



## Special Education and Student Services– Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Overview

Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services

Meghan Bartlett, Assistant Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel

### Key Areas of Budget Responsibility

- I. Responsible for supervising all special education staff, including directors, nurses, teachers, therapists, specialists, psychologists, adjustment counselors, applied behavior technicians, child-specific aides, RISE, and other special education aides.
- II. Oversees and ensures compliance with state and federal special education and 504 Accommodation legal requirements including the preparation of all special education and 504 plans and reports required by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the federal Department of Education, and Shrewsbury Public Schools. Coordinates the creation and maintenance of complete and accurate records on all students receiving special education services through an Individualized Education Program and/or 504 Accommodation Plans.
- III. Fiscally and programmatically responsible for out of district special education placement programs.
- IV. Cooperates and contracts with public and private agencies and schools, organizations, and other professionals in securing and providing services for students with special needs.
- V. Oversees the creation and maintenance of a current list and description of program options available for school age children with special needs.
- VI. Oversees and coordinates the staffing of the summer special education programs.
- VII. Ensures processing and submissions of Circuit Breaker Reimbursement Program and federal Medicaid reimbursement claims.
- VIII. Seeks and applies for appropriate state and federal grants.
- IX. Design and facilitate district professional development department offerings, including the key strategic priorities of co-teaching, the new IEP rollout, alternatives to discipline, and mental and behavioral health training for implementation of a multi-tiered system of support across all grades and buildings.
- X. Designing programming to meet our diverse student body including the design and implementation of a transition program and retail store.

### Key Budget Investments for Fiscal Year 2025

Mandated Services Need

Key investments of \$305,000

Included in this category are:

- 0.5 FTE Elementary Special Education Teacher (\$37,500)
- 1.0 FTE Occupational Therapist (\$75,000)
- 1.0 FTE Speech Language Pathologist (\$75,000)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 FTE SHS Adjustment Counselor –Previously funded through ESSER 3 Grant (\$77,000)</li> <li>1.0 FTE SHS Structured Reading Teacher-Adjustment from Tutor to Teacher (\$40,500)*</li> </ul> <p>*Updated mandated need not reflected in the initial Superintendent’s FY25 Budget Recommendation</p>	
Clinical Coordinator	Key investment of \$90,000
<p>Included in this category is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 FTE Clinical Coordinator (Board-Certified Behavior Analyst role position) to be assigned to specialized programs to address and support students with significant behavioral health concerns; estimated salary of \$90,000 for experience and level of education and training</li> </ul>	
Elementary Therapeutic Program*	Key investment of \$145,000
<p>Included in this category is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher and 1.0 FTE School Adjustment Counselor positions to address clinical and academic support to target social, emotional, and behavioral skill deficits for elementary students. This program will be designed to support students in developing foundational social, emotional, and behavioral skills to be successful in the least restrictive environment. Students who enter this program will access assessment, intensive skill-based treatment, and programming developed by a multidisciplinary team. Students will develop skills essential to stabilize and re-enter the least restrictive learning environment. Estimated at ~ \$72,500 for each role.</li> </ul> <p>*This program is based on ongoing analysis of student needs at the elementary level and is not included in the initial Superintendent’s FY25 Budget Recommendation; funding will need to be identified in order to implement. This type of program would provide in-district therapeutic services at a level that currently would require out-of-district placement, potentially saving out-of-district costs</p>	
<b>Efficiencies Through Use of Grants or Alternative Funding in Fiscal Years 2024 &amp; 2025</b>	
<p>Grant or alternative funds used for Student Services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$1,784,122- Federal entitlement 240 grant to support the RISE (Staff, Building Operations, Supplies, etc.), Disproportionality, Proportionate Share, Out of District Transportation, 2 SHS Student Support Instructors</li> <li>\$22,855- DESE Social, Emotional, Mental Health Grant (311)- supporting professional development</li> <li>\$38,702- DESE Professional Improvement Grant (274)- supporting the new IEP program from DESE</li> <li>\$10,000- DESE Chronic Absenteeism grant- supporting develop of process and procedures to address chronic absenteeism</li> <li>\$10,000- DESE- <a href="#">Social Emotional Behavioral Academy</a> participation with DESE consultant</li> <li>\$25,000- <a href="#">JED Foundation</a> consultant program review and consultation</li> <li><b>Estimated total use of grants/alternative funds in FY25: \$1,905,679</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Other Examples of Efficiencies in Fiscal Year 2024-2025</b>	
<p>Other Examples of Efficiencies for Student Services: Retail sales and fundraising work for <a href="#">RISE and Maple &amp; Main</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Estimated total of value of other efficiencies: to date: \$90,000</b></li> </ul>	



**To: School Committee**

**From: Meg Belsito, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services**

**Meghan Bartlett, Assistant Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel**

**Re: Fiscal Year 2025 Budget for Special Education and Student Services**

The mission of the Special Education and Pupil Personnel Department is to identify students who meet the federal and state criteria for a disability requiring specialized instruction and/or accommodations through an Individualized Educational Program or 504 Accommodation Plan. It is Shrewsbury's responsibility to provide services in the least restrictive environment that will empower access to our students to become active members of society based on their individual strengths and abilities. As a district, we are committed to providing an inclusive setting of dedicated multidisciplinary teams while involving parents and community members to help meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all students in a respectful and positive environment.

