

**CONCORD AREA SPECIAL
EDUCATION
(CASE) COLLABORATIVE**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021**

CASE collaborative 

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Letter from Executive Director

Dear Members:

This past year has been like no other; we experienced a global pandemic, a racial reckoning, and a monumental election. Through it all Concord Area Special Education (CASE) Collaborative was resilient and as a result was able to remain operational. The incredible CASE staff, whether in our classrooms, in our vans, or in our offices, demonstrated a commitment to providing high quality services to our students and families. Staff and student safety was the cornerstone of all decisions the administrative team made in relation to in-person, remote, or hybrid learning.

This Annual Report offers a review of CASE's accomplishments during the past year. We served students in our special education programs in a variety of modalities; remote, in-person, and hybrid. Like so many organizations we learned to "be flexible," "pivot," and "think out of the box." We worked to redefine our special education program offerings, identified appropriate classroom spaces, and reviewed our tuition structure.

We transported students to 42 locations in towns all over the commonwealth. Our Transportation Department was required to change services with very short notice based on the specific circumstances. At times, an entire district or school may have decided to go remote the next day. In other instances, the change impacted just one school, and a number of times only a single classroom switched from in-person to remote based on the COVID status of the students. These fits and starts were obviously challenging but the staff never wavered in their professionalism or commitment to maintaining student safety.

Our home school community outreach intensified and resulted in weekly newsletters to families that included information about the Collaborative and various resources for families to access. Additionally, regular virtual parent workshops were held all year and well attended by our community.

The CETT team played a prominent role during the past school year with the implementation of a one-to-one initiative for all our students, providing each student with an appropriate device to access remote learning. We made other important strides in technology, including a new website and on-line brochure.

COVID forced many changes, but we learned from them. In some instances we instituted the interim changes as permanent practices. Our flexibility and creativity were

Nurturing and Inspiring Every Child to Learn and Grow

born out of our commitment to our students. As we look back on our accomplishments, we are justifiably proud of the way we navigated the 2020-2021 school year in the midst of a pandemic.

Sincerely,

Sanchita Banerjee

Executive Director

Mission of CASE Collaborative

CASE Collaborative's mission is to maximize the full potential of students with disabilities in enriched and supportive academic, social, recreational, and vocational environments.

Purpose of CASE Collaborative

CASE Collaborative is an education collaborative established in 1974 to meet the regional needs of member school districts in the areas of special education programming and transportation. Comprised of eleven regional and municipal school districts serving the Greater Boston metropolitan area, CASE is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of the superintendents of member districts. The current CASE Collaborative Agreement was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) on November 20, 2015. As stated in the Collaborative Agreement, CASE's primary purpose is to "jointly conduct regional educational programs and services on behalf of member school committees."

Working collaboratively with CASE allows school districts to plan, develop, and implement programs for students with disabilities. CASE programs afford school districts the opportunity to provide a full continuum of special education services to meet the needs of a wide range of students. Additionally, CASE offers special education transportation services to member districts, and technology consultation. Further, parent engagement is an integral component of the Collaborative.

CASE Board of Directors

MEMBER DISTRICTS	SUPERINTENDENT
Acton – Boxborough	Peter Light
Bedford	Philip Conrad
Carlisle	James O’Shea
Concord	Laurie Hunter (Vice Chairperson)
Concord-Carlisle	Laurie Hunter (Vice Chairperson)
Harvard	Linda Dwight (Chairperson)
Lincoln	Rebecca McFall
Lincoln-Sudbury	Bella Wong
Littleton	Kelly Clenchy
Maynard	Brian Haas
Sudbury	Brad Crozier

Key Management and Program Staff

NAME	ROLE
Sanchita Banerjee	Executive Director
Marcia Berkowitz	Interim Assistant Director
Regina Erickson	Director of Human Resources
Abigail Desjardins, Michael Perrone	Directors of Finance and Operations (Interim)
Courtney Hudgins	Program Administrator
Martin Finnegan	Transportation Administrator
Ian Rhames	Treasurer

SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES

Special Education Programming

All CASE programs are staffed with licensed teachers, teaching assistants, Registered Behavior Technicians, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Physical Therapists, and other related service therapists, including reading specialists, teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility therapists, and assistive technology specialists. The specific mix of professionals and services is dictated by the individual student's IEP.

