



# Special Education Population Trends

Acton-Boxborough Consolidated\* District 2004 - 2014

September 22, 2014

---

\* The term "AB Consolidated" or similar refers to the combination of Acton, Boxborough, and Acton-Boxborough district data prior to PreK-12 regionalization.

## **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this paper is to identify useful population trends within the special education and other High Needs student groups over the last one-, three- and ten-year periods across the Consolidated AB district. The term “Consolidated AB district” refers to a combination of data from Acton Public, Acton-Boxborough and Boxborough school districts prior to the Pre K-12 regionalization. Data used in this paper is drawn from reports the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) publishes on its website each year.

In September 2012, the AB SpEd PAC published two separate reports titled *Special Education Spending & Population Trends 2004–2011* – one for Acton Public Schools and one for Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools. These reports can be found on the PAC website at <http://abspedpac.org/reports/sped-spending-trends/>. The current report focuses on updating those trends with the last three years’ data and including Boxborough’s student population in our analysis as we look ahead to a fully regionalized Pre K-12 district.

We believe that tracking population and spending trends over time and comparing our district to other high-performing districts can provide valuable information to help inform future decision-making related to special education budgeting and planning. For the purposes of this report, we have selected Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Lexington and Westford – nearby high-performing school districts – as a peer group for comparison.

This report focuses on changes in special education and other High Needs student populations over the last one, three, and ten years for the Consolidated AB district. Students with Disabilities (SWD), Low Income students (LI) and English Language Learners (ELL) together are the three subgroups of students comprising the High Needs student group. The state tracks the performance of this High Needs group each year to determine whether or not each individual school and school district has met annual state and federal education requirements. This analysis highlights trends that will impact the overall financial resources necessary to educate students with special needs and other High Needs in Acton and Boxborough as we move forward with full Pre K–12 regionalization. Within the special education subgroup, this report looks at both the change in the number of students with special needs and the change in distribution of primary disabilities since the type and severity of students’ special needs directly impact the budget by driving the type and intensity of services needed to address students’ individual learning needs.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A simple analysis of headcount strongly indicates that if current trends continue it is probable that per pupil expenditure will increase faster than inflation in the consolidated Acton, Boxborough, and AB districts. In the last year the consolidated district simultaneously experienced a decline in overall student headcount and an increase in the number of High Needs students. Over the last twelve months the total Consolidated AB student population declined by 65 students while the special education student population increased by 37 students and the overall High Needs group, including special education students, increased by 91 students.

## **INCREASE IN HIGH NEEDS STUDENT POPULATION**

Over the last ten years the number of special education students in the Consolidated AB district has increased cumulatively by 17.2% (+142 students). The Low Income student group has increased by 79% (+120 students) and the ELL student group has increased by 212% (+125 students). This compares with total student population growth over the last ten years of only 8/10ths of one

percent (+47 students). Therefore, both over the short and long term, special education students and High Needs students have become a larger proportion of the student population in the Consolidated AB district.

The decline in total student enrollment over the last year has the arithmetic effect of increasing the per pupil expenditure (by lowering the denominator) with no change in overall spending. A lower total student headcount also has a real effect on budgets as subsidies from the state (e.g., Chapter 70) and federal government are often based on student headcount. Students classified as High Needs receive costly supplementary services above and beyond those received through general education. Therefore, the increase in High Needs students is likely to lead to an increase in absolute spending and a higher per pupil expenditure to maintain the same level of education we currently provide district students.

#### **CHANGE IN COMPOSITION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

As the number and proportion of special education students has increased, the mix of students' primary disabilities has changed in meaningful ways. Over the last ten years the number of students classified with a primary disability of Autism has exploded, up by 82 students (a 292% cumulative increase) while the number of students identified with Specific Learning Disabilities has declined by 107 over the same period. Students with some disabilities like Autism tend to be more expensive to educate than students with a Specific Learning Disability because their disability impacts multiple areas of learning, e.g., social, emotional, academic, sensory, gross and fine motor skills.