Our vision is to afford *all* students the opportunity to succeed through high quality, evidence-based practices, and we will do so by connecting and communicating with families, students, school teams, and the greater community. Together, we will focus on the positive attributes and recognize the individual strengths and achievements of our students while promoting their future successes.

Our Department, and district, prioritizes equity and access for all students. This ongoing work has ensured that the Shrewsbury Public Schools continue to meet high expectations with efficient and thoughtful resources and programs to meet the needs of all learners.

This report aims to assess the level of complexity within Special Education and Student Services. The dedicated staff within this sector demonstrate exceptional commitment, diligence, and passion towards supporting and instructing students, irrespective of their abilities. As the educational landscape evolves, our district remains steadfast in its mission to expand programs and services, catering to the diverse needs of all students. This expansion is geared towards enhancing social, emotional, academic, and behavioral outcomes across the board. We continue to celebrate many services and programs across the district such as the creation of the elementary transitions program, co-teaching partnerships, social, emotional, behavioral professional development and instructions, unified programming, RISE and Maple & Main.

**\*\*\*Of note, Nursing, Mental and Behavioral Health, and RISE (Reaching Independence through Supported Employment) reports and presentations will be given in the near future with more detailed information under separate cover.**

**Student Services Overview**

Each staff member plays a unique role in providing comprehensive support services to students in areas such as academics, mental health counseling, career planning, special education accommodations, behavior management, and crisis intervention. Together, they work collaboratively to ensure the well-being and success of all students in the school. The Student Services Department is comprised currently of the following:

Role	Amount
Directors (PreK-HS, Nursing, Counseling and Mental Health, Specialized Programs)	7.0 FTE
RISE Program Coordinator and Retail Manager	2.0 FTE
Teachers: PreK, Moderate, and Severe Licensed	72.0 FTE
Therapists (Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy)	4.8 OT FTE 13.6 SLP FTE 1.0 PT FTE
Clinicians: Psychologists and School Adjustment Counselors	31.0 FTE
District Clinical Coordinators	4.0 FTE
Paraprofessionals: ABA Technicians, Child Specific Assistants, Special Education Assistants, Preschool Assistants, Speech Language Assistants, Job Coaches	124.0 ABA Technicians FTE 60.0 Child Specific Assts. FTE 30.0 Special Education Assts. FTE 10.0 Preschool Assts. FTE 2.0 Speech/Language Assts. FTE 6.0 FTE ABA Job Coaches FTE

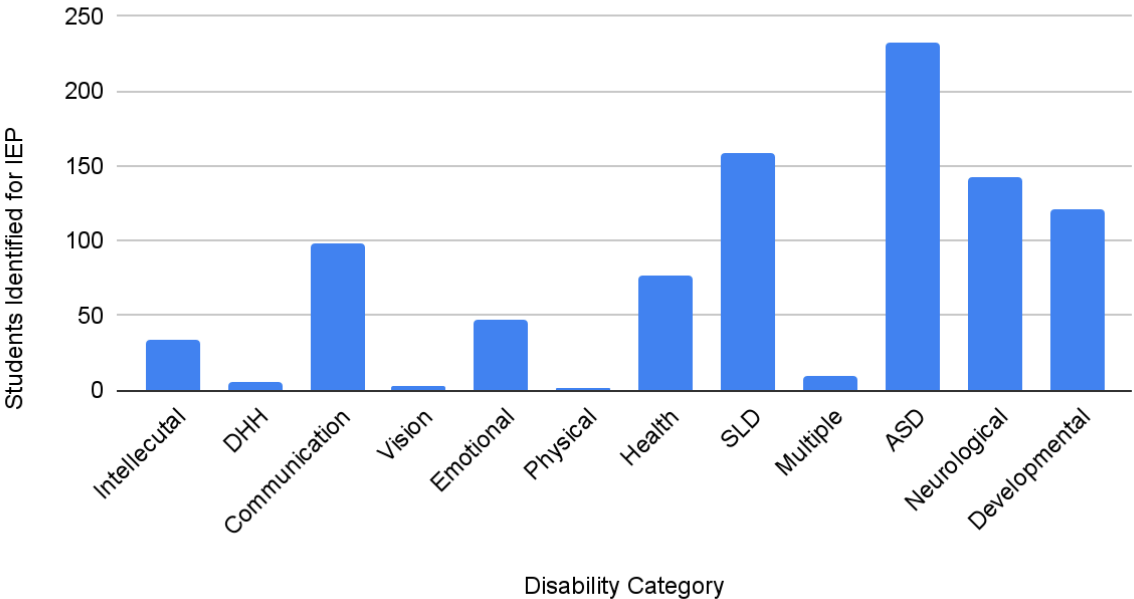
Nurses	13.6 FTE
Team Chairs	7.5 FTE
Secretaries	6.0 FTE
Current Staff	372.5 FTE

