

A Message from the Holmdel Township Board of Education

Inclusion and ARRA: Two Years Later

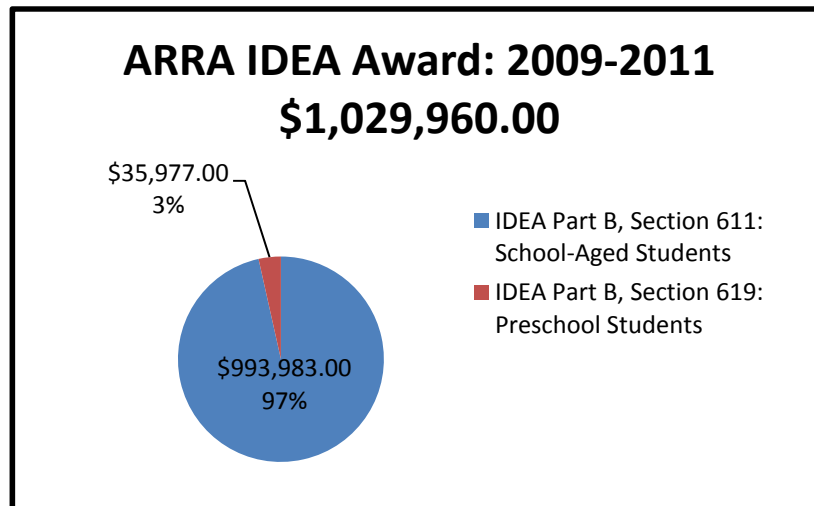
The Holmdel Township Public Schools are committed to providing children of all abilities a high quality education in an inclusive environment. Our differentiated instruction (DI) approach to education supports this philosophy by requiring our teachers to prepare instruction to meet the needs of all children in an inclusive classroom, from the most challenged to the most gifted.

Inclusion and DI not only help special education students fully participate, but they also enrich and improve the experience of general education students, both academically and socially. For example, an integrated setting helps our children learn to accept individual differences and to overcome misconceptions about others who have special needs.

However, successful inclusion is not as simple as placing a student with special needs in a general education classroom. It requires providing that student and his teacher with the appropriate support structure to succeed. To that end, Holmdel has long sought to support the unique special education and related services of students with special needs, while at the same time implementing school-wide programs to improve outcomes for all students. To our good fortune, two years ago, the Holmdel Township Public Schools were awarded a grant that enabled us to continue improving such initiatives.

ARRA

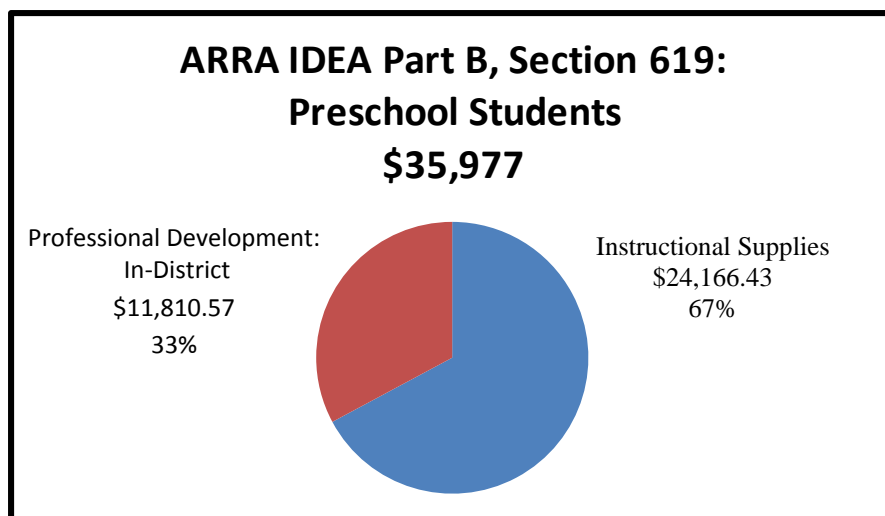
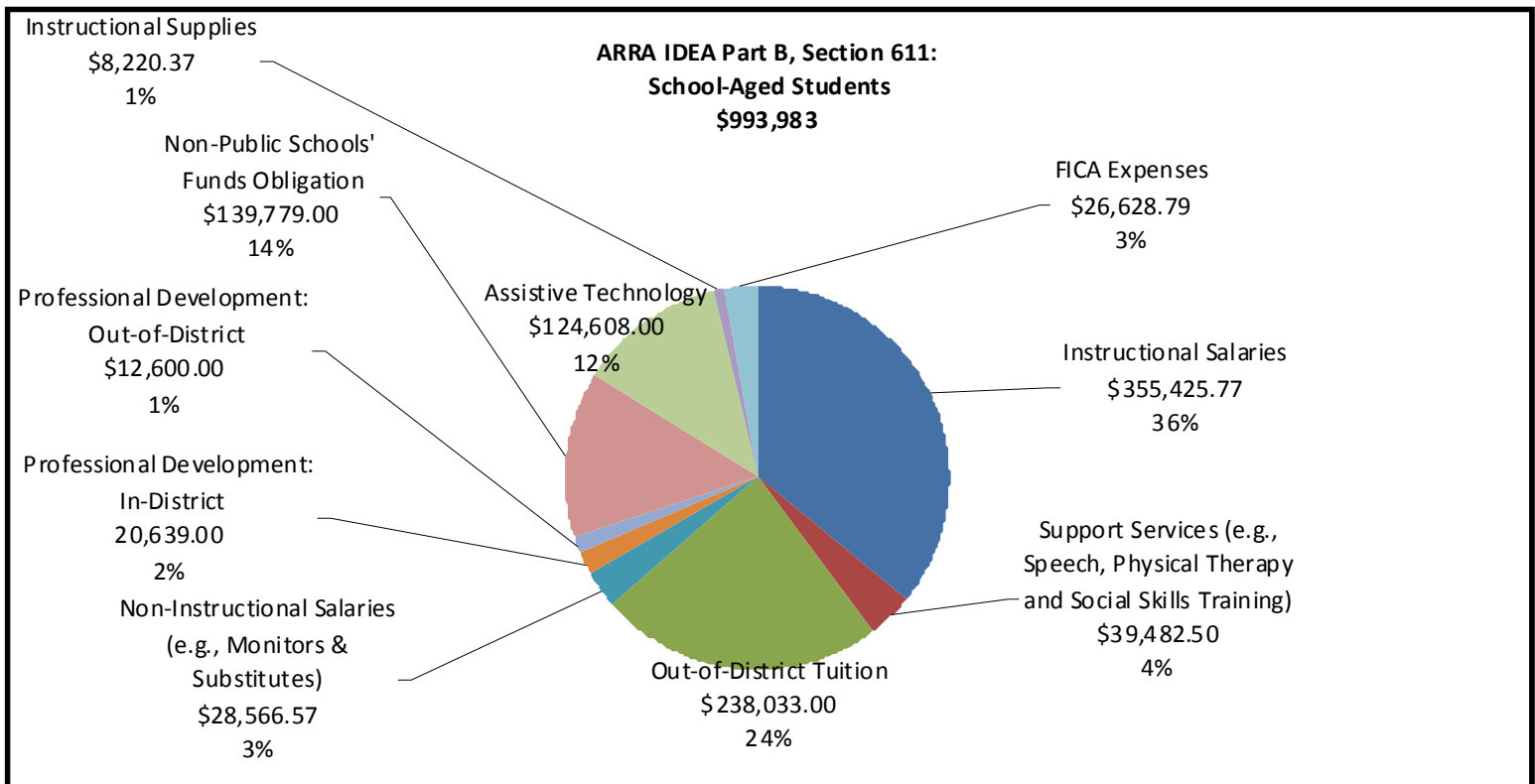
Under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), Holmdel received \$1,029,960.00 for the special education needs of school-aged and preschool students. The funds were distributed through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which requires that children with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment to meet their unique needs and to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.



