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Message from Executive Director

Dear Assabet Valley Collaborative Community Members,

As per M.G.L. c. 40, § 4E and CMR 603 CMR 50.00, AVC is required to publish an annual report that includes the following:

- Information on the programs and services provided by the collaborative.
- Discussion of the cost-effectiveness of all programs and services.
- Progress made toward achieving the objectives/purposes set forth in the collaborative agreement.

This annual report covers the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. Below are some of the highlights of the priorities addressed during that period:

- Continued efforts to advance educational equity within AVC and externally
- Hiring Interim Business Manager
- Completion of a comprehensive Technology Audit
- Design Teams met to identify needs and develop new job descriptions to address those needs: Director of Educational Technology, Director of Facilities, Director of Finance.
- Facilities rentals increased with new partners including MASS, DPH, and Boston University
- Increased enrollment and utilization of AVC's programs
- Redesigning all of AVC's services to operate remotely during the COVID-19 closures
  - Acquiring and deploying technology to students and staff
  - Developing systems to operate all services and systems virtually
    - Deliveries of office supplies, technology, school supplies directly to homes of community members
    - Virtual meeting platforms (Zoom and Google Meet)
    - Training of staff to utilize new tools and to deliver services virtually
    - Research and communications related to COVID-19 responses and safety
- Board of Directors voted to approve AVC's leadership team's proposal to adopt a shared leadership model

Sincerely,  
Cathy Cummins  
Executive Director

## **MISSION**

The Mission of the Assabet Valley Collaborative is to provide effective and efficient services to meet the current and evolving needs of member communities to promote student success and community integration. It is also the mission of the Assabet Valley Collaborative to jointly conduct programs and/or services in a cost-effective manner which shall complement and strengthen those provided by member school committees and to increase equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for children and young adults.

## **FOCUS**

The focus of AVC is the development and delivery of high quality programs and services to member districts which shall complement and strengthen those provided by member school committees. .

<b>Board of Directors</b>	<b>Member Districts</b>	<b>MEMBER SINCE</b>
Ernie Houle	Assabet Valley Regional Vocational	1976
Maryellen Brunelle	Auburn Public Schools	2018
Jeffrey Zanghi	Public Schools of Berlin and Boylston	1976
James Cummings, Chair	Grafton Public Schools	2015
Marco Rodrigues	Hudson Public Schools	1976
Michael Bergeron	Marlborough Public Schools	1976
Mary Jane Rickson	Maynard Public Schools	1976
Gregory Myers	Millbury Public Schools	2011
Brooke Clenchy	Nashoba Regional School District	1976
Gregory Martineau	Public Schools of Northborough and Southborough	1976
Joseph Sawyer	Shrewsbury Public Schools	1976
Amber Bock, Vice Chair	Westborough Public Schools	1976

## **HISTORY**

The Assabet Valley Collaborative (AVC) was established in 1976.

In Massachusetts, educational collaboratives are public regional multi-service agencies, authorized by state law (Chapter 40, Section 4E) to develop, manage and provide services or programs to public school districts.

According to AVC's founding document, its "Collaborative Agreement," the purpose of Assabet Valley Collaborative is to provide:

- Specialized education programs and services for students ages 3 to 22 and as they transition to adulthood.
- Special education transportation and other transportation services
- Professional development, training and resource sharing
- An array of consultative and direct services
- Cooperative purchasing/procurement services
- Cost-effective responses to needs articulated by member districts
- Services to adults with disabilities subject to authorizing statute, regulations state contracts/approvals and board approval
- Early childhood services to children with disabilities under the age of 3 subject to authorizing statute, regulations state contracts/approvals and board approval

### **The overall objectives in AVC's Collaborative Agreement include:**

- The creation and/or delivery of cost-effective responses to needs articulated by member districts
- The delivery of high-quality, specialized education programs and services for students ages 3 to 22 and as they transition to adulthood.
- The delivery of cost effective and efficient special education transportation services
- The development and delivery of high-quality and cost-effective consultative services
- The development and delivery of high-quality and cost-effective professional development, training and resource sharing
- The provision of effective and efficient cooperative purchasing/procurement services
- Subject to statutory and regulatory authorization, the development of continuous and evolving services that may include leveraging expertise and resources to expand the continuum of services to include young children with disabilities and/or adults with disabilities (22+)

## **BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP**

### **1. Receive member discounts**

All AVC programs and services are provided to members at membership rates. Nonmember districts may access AVC programs and services at a 12-15% surcharge.

