



Special Education and Pupil Personnel Department Overview and Budget Report to the Shrewsbury School Committee February 2017

Margaret M. Belsito
Director of Special Education & Pupil Personnel 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 mission 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 multi-disciplinary teams while involving parents and community members to help meet the academic, emotional and social needs of all our 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.

Since July 1, 2016, as a department, we have prioritized the following focus areas. This ongoing work will ensure that the Shrewsbury Public Schools continues to meet high expectations with efficient and thoughtful resources and programs.

1. **Staff caseload and schedule analysis:** All department staff have shared various caseloads and schedules. Special education leadership continue to analyze the information in an effort to maintain efficiencies and share resources as necessary. (September-Ongoing)
2. **Restraint procedures and policy revisions and trainings:** As a result of the recent revision to the law related to the prevention of physical restraint (603 CMR 46), we have updated Shrewsbury's process, procedures, and policy to reflect consistency for students in need of possible physical interventions. (July-Ongoing)

3. **Professional development for professional and paraprofessional staff:** Trauma informed instruction; Safe and Supportive Schools: LGBTQ presentation; Restraint Regulations Update; Role of the Inclusive Paraprofessional; Cultural Proficiency; Mindset and Vision and Mission. These topics were developed by staff interest and need and were presented on various professional development days this year. (July-October)
4. **Extended School Year programming:** Centralizing extended school programs through the development of qualification criteria and data collection to systemize the referral process and streamline programming PreK- Grade 12 in an effort to continue to provide students their least restrictive setting. (September-Ongoing)
5. **Program evaluation in the area of speech and language:** Each year as part of state requirements, the district must conduct a program evaluation. The focus of program evaluations is to gain an understanding of the current status of programming and services. The Speech and Language Department evaluation will look at staff, schedules, caseloads and time samples from PreK- Grade 12, and highlight the strengths and determine if there are any challenges that need to be addressed to enhance programming. The report should be finalized by early spring. (November-Ongoing)
6. **Department configuration efficiencies:** As a result of observations, conversations and staff analysis, the Special Education Department will need to develop a cohesive team with a strong mission and vision for the future. Recommendations are stated at the end of this report. (July-Ongoing)
7. **Out of District analysis with multi-year projections:** In an effort to understand our out of district tuitions and needs, a budget analysis was completed with approximate three-year projections. This data was shared with the Central Office team. (December-January)
8. **Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC):** The SEPAC hosted a *Meet and Greet* with parents. This provided an opportunity for the Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services to hear the input from families on the strengths and challenges within the department. (September-October)
9. **Office hours in each building:** Staff were invited to speak and have an open dialogue around programs, buildings, strengths and challenges. (October)
10. **Individual meetings with parents:** Approximately 20 families have reached out for meetings in order to discuss about program challenges and successes. (July-Ongoing)
11. **Paraprofessional analysis:** This new project was initiated in an effort to further discuss the criteria needed for paraprofessional support; classroom instructional support; building needs; and individual student support (December-Ongoing)
12. **Substantially separate program review:** Educational Learning Centers (ELC) and Intensive Learning Centers (ILC) are two programs in the district that serve students with complex profiles and various challenges. Teachers who are licensed to teach children with “severe” needs will be working on descriptions and service delivery as a group in order to clarify understanding of their roles and programming in each building. (November-Ongoing)
13. **State reporting:** Following last year’s full Coordinated Program Review conducted by the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE), this year the district must

report out on two areas where there were findings, namely the revisions to update local policy to match state changes regarding student restraint, and to implement an ongoing district self-evaluation process regarding various program review elements.

Department Overview:

The following information was compiled through collaboration with Central Office and building leadership teams, as well as staff input, observations, and conversations with students and families.