Over the last three years there has also been a large increase in students reporting a primary disability of Communications (+47 students, a cumulative increase of 25.1%), as well as substantial increases in Autism (+25 students, 29.4% cumulative), Health (+25 students, 28.4% cumulative) and Neurological (+21, 36.8% cumulative) disabilities. As mentioned earlier, during the same time period the number of students identified with a Specific Learning Disability has decreased (-21 students, -14.2% cumulative).

When looking at changes in the age distribution of students with special needs, interestingly more than half of the additional 142 special education students added to the consolidated AB district over the last ten years have been high school-aged students (aged 14-17). Another anomaly in the data is the overall decrease in the number of 5-year-old students with special needs identified over the last ten years (a 33% decrease) even as the total number of special education students has grown. While the change in 5-year-old eligibility could be due to random population changes it could also be due to policy changes regarding the criteria used to qualify students for special education. In the latter case the AB SpEd PAC would have significant concerns since the general consensus reflected in the research literature is that early special education intervention is the most successful for students as well as the most cost-effective for school districts in the long run.

#### **BUDGET RECOMMENDATION**

Given the dynamic nature of special education populations, we would recommend that the annual budgeting for special education expenditures start from the ground up, i.e., the first cut at the budget should be to determine the resources (and costs) necessary for the current group of students to achieve their goals, including an MCAS Student Growth Percentile of 51-60 in ELA and Math per federal and state standards. Our current budget process is more top down, e.g., last year's budget plus 2%, which does not take into account the increasing numbers of students with High Needs or the change in the type and intensity of special needs represented within the student population.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **ONE-YEAR TREND**

Students with Disabilities (SWD) also referred to as Special Education students, comprise one of three subgroups of students recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education collectively as the High Needs group.

Each year each district reports its student population as of October 1. The October 1, 2013, census is referred to as FY 2014 data because it reflects the 2014 academic year, July 2013 – June 2014. The table below shows the FY 2013 and FY 2014 student count for all students and for each of the three subgroups that make up the High Needs group – Low Income students (LI), English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education students. A student can be classified as a member of multiple subgroups but is only counted once in the High Needs group total. The final column of the table below indicates the number of multiple counts.

The following is a summary of highlights:

1. While the overall student population experienced a decline of 65 students from FY 2013 to FY 2014, the number of High Needs students increased by 91. This trend suggests additional demand for resources to address the academic needs of an increasing number of High Needs students. At the same time, even if resources remain flat, per pupil spending will increase as total spending is divided among fewer overall students.
2. The Special Education subgroup is the largest of the three High Needs subgroups. This subgroup grew by 37 students last year, which is a 4.0% annual rate of increase.
3. From FY 2013 to FY 2014 the two smallest subgroups of High Needs students – Low Income and English Language Learners – showed high growth rates of 19.2% and 22.7% respectively, increasing by a total of 44 and 34 students each.
4. Over the last year Boxborough has experienced explosive growth in Low Income and English Language Learners by percentage although the absolute number is small, up 15 students across all three High Needs subgroups.
5. A continuation of the FY 2013 to FY 2014 trend of 7.8% growth in High Needs students and a flat to declining overall student enrollment would likely have an upward impact on educational spending with no corresponding increase in financial support from state and federal agencies based on total student headcount.

## One Year Change in High Needs Population at Consolidated A-B

	District	Students Classified as High Needs:					Multiple Classified
		All Students	Low Income	English Learners	Special Education	Total High Needs	
<b>2014</b>	Acton	2,496	142	152	415	650	59
	Boxborough	435	21	12	70	103	0
	Acton-Boxborough	2,947	110	20	484	510	104
	Consolidated	5,878	273	184	969	1,263	163
<b>2013</b>	Acton	2,531	106	127	387	580	40
	Boxborough	445	15	8	64	87	0
	Acton-Boxborough	2,967	108	15	481	505	99
	Consolidated	5,943	229	150	932	1,172	139
<b>Change</b>	Acton	-35	36	25	28	70	19
	Boxborough	-10	6	4	6	16	0
	Acton-Boxborough	-20	2	5	3	5	5
	Consolidated	-65	44	34	37	91	24
<b>% Change</b>	Acton	-1.4%	34.0%	19.7%	7.2%	12.1%	
	Boxborough	-2.2%	37.5%	47.3%	9.4%	18.4%	
	Acton-Boxborough	-0.7%	1.9%	33.3%	0.6%	1.0%	
	Consolidated	-1.1%	19.2%	22.7%	4.0%	7.8%	