Programs are available as school year programs, supplemented by an Extended School Year program during the summer. Academic, behavioral, and diagnostic assessments are provided.

Be it in public schools or DESE approved public day setting, our programs offer inclusion opportunities and appropriate school activities that promote a full spectrum of meaningful experiences. Our programs allow students to benefit from the richness of a highly specialized and diverse team of faculty and staff.

Empower Program

[formerly Program for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Developmental Disabilities]

Empower is a specialized program that meets the needs of students with language processing and production challenges, problems with sensory regulation, and social communication. Students with a diagnosis of Developmental disabilities are served in this program. Instruction is provided in whole class and small group formats based on grade and age level. This program offers curriculum based on students' needs such as curriculum standards set by DESE, on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), and other evidence-based programs. The curriculum is a blend of academic subjects and intensive support from related service providers.

Empower utilizes a multi-sensory approach and provides lessons that integrate language, sensory, and social skills. A total communication approach is used to facilitate language development in the context of direct teaching and the natural environment. Staff address individual student needs with a focus on enhancing independence, self-reliance, responsibility, and social maturity. Assistive technology is integrated throughout the curriculum.

Learning for Life Program

[formerly Program for Students with Developmental Disabilities - Intensive Needs]

Learning for Life (LFL) is a specialized program that addresses the many different cognitive, physical, medical, communication, and social needs of students. Instruction is individualized to address each student's unique needs. As appropriate, physical, visual, and verbal prompts, technology, and assistive devices are incorporated into each student's program. The curriculum helps build independence and includes functional academics and daily living skills. Activities, materials, and instructional strategies are age and cognitively appropriate. LFL staff provide immediate feedback and provide numerous opportunities to maintain and generalize academic and life skills. Students in this program are provided extensive opportunities to demonstrate independence and self-advocacy skills, engage in social interactions, access community resources, and beginning at age 14, acquire and practice vocational skills in a multitude of community settings.

Therapeutic Intervention Program

[formerly Program for Students with Social Emotional Disabilities and Colebrook High School Public (CASE's Approved Public Day School)]

The Therapeutic Intervention Program (TIP) is a specialized program that meets the needs of students experiencing mental health issues, school adjustment issues, trauma history, behavioral and social challenges, and other issues interfering with accessing grade-level curriculum and making substantial progress.

TIP offers a supportive environment to students with average to above-average cognitive profiles. Programs are developed based on students' grade and skill levels utilizing engaging curriculum to meet the specific needs of the students, who are held to high academic standards. The rigorous curriculum outlines clear learning outcomes with matching assessments. Clinical support is provided in both individual and group modalities. All related services are available as necessary for all students; vocational and transition services are provided to students age 14 and older

Extended School Year Services

Extended School Year (ESY) and Intersession Programs are available for those students who require them. Due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the ESY program in 2020 was remote. A special thank you to our staff who, following a challenging school year, continued providing services to our students.

ADMISSION PROCESS FOR CASE PROGRAMS

CASE Collaborative works with partner school districts to accept students referred to our programs. Students typically have a current Individualized Education Program (IEP). CASE can provide an Extended Evaluation in programs. The admissions process is comprehensive in order to ensure that each child's program is designed to maximize potential.

Referral

We request that parents work with their school district to begin the referral process. This allows us to make the visit as productive as possible by guiding families to appropriate classrooms and services that are best for their child. It's helpful to have a complete referral packet in advance of a visit. However, there are some circumstances where the sending district may make a special request for a family to visit before all the paperwork has been shared with CASE Collaborative. To make a referral, please contact CASE at caseinfo@case.org or 978-318-1534.

Intake Assessment Review

The process usually is completed within 72 hours of receipt of a packet.

Tours

Parents and students will meet with CASE staff and have an opportunity to meet with staff and students in the program. Parents and students tour the school building and observe classrooms in action. The visit lasts approximately one hour and concludes with an opportunity to ask follow up questions.

