

LEARNING
FOR Life





Southeastern Massachusetts
Educational Collaborative

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To Whom It May Concern:

Chapter 40, Section 4E of the Massachusetts General Laws requires each of the Educational Collaboratives in the Commonwealth to create and submit an annual report to the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Office of the State Auditor and to each member school committee by January 1st of each year for the prior fiscal year. Attached, you will find the annual report for the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC), covering the period of July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018. This report contains all of the regulatory requirements, including summarized information about the programs and services offered by the Collaborative during the relevant fiscal year, a discussion of the cost effectiveness of each program and service offered by SMEC, information regarding our governance and administration and a discussion of the progress made toward reaching our agency's stated goals and objectives. In addition, our Audited Financial Statements and Independent Auditor's report are attached and considered to be incorporated into this annual report.

During the period covered by the FY18 annual report, SMEC continued to implement the goals that had been developed through a comprehensive Strategic Planning process that set forth our path of growth and advancement for a five year period. We focused on improved communication both within and beyond the Collaborative, acquiring and maintaining facilities for our program improvement and growth, beginning the expansion of our student services related to social/emotional and physical/medical health and promoting staff professional development and quality retention. We are excited to move forward during FY19 and beyond with the priorities identified through this process to make our agency even stronger and better than it already is.

We encourage anyone reading this report to use the data contained herein as a brief overview of SMEC and an idea of where our agency may be heading in the future. This report provides a synopsis and fulfills a legislative requirement but much more information can be found by visiting our website or by contacting any of our program locations or our administrative office(s) to request more information or to set up a personal tour or visit. We'd love to show you around and answer any questions you may have. The best way to get to know SMEC is to speak to those who choose to be part of it. We are proud of our agency and look forward to sharing it with you.

Sincerely,

Catherine S. Cooper, M.Ed., JD
Executive Director



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SMEC Governance

SMEC membership during FY18 was comprised of the school districts of Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Marion, Mattapoisett, New Bedford, Rochester, Old Rochester Regional and Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical High School. Each of these school committees appointed a member to serve on the SMEC Board for the 2017-2018 school year as follows:

Board of Directors 2017-2018

Sarah Gomes, Acushnet
Michelle Smith, Vice Chairman, Marion
Carole Clifford, Mattapoisett
Anne Fernandes, Rochester
Donna McKenna, Fairhaven
Christopher Oliver, Chairman, Dartmouth
Christopher Cotter, New Bedford
James Muse, Old Rochester Regional
Frederick Toomey, Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical HS*
*Resigned in April 2018.

Leadership

In addition to the Board of Directors, the 2017-2018 SMEC leadership team also included the following:

SMEC Administrative Team

Catherine S. Cooper, Executive Director
Jill Brilhante, Director of Business Services
Michelle Goettlich, Student Services Director
Nelson Cordeiro, Adult Services Director
Sherri Tetrault, Director of Communication and PD
Sean Mitchell, Asst. Adult Services Director
Audrey Rodrigues, Human Resources Manager
Kimberly Wilmot, TLC Program Coordinator

Treasurer

John Nunes

2017-2018 Steering Committee Members

The SMEC steering committee is comprised of the special education directors from each member district and serves in an advisory capacity to the Administrative Team:

Sandra Barboza, Acushnet
Elizabeth Townsend, Dartmouth
Diane Sullivan, Fairhaven
Michael Nelson, Marion, Mattapoisett, Rochester and Old Rochester Regional
Kimberly Bettencourt, New Bedford
Erin Ptaszenski, Greater New Bedford Regional Vocational Technical HS

SMEC Mission, Guiding Principles and Objectives

The SMEC mission statement, principles and objectives were developed as part of a Strategic Planning process in 2014 and are as indicated below. In addition, SMEC's mission statement, principles and objectives are included in our Articles of Agreement.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative (SMEC) provides high quality programs and services for all children and adults who need specialized instruction or support. SMEC utilizes a team approach to meet the needs of the whole individual in order to achieve greater personal independence and success.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- We believe that all people have strengths, abilities and gifts and must be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their level of need.
- We ensure that support and services are guided by an individual's evolving needs, goals and preferences.
- We assist each individual to participate and contribute meaningfully to their community through school, work, community service and recreation.
- We believe that all individuals have the ability to learn within a safe, nurturing environment and with the appropriate support.
- We will safeguard each individual's right to privacy, dignity and respect.
- We believe that parents/guardians and families are important advocates and teachers.
- We believe that through collaboration and teamwork we strengthen the resources of school districts and adult agencies to provide the very best programs and services for students and adults.
- We have high expectations for the success of our students, staff, consumers, parents and the community.
- We believe that an effective organization is diverse in perspective, culture and experience.