### **2. Influence and guide decision making**

Member districts influence and guide decision-making regarding existing and new programming, improving the quality of services and pooling resources with neighboring districts. In the last decade, member district influence resulted in the opening of SOAR Assessment Center, Evolution, Family Success Partnership, and the expansion of OSA to include grades 5-8 and the addition of music therapy, equity-centered consulting, and a consulting child psychiatrist.

### **3. Obtain cooperative/volume purchasing advantages**

Members have access to Cooperative/Volume Purchasing through collective procurement activities. AVC procures goods and services on behalf of member communities, resulting in more competitive pricing for goods districts need to purchase. In FY19 AVC contracts included office supplies, copy paper, school supplies, and transportation services.

### **4. Gain access to grant-funded initiatives**

Members have access to grant-funded initiatives through collective, collaborative stakeholder groups. AVC seeks to identify areas of need and determine grant funding or other sources of revenue to support the launch of new initiatives.

### **5. Network and Collaborate with Colleagues**

Members have access to Job-Alikes and joint initiatives for district faculty. Through joint initiatives, member districts share expertise, pool resources to increase capacity, collaborate on new regulations and mandates, and launch innovations and projects to improve public education in our region.

## PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING PURPOSE

The following table highlight's AVC's progress in 2019-2020 in achieving the purposes articulated in AVC's Collaborative Agreement

Purpose:	Progress in FY20
To provide specialized education programs and services for students ages 3 to 22 and as they transition to adulthood.	AVC continued to provide specialized programs as noted throughout this annual report. Average daily enrollment in specialized education programs in 2020 was: 109. March to June 2020 these services were provided remotely.
To provide special education transportation and other transportation services	AVC transported 485 students in 2019-2020; this was disrupted in March 2020 due to the pandemic.
To provide professional development, training and resource sharing	AVC provided 189 contact hours of professional learning to 422 educators in 2019-2020 until March 2020 when courses and events were canceled. 7 organizations rented AVC's training center 24 days between July 2019 and March 2020. Rentals were canceled after March 12 due to the pandemic.
To provide an array of consultative and direct services	AVC's consulting team provided services to 15 districts/organizations. Family Success Partnership (FSP) delivered wraparound services to 6 districts supporting over 109 students' families.
To provide cooperative purchasing/procurement services	In FY20, AVC conducted joint purchasing for office supplies, copy paper, and school supplies. Bids were collected virtually due to the pandemic.
To provide cost-effective responses to needs articulated by member districts	During 2019-2020, AVC conducted an Equity Audit for a member district; a new service.
To provide services to adults with disabilities subject to authorizing statute, regulations state contracts/approvals and board approval	During 2019-2020, plans to explore adult programming were suspended due to the pandemic.
To provide early childhood services to children with disabilities under the age of 3 subject to authorizing statute, regulations state contracts/approvals and board approval	FSP continues to help families navigate resources related to child care, early intervention, parenting, diapers, nutrition, and other holistic family needs.

## **Orchard Street Academy (OSA) and SOAR Assessment Center**

Orchard Street Academy offers academic and clinical services to students in grades five through twelve. Programming includes:

- Small instructional groups
- Integration of academics, expressive therapy and transition skills
- Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS)
- Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) & Trauma-Informed Care (TIC)

Within OSA, SOAR Assessment Center is a short-term stabilization and diagnostic assessment program for middle and high school students (grades 5-12). Our team collaborates closely with parents and districts to identify appropriate academic and clinical supports for students with social/emotional difficulties. Program features include:

- Customized educational and clinical assessments
- Individualized academic and clinical services
- Comprehensive reports and recommendations

### **Value**

OSA's expressive therapy programs and high-interest electives add value to our comprehensive academic and therapeutic setting. Our educators, clinicians, school psychologists and child psychiatrist support the academic and clinical needs of a wide range of students.