Suitability

Once the assessment review and tour are complete, CASE Collaborative staff determine whether our program is a good fit and can address the unique learning, behavioral and social/emotional needs of the student. A determination is sent to the sending district.

Cost Effectiveness: CASE Collaborative Programs

Once again, CASE undertook a market survey to ensure tuition rates were in line with similar programs offered by other educational services providers. By maintaining competitive rates, we are able to attract students without sacrificing the quality of our programs.

Cost Effectiveness:

Developmental Preschool Programs

Alternative to CASE Developmental Preschool Program

Non-CASE programs - "Equalized" average total tuition - 170 days	\$94,067
CASE Collaborative (ASD Strand)	\$88,148
CASE Collaborative (DD-INT Strand)	\$92,791

Comparable programs include: NECC - Intensive, Crossroads, May Institute; Melmark, Nashoba Learning Group, Cotting School

Cost Effectiveness:

Developmental Disabilities Programs

Alternative to CASE Developmental Disabilities Programs

Non-CASE programs - "Equalized" average total tuition - 170 days	\$88,815
CASE Collaborative	\$62,000

Comparable programs include: Community Therapeutic; Protestant Guild, Cardinal Cushing

Cost Effectiveness:

Developmental Disabilities - INTENSIVE Programs

Alternative to CASE Developmental Disabilities - INTENSIVE Programs

Non-CASE programs - "Equalized" average total tuition - 170 days	\$95,939
CASE Collaborative	\$92,791

Comparable programs include: BC Campus; Crotched Mountain (NH); Franciscan's Hospital; Perkins Multi-Impaired; Perkins Severely Impaired

Cost Effectiveness: Autism Spectrum Disorders Programs

Alternative to CASE Autism Spectrum Disorder Programs

Non-CASE Programs - "Equalized" average total tuition - 170 days	\$94,144
CASE Collaborative	\$88,148

Comparable programs include: Crossroads; League; May Inst. (Randolph); McLean Hosp.; Melmark; Milestones; Nashoba Learning Group; NECC - Intensive

Cost Effectiveness: Social Emotional Programs (K - 8)

Alternative to CASE Social Emotional Programs

Non-CASE Programs - "Equalized" average total tuition - 170 days	\$77,241
CASE Collaborative	\$52,000

Comparable programs include: Walker School, Community Therapeutic; Dearborn; Italian Home; Judge Baker

Cost Effectiveness: Colebrook High School - Approved Public Day Social Emotional Program

Alternative to Colebrook High School (APD Social Emotional Program)

Non-CASE Programs - "Equalized" average total tuition - 170 days	\$68,898
CASE Collaborative	\$52,000

Comparable programs include: McLean Hospital, Arlington; McLean Hospital; Milestones; Walker, Beacon High; James Farr Academy; New England Academy; JRI, Victor School

CASE COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM ENROLLMENT (SY2020-21)

School District	Enrollment (10/1/2020)	Mid-Year Admissions	Mid-Year Terminations	Enrollment (6/30/2021)	% Change
Acton/Boxborough	16		-2	14	-12.50%
Bedford	2			2	0%
Carlisle	2			2	0%
Concord	8		-1	7	-12.5%
Concord/Carlisle	0			0	0
Harvard	7	4		11	57.14%
Lincoln & Linc/Hanscomb	14	4	-1	17	21.43%
Lincoln/Sudbury	4	1	-1	4	0
Littleton	5	1	-2	4	-20.00%
Maynard	3	1	-1	3	0
Sudbury	2	1		3	0
Non-Member Districts	42	10	-8	43	2.38%
TOTALS	105	22	-16	110	4.76%

CASE COLLABORATIVE STUDENTS BY GRADE LEVEL (SY2020-21)

School District	Pre-School	Elementary	Middle School	High School	Post High School
Acton/Boxborough	1	3	5	4	1
Bedford		1	1		
Carlisle			2		
Concord		2	5		
Concord/Carlisle					
Harvard		2	3	6	
Lincoln & Linc/Hanscom	5	6	6		
Lincoln/Sudbury				4	
Littleton	1	1		1	
Maynard				3	
Sudbury			2	1	
Non-Member Districts		5	10	29	
TOTALS	7	20	34	48	1