FY18 Objectives

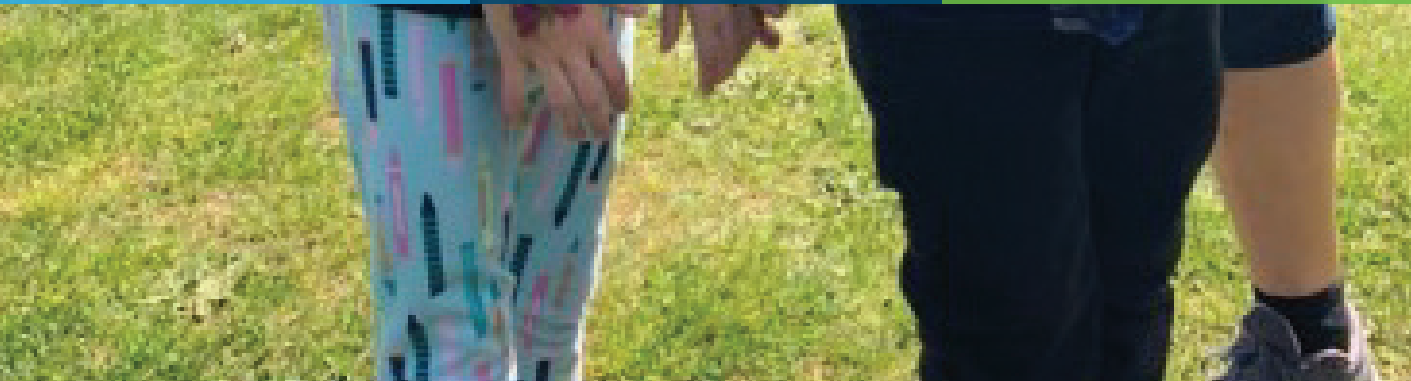


As indicated in the Collaborative's Articles of Agreement, the Objectives of the Collaborative shall be:

To develop and administer, as directed by the Collaborative Board of Directors, programs, supports and services which best serve the interests of the Collaborative and its Member Committees;

To provide a vehicle for Member Committees to identify and resolve issues of a common and regional nature; and

To provide professional development opportunities for educators, parents and related services personnel.



Progress Toward Meeting Our Mission and Objectives

SMEC provides programs and services for individuals with special needs ages three to adult. Our programs have a strong focus on community integration and independence. Student services and programs are available at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels. Students who transition into adult services at age twenty-two and who are eligible to receive adult service funding through DDS, MA Health, MRC or MCB have the option to choose SMEC as their adult service provider. Over 97% of our students in this category choose to stay with SMEC when they turn twenty-two.





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Offering high quality programs requires us to continually examine our facilities to ensure that they meet the needs of our students, consumers and staff. Our student services programs are primarily housed in public

school classrooms and we have been fortunate to have a multitude of modern, high quality and spacious classrooms from which to choose. Several of our member districts have undergone SBA school building projects in the relatively recent past and have offered space for SMEC programs following these projects.

In early FY18, SMEC signed a lease with the Rochester School Committee to procure space at the Rochester Memorial School (RMS) in order to relocate our Primary Language Program (PLP) to Rochester. The PLP program began operating at RMS in August, 2017, thereby freeing up our classroom at East Fairhaven Elementary School to create the Multidisciplinary Learning Center for elementary students with multiple disabilities and medical fragility.

Our FY18 professional development offerings primarily focused on assisting teachers and school staff to instruct and assist all learners. In addition to providing in-service training for our own staff on CPR/First Aid, Mandated Reporting, Civil Rights, CPI and PMT non-violent crisis intervention, suicide prevention and ALICE protocol, SMEC provided a wide variety of professional development opportunities to 434 faculty and staff from 47 school districts throughout Southeastern Massachusetts during the year. In addition, we sent our own training consultants to go out to districts to provide onsite staff training for many additional district educators on the topics of Leading Educational Access Project (LEAP), Executive Functioning and De-Escalation.