*\*This is a moving target with paraeducator staff frequently shifting roles for career advancement and staff resignations.*

Number of Students with Individualized Education Programs:

As of March 2024, we have 1055 students with active Individualized Education Programs (IEP) for ages 3-22 who are accessing special education services that require specially designed instruction. The concurrent data indicated that there are 124 students with active referrals for Special Education. This number is included in the total Special Education number of 1055 students. Students in referral are considered special education students until eligibility has been determined. The chart below breaks down the educational disability by eligibility of service. As it has been historically, qualification under Autism (ASD) remains our highest primary area of educational disability category.

Students Identified for IEP



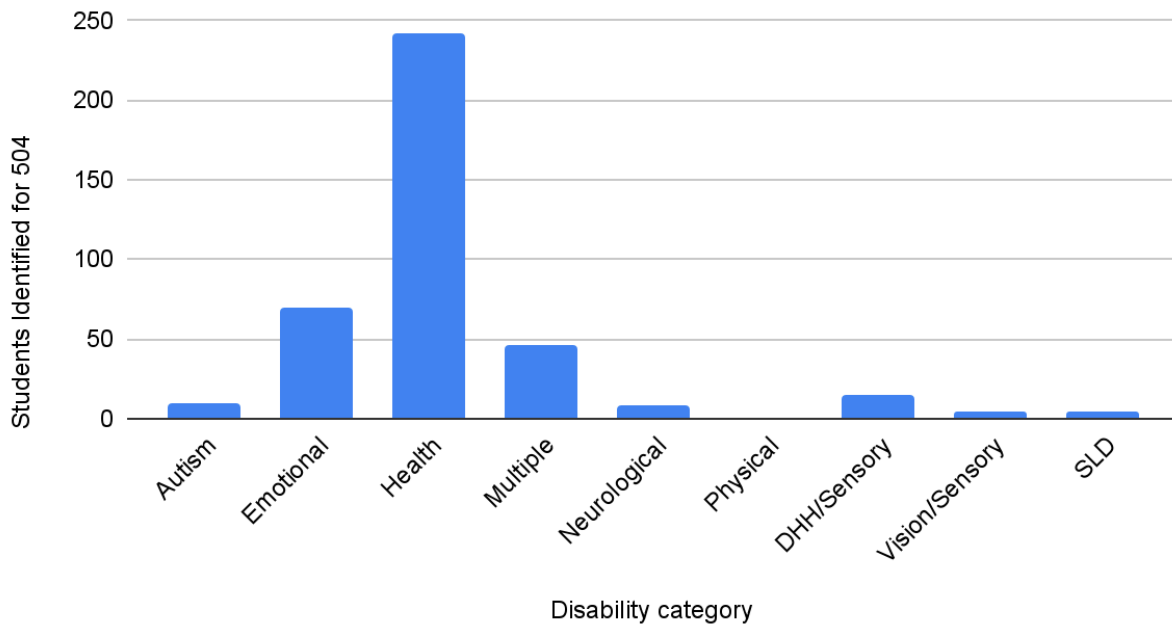
Key: DHH: Deaf & Hard of Hearing; SLD: Specific Learning Disability; ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder

Number of Students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans:

504 Accommodation Plans define eligibility as a diagnosed disability that is limiting one or more major life functions. To be eligible for a 504 plan, the student needs to have a record and be regarded as having such an impairment. Students that are eligible for a 504 Accommodation Plan do not require specially designed instruction, however, they do require accommodations within the classroom to access their education. 403 students are receiving accommodations within the classroom setting through Section 504 Accommodation Plans. There are an additional 25 students in referral for eligibility.

The district continues to identify Health Impairment as the primary disability category for 504 eligibility. Many students that have this as a category may identify as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, food allergies, Diabetes, Asthma or other health impairments. The district continues to see an increase trend in students with emotional disabilities becoming eligible for 504 Accommodation Plans. The Student Services Department will continue to support students with a variety of disabilities within both the IEP and 504 eligibility processes.

