



Shrewsbury Public Schools

March 2023

The purpose of this document is to provide answers to commonly asked questions related to the program and finances of the new RISE Program.

Program Requirements/Goal

Public school districts are required by law to educate students up to age 22 if their disability warrants services beyond high school. Shrewsbury Public Schools has typically sent our 18-22 year old population to the Assabet Valley Collaborative in Marlboro for these services. We pay a tuition and transportation cost for each student we send there.

Creating the in-house RISE Program will allow us to keep our students in district, in their own community, and receive a high-quality program at the same or lesser cost. It is very important to note that this is a mandated educational program that will contain a business operation as part of its programming. While this will be a “real” business, the program is not dependent on the business aspect for its funding; however, any profits will offset the overhead cost of the business. The program is projected to be a cost-effective alternative to paying to transport and enroll our 18-22 year old students in an out-of-district transition program.

The goal of creating the RISE Program is to provide students with the skills and experiences they need to successfully and independently navigate their local community. The focus is to increase students’ overall independence with functional academic life skills, employment opportunities, and community access. Best practices in transition services continue to evolve, including an increased emphasis on providing community-based opportunities for students to develop key life skills based upon their post-secondary vision and partnering with adult agencies who will support the students upon their 22nd birthday.

RISE looks to provide students with meaningful employment opportunities in their local community that focus on each student’s individual interests and strengths. Through the program students will have the opportunity to develop these skills through volunteer opportunities, internships, and paid employment. Once a student demonstrates independent employment skills through individual internships additional opportunities can be identified.

Curriculum Planning

The core curriculum with focus on these key areas:

- Functional Life Skills
- Employment
- Career Preparation
- Functional Academics
- Community Navigation and Safety
- Health and Relationships
- Cooking
- Home Maintenance
- Leisure

Similar Public School Programs in Other Districts

While all schools are required to provide services to 18-22 year olds with disabilities when warranted by the IEP, not all of them have their own retail operation. There is a growing trend to do this and listed below are just a few districts in our area who have opened a retail operation.

Westboro: Sugar Shack
 Grafton: Bread Guy Breads
 Hopkinton: Excel Program

Projected Enrollment

Given what we know about our current students and their capacities and disabilities, we are projecting the following enrollment for the next four years. Please keep in mind that students may enter the program at age 18 and stay, if appropriate, up to age 22. Students will be aging into the program, exiting the program, and remaining in the program during the course of these four years.

'23-'24= 18 students
 '24-'25= 24 students
 '25-'26= 31 students
 '26-'27= 32 students

Property Lease

The property at 557 Main Street was secured through a competitive procurement process that was extended several times due to a lack of responses but resulting in a successful outcome in September 2023. Shrewsbury Town Counsel was the lead in negotiating lease terms with the property owner.

We have entered into a five year lease that will commence upon completion of renovations. The owner has agreed to fund a \$296,420 renovation project with that cost already implicitly

factored in the proposed and agreed monthly lease payment. We expect the renovation project to be completed by April/May 2023. At the end of the fifth year, there is an option to extend the lease for an additional two years.

A copy of the property lease costs for all five years is shown below:

LEASE

THIS LEASE (this "Lease") is made as of the 15th day of December, 2022 by and between CP 557 Main Street, LLC, a Massachusetts limited liability company having a principal place of business at One West Boylston Street, Suite LL05, Worcester, Massachusetts 01605 ("Landlord"), and The Town of Shrewsbury, having a principal place of business at 100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545 ("Tenant"), for the land and the building located at 557 Main Street, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts 01545 (such building, together with the land upon which they are situated, being herein referred to as the "Premises"). The following schedule (the "Schedule") sets forth certain basic terms of this Lease:

SCHEDULE

1. Premises:The land and the building located at 557 Main Street, Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. The building portion of the Premises (the "Building") contains approximately 3,636 +/- rentable square feet of floor area as shown on the plans described on Exhibit A and incorporated herein by this reference.