The ARRA award was limited to use over a two-year period, commencing Summer 2009 and concluding September 30, 2011. ARRA provided a short-term infusion of funding for investments, with the optimal goal of producing sustainable long-term benefits. To ensure transparency, ARRA imposed strict record keeping and reporting requirements. Moreover, the uses were determined by federal and state statutes, regulations and guidance.

Allocation

In consideration of the above parameters, it was especially important to prudently invest the grant monies. The school district identified the following focus areas of need for ARRA expenditures: 1. *Integrated Preschool Program*; 2. *Assistive Technology*; 3. *Instructional and Non-Instructional Salaries*; 4. *Support Services*; 5. *Professional Development*; and 6. *Out-of-District Placement Tuition*. Particular attention was made to distribute equitably the funds to benefit a wide student population: from preschool to high school, as well students requiring out-of-district placements. The charts below detail how the monies were allocated.



Two areas of ARRA investment are particularly noteworthy:

Integrated Preschool Program

The state of New Jersey had issued an unfunded mandate requiring all school districts to establish a preschool program. At the same time, Holmdel had been instructed by the state to provide more opportunities for our preschool children with special needs in the least restrictive environment. Consequently, the school district used this opportunity to develop an integrated/inclusion program for children of all abilities. The start-up costs associated with this new program would have added to the strain of the tough economic situation already faced by the school district. Fortunately, ARRA funds were able to cover all these expenditures, including the classroom supplies, the new curriculum, and the professional development.

Assistive Technology

By expanding the use of Assistive Technology (AT) devices and training services with ARRA funds, the school district has helped to further achievement for students with special needs by increasing their access to educational opportunities and the general education curriculum. AT examples include SoundField Systems, notebook and desktop computers, LCD TVs, LCD and ELMO overhead projectors, and supporting software.

The above are just two examples in which, thanks to ARRA, the Holmdel Township Public Schools have been able to implement self-sustaining initiatives to enhance the educational experience of our students well beyond the two-year term of the grant--with the added benefit of not placing an increased financial obligation on our community during these tough economic times. More importantly, the ARRA investments complement the district's underlying philosophy of providing children of all abilities a high quality education in an inclusive environment.

On behalf of my Board colleagues,

Ana M. Vander Woude

Member, Holmdel Board of Education

There are several easy ways to stay informed of district/schools happenings. Please visit the district website at www.holmdelschools.org for event updates, school announcements, district progress reports, board meeting information, and much more. You can also subscribe to our E-Alert at <http://www.holmdel.k12.nj.us/home/joinlist.shtm> to receive email alerts on your choice of topics, such as school security alerts, committee notes, parent support group minutes, the district calendar, career opportunities, and school lunch menus. Another valuable source of information is the new Holmdel Parents Associations website: www.HolmdelParents.org .