### Students Identified for 504



Key: DHH: Deaf & Hard of Hearing; SLD: Specific Learning Disability

**Analysis of Services:**

There continues to be an increasing trend of students qualifying for 504 Accommodation Plans and Individualized Education Programs based on data collected over a 5 year period. This increase is due to the larger number of referrals, students moving into the district, students with both IEPs and 504s, continued Child Find activities, and the impact of the school closure and mental health crisis.

School Year	Total Number of Enrolled Students	Students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans	Percentage of Students Receiving 504s	Students with Individualized Educational Programs	Percentage of Students with IEPs
2018-2019	6,207	206	3.0%	962	15.4%
2019-2020	6,251	235	3.0%	1,020	16.3%
2021-2022	6,008	275	4.5%	996	16.6%
2022-2023	6,076	336	5.5%	977	16.1%
2023-2024	6,108	403	6.6%	1055	17.3%

**Extended School Year Services (ESY):**

ESY services are required and developed for students with disabilities who qualify for a continuation of services based on the nature or severity of their disability or who exhibit substantial regression and/or significant recoupment throughout the school year. ESY eligibility and data tracking help teams make data-driven decisions. This data is used in annual team meetings to help the team determine the level and need for extended school year services. Throughout the school year, the ESY Coordinators and the special education leadership team meet monthly to address: staffing, program organization, student recommendations, and qualification for services. Student recommendation forms are reviewed and used to develop programming for students who require a longer school year.

**FY 24 Extended School Year Student Enrollment:**

Programming Type	Student Count
4 Week Half Day Academics	29
4 Week Half Day Intensive & ELC	3
4 Week Related Services Walk-In	9

5 Week Half Day PreK Classroom	19
5 Week Half Day RISE	16
6 Week Half Day Academic	70
6 Week Intensive & ELC Half-Day	99
6 Week Full Day Academic	14
6 Week Related Services Walk-In	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>

A total of 287 students accessed ESY services. However, this number only represents a portion of the ESY program. Many students who participate in the academic, intensive, and ELC programs also receive multiple related services on a weekly basis, which requires additional staff to complete all services during the summer.

**FY 24 Extended School Year Professional Staffing Plan:**

ESY Staff	Total FTE
Teachers: PreK & Moderate	9.5 FTE
Therapists (Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, Physical Therapy)	1.0 OT FTE* 13.0 SLP FTE 0.1 PT FTE
Structured Reading	2.0 FTE
Coordinators	2.0 FTE
RISE Coordinator and Retail Manager	2.0 FTE
ELC Coordinators	1.9 FTE

***\*0.2 OT Contracted Services***

**Out of District Programming:**

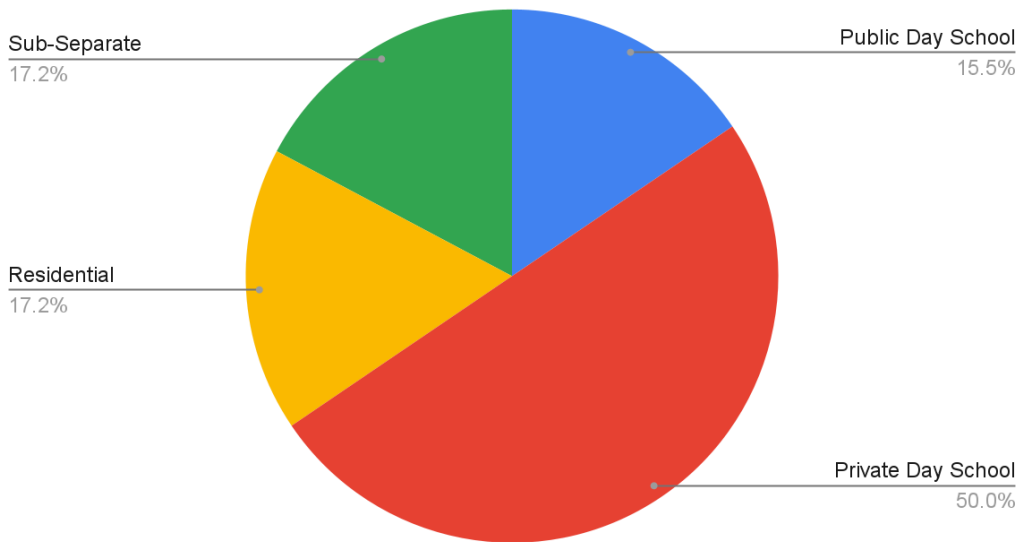
As previously mentioned, the mission of the Special Education Department is to provide services in the least restrictive environment that will empower and provide access to our students to become active members of society based on their individual strengths and abilities. There remains a population of students that, due to the scope and severity of their disability, the child will require a more restrictive educational experience in order to make effective progress commensurate with their disability.



When identifying programs for students to access their education, teams must consider placements that are gradually more restrictive than public schools.