### **2019-2020 Highlights**

- Continued growth of Middle School
- Digital drawing class
- Piano, Electric Drum, Electric Guitar, Songwriting and recording
- Socktober - community service project
- College visits
- Student art on exhibit at Worcester Art Museum and the Marlborough Public Library
- One-to-one technology provided to address remote learning required due to COVID-19 school closures
- School work and supplies delivered to students as needed

	FY20 Member Tuition	FY20 NonMember Tuition	Membership Savings
Middle School	\$62,280	\$68,508	\$6,228
High School	\$54,631	\$60,095	\$5,464

## REACH

REACH provides a multidisciplinary approach to meet the varied and complex academic, therapeutic and healthcare needs of students with multiple disabilities between the ages of 5-18. REACH infuses social communication throughout programming with a particular emphasis on assistive technology and augmentative communication. Classes include:

- Embedded speech/language, physical, occupational, vision and music therapies
- Comprehensive nursing support
- Inclusion opportunities with typical peers
- Art, cooking, adaptive physical education, music and animal-assisted activities
- Educational and assistive technology

## Value

AVC's REACH program provides a high-quality, cost-effective alternative to enrollment in private schools that are further away from our students' home communities. REACH classrooms are housed in public school settings, which add the value of inclusion opportunities with peers in the host school community as well as being able to participate in home community activities.

## 2019-2020 Highlights

- REACH I found a new home at Woodward Elementary School in Southborough
- REACH II planned to perform with peers from Trottier Middle School in a play
- REACH III participated a variety of community service activities
- One-to-one technology provided to address remote learning required due to COVID-19 school closures
- School work and supplies and equipment delivered to students as needed

FY20 Member Tuition	FY20 NonMember Tuition	Membership Savings
\$79,865	\$91,050	\$11,185

## Evolution

Evolution is located in Shrewsbury and Marlborough. This transition program is designed for students ages 18-22, who continue to be eligible for educational services as they transition to adulthood. Evolution blends educational opportunities within real-world settings in the community. Our programming includes:

- Transition assessment, job development and job coaching
- Community-based instruction – Travel training, fitness: YMCA, college coursework, shopping, and recreation
- School-based instruction – healthy relationships, cooking, finance, laundry, and hygiene
- Work experiences in a variety of locations based on student interests

## Value

The transition to adulthood looks different for each Evolution student. The team at Evolution works with each student and their team to support the development of rigorous and attainable transition goals and plans. Students have access to a wide range of opportunities to prepare for their transition to adulthood.

### 2019-2020 Highlights:

- Annual Art and Music Show
- Garden-to-table activities
- Activities of daily living - cooking, independence, social skills
- YMCA membership - fitness, recreation, social
- College experiences, Internships, and Work Experiences
- One-to-one technology provided to address remote learning required due to COVID-19 school closures
- School work and supplies and equipment delivered to students as needed

	FY20 Member Tuition	FY20 NonMember Tuition	Membership Savings
Tier 1	\$35,175	\$40,100	\$4,925
Tier 2	\$52,174	\$59,485	\$7,307
Tier 3	\$79,865	\$91,050	\$11,185



## Specialists and Consultants

AVC responds to the unique requests of our member and non-member districts to fill gaps in program development, student assessments and student interventions. Consultants provide a variety of related services that include:

- Programs designed to address specific students' needs
- Consultation to educators, parents, providers
- Assessment/Evaluation
- Strategic Planning and Equity Audits
- Collaborative and flexible scheduling and consultation

### Types of Services:

- Occupational Therapy
- Physical Therapy
- Music Therapy
- Child Psychiatry
- Transition
- Home-based tutoring/educational case management
- Evaluations/Assessments
- Leadership coaching; Equity coaching
- Improvement planning facilitation

### 2019-2020 Highlights

- Continued contracts for OT and PT in Northborough, Southborough, Berlin, Boylston, Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School, Maynard, and Advanced Math and Science Academy
- Transition consultation in Auburn
- Child psychiatrist consultation and professional development
- Pivot to remotely delivered services due to COVID-19

	FY20 Member Rate	FY20 NonMember Rate	Membership Savings
Licensed Professionals	\$95.35	\$108.70	\$13.35
Therapy Assistants	\$63.55	\$72.45	\$8.90
Consulting Psychiatrist	\$281.71	\$321.15	\$39.44

## Family Success Partnership (FSP)

Family Success Partnership (FSP) is a family-centered wraparound program designed to support students and their families who have needs that fall outside of school that have not yet been met by community or state agency services. Family Support Counselors help each family develop goals and identify resources needed to achieve those goals. FSP helps families navigate the intricate process of health care insurance, state agency applications and waitlists – assisting schools in addressing the non-academic needs of students that impact student outcomes.

