

What is Special Education?

The first in a series for Andover taxpayers

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This is the first article in a planned series about Special Education. This article tackles one relatively narrow question: in general, what is Special Education?

In future articles we plan to look at other important, specific questions like: How and why do we budget for and pay for Special Education in Andover? How do we manage and deliver Special Education in Andover? Does Special Education benefit the Andover community?

If you've had any experience with the Special Education system in any way and would like to share your experience (with your name withheld from publication, if you prefer), please contact the Beacon. We especially need your help answering the question: Does Special Education benefit the Andover community?

What is Special Education?

Each student has his or her own individual personality and learning style. Some children's differences are significant enough that the regular school environment (often referred to as General Education) can't adequately address their educational needs. These differences can be physical, emotional, intellectual or cognitive, social, behavioral, or a combination of any of these.

In passing the Individuals with Dis-

abilities Education Act (IDEA), the nation's Special Education law enacted in 1975 and revised many times since, Congress recognized that students' differences "in no way [diminish] the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities."

The IDEA mandates that the special educational needs of students with differences be addressed beginning at age three, and that those needs continue to be addressed until the child is 21 years of age. The goal of the IDEA is to prepare children with special needs to lead independent and productive lives.

Involving Parents

Parents are deeply involved with their child's Special Education. They meet with local school district Special Education professionals to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in order to provide the student with an education that both meets the student's special needs and does so in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) that is suitable to their development.

Of course, a student's special education needs often change over time, so a big part of what Andover School See Spec Ed on page 12

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Construction continues in August on the big culvert project to the east of Andover Village (pictured here) and on the big bridge project to the west, in Cilleyville.
Photo: Charlie Darling



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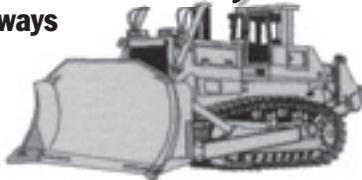
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