### COMPARISON OF CONSOLIDATED AB DISTRICT TO PEER DISTRICTS AND STATE HIGH NEEDS POPULATION

Next, we compared the Acton-Boxborough Consolidated district's High Needs student population to Concord, Concord-Carlisle, Westford and Lexington's High Needs populations and the statewide average. As in our 2012 Population and Spending Trend reports, we selected this peer group because of their similarities to AB. Each is a high-performing suburban school district in Middlesex County of about equivalent size to the Consolidated AB district. Lexington has a total of 6,700 students, Concord and Concord-Carlisle have 3,484 students, and Westford has 5,220 students while AB Consolidated has 5,878 students. When compared to the state average, all of the districts in our peer group have a very small percentage of Low Income students, ranging from 3.9% to 7.1% compared to the state average of 38.3%. In terms of total High Needs students, all of the peer districts reviewed have roughly half as many students or less in this category than the state average of 48.8%. Certainly compared to the statewide average both the AB Consolidated district and the peer districts reviewed carry a significantly lower burden related to educating High Needs students than many districts in the state.

## Students Classified as High Needs

<b>2014</b>	<b>Low Income</b>	<b>English Learners</b>	<b>Special Education</b>	<b>Total High Needs</b>
AB Consolidated	4.6%	3.1%	16.5%	21.5%
Concord	3.9%	2.8%	17.7%	22.5%
Concord-Carlisle	4.2%	1.1%	19.2%	22.8%
Lexington	7.1%	5.5%	14.2%	26.2%
Westford	4.2%	1.1%	11.7%	16.3%
State	38.3%	7.9%	17.0%	48.8%

### TEN-YEAR SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION TREND

Over the last ten years the population of special education students in the AB Consolidated district has increased by 142 students (17.2% cumulative growth) to reach a current total of 969 students. The number of special education students has risen and declined over the years but has shown accelerated growth in the last two years (+80 students). The table below shows the year-by-year census.

### Ten Year Trend of Special Education and Total Students

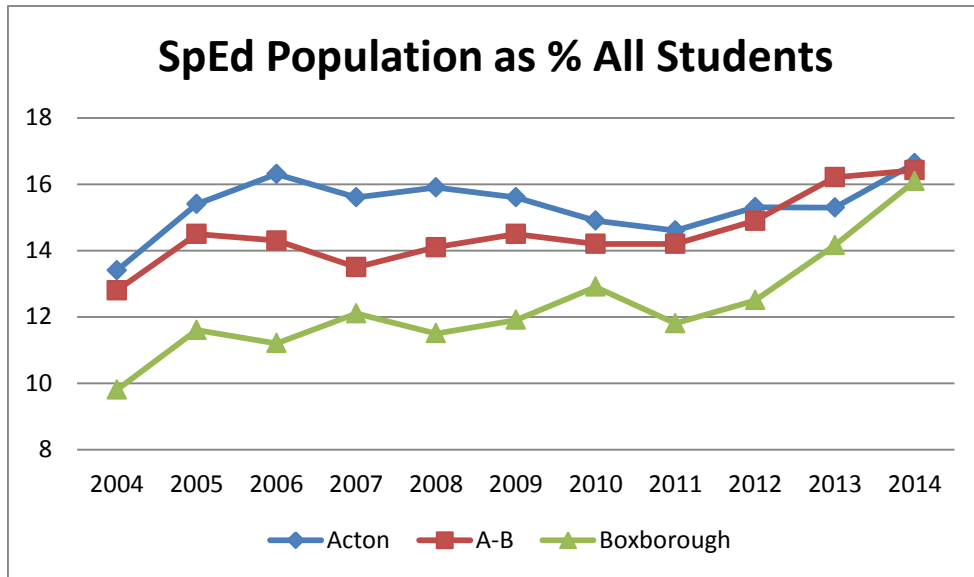
Year	Special Education Population				All Students
	<u>Acton</u>	<u>A-B</u>	<u>Boxborough</u>	<u>Consolidated</u>	<u>Combined</u>
2004	359	391	77	827	5,744
2005	399	391	70	860	5,792
2006	419	408	64	891	5,903
2007	404	397	67	868	5,983
2008	414	419	64	897	6,054
2009	402	437	63	902	6,040
2010	392	424	65	881	6,039
2011	378	425	58	861	5,993
2012	387	442	60	889	5,899
2013	387	481	63	931	5,860
2014	415	484	70	969	5,791