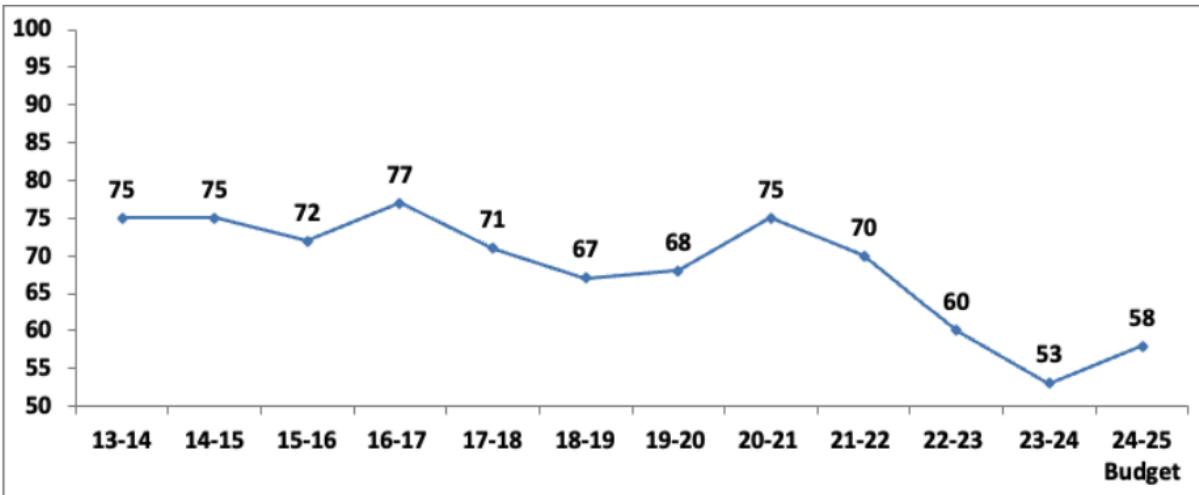
When considering out of district placements, approved programs grow in restrictive nature. Some out of district programs are still considered Substantially Separate placements. These are through collaboratives that are placed within a public school, or for students ages 18-22 accessing their entitlement services through a collaborative placement and are placed within the community setting. Students that access their education in a Public Day placement are accessing their education through a collaborative placement governed by a board of area town administrators. Private Day placements are for students who require an even more restrictive setting. These placements are [Chapter 766](#) approved placements and are sanctioned by the DESE. Residential Placements are also governed by the DESE. However, these placements are for students that due to the scope of their disability and safety needs, the child requires 24 hour 7 days a week, and 365 days coverage and supervision.

### Student Accessing OOD Placements



Out of district enrollment is projected to remain stable and or increase in the following fiscal year. This has to do with the complexity of student profile and ability to access their learning.

### Special Education Out of District Placements – Budgeted



The Special Education Department continues to review the profile of students that require more restrictive placements. This is a multi-tiered approach that includes further examination of the student demographics that are currently being serviced in an out of district placement and identifying if their unique needs could be met within the district, and/or what supports and services would be needed to have students transition to a less restrictive setting. This data aligns with the key investment for next fiscal year to develop and design an elementary therapeutic program to address student clinical and academic needs to target social, emotional, and behavioral skill deficits as a means to not refer this young population of students to an out of district placements.

#### **Out of District Fiscal Impact:**

As indicated above, the out of district budget is a moving target and may shift as students are accepted into approved special education programs. The [Operational Services Division](#) sets the tuition prices for M.G.L. approved private special education programs for purchase by cities and towns and Commonwealth departments. This year the Operational Services Division approved a 4.69% fiscal increase for all Chapter 766 approved schools. This rate of inflation has been applied to all out of district placements.

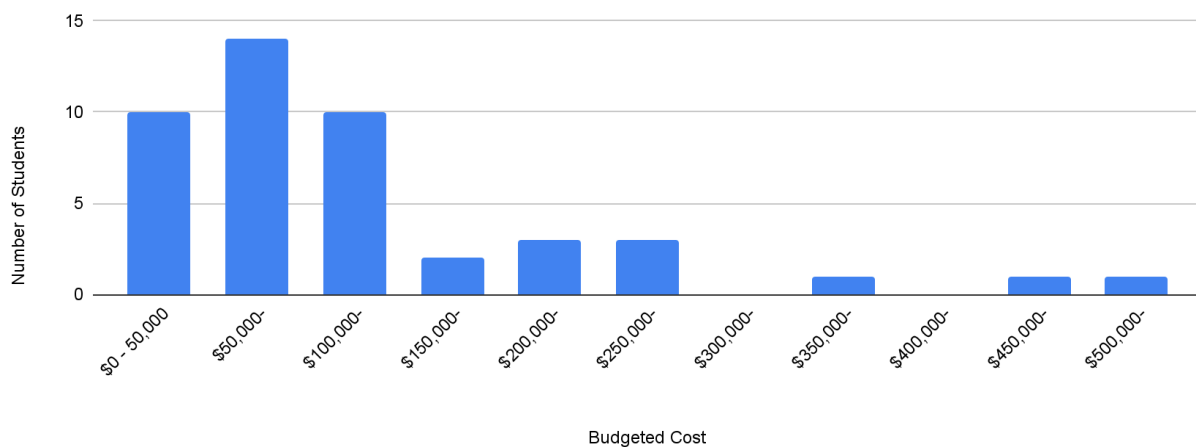
Even with the approved inflation rate for tuitions, there continues to be a staffing shortage within out of district placements which impacts the speed of student acceptance. Shrewsbury has 4 students who are waiting to be accepted to an out of district program. This is impactful to the student, family, and school community.