Student Demographics:

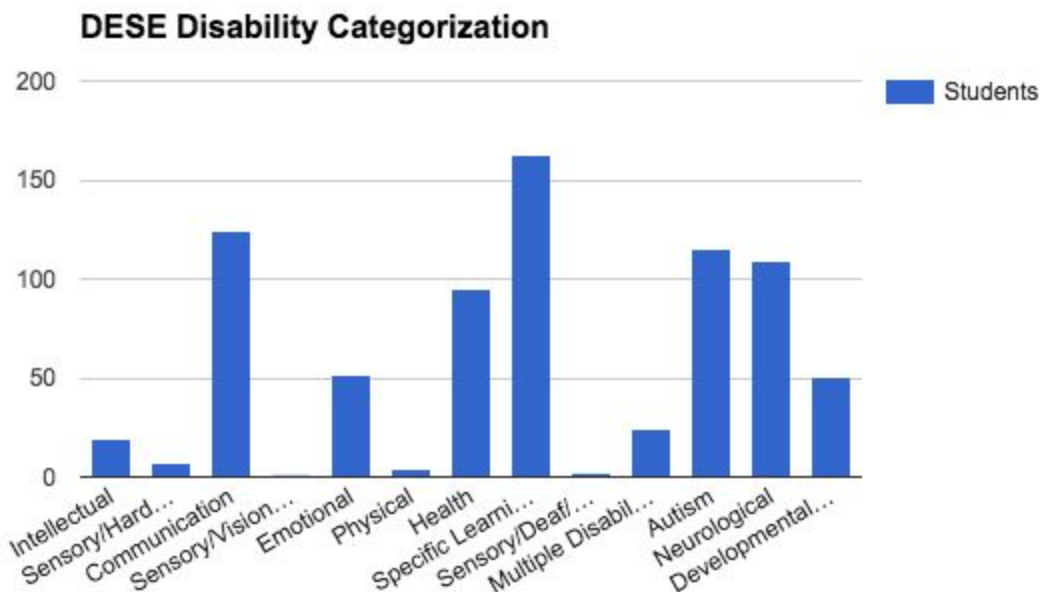
As of January 2017, 821 students in Preschool through Grade 12 were receiving or were being referred for special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An additional 185 students were receiving accommodations within the regular education setting through what are known as Section 504 Accommodation Plans, which are provided to students who are diagnosed with a disability, but who do not require specialized services to make effective academic progress.

Total Number of Students	Students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans	Percentage of Students Receiving 504s	Students with Individualized Educational Programs	Percentage of Students with IEPs
6,218	185	3%	821	13%

****During the 2015-2016 school year, 13.4% of SPS students were in Special Education while the state average was 17.2%.

****As of January 2017, there are 108 active referrals for Special Education services. This number is included in the total Special Education number of 821. Students in referral are considered special education students until eligibility has been determined.

In looking at DESE disability categories for eligibility, SPS shows the following distribution for students with IEPs:



504 Accommodation Plans define eligibility as a diagnosed disability that is limiting one or more of major life functions. To be eligible for a 504 plan, the student needs to have a record and be regarded as having of such an impairment. Of note, when analyzing the 504 accommodation plans for Shrewsbury, 69 of 185 students are categorized as Health and/or ADHD; 49 of 185 students are categorized under Anxiety/Depressive Disorder.

Once evaluations are complete and eligibility has been determined, school teams work together to develop comprehensive programs for students. The team process for 504 Plans and Special Education differs in 504 Plans allow for accommodations and modifications as necessary, where Individualized Education Programs (IEP) include accommodations and modifications as necessary but also require specialized instruction in order for the student to make effective progress. In essence, 504 Plans level the field while IEPs modify the field. For all students, whether they require a 504 Plan or IEP, access to the general education curriculum is paramount. Expectations for growth are developed through yearly team meetings, progress reports, district/state assessments, and district report cards.

Specialized Instruction Services:

Each SPS building offers a myriad of services to meet each child's specific needs. These services are interpreted through placement and service delivery options. Students access inclusion, partial inclusion, or substantially separate options based on the team process when calculating the student's least restrictive setting. Full Inclusion is defined as students having special education services outside the general education classroom less than 21% of the time. Partial Inclusion is defined as special education services outside the general education classroom 21%-60% of the time. Substantially Separate classroom is special education services outside the general education

classroom more than 60% of the time. The 713 students currently receiving specialized services through IEPs are categorized as follows:

Inclusion	Partial Inclusion	Substantially Separate
545	105	63

Professional Staff:

Students access their education through specialized instructional programming using the above criteria of inclusion, partial inclusion, and substantially separate. Contingent on calculating the least restrictive setting, students may access instruction from general education teachers, paraprofessionals, special education teachers (carrying a license in either moderate to severe needs), and/or related services. This may also include: speech pathology and audiology services, vision services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling services, orientation and mobility services, school health services and school nursing, parent counseling and trainings, and augmentative communication.