#### 2004-2014 Trend

Change	56	93	-7	142	47
% Change	15.6%	23.8%	-9.1%	17.2%	0.8%

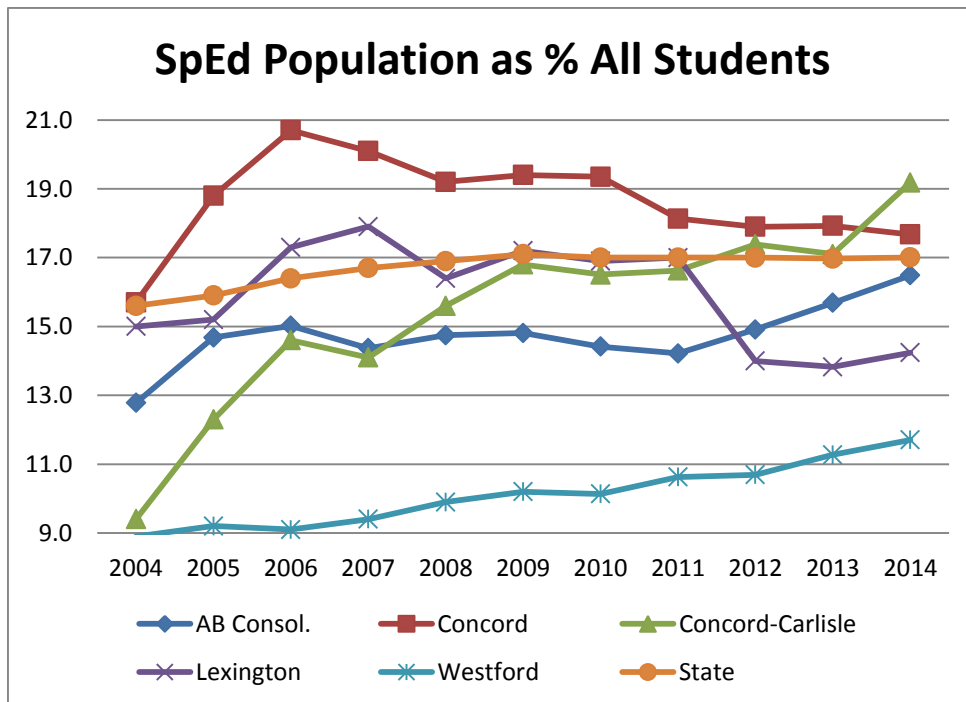
### COMPARISON OF SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION TO ALL STUDENTS

The following chart shows how the percentage of special education students has changed over the last ten years in relation to the total student population. Acton, Boxborough, and AB have each shown the same increasing trend of special education students since 2011 and as of 2014 have almost identical percentages of special education students to total students.