Courses offered at SMEC included Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) instruction (both endorsement and non-endorsement PDP courses), an Overview of Student Disabilities, Transition Planning, Initial and Refresher courses in CPI Non-Violent Crisis Prevention, Preparation for the Parapro Test, Tools for Responding to Social Emotional Behaviors, Tiered System of Intervention, IEP Writing Strategies, Reading with TLC, Board Maker, Executive Functioning and a content specific workshop for Fine Arts teachers.

SMEC is also a participant in the Southeast Collaborative Regional Organization (SCRO) and collaborated with other SCRO members to provide training and resources to districts from throughout the southeastern part of the state and also cohosted the Special Education Symposium, a two day event focusing on student mental health in December, 2017. In addition to staff training, SMEC offered workshops for parents and guardians on Keeping Children Safe from Online Predators, the Special Education Appeals process and Changes in State and Federal Disability Benefits as well as an SAT preparation class for 16 high school students from the area.

SMEC is one of only two sites in Massachusetts authorized to administer the Parapro examination through the Educational Testing Service. Employment as a paraprofessional in Title One schools and most other public school districts in Massachusetts requires either a minimum of an Associate's Degree/Equivalent or a passing score on the Parapro assessment. SMEC offers

both the test administration and an optional Parapro test preparation workshop. 160 individuals took the Parapro test through SMEC during FY18, representing at least 41 school districts.

Through implementation of the final stage of our most recent Strategic Plan over the course of the year, in addition to focusing on ensuring that our programs are located in suitable facilities, we also prioritized goals addressing the strengthening of our student and adult services, quality staff retention, increasing parent engagement and public awareness of SMEC and its services, addressing internal organizational and developmental issues including improving overall communication, increasing our resource development capacity and maintaining strong leadership, governance and financial capacity.

Other infrastructure improvements, such as acquiring and maintaining a safe and reliable van pool, updating our technology infrastructure and attracting and retaining high quality staff, are ongoing priorities and built into the administrative decision making process for all programs. The Collaborative maintains ongoing communication with our districts and local state agencies to ensure that we are targeting our efforts to meet their ever changing needs as well as ensuring compliance and readiness for all DESE and other state agency mandates.

FY18 General Statistics

Years in Service:	42
Employees:	203 ¹
Member Districts:	9
Districts Served in 2017-2018:	49 ²
Program Classrooms/Sites:	11
Students Served in or by SMEC School Programs or Services in FY18:	373 ³
Adult (Age 22+) Consumers Served FY18:	146

FY18 Revenue

Tuition and Services Member:	\$3,809,574
Tuition and Services Non-Member:	\$ 312,490
DDS Contracts:	\$4,025,592
MCB Contracts:	\$ 136,751
MassHealth/Medicaid:	\$ 900,837
DESE CACFP:	\$ 54,547
Professional Development:	\$ 87,836
Grants:	\$ 6,083
Investment Income:	\$ 620
Self Pay:	\$ 1,280
Miscellaneous:	\$ 10,196
TOTAL FY18 REVENUE:	\$9,345,806⁴

Adult Service Expenditures

FY18 Amount Expended on Services for Students/Consumers Age 22+	
SAIL Program (DDS/MCB Contracts):	\$3,714,350
ADH Program (Medicaid/MA Health):	\$ 786,748
FY18 TOTAL ADULT SERVICE EXPENSES:	\$4,501,098⁵

Cost Savings to School Districts:

Average FY18 MA Private Day School Special Education Daily Tuition Rate:	\$343/Day ⁶
FY18 SMEC Daily Tuition 180 Day Standard School Day Program:	\$230/Day
Average Local Private Agency Therapy Fee (SLP, OT, PT):	\$80-\$125/hour
FY18 SMEC Therapy Fee (SLP, OT, PT):	\$68/hour ⁷

1 Includes full and part-time employees.

2 Based on LEA student programmatic responsibility and professional development provided to district staff.

3 Includes all SMEC program and district based services. Does not include students receiving transportation services only.