OSD governs and regulates Individual Price Authorization, 808 CMR 1.06(7)(a). An “Individual Price” is required for the payment of additional, unique or specialized services for a student that are required by an approved or amended Individual

Education Plan (IEP) which are not reimbursed in the program’s established price. This “Individual Price” may be for an additional 1:1 or other related service not regularly provided by the placement. Thus incurring an additional fee beyond the approved tuition cost. Funding cost for these additional services are determined by the program or contracted provider.

Because the number of students in out of district placements can fluctuate depending on varied circumstances, this projection could shift in either direction in the coming months. The charts below breaks down the number of forecasted out of district students by tuition cost. The total budgeted cost for out of district expenditures is currently estimated at \$6.63 Million for FY 25 (this total estimated cost does not reflect the proportion budgeted to be paid from state Circuit Breaker reimbursement funds, which is illustrated in the next section; it is likely that this estimate will change prior to the updated FY25 budget recommendation that will be made in April).

Cost Affiliated with Student OOD Enrollment, FY 25



**Special Education Circuit Breaker:**

The state’s Special Education Circuit Breaker reimbursement program began in fiscal year 2004 to provide additional funding to districts for high special education costs. Reimbursements are for the district’s prior year’s expenses. Each spring, the Student Services Office completes and submits claim forms to DESE listing the types and amounts of services, and tuitions provided to students that meet the threshold formula.

The threshold for eligibility is tied to four times the state average foundation budget per pupil as calculated under the Chapter 70 Program. The state reimburses “up to 75 percent of the costs above the threshold. Subject to appropriation.” Rates are determined by the Department and established annually. The Circuit Breaker account is

essential to ensuring that municipalities and school districts are able to pay the costs associated with more costly special education placements without cutting from other general and special education areas. Below highlights the allocation of funds through the Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services budget for out of district placements and circuit breaker reimbursement.

For out of district placements, total tuition costs are estimated to decrease by 5.78% in FY25, based on the expected placements and tuition rates for next year. The actual enrollment in out of district schools changes within each year, and from year to year, as new students may be placed in out of district schools, students return to an in-district placement, students move in or out of town, or students graduate or age out when they turn 23 years old. The net amount budgeted for out-of-district tuitions in the School Department’s town appropriated budget in the initial Superintendent’s FY25 Budget Recommendation is estimated to decrease by 5.06%. This is due to a an estimated \$406,878 reduction in tuition costs while utilizing \$266,972 less in Circuit Breaker funding to offset these costs compared to the current year, in order to maintain an estimated Circuit Breaker fund balance of 75% of maximum.

<b>Special Education Tuition Costs and Funding Sources</b>				
	<b>FY 2024 Budget</b>	<b>FY25 Initial Budget</b>	<b>Difference</b>	<b>% Difference</b>
<b>Estimated Out-of-District Tuition Costs*</b>	\$7,039,572	\$6,632,694	-\$406,878	-5.78%
<b>Budgeted Use of Circuit Breaker Funds for Out-of-District Tuitions ("Circuit Breaker Offset")</b>	\$4,274,091	\$4,007,119	-\$266,972	-6.25%
<b>Budgeted Use of Town Appropriated Budget Funds for Out-of-District Tuitions ("Net Special Education Tuitions")</b>	\$2,765,481	\$2,625,575	-\$139,906	-5.06%

\*Actuals for FY24 will not be known until July 2024; initial estimates for FY25 will likely change prior to updated budget recommendation in April

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Special Education Grant 240:** In Shrewsbury, Federal Special Education Grant 240 primarily funds RISE (Reaching Independence through Supported Employment) and special education transportation. The 240 Grant also allocates funds for Proportionate Share. Proportionate Share is an amount of the district’s IDEA funds allocated to eligible parentally-placed students who are privately educated in the district’s geographic boundaries regardless of student's residency and those that are home-schooled and reside in Shrewsbury. There was also carryover 240 Grant funding from the previous finding of Significant Disproportionality. These funds were used to help support the social-emotional and behavioral needs of our students.