### COMPARISON OF AB CONSOLIDATED SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION TO LEXINGTON AND THE STATE

The following chart shows how the AB Consolidated special education population compares to each peer district and the state average. The AB Consolidated district has trended upward to 16.5% of its total student population and in 2014 is within .5% of the state average for the first time in the last ten years. Lexington followed the state average closely from FY 2004 to FY 2011 and then dropped 3 full percentage points in 2012, which it has maintained. That steep a percentage drop represents a reduction of 188 special education students in one year. This trend is idiosyncratic. We are unaware of any other district reporting such a major drop in one year and are curious how Lexington shifted its special education population so dramatically in one year. It is possible there was a concerted effort to move as many students as possible from IEPs to 504s, which are implemented under regular education as opposed to special education.



**TEN-YEAR AB CONSOLIDATED HIGH NEEDS POPULATION TREND**

The following chart shows the change in the High Needs student population over the last ten years. The special education subgroup is by far the largest subgroup of students in the High Needs category. However, the English Language Learners and Low Income subgroups have been growing at a substantially higher rate than the Special Education subgroup in recent years. Based on both the one-year and ten-year trends, the number of High Needs students has grown significantly as the overall student population has held steady or decreased slightly.

**Consolidated A-B High Needs Ten Year Trend**

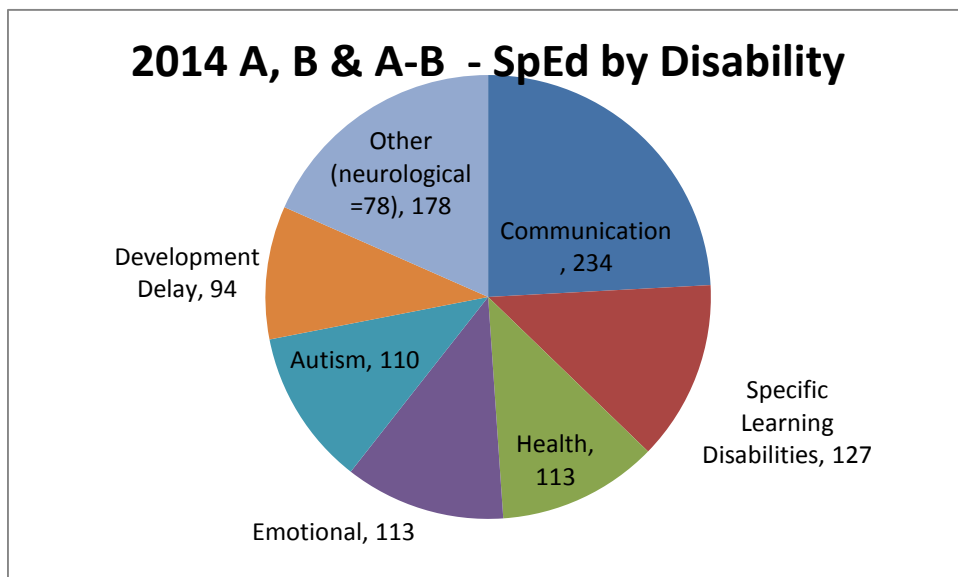
	Low Income	ELL	Special Ed	All Students
<u>Year</u>				
2004	152	59	827	5,744
2014	272	184	969	5,791
<u>2004-2014 Trend</u>				
Change	120	125	142	47
% Change	79.2%	212.2%	17.2%	0.8%



### FY 2014 SPECIAL EDUCATION DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION

The following pie chart summarizes the AB Consolidated district's 2014 special education population by the largest six disability categories, which account for 82% of all special education students. Communication is the largest primary disability category (234 students, 24% of SpEd students) followed by students with Specific Learning Disabilities (127, 13%), Health (113, 12%), Emotional (113, 12%), Autism\* (110, 11%), Developmental Delay (94, 10%) and Neurological disabilities (78, 8%). Tracking the trends in primary student disability provides valuable information for special education planning and budgeting because different disabilities require different levels of educational programming and support services. Of course, there can be significant variation within a disability category in terms of how much support any individual student requires to make effective progress in the curriculum.

**\*Note:** Our experience has been that some students entering the district without an Autism diagnosis may be categorized as Developmental Delay or Other Neurological until formally diagnosed, meaning the percentage of students with Autism may be underrepresented by this chart.



