



Nauset Public Schools

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Massachusetts Inter-district School Choice Program

The Massachusetts School Choice program was established in 1991 (MGL c 76 sect 128). The Nauset Regional School District began participating in the the Choice program in 1997, at which time Nauset had 5.5 FTE students coming in through the Choice program and 13.8 FTE students leaving the District through Choice.

School Choice Tuition Revenues (Edited from the DESE Web Site) – 1-15-2021

While the School Choice Statute does not provide explicit guidance as to the allowable uses of choice tuition revenue, the requirement that municipalities place such revenues in a special account for use by the school committee indicated a legislative intent that they be used for the general purposes of the school choice program. School choice tuition is intended to cover any additional out of pocket expenses associated with students who are enrolled under the choice program and to provide a financial incentive to encourage districts to participate in the program. Therefore, allowable expenditures include any expenditure for staff, materials, equipment, or services that directly enhance the quality of a district's educational program and benefit students who currently attend a district's schools. Local school committees may not transfer funds for the payment of debt service, even if the debts were incurred by the municipality for a school related capital expenditure, as such expenditures are not within the scope of the school committee's power or authority.

Under the Current Chapter 70 formula, the pupils at a receiving district are credited toward the *sending* district's foundation enrollment. However, any low-income increments for those pupils are credited to the receiving districts' foundation budgets.

Why School Choice works for the Nauset Regional Schools

Nauset, along with all other Cape high schools, continues to participate in School Choice because of the significant advantages it brings to our member towns and their school-aged children, namely:

- Positive income stream
- Additional income contributes to a wide variety of courses that deepen and broaden the school curriculum, enriching the educational experience for all students
- Increases the diversity of the Nauset student body by bringing in students from more diverse backgrounds and cultures.

School Choice provides a very significant revenue stream (1.74 million in FY20) that not only enables Nauset Middle School and Nauset High School to offer an extensive program of studies, but the funds also allow the District to reduce assessments (taxes) to the member towns. How is this possible when the base tuition rate is only \$5,000? It has to do with the distribution of the students into our classrooms. To understand how the school choice tuition benefits Nauset financially, even at \$5,000 per student, we identified the home towns of each student enrolled and matched that with the courses they are enrolled in. We have attached a summary of this data collected for all of our English classes at the high school as of October 2020. The data show that on average there are 10.3 students per course from one of the four member towns or from Truro or Provincetown and 2.97 students from other towns attending under School Choice. The percentage of school choice students in each course varies from 0% to 47%. The average % of Choice students in all of our English classes in October 2020 was 22%.

In most cases, the additional cost to educate a School Choice student is limited to the cost of any consumable supplies. In the example of our English classes, the District is already paying for the salary of the teacher, the heat and electricity costs, and general operating costs of the **10.3** students per class who attend from the member towns. So there is little added expense to add an average of about 3 School Choice students to each English class at Nauset High School.

There are of course some situations where we have added a teacher to accommodate the School Choice students and keep class size reasonable for students from our member towns. For the 2020-2021 school year, we estimate that about 6-7 teachers teaching 4-5 course sections each are needed to accommodate the 198 students who attend Nauset High under School Choice and keep class sizes for all students at a reasonable level. The cost for these teachers is approximately. \$644,085 based on 6.5 teachers @\$84,750 each (Nauset's average teacher salary per DESE FY18) plus the cost of fringe benefits (health and life insurance). With expected revenue from School Choice in FY20 to be \$1,735,199 & FY21 to be \$1,549,403 the School Choice program is clearly financially beneficial to our District.

Why are some of the High School classes so small?

When you review the data on enrollment in our English classes, you will notice that some classes are very small. The reasons for this vary. In some cases the course is a special education inclusion class where enrollment is purposefully kept small. In some cases, a small group of students needed to take a course but a new section had to be added to accommodate their schedule of other classes. Still other classes are small because a few students needed to take a required class to matriculate into the next grade or in order to accumulate enough credits to graduate. Our goal is to meet the needs of each and every students in the most effective way possible.

Why else is School Choice beneficial to Nauset students?

Beyond financial benefits, there are at least two other major benefits to the School Choice program in Nauset – the positive impact on the Program of Studies – the courses we can offer - and the addition of students from diverse backgrounds, race and cultures.

Again, when we reviewed our core classes in English, we found that very few of the classes would not run even if there were no school choice students enrolled at Nauset High. On the other hand, Nauset students – from member towns and from School Choice – can take a wide variety of courses

that we would likely not be able to afford to offer without the additional revenue from School Choice. Some of these courses include: Advanced Placement Art, American Sign Language, Level 4 German, Latin 2, Criminology, Botany, Salt Water Ecosystems, American Pop Culture, and even some sections of Advanced Placement Calculus or AP Statistics to name a few. These courses not only attract students to Nauset from all over Cape Cod, but they provide an unmatched opportunity for member students to challenge themselves and pursue their individual interests and passions. In addition, the School Choice students also expose our member students to more diverse backgrounds, cultures and races. The Outer Cape can be a very isolating place, and some students do not have numerous opportunities to venture off Cape. So the addition of 198 students with different backgrounds and experiences enriches all of our students in a way that may not be possible without participation in School Choice.

In Conclusion

School Choice makes sense for Nauset financially and educationally. We intend to continue to market our Regional Schools throughout the Cape as an outstanding opportunity for students to attend one of the best high schools in Massachusetts.