SERVICE TO MEMBER DISTRICTS

Transportation

In any given year, CASE Transportation typically provides special education transportation services, to public and private special education programs, for more than 400 students from our member districts, covering nearly two and one-half million miles a year. As with so many aspects of life, COVID-19 had a tremendous impact on CASE's Transportation Department and we transported approximately 320 students during this school year. We have long known of the strength of this Department and commitment of its staff, but this year was truly a case of going above and beyond. Thinking creatively, flexibility, and adaptability are just a few areas in which the Department shone. Changes from in-person learning, to remote, to hybrid models happened quickly and often with little notice. Many of our students have difficulty wearing masks, creating further challenges of limiting capacity on the vans. The willingness of the Transportation Department staff to do what needed to be done allowed us to maintain the employment of all of our drivers even though the number of students being transported varied from day to day.

The financial assessment is based upon transporting a student to and/or from school on a set schedule. Every effort is made to contain costs while providing safe transportation for students. The Transportation office consolidates runs within the constraints of a student's IEP. District requests that could impact costs include factors such as: the need for wheelchair/lift vans, requirements for time in transport to be less than required by regulation, additional wait time on pick up or drop off, multiple pick-up and drop off schedules to the same location, monitors, accommodating service animals, medical support personnel accompanying the student, and requests for additional vans to separate students, as well as other unique requirements. CASE Transportation works closely with districts and the school program the student attends to define and implement positive behavioral supports for students as needed and to provide maximum efficiency in consolidated routes, as appropriate. In many cases this is unavoidable as a necessary component of the student's IEP; however, at times, adjustments are considered and implemented.

Transportation Cost Effectiveness

CASE Transportation provides special education transportation services only to students living in CASE member communities; currently CASE provides such services to nine districts. In addition to its commitment to providing safe, efficient, and courteous transportation for students with disabilities, CASE Transportation maximizes efficiency and minimizes cost by effective routing which enhances vehicle capacity. One of the

largest cost factors for special education transportation is the specialized nature of the service. When a district sends only one or two students to a particular destination, the fee reflects the entire cost of the vehicle and labor. CASE Transportation reduces costs to its districts by combining students from various CASE communities on a single vehicle, even if the students are going to multiple destinations.

Transportation Enrollment 2020-2021 - Annual Summary

Students Transported	320
Programs Students Transported To	95
Number of Destinations (Towns)	42
Total Number of Routes	70
Routes with more than one student	65
Routes with students from more than one CASE district	62

SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES

Consultation, Education and Training for Technology (CETT)

Mission

The Mission of the CASE CETT Team is to support the use of Assistive Technology for students from the CASE Collaborative communities and local school districts. The CETT Team strives to provide guidance, support and consultation to educational teams in the selection and use of appropriate assistive technology that will help students access the curriculum and/or meet individual educational goals.

Evaluations/Assessments/Coaching

The team provides assistive technology evaluations on a timeline, assessments with trials and hourly coaching for individual students. A few of the many areas that the CETT Team's services focus on are alternative-augmentative communication (AAC), reading, written expression, and physical access to curriculum. Evaluations and assessments often include observations, meeting with the special education Team to discuss possible assistive technology interventions, training when necessary, field testing with a student and a written report summarizing recommendations. Coaching sessions are guided by the assistive technology needs of the student and the team. They often include observation of the student, a loan from our lending library if needed, training and brief notes of each meeting.

CASE Classroom Consultations

The CETT Team provides assistive technology services to all CASE classrooms. The CETT Team assists special educators and therapists in the selection of, and training for, various assistive technology equipment, and acts as a resource for sharing tools and tips. This support is individualized, based on the needs of each classroom. Examples have included: developing switch accessible digital books for preschoolers; staff training on Read and Write for Chrome, Clicker apps, and Word Prediction software; Talking Word Processors, access to digital text and Voice Recognition as Assistive Technology and working with staff to create video modeling projects for use in the classroom.

Assistance may take place in a single brainstorming session or ongoing monthly meetings to discuss assistive technology solutions. The CASE CETT Team is available to all CASE classrooms.

