

Boston Sunday Globe

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Massachusetts public schools spend more than **\$1 billion** annually on tuition for out-of-district special education placements. ■

■ Some families receive more than \$100,000 in annual tuition reimbursements, while others with children in need get much less or **nothing at all.**

It is a system rife with inequities, and sealed by secrecy.

The silent treatment



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Jonathan Pagan put his head down as his mom, Jenni-Lyn, wrote in the answers he gave her for a worksheet.

By Mandy McLaren
GLOBE STAFF

It had all come down to this, she thought, signing her name in careful script.

The years of agony endured by her son, who, at 11, still couldn't read or write. The antidepressants the boy had been prescribed in a desperate attempt to salvage his battered self-esteem. The thousands of dollars they'd scraped together for expert testing, to prove what their son's severe learning disability required. The tedious and maddening back-and-forth between their lawyer and the one employed by the boy's suburban Boston school district — the bargaining that yielded the document she had just signed.

She understood, now, with an excruciating clarity: Her silence could buy her son's salvation.

The price of the deal was secrecy and she paid it. No one else

would be told about the settlement and the nearly \$40,000 in annual tuition the district had agreed to pay for the boy's placement at a private school specializing in dyslexia — not her friends or her neighbors, and especially not the other special education parents still fumbling in the dark for clues as to how to help their own children.

It was a tradeoff laden with guilt.

"You want to be as talkative as you can be, but you're not allowed to," said the mom, who requested anonymity for fear of legal repercussions. "I want to scream, but I can't."

Over the past decade, hundreds of Massachusetts parents of students with special needs have been similarly muzzled, forced to sign nondisclosure agreements in order to secure the free and appropriate education to which their children are legally entitled, an investigation by the Globe's Great Divide education

NDA, Page A16

Be-leaf you me

Sunday: Mostly sunny. High: 58-63. Low: 40-45.

Monday: Mostly cloudy.

Complete report, **A24.**

Deaths, **A19-23.**

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\$6.00



Local arts organizations thrived with federal COVID funds, but what will happen as that money runs out? **SundayArts, N1.**

Tensions over the future of abortion access erupted in Boston as hundreds confronted a "Men's March" demonstration. **Metro, B1.**

Inside emergency shelters, tensions mount as time runs out for migrants

By Stephanie Ebbert
and Deirdre Fernandes
GLOBE STAFF

The family was washing their clothes at a Mattapan laundromat when they got the call: They had maxed out their time in a homeless shelter and no longer qualified for an extension. Their exit date — scheduled for that day — would be final. After three months sleeping on military cots in a National Guard armory, it was time to make their own way in Massachusetts. Where, they didn't know.

By the time they returned to the shelter in

Lexington, all their belongings had been stuffed into trash bags and left in heaps at the front of the armory. On top of that, their 4-year-old daughter had begun complaining of stomach pains and they wanted to take her to the hospital, said her father, Lherissonn Pompee.

The little girl's mother grew frantic. Facing eviction with a sick child, Manoucheka Joseph became irate with the shelter manager, then stormed into a trailer behind the building and confronted the Haitian Creole-speaking case managers.

SHELTERS, Page A14

Democrats at a loss after GOP trifecta

Little agreement within party over election fixes

By Tal Kopan
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON — There's one thing Democrats in Washington agree on right now: They have a problem. The party faced an apparent rejection by voters from nearly every part of their coalition — some turning to Donald Trump, many staying home — leading to the loss of Congress and the White House.

But the agreement ends when it comes to how to solve that problem, as they face a soul-searching moment without a clear party leader to guide the process. The New England delegation typifies the conundrum, as some of its more prominent members to the left and center have publicly diverged in their diagnoses of the issues, triggering discord and backlash.

The stakes are high for those intraparty debates, as Democrats stare down the start of the incoming Republican-controlled Washington and what will be a chaotic two years leading to the next election that could give them back a point of power in Congress.

DEMOCRATS, Page A12

For Latinos, the language of politics in a familiar voice

By Aidan Ryan
GLOBE STAFF
and Rachel Umansky-Castro
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

LAWRENCE — Frederick Frías wasn't initially sure where to look for information about the presidential election. A Spanish-speaking construction worker, Frías was struggling to afford everything from groceries to gas and wanted to vote for a candidate who would take action on affordability.

As Frías's friends urged him to look into supporting Donald Trump, he didn't turn to traditional English-language news outlets. Instead, he watched videos on YouTube after searching "How Trump can help economy" and "Trump helping Latinos," which helped influence his decision to cast his ballot for the president-elect.

"YouTube has the election information, but in Spanish," said Frías, 67, who came to Massachusetts from the Dominican Republic in 1985. "It's much easier."

As Vice President Kamala Harris and Trump increasingly bypassed mainstream news organiza-

LATINOS, Page A12



ALEX BRANDON/ASSOCIATED PRESS/FILE

Donald Trump supporters at a September campaign event in Tucson. The president-elect made gains with Latinos in 2024.

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Pictured: (Left to Right) Itamar Chalif, Rockland Trust; Holly Daniels Christensen, Dune Jewelry & Co.

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