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- **Overview of special education enrollment and spending in Massachusetts**

- Special education eligibility
- Maximum feasible benefit vs. FAPE
- Managing large swings in local special education budgets

The Massachusetts Department of Education measures enrollment as a share of public school enrollment, while the Federal Department of Education measures special education enrollment as a share of total children ages 3 to 21. In this report, we use the Federal measure when we are comparing Massachusetts to other states.

MEASURES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLLMENT

MA DOE measure

Total children in special
education (ages 3-21)

=

17%

Total public school
enrollment

Federal DOE measure

Total children in special
education (ages 3-21)

=

11%

Total children ages
3-21

There are benefits to both measures

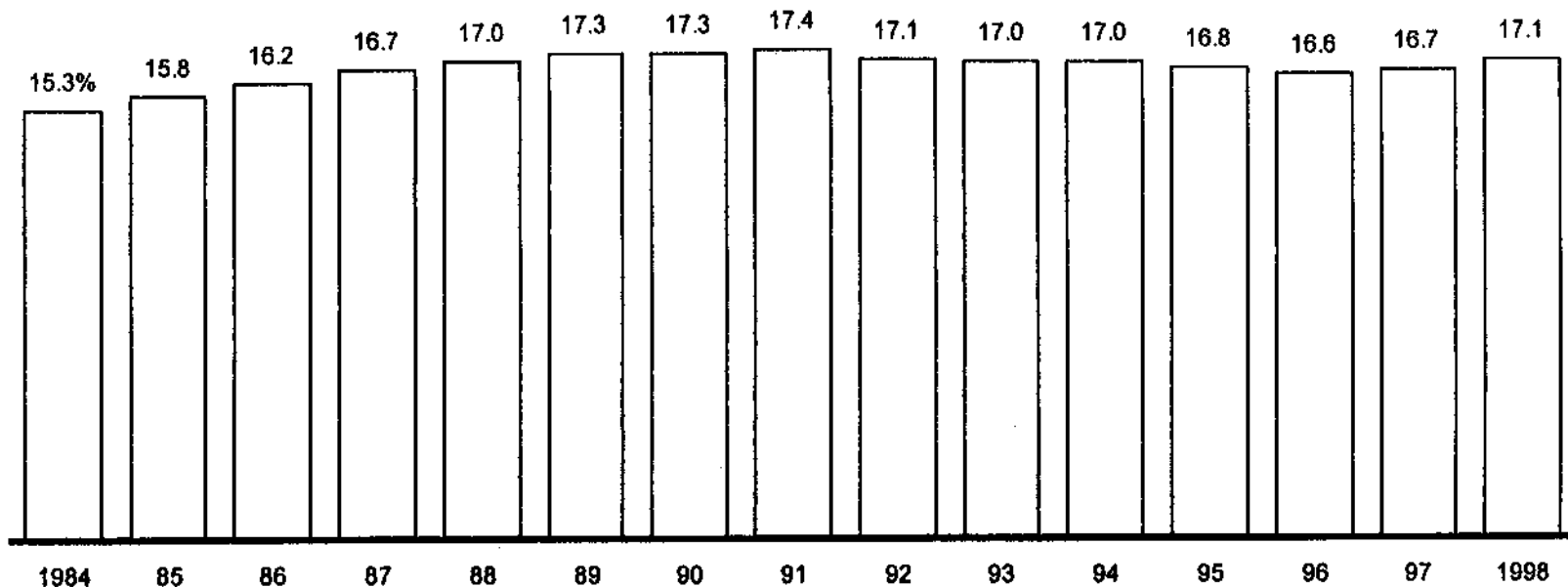
- MA DOE measure gives a better sense of burden of special education spending on public school budget
- Federal DOE measure enables comparison of enrollment across states, by eliminating effects of different rates of private school enrollment

We use the Federal measure when comparing MA with other states

Using the Massachusetts DOE measure of enrollment, special education enrollment as a share of public school students rose steadily until 1991, declined somewhat after that, and has recently increased again.

SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS AS A SHARE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Percentage of public school children ages 3-21



Number of
special
education
students

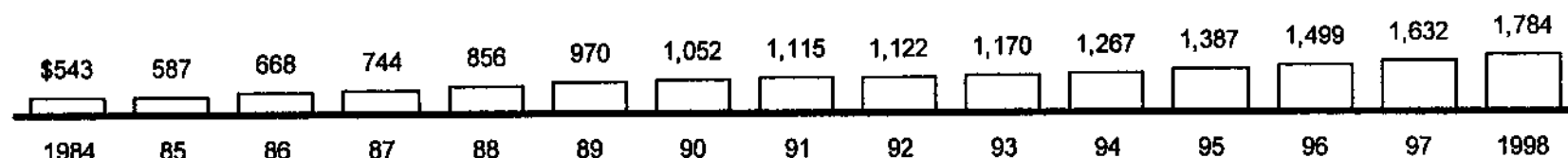
131,864	133,611	135,411	137,760	140,326	143,373	144,707	147,732	147,727	149,431	151,843	153,912	155,128	159,042	164,925
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Total education spending (regular education plus special education) for special education children in Massachusetts has grown steadily in dollar terms over the past two decades. However, as a share of total education spending it has flattened recently, probably due to significant increases in other education spending.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SPENDING IN MASSACHUSETTS – 1984-1998

Total cost of educating Massachusetts special education children*

\$ Millions

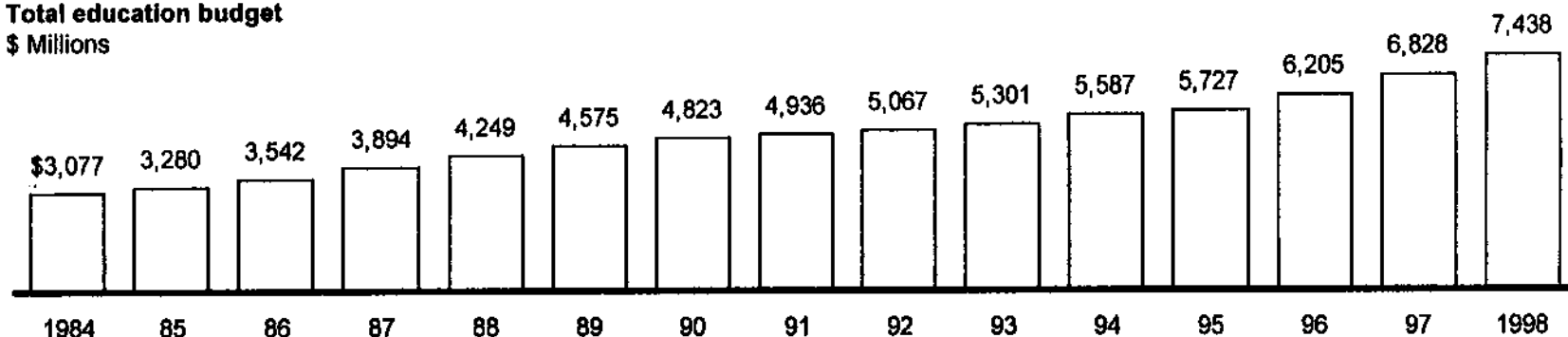


CAGR**
1984-98

8.9%

Total education budget

\$ Millions

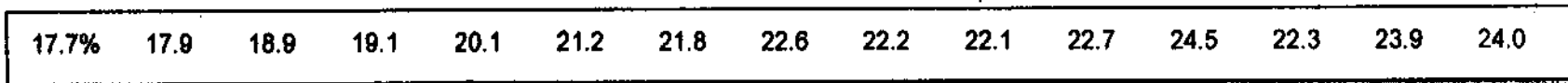


CAGR
1983-98

7.7%

Special education as a percentage of total education budget

Percent



* Includes regular education and special education costs of educating special education children

** CAGR = Compound annual growth rate

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education; team analysis

When all costs associated with educating special education children – regular education plus special education spending – are accounted for, the cost of educating these children comprises nearly a quarter of the total education budget in Massachusetts.

COST OF EDUCATING SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS – 1998

	Enrollment*	X	Average education cost per student	=	Total education costs of special education students
Public school**	158,780	X	\$9,840	=	\$1,562,400,000
Day school	4,919	X	\$34,242	=	\$168,400,000
Residential	1,226	X	\$43,473	=	\$53,300,000
Total					\$1,784,100,000

Massachusetts
spends 24.0% of
its public
education dollars
on the 17%
of publicly funded
students (11%
of children
ages 3-21)
enrolled in
special education

$$\frac{\text{Total education costs of special education students}}{\text{Total education budget}} = \frac{\$1,784,100,000}{\$7,438,300,000} = 24.0\%$$