AAC Evaluations/Assessments/Coaching

The CETT Team provides evaluations on a timeline, assessments with trials, and hourly coaching to special educators and therapists to help determine the most appropriate alternative-augmentative communication (AAC) system for students. CETT loans low- and high-tech devices, from single message switches to dynamic display speech-generating devices (e.g., iPad with AAC apps). Support with AAC devices is provided through assessment of device effectiveness, programming, training on programming and implementation, assistance with renting devices for trial periods, and helping families obtain private funding for the purchase of devices.

Lending Library

The CETT Team has an assortment of both low- and high-tech Assistive Technology tools in their lending library. The library has a range of software and hardware, including AAC devices that are available on a short-term loan basis. The purpose of this lending library is to provide educators and students with the opportunity to try these products prior to purchasing them. The CETT Team is continuously reviewing new equipment on the market and making purchases, as appropriate, to ensure that current assistive technology tools are available for loan.

Assistive Technology Training

The CASE CETT Team provides workshops for staff and parents of students in CASE Collaborative classrooms who are interested in learning more about Assistive Technology. Staff workshops are scheduled yearly through the CASE Professional Development office and are open to educators in CASE community member districts and local school districts. Examples of recent workshops include "iPad Apps for Special Education", "Selecting the Right App for Your Child", "Intro to Video Modeling", "Chrome as Assistive Technology" and "Boardmaker and Beyond".

CASE CETT Team Professional Development

Members of the CASE CETT Team pursue continuing professional study in the area of assistive technology by attending national conferences, including Closing The Gap and Assistive Technology Industry Association. In addition, they participate in listservs such as QIAT (Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology), and blogs, such as SpeechTechie.com.

Contact Information:

Telephone: 978-540-2571

FAX : 978-952-4539

Russell Street School

57 Russell Street

Littleton, MA 01460

cettteam@casecollaborative.org

CASE Collaborative - CETT Consults (SY 2020 - 2021)

2019-20	AT Evaluations and Consults	AAC Evaluations and Consults
Member Towns	15	13
Non-Member Towns		4
TOTAL	15	17

SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES

Parent Engagement

Recognizing the importance of communication with parents and the positive impact it has on parent engagement, CASE has long employed staff member/s dedicated to family communication. Although always an important matter, keeping parents informed during the pandemic, and the resultant changes to so many areas of life in general and school in particular, took on added importance this year. To help keep our families informed during the uncertainty and rapidly changing environment during the pandemic, we increased the frequency of our *Update and Resource Newsletter* from monthly to weekly. The weekly Newsletter was so well received it was continued through July after the school year had ended and ESY programming started.

The weekly *Update and Resource Newsletter* contained information about Collaborative happenings, monthly parent workshops on a range of topics (see below) offered virtually to make them accessible, COVID-19 information, and other news of interest. The CASE Newsletter helped keep parents aware of community organizations that serve children with disabilities. Many of these organizations had to pivot due to the pandemic and our Newsletter helped keep the community informed of resources including virtual enrichment opportunities, educational activities, recreation offerings, and support. With changes happening literally daily, the consistent and reliable nature of the Newsletter was appreciated by our families. Some of the virtual offerings announced in the Newsletter provided forums for widening students' circle of friends, creating a supportive community for both students and families, and exposing people to resources to help navigate the journey of raising children with disabilities and helping to give older students, and adult children with disabilities, a better understanding of how to take next steps to increased independence.

Parent Workshops included:

- MassHealth and PCA Workshop
- DDS Overview
- Guardianship
- Planning for a Happy and Healthy Winter Season
- Establishing a Special Needs Trust
- Zoom Tips

SERVICE TO COMMUNITIES

Music to Our Ears

CASE is fortunate that, once again this year, we have received a grant from Kate's Voice, a non-profit organization providing music therapy services to students with special needs. CASE students enjoy the opportunity to participate in this program while enhancing their social, self-expression, communication, and gross and fine motor skills.

Fiscal Year 2021 Audit Report

The CASE Board of Directors commissioned an independent auditors' report for the year ending June 30, 2021 from Melanson Heath Accountants & Auditors. The findings are presented to the Board of Directors at their December 3, 2021 meeting. The full report is included as part of this report via electronic link.