Current Staffing:

Staff FY 17	Special Education Teachers	Speech and Language Therapists	Occupational Therapists	Psychologists	Adjustment Counselors	School Nurses
Total	75.6	14.4	4	13	4.8	11.31

Preschool Programs:

Prior to turning three-years old, children with a disability or disabilities, or at-risk profiles may be referred to the school district for an initial special education evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services upon turning three-years old. Early Intervention programs are provided through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for children birth to three. Parents, pediatricians, and private preschool teachers can also refer preschool aged children to the Shrewsbury Public Schools for an initial special education evaluation if there is a suspicion that a child may have a disability. Every referral is followed up with an evaluation in the suspected area of disability. If a student is found eligible for special education services, a preschool placement is determined. The least restrictive environment for most of our students in an integrated or inclusive preschool environment, which includes students with and without disabilities. A smaller percentage of preschool children require a substantially separate setting for the majority of their school day as a result of the severity of their disability. This group of students may also attend a full-day of preschool in order to receive an educational benefit. The District's preschool programs provide children with and without disabilities an engaging and challenging preschool experience. Children

with identified disabilities are provided with an Individual Education Program developed for their unique and individual needs.

Educational Learning Center (ELC) PreK:

Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or similar developmental profiles may receive some or all of their services as part of the ELC program per their IEP. The ELC program is designed to provide services along a continuum from consultation and/or to highly individual and intensive curriculum and instruction. This program is led and supervised by special educators with intensive certification and specialized training in working with children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) or similar developmental profiles. Instructional methodology is primarily based on, but not limited to, the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA). Principles of ABA may include the use of positive behavior interventions, systematic instruction of skills across all domains of learning to foster increasing independence in the educational learning environment, instructional plans that break down skills across all domains into manageable increments and are taught from least to most complex, error-less instruction, task analysis, analysis of targeted intermittent collection of data and adjustment of instruction based on data, and planned and naturally occurring opportunities to acquire and practice skills and concepts.

Integrated Classrooms:

Preschool aged students with and without disabilities are enrolled in integrated classrooms. Children with disabilities are enrolled based on their Individual Education Program (IEP). Children without disabilities are enrolled by their parents/guardians. Early childhood special education teachers, certified to teach both children with and without disabilities, provide preschool curriculum and instruction for up to fifteen students with a ratio of seven students with disabilities to eight students without disabilities. Our curriculum is based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, Early Childhood Program Standards, and Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences.

Walk-in/Itinerant Services:

Students ages three to five and in need of therapies such as speech and language, occupational therapy, and physical therapy, receive walk-in services. Parents accompany their child during the one to two therapy sessions each week and are provided with consultation on how to best support their child at home.

Intensive Preschool Program:

This program is designed for preschool children with intensive disabilities, which affect all areas of their development including cognition, communication, physical, social-emotional, and self-care skills. The morning portion of the program is integrated and the afternoon portion is substantially separate. An early childhood educator certified in intensive special needs leads this full-day program with related service providers to target all domains of development. Paraprofessionals, trained and supervised by the lead early childhood teacher provide carryover and direct instruction throughout the full-day program. The multidisciplinary team utilizes the afternoon instructional period to provide intensive therapy across all domains of development.

Kindergarten-Grade 4:

Educational Learning Center Grades K-4:

The Educational Learning Center, ELC, is designed for students diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders or similar developmental profiles who require more time in a specialized classroom in order to make effective progress in school. This program is led and supervised by special educators with intensive certification and specialized training. A variety of teaching methods, guided by the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) are utilized. Data collection and careful monitoring of progress are used to determine which instructional methodologies are best suited for each student. Students may require 20% to 60% of their educational services in the ELC. Integration into the general education setting is determined by the student's IEP. Students who require clinical support may also receive services through the ELC, but are fully included in their general education classroom. These students may have support from a trained paraprofessional and behavior support supervised by the ELC Coordinator. ELC program coordinators supervise the direct teaching staff and coordinate all student services.

Inclusion Support:

Special education teachers or instructional aides support students who are included in their regular education classes. Services can range from assistance with organizational strategies, reading, writing, and math within the context of the curriculum being delivered. The special education teacher works closely with the general education teacher to ensure the student receives the appropriate accommodations/modifications needed to make effective progress towards their educational goals.