4 Based on FY18 Independently Audited Financial Statements. Does not include MTRS intergovernmental on behalf payments.

Cost savings to districts are realized by sharing resources regionally, utilizing district owned facilities to house Collaborative programs when possible, sharing agency administrative and indirect costs between the Collaborative's adult services departments and student services departments and having district representatives guide our program and service development. Exact savings figures are difficult to quantify, however a comparison of the average private day school tuition of \$343 per day versus the standardized FY18 SMEC program tuition of \$230 per day for all of our 180 day/school day programs indicates significant average annual savings of \$20,340⁸ per student as does a comparison of a range of contractual service costs offered by private agencies in the geographic area against the cost to districts to access the same therapeutic services through SMEC. If SMEC programs and services were not available, districts would undoubtedly be forced to utilize these higher cost private programs and services. Our programs serve students with low incidence special needs from multiple districts allowing the districts to share the costs of operating a high quality specialized program for several students instead of each district funding and operating an in-district program for one or two students. In addition, services provided by the Collaborative have a value added component in that we provide services specifically tailored to the needs and requests of our districts and students thereby

reducing costs for certain amenities that may be included in the services offered by private providers but not necessarily required to provide a high quality program or targeted services to address specific district and students' needs.

Further cost savings are realized by operating programs within our local cities and towns thereby significantly reducing special education transportation costs and length of student trips. Cost savings varies based on route and competitive bidding quotes from private vendors. Similarly, utilizing surplus district classroom space to house collaborative programs reduces program overhead, which lowers tuition costs for all districts utilizing the program while providing a modest source of revenue for the host district.

Lastly, offering professional development on a regional basis allows districts to offer high quality professional development to their faculty and staff that might not be possible if each district, particularly the smaller districts, were required to fund and arrange courses or workshops on an individual basis. Particularly at a time when district professional development funding has been reduced and is primarily targeted toward meeting a host of new and additional state and federal mandates, targeted professional development for lower incidence or specialty staff would likely not occur if it weren't done on a regional basis through the Collaborative.

5 FY18 Independent Audit Report; exclusive of administrative and overhead cost.

6 www.mass.gov/osdFY18 data for private day school placements listed as "day" programs in FY18; average of private day school FY18 daily tuition rates..

7 FY18 SMEC member rate for hourly therapy services. Does not include contractual staffing FTEs.

8 No direct program comparison is asserted. Cost savings calculated by difference in average daily rates x 180 days.

FY18 Program Descriptions



SMEC Early Childhood Program

The SMEC Early Childhood Program, located at Acushnet Elementary School, serves children ages three to six with developmental and language delays. Staffed by a special education teacher, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapy assistant and paraprofessionals the program provides a full day, five day per week program with a 2:1 student/staff ratio.

SMEC Primary Language Program:

The SMEC Primary Language Program, which was located at East Fairhaven Elementary School in FY17, relocated to Rochester for FY18, and serves students in grades 1-6 with significant language delays and autism spectrum disorders. Staffed by a special education teacher(s), speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, consulting BCBA and paraprofessionals, the program offers intensive, language based programming with a small staff/student ratio and opportunity for inclusive activities within the host building.

SMEC Integrated Services Program II

The SMEC Integrated Services Program, with classrooms located at the Old Rochester Regional High School in Mattapoisett and Dartmouth High School in Dartmouth, serves students in grades 9-12 with significant social and language delays and autism spectrum disorders. It provides a continuum of services for students who have been deemed by their IEP teams to require a substantially separate classroom

with a small staff/student ratio at the high school level. Services are provided by a special education teacher, paraprofessionals, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, BCBA consultant, school adjustment counselor and a speech language pathologist.

SMEC Alternative Learning Classroom I

The SMEC ALC I program, located at the Ford Middle School in Acushnet, serves students in grades 5-8 with social/emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities. Students are served in a substantially separate classroom with a small student/staff ratio and inclusion opportunities. Services are provided by a special education teacher, reading specialist, paraprofessional, speech pathologist, occupational and physical therapists as needed and licensed mental health counselor.

SMEC Alternative Learning Classroom II

The SMEC ALC II program is located at Dartmouth High School, serving students in grades 9-12 with social/emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities. Students are served in a substantially separate classroom with a small student/staff ratio and inclusion opportunities. Services are provided by a special education teacher, paraprofessionals, a licensed mental health counselor, speech pathologist, occupational therapist and physical therapists as needed as well as a consulting BCBA and employment development coordinator.



