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| ESE logo | |
|  | **The Average Cost Per Pupil at Recovery High Schools** |
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| This report is submitted pursuant to Chapter 132 of the Acts of 2019, An Act Relative to Educational Opportunity for Students, examining the per pupil costs associated with sending students to Recovery High Schools.  March 2020 |
| Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906  Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370  www.doe.mass.edu |
| ESE logo  This document was prepared by the  Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  Jeffrey C. Riley  Commissioner    **Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Members**  Ms. Katherine Craven, Chair, Brookline  Mr. James Morton, Vice Chair, Springfield  Ms. Amanda Fernández, Belmont  Mr. Matthew Hills, Newton  Mr. Michael Moriarty, Holyoke  Mr. James Peyser, Secretary of Education, Milton  Mr. Paymon Rouhanifard, Brookline  Ms. Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington  Mr. Mathew Tibbitts, Student Advisory Council, Ludlow  Dr. Martin West, Newton  Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner  Secretary to the Board  The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, an affirmative action employer, is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public.  We do not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.  Inquiries regarding the Department’s compliance with Title IX and other civil rights laws may be directed to the  Human Resources Director, 75 Pleasant St., Malden, MA 02148-4906. Phone: 781-338-6105.  © 2020 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  Permission is hereby granted to copy any or all parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes. Please credit the “Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.”  This document printed on recycled paper  Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA 02148-4906  Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370  www.doe.mass.edu  State Seal of Massachusetts | | |

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

March 1, 2020

Dear Members of the General Court:

I am pleased to submit this Report to the Legislature, *The Average Cost per Pupil at Recovery High Schools,* pursuant to An Act Relative to Educational Opportunity for Students, [Chapter 132 of Acts 2019](about:blank), Section 28, that reads in part:

*“…the department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation with the principals of the 5 recovery high schools in the commonwealth, shall examine the costs associated with sending students to a recovery high school, as defined in subsection (a) of section 91 of chapter 71 of the General Laws, and shall determine the average cost per pupil at recovery high schools in the commonwealth…”*

The data compiled in this report was submitted by the five recovery high schools in the Commonwealth to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department).

If you have any questions about this report, please feel free to contact Kathleen Cross, in the Office of Resource Allocation, Strategy and Planning via [Kathleen.Cross@mass.gov](about:blank) or

781-338-3231 or Samantha Graham, in the Office of Student and Family Support via [Samantha.Graham@mass.gov](about:blank) or 781-338-6305.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey C. Riley

Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

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# Introduction

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) respectfully submits this Report to the Legislature: The Average Cost per Pupil at Recovery High Schools, pursuant to An Act Relative to Educational Opportunities for Students, [Chapter 132 Section 28](about:blank) of Acts 2019:

*“Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department of elementary and secondary education, in consultation with the principals of the 5 recovery high schools in the commonwealth, shall examine the costs associated with sending students to a recovery high school, as defined in subsection (a) of section 91 of chapter 71 of the General Laws, and shall determine the average cost per pupil at recovery high schools in the commonwealth. The department shall submit its findings to the chairs of the house and senate committees on ways and means, the chairs of the joint committee on education and the chairs of the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery not later than March 1, 2020.”*

Recovery High School (RHS) programs, as set forth in [G.L. c. 71, § 91](about:blank), provide a structured plan of recovery for students diagnosed with substance use disorder or dependency, and offer the students a comprehensive four-year high school education. RHS programs serve a complex student population, and while each RHS program varies to meet the needs of their given population, they all play an important role for these students by offering them another educational option in which they can feel supported in their recovery while still working towards a high school degree.

The five RHS programs throughout the Commonwealth are:

* Independence Academy in Brockton operated in partnership with North River Collaborative.
* Liberty Preparatory Academy in Springfield operated in partnership with Springfield Public Schools.
* North Shore Recovery High School in Beverly operated in partnership with Northshore Education Consortium.
* Rockdale Recovery High School in Worcester operated in partnership with Central Mass. SPED Collaborative.
* William J. Ostiguy High School in Boston operated in partnership with Boston Public Schools.