***Proportionate Share***

In July 2017, DESE issued guidance regarding the IDEA funds through the 240 Grant allocation to monitor Proportionate Share. Annually, our district must calculate the

proportionate share for privately placed schools in Shrewsbury and home schooled students. Each year the district must have meaningful consultation with our local private institutions at minimum 3 times a year. Annually, the district holds individual student service meetings with each family that has a student with an active IEP. The allocated set funds for FY24 was a net sum of \$55,345 to support the needs for students that are eligible and maintain active IEPs. This net sum is calculated using the Department's formula which is based upon the enrollment numbers of students with active IEPs that are provided to Shrewsbury by the private schools.

In terms of expenditures, Shrewsbury has partnered with St. John's High School and their Gregory Academic Center to provide two part time tutors to address the academic and executive functioning needs of eligible students with active IEPs. Shrewsbury also consulted with Gateway School to provide additional academic and social skills support as well as curriculum materials for their students with active IEPs. Shrewsbury does have 7 private schools; however, the other schools in town do not have students with identified disabilities and therefore are not eligible for special education services. Shrewsbury is then not able to partner in expending the Proportionate Share funds to the other institutions.

Additionally, the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs approved the proposed resolution by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for resolving concerns relating to IDEA funds that school districts were required to spend on parentally-placed private school children with disabilities and home-schooled children with disabilities. As a result, in FY24, Shrewsbury had an additional \$21,552 allocation of these resolution funds for all 7 private institutions regardless of having identified students with special needs. All private schools were notified of this funding and have spent the allocated funding on professional development opportunities, supplies and materials.

### ***Significant Disproportionality***

DESE is required under federal regulations to analyze data from school districts to identify and report to the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs regarding Significant Disproportionality in special education within racial and ethnic groups. This analysis is conducted pursuant to requirements under IDEA. The determination was made following a review of data reported to DESE through the Student Information Management System and the Student Safety and Discipline Reports for the prior three years. The threshold rate for the formula established by the state decreased from a "risk ratio" of 4.0 to 3.0, meaning a demographic group is 3.0 or more times as likely to be identified as other groups for one of several categories of disability or discipline.

Shrewsbury has been notified that the district has been identified as over the new, lower threshold for students who identify as “White with a Health Impairment.” Therefore in planning for FY25, Shrewsbury will need to set aside the 15% of the 240 Grant, approximately \$250,000, to address this disproportionality. We will begin to develop an action plan to address this area for DESE in April 2024. We will continue to monitor for the overidentification of any group of students based on race and ethnicity as it impacts the disproportionality relating to placement, disability type, and discipline.

**Fiscal Year 24-240 IDEA Grant Expenditures for  
Disproportionality, Proportionate Share & Resolution Funds**

Budget	Source	Awarded
Stipends	Disproportionality	\$0
Contractual Services	Disproportionality	\$0
Contractual Services	Resolution Funds	~\$121,552
Contractual Services	Proportionate Share	~\$55,345
Supplies and Materials	Disproportionality	\$0
Supplies and Materials	Resolution Funds	~\$10,776
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$187,673</b>

~Estimated due to Child Count numbers due from the private schools by April 1, 2024

**Contracted Services:**

Student Services uses certified contract specialists to support low incidence disabilities and mandated services for in-district students. These specialists are within the following domains: Psychiatry, Orientation and Mobility, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Vision Specialists, Behavior, Speech and Language, Teacher of the Deaf, Home Based Services, Teacher of Deaf/Blind, Audiological services, Augmentative and Alternative Communication, and Assistive Technology.

**Legal Consultation:**

Our legal counsel supports the district with administering state and federal laws governing special education. Special education legal counsel helps to support legal decision making as district representation through appeals processes. Despite our team's best efforts to resolve family and district IEP disputes, the school system may need to proceed to mediation, pre-conference hearings and/or hearings through the Bureau of

Special Education Appeals in order to find educational programming appropriate for a student. Full legal representation may be warranted through those proceedings.

**Translation/Interpreter:**

Students and parents receive special education written and verbal communication in their home language as stated in state and federal law.

**Home/Hospital Tutoring:**

The district must provide tutorial services for students when they are absent for more than 14 consecutive school days or cumulative days due to illness. A physician’s statement requesting home/hospital tutoring must be completed in order for the tutoring process to be initiated with the district.

**Assessment Materials:**

Special education staff use standardized assessments for initial evaluations and reevaluations to determine eligibility for special education. Once a testing assessment battery is obsolete, there is a two-year window for when it must be replaced.

