

Virginia's Special Education Regional Tuition Reimbursement Program (RTRP): Current Status and Issues for Further Study

Delivered to:
Senate Finance

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Background

- Virginia's Special Education Regional Reimbursement Programs
 - Authorized by Virginia's General Assembly in 1977
 - P.L. 94-142 (Federal Special Education Law)
 - Cruse V. Campbell
 - full tuition for private placements must be at public expense when determined by IEP Team as appropriate placement
- **Purpose:** to provide a mechanism for school divisions to cooperate and share resources to serve children with low incidence disabilities.

Requirements

- Authorized disability categories under RTRP for Reimbursement:
 - Emotional Disabilities
 - Autism
 - Multiple Disabilities
 - Hearing Impaired
 - Deaf/Blindness
 - Traumatic Brain Injury

Review of Current Model and Data

Regional Programs in Operation

- 11 legally constituted RTRPs
- 57 out of 132 or 43 percent of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) participate with 3 or more students served
- Total of 4,438 students were served in RTRPs 2014
 - Represents 2.7 percent of the 162,960 students with disabilities served statewide

Current Approved RTRPs

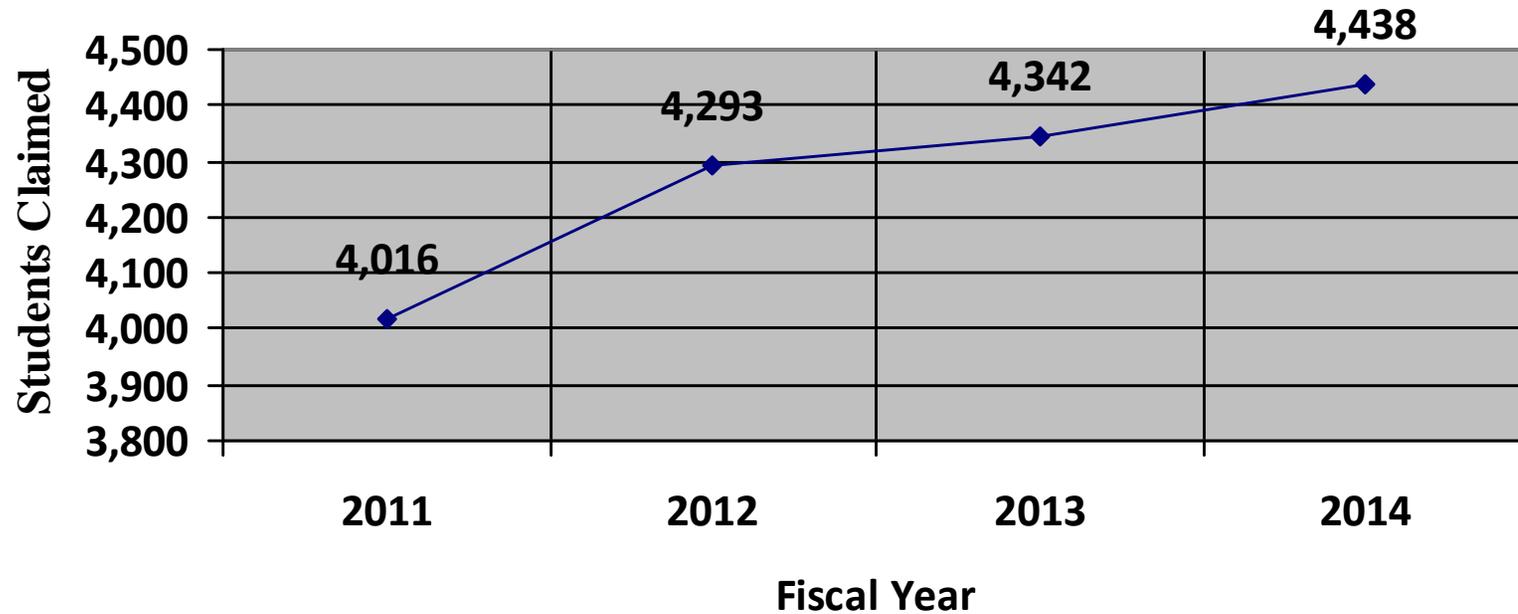
- **Cooperative Centers for Exceptional Students**
 - Carroll County
 - Grayson County
 - Smyth County
 - Washington County
 - Wythe County
 - Bristol City
 - Galax City
- **Middle Peninsula Regional Special Education Centers**
 - Gloucester County
 - Middlesex County
 - West Point (Town)
- **LAUREL Regional Program**
 - Amherst County
 - Appomattox County
 - Bedford County
 - Campbell County
 - Charlotte County
 - Lynchburg City
- **Northwestern Regional Education Program**
 - Frederick County
 - Winchester City
- **New Horizons Regional Education Center**
 - Gloucester County
 - York County
 - Hampton City
 - Newport News City
 - Williamsburg-James City County
 - Poquoson City
- **Piedmont Regional Education Program**
 - Albemarle County
 - Culpeper County
 - Fluvanna County
 - Greene County
 - Louisa County
 - Madison County
 - Nelson County
 - Charlottesville City