Therapeutic Learning Center

The Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) is a DESE licensed public day school program in New Bedford. Serving students in grades 1-5 with significant social/emotional disabilities and trauma backgrounds, the TLC offers a therapeutic milieu with a high staff to student ratio and specialized support. Services are provided by licensed special education teachers, paraprofessionals, a licensed school adjustment counselor, a BCBA, school nurse, OT, PT and SLP.

Transitional Services

SMEC offers transitional services to students ages 18-21 with developmental disabilities. Student services include job development, employment skills training and support, life skills/ADL instruction, social/community skills development and case management. Instruction is community based with classroom and kitchen space available at the Tripp School building in Fairhaven. Staffing includes special education teachers, paraprofessionals, a speech pathologist, occupational and physical therapists, job developer, job coaches and transitional/vocational specialist. Services are available on a full-time, part-time or extended day/extended year basis. Job coaching is available seven days per week, year round.

The Multidisciplinary Learning Center

In August of 2017, SMEC opened the Multidisciplinary Learning Center, an elementary program serving students in grades 1-5 with significant physical or intellectual disabilities and/or medical fragility.

An experienced special education teacher, CNA Paraprofessionals and an RN create a safe, supportive learning environment for students with multi-disabilities. Therapeutic services are provided by an OT, PT and SLP. The MLC program offers a 180 day program with a part-time 5 week summer component. The program is located in a public school building and accepts referrals from all school districts.

Supporting Adults for Inclusive Living (SAIL) program

SMEC's SAIL program serves individuals over the age of 22 who have been deemed eligible for adult service funding through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and the MA Commission for the Blind (MCB). SMEC is a qualified state provider for employment support, residential support, community day support and individual support services. SAIL services operate year round. Funding for the SAIL program is primarily provided through state contracts with DDS and MCB. Biannual licensure and compliance audits are conducted by DDS.

SMEC Adult Day Health (ADH) Program

SMEC's ADH program provides a continuum of services for individuals over the age of 22 who require daily supervision, activities and case management. The ADH program supplements the services provided through SMEC's SAIL program. The ADH program operates year-round and is currently funded through Medicaid/MassHealth and licensed by the Department of Public Health (DPH) with reimbursement for hot lunches provided through the DESE's CACFP program.



Ancillary Services

SMEC provides specialized staffing and therapeutic services to school districts throughout our region. SMEC's speech pathologists, occupational therapists, COTAs, SLPAs, physical therapists, BCBA and ELL teachers provide therapeutic, evaluation and consultation services to students and staff in member and non-member districts, vocational and charter schools throughout the region on a contractual basis. In addition, our vocational specialist offers transitional/vocational assessment services to students referred for evaluation by their LEA.

Professional Development

SMEC offers a variety of professional development activities for educators from member and non-member districts throughout the year. SMEC is one of the few DESE qualified providers of Sheltered English Immersion endorsement classes for both teachers and administrators. In FY18, 434 outside educators from public school districts, private schools and other Educational Collaboratives took part in SMEC PD activities.

Transitional/Vocational Assessments

SMEC's Transitional/Vocational Specialist utilizes the McCarron-Dial Evaluation System along with companion assessments to provide a comprehensive transitional/vocational evaluation for students ages 15-21. Students are referred for such evaluations by the LEA based on Team recommendations.

Parapro Assessment

160 paraprofessionals or aspiring paraprofessionals sat for the Parapro examination at SMEC during FY18.

Special Education Transportation

In 2017-2018, SMEC offered special education transportation services to member school districts. Cost benefit to district varies based on route and competitive bidding quotes from private vendors. During FY18, SMEC's transportation services were primarily limited to students attending SMEC programs or SMEC member districts' in-house programs.



This annual report summarizes the activities of the Southeastern Massachusetts Educational Collaborative during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018. We are very proud to serve the communities in the Southeastern corner of the Commonwealth and to be able to partner with a wonderful group of school districts and state agencies to ensure that a wide array of high quality services is available to meet the needs of all individuals and we are looking forward to many changes in FY19 and beyond that will allow us to continue to provide the very best in programs and support. We welcome and encourage the readers of this report to contact us or set up a visit in order to truly see and hear about the great work that is done here.

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