### TEN-YEAR SPECIAL EDUCATION DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION TRENDS

The AB Consolidated district has experienced a change in the mix of disabilities of its student population over time as shown in the following table. Over the last ten years (FY 2004 – FY 2014), the Autism disability category has accounted for 58% of the growth in the special education population (+82 students) while the Communications disability category has accounted for 49% of overall growth (+69 students). Countering the increase in those two disability classifications was a 75% decrease (-107 students) in students identified with a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). Overall, the special education population grew by 142 students or 17% from FY 2004 – FY 2014.

**Note:** Two DESE FY 2003 – FY 2004 reports on special education student counts provide conflicting data. A “Selected Populations” report indicates 732 students in the Consolidated AB district whereas the “District by Disability” report indicates a total of 827 students. For purposes of this report, the “District by Disability” data has been used since it supports the total number with individual disability counts. The DESE was notified of the apparent discrepancy. No clarification has been received to date.

TEN-YEAR SPECIAL EDUCATION DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION TRENDS (CONT'D)

	Special Education Students by Primary Disability					
	2014		Incr (Decr) since		Cum. % Incr(Decr)	
	Students	% SpEd	2011	2004	2011	2004
Intellectual	26	2.7%	5	-10	23.8%	-27.8%
Sensory Hard of Hearing	10	1.0%	0	3	0.0%	42.9%
Communication	234	24.1%	47	69	25.1%	41.8%
Sensory Vision Impairment	4	0.4%	1	1	33.3%	33.3%
Emotional	113	11.7%	14	27	14.1%	31.4%
Physical	35	3.6%	-9	20	-20.5%	133.3%
Health	113	11.7%	25	35	28.4%	44.9%
Learning Disab	127	13.1%	-21	-107	-14.2%	-45.7%
Blind	0	0.0%	-1	0	-100.0%	
Multiple Disab	25	2.6%	-6	-5	-19.4%	-16.7%
Autism	110	11.4%	25	82	29.4%	292.9%
Neurological	78	8.0%	21	13	36.8%	20.0%
Development Delay	94	9.7%	7	14	8.0%	17.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>17.2%</b>

THREE-YEAR SPECIAL EDUCATION DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION TRENDS

When we look at the three-year change in special education distribution trends within the AB Consolidated district, we see that the Communications disability category accounted for 43% of the growth in special education students (+47 students) while the Autism and Health categories each accounted for 23% of the growth (+25 students) in special education students. The cumulative three-year growth in all categories of special education students was 13% over that time period.

The key points from a review of the special education population by primary disability are:

1. The mix of disabilities is dynamic and there are some categories of disability that are growing faster than others in recent years, e.g., Communications, Autism.
2. It is possible that a substantial amount of the decrease in students identified with a Specific Learning Disability is a result of re-classification of the disability rather than a decline in the number of students with an SLD, i.e., coverage under a 504 instead of an IEP.
3. The rate of students identified for special education seems to be accelerating. Of the 142-student increase in special education students over the last ten years, 108 are attributable to the last three years.

### COMPARISON OF TEN-YEAR DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION TRENDS TO PEERS AND THE STATE

A comparison of the AB Consolidated district's growth by primary disability with the peer group and the state average shows that the AB trends are broadly similar to both groups. Over ten years, the AB Consolidated district and Concord-Carlisle experienced hyper-growth in Autism students (cumulative growth of 293% and 766.7% respectively) compared to other districts, which was much faster than Concord's, Lexington's, Westford's or the state's rapid growth. Over the last three years, the growth of Autism in AB Consolidated has remained very high (cumulatively 29%) but somewhat below the state average. The table below also shows that the consolidated district's decline in the SLD group was not unique, but rather in line with the statewide experience. Lexington reported substantially larger percentage declines in students with Specific Learning Disabilities for both the three- and ten-year timeframes than either AB Consolidated or the state. However, the AB Consolidated district's total growth in special education students has been considerably faster than the state average over both the three-year (A-B +12.5%, state -.2%) and ten-year (A-B +17.2%, state 6.4%) time periods.