* Headcounts as of December 1, 1998

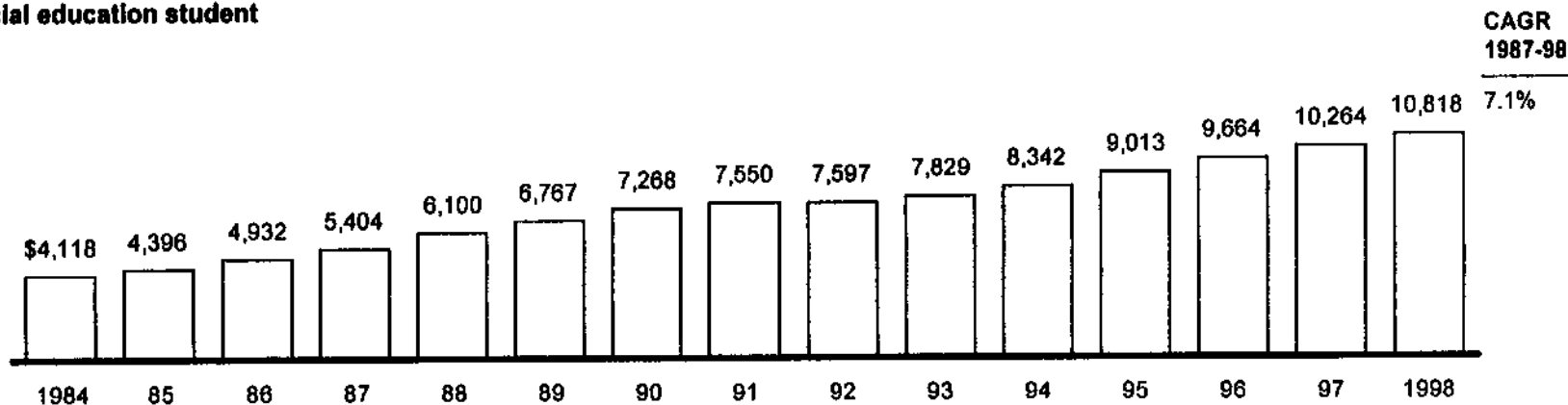
** Includes prototypes 502.1, 502.2, 502.3, 502.4, 502.7, 502.8

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education; team analysis

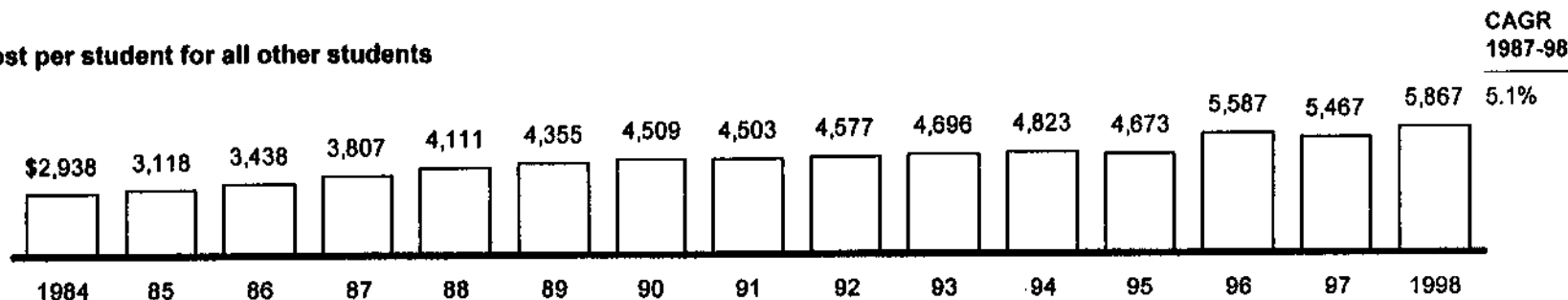
The average total education cost per special education student has grown faster than the total education cost per student for all other students over the past decade. Since 1984, the ratio of education costs per special education student to that of all other students has increased from 1.40 to 1.84, roughly a 30 percent increase.

PER STUDENT COST OF EDUCATING STUDENTS IN MASSACHUSETTS

Cost per special education student
\$ Dollars



Education cost per student for all other students
\$ Dollars



Ratio of cost per special education student to cost per all other students	1.40	1.41	1.43	1.42	1.48	1.55	1.61	1.68	1.66	1.67	1.73	1.92	1.73	1.88	1.84
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