2. Annual Base Rent:

Operating Year 1:	\$105,444.00
Operating Year 2:	\$108,607.32
Operating Year 3:	\$111,879.72
Operating Year 4:	\$115,224.84
Operating Year 5:	\$118,679.04

3. Monthly Base Rent:

Lease Months 1-12:	\$8,787.00
Lease Months 13-24:	\$9,050.61
Lease Months 25-36:	\$9,323.31
Lease Months 37-48:	\$9,602.07
Lease Months 49-60:	\$9,889.92

Transportation Services

a) Home to School Transportation: per legal mandate, students are provided "home to school" transportation just as they did in high school. For the '23-24 school year and beyond we have contracted van services via AA Transportation to provide this service.

b) Field Trips, Life Skills, & Other Transportation: Through special education grant funds the district purchased a van for use by RISE Program staff. We have a second van on order which will be needed given the enrollment increase for FY24 and need for multiple activities to be occurring simultaneously.

The School Dept. utilizes the town refueling station located at the SELCO operations and the vehicle is insured under the town's commercial vehicle coverage.

The Asst. Manager for Finance and Operations [April Yu] has direct responsibility for monitoring van maintenance services.

Retail Store Operations

We expect store hours to be Tuesday through Saturday, 10am-4pm and closed Sunday and Monday.

The retail store manager will be responsible for all of the merchandising strategy, store operations and effectiveness. Specific product mix and space allocations will be made after the retail manager is hired and renovations completed. It will be a "general store" concept with a mix of candy, Shrewsbury-centric products, and a rotating/seasonal mix of "pop-up vendor" products. All of these decisions will be made in the context of our ability to train students with disabilities in the basics of customer service, inventory management, cashiering etc.

On a related note, we plan to make public parking available in the evenings/non operating hours and will communicate this via on site signage.

We are using the following start-up timeline based upon expected completion of the renovations. All of these dates are subject to change based on our capacity/pacing to complete.

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| Ongoing | -Branding/retail store website framework
-Communication with student families for Summer/Fall 2023 |
| March | -Hire teaching staff for Summer 2023 start |
| May 1st | -Renovations complete/Move-in
-Hire job coaches/paraprofessionals for Summer 2023 start |
| June | -Begin educational programming from this location with current students [3]
-Hire the retail store manager
-Begin outfitting retail store fixtures, point-of-sale (POS) system |
| July | -Operate summer program from this location |

- Develop specific merchandising strategy and order initial inventory
- August
 - Set-up inventory and pricing strategy
 - Staff training on store operations/POS system
 - Begin marketing store opening
- September
 - Silent store opening/operational adjustments
- Sept./October - Grand Opening

Budget & Funding Sources

A program specific budget has been provided via School Committee report on March 15, 2023. The total program costs for FY24 are budgeted at just over \$1.1M. The cost per pupil is **less than** what we would otherwise be spending to send these same students to an out of district placement.

For FY24 we have funding available from two sources to get this program going. First, we will use the American Rescue Plan Grant [one-time funding], totaling \$390,954 for start up expenses related to equipping and outfitting the educational spaces and retail operation. Secondly, we will use available funds [FY23 carry-over] from the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA-240 grant] to fund the staffing and facility-related expenses. The IDEA grant is an annual, recurring grant and we plan to use this source and town-appropriated funds in future fiscal years [FY25 and beyond] to fund the recurring RISE Program costs. [These are dollars that would otherwise be budgeted in our special education tuition account to pay for these required services.]

Building Maintenance and Operations

In accordance with our lease, the owner is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the structure, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems. We are responsible for routine maintenance [clogged sink] or items broken after occupancy [holes in a drywall]. We will engage Public Bldgs support for projects within their scope and capacity and rely upon their contractors for items beyond their scope.

Security

We plan to install a video surveillance system that is on our network and will have the same real-time view and approximately 3 week storage capacity. The cameras will be installed by the School Dept. contractor.

We are purchasing a cash register/point of sale system and software. We expect to primarily have cash-free payments but will inevitably have some portion of cash receipts. Like our school student activity account operations, we will maintain an onsite drop safe and make regular bank deposits.

Insurance Coverages

The RISE Program operations located at 557 Main Street will be covered by the Town's General Liability, property contents, and business interruption insurances just like our other schools are covered. The owner maintains his own property and liability insurances as well.

Fundraising

A team consisting of The Asst. Superintendent for Student Services, the Assistant Director of Special Education, the RISE Program Coordinator, Asst. Superintendent for Community Partnerships and Wellbeing, Asst. Superintendent for Finance & Operations, and Development Coordinator has already begun to meet to discuss fundraising support of the RISE Program.

We have been approached by several institutions that wish to provide business sponsorships. We are looking at some models similar to funding opportunities created for the turf field project. We have also created an online donation link on the RISE Program website to receive individual donations.