# The Average Cost Per Pupil at Recovery High Schools

Calculating an average per-pupil cost[[1]](#footnote-1) is complicated by the variation in enrollment days among students in RHS (ranging from 1 to 364 days) and the variation in the days in school years among the five RHS (ranging from 180 to 365 days). In an attempt to standardize data to account for this variation, the average per-pupil cost is presented in four ways: by Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students [$50,794 for fiscal year 2018-2019 (FY2019)]; by FTE and a 180-day school year ($42,979 for FY2019); by simultaneous high enrollment ($43,005 for FY2019); and by all enrollment, including all students attending at least one day ($25,206 for FY2019). The benefits and potential weaknesses of each method, as well as per-pupil costs for FY2017 and FY2018, are discussed below.

This report provides information based on available data. It includes expenditures by the RHS programs (whether or not the source of the funds was the Department or elsewhere such as grants, donations or chargebacks to districts), on costs such as salaries and stipends, fringe benefits and fixed charges, contractual services, supplies and materials, travel, operations, maintenance, pupil services, and other expenditures. It does not include associated costs incurred by the families or others, such as transportation not provided by schools (a big challenge for many families and schools).

*Cost per pupil*. Because of the variations in school year and enrollment (both in-school and among schools), the per-pupil cost data is presented in four ways (see Figure 1):

*Figure 1. Average per-pupil costs for RHS for FY2017 through FY2019. Note that cost per student based on high enrollment includes only four of the five high schools because of data gaps.*

* *Cost per FTE student* (averaged $50,794 for FY2019) – This average takes the total number of enrollment days for all students for a school year and divides by the number of days in the school year, resulting in the number of FTE students. Because days of enrollment vary by student, this method attempts to standardize the per-pupil cost based on a simulated number of students enrolled for the entire school year. This method may not capture the costs associate with volatility (onboarding/orienting students), nor that an RHS likely needs to plan (and spend) for the highest projected enrollment at any point in a school year. Note that costs for one RHS program for FY2017 and FY2018 may be slightly elevated because its costs included summer programming but its enrollment numbers for those months was not available.

* *Cost per FTE student/180 days* (averaged $42,979 for FY2019) – This average is based on the cost per FTE student per school day multiplied by 180 days (typical school year). In addition to the benefit of using FTE students described above, because the schools reported different school years (one is year-round), this calculation attempts consistency in cost per pupil using a standard school year. As described for FTE calculation, this method may mask costs associated with enrollment volatility.

* *Cost per student using high enrollment* (averaged $43,005 for FY2019) – This average takes all expenditures for each school for each year divided by the highest number of students simultaneously enrolled for each school year. Assumedly schools incur costs to ensure that their projected highest number of students can receive necessary educational and intervention services, even if the school does not maintain that enrollment number for the full year, as most costs (e.g., salaries) are not fungible. *Note that this cost is not standardized for variation in the number of days in school years across the five RHS.*

* *Cost per student using all enrollment* (averaged $25,206 for FY2019) – This average divide all annual costs by the total number of students who were enrolled for at least one day for each school and each school year. This cost is the least standardized as enrollment varies substantially from 1 to 365 days per student among the five schools with relatively low numbers of students enrolling for the entire school year. This average assumes that all students, regardless of length of enrollment, are creating the same cost, which seems unlikely.

# Enrollment at Recovery High School Programs

Enrollment numbers[[2]](#footnote-2) vary among the five RHS programs ranging from a low of 10 to a high of 37. This variation in the enrollment data for RHS raised difficulties in arriving at a representative per-pupil cost averaged across the five programs. School years varied from 180-365 days in each of the programs and enrollment is unique in a RHS as students can attend more than one RHS in a given year and can also transition back to their home district.

Student enrollment varied from 1 to 364 days with the average enrollment among the five schools over a three-year period being slightly more than half of the school year (58.9 percent). See Figure 2, on page four, for a representation of enrollment over a school year for one RHS in FY2019.

*Figure 2. Variation in the period of enrollment for each student at one RHS. Each red bar represents enrollment period for one student.*

Recovery High School programs serve a complex population and play an important role for students diagnosed with a substance use disorder. They support the individual needs of their students by developing and following an Individualized Recovery Plan while providing a comprehensive four-year high school education helping these students reach success in their academic and personal lives.

1. The term “cost” as used in this report is based on expenditure data (actual and in-kind, see next paragraph) and not on economic cost analysis that considers the opportunity costs of these programs. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Number of enrolled students from the March 2019 Student Information Management System (SIMS) for the five recovery high school programs across the state. When comparing enrollment data at each program with their two previous years, there is some variability but the trend in enrollment remains fairly consistent. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)