actions). This collaborative member has also been able to supply a level of consistency and methodological framework for our counselors in supporting our students in collaboration with Dr. Wilkins, the collaboratives contracted a psychiatrist. This systematic foundation has been established as we continue to develop the Transition Program Coordinator role to best service the students when they are ready to be reunited with their sending districts/ communities.

The collaborative has been appreciative of the support of the member districts in the procuring of these highly specialized positions and in turn the collaborative has and will continue to expand member's exposure to quality professional development and support. In projection for the future, the collaborative is currently working with TUFTS University in designing a capstone program for their new doctoral program in Occupational Therapy. This newly designed program will supply a more robust curriculum and occupational therapy staff that will be aligned with current research based best practices that align with educational environments. The collaborative has also expanded its AAC and SLP capacity to evaluate students as demand increases with the increase in student with disabilities needs increase in this area. The collaborative also continues to work in collaboration with Fitchburg State University as an educational site for teachers obtaining their licensure in Severe Disabilities in hopes to retain quality educators within our member communities.

The health pandemic has brought to light many shortages that our member districts have within specialty discipline, and we will continue to supply our efforts to bring those services within those areas to our communities.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S SUMMARY

Keystone Collaborative has been a staple as an educational resource for over 40 years servicing our communities, our member districts and our students and families. As everything in life changes it is inevitable that we too as an organization must adapt and change. As an educational institution either we embrace change with the times, or we become obsolete. The latter is not an option. This collaborative has been established with the conscious decision to embrace the need for change and the need to evolve based upon the constantly changing needs of the students that we serve. In a relatively short period of time as the new Executive Director, even with the presence of a health pandemic upon us, this organization has continued steadfast on its mission despite everything going on around us. We will continue to take on the challenge, to continue to pass on the quality educational torch that has been established and will continue to redefine and shape the foundation for the future.

Keystone Educational Collaborative remains committed to improving the academic, social, emotional, and self-help skills of our students, by preparing them to live meaningful and productive lives within their own communities. We will continue to embrace the foundations that have been laid by our predecessors in the past and will continue to mold and restructure as we move towards supporting our students for the future.

John Demanche, M. Ed, BCBA, LABA

Executive Director

Keystone Educational Collaborative

[www.keystonecollaborative.org](http://www.keystonecollaborative.org)





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