Contracted Services	FY 23 Budget	FY23 Actual	FY 24 Budget	FY25 Recommended	Difference FY24 to FY 25
Legal Fees	\$41,000	\$18,089	\$45,000	\$46,913	\$1,913
Home/Hospital	\$5,000	\$1,050	\$5,000	\$5,213	\$553
Educational Services	\$82,000	\$28,250	\$82,000	\$85,485	\$3,485
Translations	\$50,000	\$104,387	\$90,000	\$93,985	\$3,985
Evaluations	\$17,500	\$40,930	\$17,500	\$18,244	\$744
Psychological Services	\$50,000	\$22,529	\$50,000	\$52,125	\$2,125
Summer Therapies	\$7,500	\$18,450	\$10,000	\$10,425	\$425
SPED Therapies	\$250,000	\$102,606	\$206,692	\$215,476	\$8,784

**Staffing:**

Student Services continues to monitor the staffing needs across the district to ensure teams are providing students with the necessary support and the greatest opportunities for independence. We have seen great success with our programs where students are accessing more of their day independently and are making continued progress across all domains of their education. Even with this focused lens, the district continues to experience staffing challenges given the number of unanticipated move-ins students, along with other students who were identified with high levels of academic, behavioral and complex medical needs.

**Challenges and Complexity:**

1. **Diverse Student Needs:** The student population presents a wide spectrum of needs, ranging from learning differences to behavioral challenges. Catering to this diversity requires a multifaceted, multi-tiered approach, involving specialized resources, individualized education plans, and ongoing support mechanisms.
2. **Legal and Regulatory Compliance:** Special Education is governed by a complex framework of laws and regulations, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Compliance with these legal mandates necessitates meticulous planning, documentation, and adherence to procedural requirements.
3. **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs):** Developing and implementing IEPs for students with disabilities demands careful consideration of their unique strengths, weaknesses, and learning objectives. Crafting effective IEPs requires collaboration among educators, parents, and relevant stakeholders, ensuring alignment with academic standards and instructional best practices.
4. **Resource Allocation:** Meeting the diverse needs of students with disabilities entails significant resource allocation, encompassing personnel, funding, assistive technology, and specialized instructional materials. Optimizing resource allocation involves strategic decision-making to maximize the impact of available resources and enhance student outcomes.
5. **Staff Training and Professional Development:** Equipping staff with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to effectively support students with disabilities is paramount. Continuous professional development initiatives, encompassing workshops, and training programs, empower educators to stay up to date on emerging best practices and evidence-based interventions.
6. **Collaboration and Coordination:** Effective collaboration among educators, support staff, administrators, and external agencies is essential for delivering comprehensive services to students with disabilities. Facilitating seamless coordination and communication ensures that students receive support across academic, social, and emotional domains.



## **Recommendations for 2024/2025 School Year**

Through observations, analysis and collaborative conversations with administrators and staff, the following positions will further develop Shrewsbury Public Schools Student Services programs with integrity and consistency.

### **Recommended New Investments for Fiscal Year 2025**

Positions needed to meet increased student need for mandated services:

- 0.5 FTE Elementary Special Education Teacher (\$37,500)
- 1.0 FTE Occupational Therapist (\$75,000)
- 1.0 FTE Speech Language Pathologist (\$75,000)
- 1.0 FTE SHS Adjustment Counselor –Previously funded through ESSER 3 Grant (\$77,000)
- 1.0 FTE SHS Structured Reading Teacher-Adjustment from Tutor to Teacher (\$40,500)\*

\*Updated mandated need not reflected in the initial Superintendent's FY25 Budget Recommendation

Positions needed to meet increased frequency and intensity of student behavioral health needs:

- 1.0 FTE Clinical Coordinator (board-certified behavior analyst role position) to be assigned to specialized programs to address to support students with significant behavioral health concerns. (\$90,000)
- 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher and 1.0 FTE School Adjustment Counselor positions to address clinical and academic support to target social, emotional, and behavioral skill deficits in students. This program will be designed to support students in adjusting to the school environment and developing linguistic skills and foundational social, emotional, and behavioral learning skills to be successful in the least restrictive environment. Students who enter this program access assessment, intensive skill-based treatment, and programming developed by a multidisciplinary team. Students will develop skills essential to stabilize and re-enter the least restrictive learning environment. (\$145,000)\*

\*This program is based on ongoing analysis of student needs at the elementary level and was not included in the initial Superintendent's FY25 Budget Recommendation; funding will need to be identified in order to implement. This type of program would provide in-district therapeutic services at a level that currently would require out-of-district placement, potentially saving out-of-district costs

**Conclusion:**

The realm of Special Education and Student Services is characterized by inherent complexity, driven by the diverse needs of students and the evolving regulatory landscape. Despite these challenges, our district remains committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment where all students can thrive. By leveraging the dedication and expertise of our staff, along with strategic resource allocation and collaborative partnerships, we continue to enhance outcomes for students with disabilities, nurturing their academic, social, and emotional growth.