### Value

FSP wraparound is a strengths-based, student-centered, collaborative support that assists schools in addressing barriers to learning. In collaboration with district administration and school counselors, FSP supported over 100 families to access:

- Medical care
- Counseling
- Housing and essential resources
- Insurance

### 2019-2020 Highlights.

- New contract with nonmember district - Acton Boxborough
- READS Collaborative continued to partner with AVC on replication project.
- Through a grant, clinicians became certified in QPR (Question, Persuade, Respond) suicide predention trainers.
- Marlborough Coalition Monthly Meetings
- CBHI-System of Care Meetings
- Assist families with navigating pandemic-related needs
- Pivot to remote services due to COVID-19 closures;

Service	FY20 member rates	FY20 Non-member rates	Membership Savings
Phase I	\$33,063	\$37,692	\$4,629
Phase II	\$66,126	\$75,384	\$9,258
Phase III	\$99,189	\$113,075	\$13,886
Phase IV	\$132,252	\$150,767	\$18,515

## Professional Development

AVC provided 189 contact hours of professional learning to 422 educators in 2019-2020 until March 2020 when courses and events were canceled due to the pandemic.

The following districts funded participants in PD at AVC:

- Maynard Public Schools
- Worcester Public Schools
- Hudson Public Schools
- Shrewsbury Public Schools
- Holliston Public Schools
- Grafton Public Schools
- Marlborough Public Schools
- Auburn Public Schools
- Public Schools of Northborough and Southborough

Service	FY20 member rates	FY20 Non-member rates	Membership Savings
3-Day Course @AVC	\$550/person	\$625/person	\$75
3-Day Course @district (max 25 participants)	\$6,960/course	\$7,935/course	\$975

## Facilities Rental

In 2019-2020, AVC experienced an increase in requests to rent space in our training center. Until we closed due to the pandemic, AVC rented the training center 24 dates to 7 entities. AVC's rentals include access to white board painted walls, projectors, screens, sound and a variety of furniture configurations for up to 100 participants.

Service	FY20 member rates	FY20 Non-member rates	Membership Savings
Room Rental	\$250/room	\$285/room	\$35

## Transportation

### Purpose & Value

AVC provides special education transportation services by contracting with a vendor on behalf of our member school districts. Our contract requires vendors to employ well-trained drivers and monitors and that the fleet of vehicles used are well-equipped and maintained. AVC leverages volume from many districts; transportation vendors submit competitive rates to AVC resulting in cost savings for special education transportation. In addition, AVC monitors the quality of the services provided, to save districts valuable time and to capitalize on an economy of scale. While pricing is an important element of the transportation offered, our districts rely on AVC to provide services with vendors who are committed to safe, high-quality and reliable transportation.

Services include:

- In-district and out-of-district McKinney Vento, field trips, community-based instruction, and after school services
- Monitored two-way radios, GPS and video monitoring
- Pre-screened CORI and SAFIS (Statewide Application Fingerprinting Identification Services) and specially trained drivers and monitors

Transportation	Member Rate	Nonmember Rate	Membership Savings	Savings per route for 180 Day school year
Single district route: 7D vehicle within collaborative communities	\$119.15	\$133.45	\$14.30	\$2,574
Single district route: 7D vehicle outside collaborative communities	\$146.20	\$163.74	\$17.54	\$3,157
Single district route: Wheel Chair vehicle within collaborative communities	\$238.85	\$267.51	\$28.66	\$5,159
Single district route: Wheel Chair vehicle outside collaborative communities	\$243.60	\$272.83	\$29.23	\$5,261

Average Daily Enrollment in School Programs							
	FY14	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Evolution	32	32	21	26	28	24	25
REACH	13	11	11	9	11	13	15
OSA	41	43	47	46	50	55	56
SOAR	18	21	38	42	38	28	13
Total	<b>104</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>109</b>

## Average Daily Enrollment in School Programs FY14-FY21