Current Approved RTRPs

- **Shenandoah Valley Regional Program**
 - Augusta County
 - Page County
 - Rockingham County
 - Shenandoah County
 - Harrisonburg City
 - Staunton City
- **Northern Virginia Regional Special Education Program**
 - Prince William County
 - Spotsylvania County
 - Manassas City
 - Manassas Park City
- **Southeastern Cooperative Education Program (SECEP)**
 - Isle of Wight County
 - Southampton County
 - Chesapeake City
 - Franklin City
 - Norfolk City
 - Portsmouth City
 - Suffolk City
 - Virginia Beach City
- **Roanoke Valley Regional Program**
 - Botetourt County
 - Craig County
 - Franklin County
 - Roanoke City
 - Salem City
- **Henry County/Martinsville Regional Program**
 - Henry County
 - Martinsville City

Growth in Students Served

Growth in Students Served in RTRPs



Financial Analysis

- From all funding sources (local, state, federal):
 - Students served in regional programs generated an average per-pupil amount of **\$29,097**
 - Students not served in regional programs generated an average per-pupil amount of **\$13,497**
- From state-only funds:
 - Students served in regional programs generated an average per-pupil amount of **\$17,392**
 - Students not served in regional programs generated an average per-pupil amount of **\$3,014**

Financial Analysis

Year	Amount	Amount of Increase
2010-2011	\$64,436,343	
2011-2012	\$70,208,260	\$5,771,917
2012-2013	\$74,168,478	\$3,960,218
2013-2014	\$77,040,276	\$2,871,798
2014-2015	\$80,792,037	\$3,751,761
		Total: \$16,355,694

Average growth of \$4.1 million per year for the five-year period

Findings

1. The number of students claimed and the overall cost for supporting Regional Tuition Reimbursement Programs has increased annually. The number of students with autism is primarily driving this increase as well as the number of students who need more intensive special education and related services.
2. Submission of the current Tuition Reimbursement Rate Package has evolved so that the information submitted is inconsistent across the RTRPs.

Findings

3. Use of RTRP funds may have “drifted” from the original intent of supporting special education instructional costs for students with low incidence disabilities. Examples include:
 - LEAs have claimed capital expenditures that are not direct instructional costs.
 - Salaries of local administrators, other than regional program staff, are partially supported through RTRP funds.

4. A large majority of students (75 percent) claimed for tuition reimbursements are served in regular schools and not in separate special education centers.

Findings

5. LEAs that do not participate in RTRPs receive significantly less state financial support than those in RTRPs for serving the same disability groups.
 - More non-participating LEAs are viewing participation in a RTRP as increasing their capacity to provide intense support in the least restrictive environment.

6. Placement options available through RTRPs are viewed as part of the continuum of services required by IDEA. Further, staff members in RTRPs reported that many of the students served in the regional programs would be candidates for private day placements without the option of the regional services.

Findings

7. Special Education administrators in LEAs not participating in RTRPs indicated that accessing regional funds would greatly enhance capacity to provide professional development and to “cost-share” difficult-to-staff positions such as Board Certified Behavior Analysts and mental health providers.

8. Some students with reimbursable disabilities appear to be claimed for reimbursement for the purpose of generating additional support (i.e., these students are served in their respective home schools with no evidence of additional regional services).

Issues for Further Study

1. The VDOE should modify the current rate package requirements and submission process.

Issues for Further Study

2. The VDOE should examine the concept of replacing categorical disability groups (e.g., emotional disabilities) with “students with disabilities who have expensive and/or intense support needs” for future funding.

Issues for Further Study

3. The VDOE should examine ways to provide equitable financial support for all LEAs in serving students with disabilities who have expensive and/or intense support needs.
 - In any proposed new model, VDOE should do a thorough analysis of the potential impact to state and local budgets, staffing requirements, and federal and state special education regulations.

Issues for Further Study

4. The VDOE should explore with LEAs the development of a system to track and report the outcomes of students claimed for Regional Tuition Reimbursement Programs in order to ensure high quality service delivery.