



Shrewsbury Public Schools

Joseph M. Sawyer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

September 27, 2023

To: School Committee
Re: Update on Education of Students from Local Emergency Shelter for Homeless Families

At your meeting earlier this month, I provided you with an update on the number of students enrolled in our schools from the emergency homeless shelter opened in a hotel in Shrewsbury, the number of students we are transporting back to their districts of origin per our legal responsibilities, and how we planned to use two sources of state funding that we have been told we will receive to support the education of these students. You can find that memo [here](#) for reference.

At this time, the total population of students we are educating within the district has increased slightly, from 49 students to 52 students. The number of students we are transporting back to their districts of origin has decreased from 10 to 4.

The most important information I want to convey is that meeting the needs of our students who reside at the shelter is requiring even more intensive levels of dedicated time and attention than we anticipated, particularly for the youngest students who have never been in school, have no or extremely limited English, and who have experienced trauma as a result of their life experiences. We are experiencing the following challenges:

- The district has been allocating much of its existing resources for supporting the safety and behavior of these students, including a significant amount of the time of our four Clinical Coordinators (all of whom are board-certified behavior analysts, or BCBAs), our Director of Counseling and Mental Health Services, the school-based adjustment counselors and school psychologists at Beal and Floral Street, Educational Learning Center (ELC) coordinators (where possible), district social worker, and the principals and assistant principals.
- This is compounded by being short one school psychologist at Floral Street and with the other being new, as the previous psychologists resigned in late summer, as well as the challenges of bringing candidates for paraprofessional positions on board as quickly as we would like due to the current job market.
- The number of other newly enrolled students who are qualifying as English language learner students is significant at both Beal and Floral Street, putting additional pressure on providing mandated services.

- Effectively communicating with the parents at the shelter requires a great deal of in-person communication, as many families are not able to understand written communication even when translated into their home language.

Updated projected costs:

Because of these evolving challenges, it has become apparent that additional personnel resources are needed, and our plan to utilize the state funding we have been told we will receive has changed as follows. Changes from the previous memo are in blue.

- We now need to hire 2.0 FTE full-time English language education teachers, one each at Beal and Floral Street School. These will be long-term substitute positions since they may be temporary for this year, total estimated cost is \$45,000 each \$90,000 total
- A part-time Homeless Family Coordinator to serve as a liaison between families at the site and the schools – \$23,500, and a second part-time Homeless Family Coordinator who speaks Haitian Creole - \$23,500, total of \$47,000
- Two bilingual instructional aides – \$60,000
- 8.0 FTE (instead of the original 2.0 FTE) applied behavioral analysis technician paraprofessionals to support individual or small groups of students – \$280,000
- 2.0 FTE bus monitors to assist with safe transportation – \$52,000
- Mental and behavioral health counselor contracted through Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services – \$65,000

Subtotal for cost of personnel resources: \$594,000

In addition to the above, there are costs for various supports such as interpreters for meetings, technology, supplies and materials, required contributions to the state pension system for positions funded through state homeless grant funds, etc., which are conservatively estimated as requiring an additional \$400,000.

Updated grand total of projected expenditures to support homeless students: \$994,000.

Updated projected dedicated state revenue:

The updated estimate of state funding we should receive, based on the small number of additional students enrolled who qualify for funding is \$952,000, as follows:

- 1) Homeless Emergency Support Grant, which provides \$1,000 for each student enrolled in our district from an emergency shelter for initial needs (such as technology, supplies, etc. 52 students enrolled = \$52,000 in funds.
- 2) Expanded Homeless Shelter Funding Program, which provides \$104 per student per day for the time they are enrolled in our district. We currently have 52 students, and we expect some changes in the census over the course of the year. If we

conservatively average the number of the census over time at 48, that would result in approximately \$900,000 in state funding.

Based on the above, depending on how long students remain at the shelter, the amount of state funding we are projecting we will receive (\$952,000) will not entirely cover the expenses we are estimating we may incur (\$994,000), given the substantial additional personnel we plan to add. There is a possibility that resources needed during the first part of the school year can be shifted/reduced as needs change, and the \$400,000 in “additional costs” we have plugged in is a conservative estimate. We are monitoring these expenditures carefully and will make efforts to minimize any potential assumption of costs beyond what the state has communicated they will provide.

Conclusion:

Meeting the needs of students who are English learners (ELs) *and* who are also students with limited or interrupted formal education (known as SLIFE students) presents a variety of significant challenges for our schools. I am proud of the dedicated efforts that our staff have been making to welcome our students who reside at the emergency shelter, and it is clear that our educators and support staff are working extremely hard to respond to their needs. We are considering ways in which we can provide the most effective educational programming options in conjunction with these increased staffing levels that will help our students to successfully adapt to and learn within their new school environments.