### 10 Year Cumulative Growth

	AB Consol.	Concord	C-C	Lexington	Westford	State Total
Communication	41.8%	24.4%	1050.0%	158.5%	122.7%	34.7%
Specific Learning	-45.7%	-58.5%	-56.5%	-65.7%	-27.0%	-38.7%
Autism	292.9%	50.0%	766.7%	148.3%	150.0%	233.2%
Development Delay	17.5%	78.4%		97.9%	42.3%	27.4%
Other	55.6%	268.8%	307.0%	10.9%	238.2%	34.1%
Total	17.2%	4.5%	71.8%	-5.1%	29.2%	6.4%

### COMPARISON OF THREE-YEAR DISABILITY DISTRIBUTION TRENDS TO LEXINGTON AND THE STATE

However, when you look at the last three years of the same data, we note that the number of students in the AB Consolidated district identified with a Communications disability moved in the opposite direction of Concord, Lexington, Westford and the state average. Over the last three years the AB Consolidated district and Concord-Carlisle reported rapid growth in students with a primary Communications disability (25% and 100% respectively), while Concord, Lexington, Westford and the statewide average declined by 3% to 32.9%. As mentioned earlier, Lexington reported a large drop in its special education student population over the last three years. The analysis below suggests those declines came principally out of the number of students with Communications, SLD, and Other disability designations. Each category for Lexington showed double digit declines in student counts over the last three years.

### 3 Year Cumulative Growth

	AB Consol.	Concord	C-C	Lexington	Westford	State Total
Communication	25.1%	-29.1%	100.0%	-10.9%	-32.9%	-3.3%
Specific Learning	-14.2%	-29.0%	-59.2%	-22.7%	-18.1%	-16.3%
Autism	29.4%	28.6%	52.9%	25.2%	27.1%	34.7%
Development Delay	8.0%	13.8%		2.2%	37.0%	0.0%
Other	14.1%	230.4%	191.3%	-23.0%	157.4%	9.0%
Total	12.5%	8.6%	17.9%	13.9%	8.0%	-0.2%

### **AB CONSOLIDATED AGE DISTRIBUTION TRENDS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**

Another way of parsing the special education population is by the age of the students. The analysis below shows the cumulative change by age for the seven years FY 2004 to FY 2011, the three years FY 2011 to FY 2014, and the ten years FY 2004 to FY 2014. While the total number of special education students grew by 142 (17.2%) over ten years, the age distribution changed erratically. Over ten years, high school-aged students (aged 14-17) accounted for more than half (79 of the 142 additional students) of the ten-year growth. During the last seven years the number of special education students aged 7-9 was particularly volatile. From FY 2004 – FY 2011, the number of special education students aged 7-9 declined by 33 while all other ages increased by a net of 67 students. Then, in the following three years FY 2011 – FY 2014, this group grew by 56 students, more than half of the 108-student growth during that period.

Another anomaly is the decrease in the number of 5-year-old special education students over the last ten years even as the total number of special education students has grown. This is of potential concern to the AB SpEd PAC as these changes could be due to random change but could also be due to policy changes regarding the criteria used to qualify students for special education. As much research has indicated, early and intense special education interventions are most successful for students as well as most cost-effective for school districts. The PAC has the same concerns about the anomalous slow decrease in 10-year-olds identified with special needs while the total number of special education students is increasing. We note that the decline in 10-year-old eligibility coincides with the elimination of the Developmental Delay disability category, which only applies to students aged 3-9. While some children may no longer require special education services at age 10, it is possible that some students are being removed from special education prematurely because this disability category goes away instead of being reassigned to a different disability category such as Autism or Other Neurological.

In the chart below the class of 2014's special education population is highlighted in blue and the class of 2015 is highlighted in orange. For the purpose of this analysis, students age 17 at the time of the census (each October 1) are assumed to graduate the next June. The highlights show the growth in the class from ages 6-7 to ages 13-14 and little change from there through ages 16-17. This chart also highlights in yellow the declining trend of five and ten year olds identified with special needs over both the last three- and ten-year periods in contrast to the growing number of total students with special needs.

DISTRIBUTION OF ACTON-BOXBOROUGH CONSOLIDATED SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS BY AGE (2004, 2011, 2014)

Age	<u>Consolidated (2004)</u>	<u>Change (2004-2011)</u>	<u>Consolidated (2011)</u>	<u>Change (2011-14)</u>	<u>Consolidated (2014)</u>	<u>Cum. Change</u>
3	14	3	17	0	17	3
4	14	3	17	0	17	3
5	45	-9	36	-5	31	-14
6	34	17	51	0	51	17
7	47	2	49	14	63	16
8	62	-11	51	19	70	8
9	82	-24	58	23	81	-1
10	70	-6	64	-3	61	-9
11	54	17	71	9	80	26
12	77	-4	73	3	76	-1
13	70	0	70	7	77	7
14	58	18	76	5	81	23
15	49	14	63	13	76	27
16	60	13	73	-1	72	12
17	53	-6	47	23	70	17
18	28	1	29	1	30	2
19	4	3	7	2	9	5
20	3	3	6	-1	5	2
21	3	0	3	-1	2	-1
<b>Total</b>	<b>827</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>969</b>	<b>142</b>

**AB CONSOLIDATED CHANGE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION COHORT BY AGE**

The table below shows the increase or decrease in the size of each cohort age group from the prior year. This table shows the increase and decrease in special education students as the age group or cohort gets older. For example, the “4” in the first row, first column indicates that the three-year-old group in 2013 increased by four students.

This table indicates a pattern of increasing headcounts up until 8-9 years old, a fairly steady count from then through high school (age 17), then rapid decreases the next two years. The data also shows a blip in headcount aged 10-11 in FY 2013 – FY 2014. Each year the headcount changes as a result of eligible students moving in and out of the district and the classification of new students into and out of the special education group.

**Acton-Boxborough Consolidated  
Change in Special Education Population by Cohort**

<u>Age</u>	<u>2013-14</u>	<u>2012-13</u>	<u>2011-12</u>	<u>2010-11</u>
3-4	4	5	6	0
4-5	13	9	11	12
5-6	19	21	14	21
6-7	14	11	10	10
7-8	9	10	7	-2
8-9	10	7	8	-3
9-10	-2	1	3	-1
10-11	20	10	12	6
11-12	5	0	-2	-7
12-13	1	12	7	-1
13-14	0	0	-5	-2
14-15	-4	6	-3	1
15-16	1	0	1	-6
16-17	-3	-6	0	-6
17-18	-28	-39	-25	-36
18-19	-25	-12	-21	-18
19-20	-5	-2	-2	-3
20-21	-4	-1	-3	0

**AB CONSOLIDATED AGE COMPARISON TO LEXINGTON AND STATE**

The distribution of special education students by age in the Consolidated Acton-Boxborough district is very similar to the Lexington school district and the statewide distribution. In the table below the distribution is shown by estimated “grade” level beginning with Pre-K (3- and 4-year-olds). Statewide a higher percentage of Pre-K students are in the distribution in comparison with the Consolidated AB and Lexington districts. Lexington also has a somewhat elevated percentage of junior high students and a lower percentage of high school students versus the state average.

## 2014 Distribution of Special Education Students

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Consolidated</u>	<u>Lexington</u>	<u>State</u>
Pre K	3-4	3.5%	2.7%	5.3%
K-3	5-8	22.2%	22.1%	21.2%
4-6	9-11	22.9%	22.9%	22.9%
Jr. High	12-13	15.8%	18.4%	15.8%
High School	14-17	30.9%	27.9%	29.3%
Post High	18-21	4.7%	6.0%	5.6%

Overall the distribution of the consolidated district's special education population is similar to that of Lexington and of the state overall. The Consolidated AB district is a bit "light" on the ends of the age distribution range (Pre-K and post high school) versus the state overall and a bit heavy during the high school years. However, these differences seem too small to be significant.