Learning Skills:

Learning Skills programs provide direct special education services, typically in language arts and/or mathematics, to students who require varying levels of skill development in a small group setting. All students who receive learning skills services remain included in their grade-level general education classrooms for all subjects, but require remediation of certain basic skills and pre-teaching/re-teaching of grade-level material. Small group time depends on the individual student's needs. A variety of instructional techniques are utilized including structured, multi-sensory reading and math programs. There are learning skills programs in all of the elementary schools.

Intensive Learning Supports:

Teachers work with students in a more restrictive, structured environment for their educational program. A greater emphasis is placed on the acquisition of basic reading, language and math skills. These supports are individualized and vary in time across all the elementary programs.

Middle Schools:

Educational Learning Center Grades 5-8

The focus of this program is to provide an age appropriate, functional and inclusive education for students with moderate to intensive special needs, primarily those requiring a program that operates using the principles of applied behavior analysis due to disability or behavioral presentation. The program is highly individualized to meet the students' unique learning needs. The curriculum includes reading, writing, math, functional life skills, activities of daily living, social skills and pre-vocational training. Students may also require behavior support across their educational settings. Science and social studies are taught either in the ELC program or in the general education setting with modifications. Students typically have a substantially separate program, with planned inclusion opportunities on an individualized basis. The goal is to teach skills that can be applied at the greatest level of independence.

Most Students in the ELC program have regularly scheduled community outings to destinations such as Price Chopper, Target, Stop and Shop, Wegman's and Michael's, in order to apply and generalize the skills learned in the classroom. Students are learning how to develop grocery lists, read product packaging, and determine items needed to cook or bake a given recipe or simple meal at school. They are practicing functional math, including reading and estimating prices, simple budgeting, and monetary transactions. Some students now make their own lunch and snacks from things they bought at the grocery store. Students are also learning their clothing size, shoe size, and the various layout of stores to find items on their lists. Communication is of the utmost importance during community outings, as students learn to communicate with community members to ask questions, seek information, self-advocate, and navigate community resources.

Inclusion Support:

Special education teachers or instructional aides provide inclusion support in the general education classroom to students on IEPs who are working at grade level or very close to grade level. Supports can range from assistance with organization and/or attentional strategies; specialized instruction and/or assistance with reading, writing, and math; or self-regulation strategies, all within the context of the grade level curriculum being delivered. The special education teacher works closely with the general education teacher to ensure the student receives the appropriate accommodations needed to make effective progress toward her/his educational goals as well as progress within the general curriculum. Students identified for inclusion supports do not require extensive modifications to curriculum.

Co-Taught (grade 5 and 6):

Students who generally present with Specific Learning Disabilities and are working on grade level content, are recommended for this model, to receive programming in their community schools, which had previously been available only in out of district programs. Classrooms in this model include both a general and special education teacher for all core academic content: ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies. Planning and instruction both occur in tandem between general and special education teachers, allowing for more services to be provided within the general education classroom. Modifications required by students in this model are built into the structure of every

lesson. Students in this model have access to more frequent, teacher-lead, small group instruction opportunities, shifting responsibility from paraprofessional support to direct teacher instruction, modifications, and support.

Essential Skills:

Students who are performing generally two or more years below grade level, or who require a pace of learning that is significantly modified from the general education classroom, are recommended for this model. Students receive ELA and Math curriculum in the small group, special education classroom with a special education teacher and instructional aide. A majority of students receive Science and Social Studies instruction in the general education classroom with varying levels of curriculum modification provided by a special educator based on individual need. Students may also receive related services, such as Speech/Language Therapy, Structured Reading, Social Skills instruction, or other therapies, as specified in individual IEPs.

Learning Skills/Academic Support:

Students are assigned learning skills classes to develop learning and compensatory strategies that will enhance the progress they make in their core curriculum content classes. Learning skills classes provide an opportunity to pre-teach curriculum content, allowing students to achieve success when presented with information in the general education classroom, or to re-teach concepts covered in the content classes as needed. Other areas addressed include test taking, study skills, an emphasis on self-advocacy, executive functioning coaching and direct instruction, such as material management, organization skills, breaking down long term projects into smaller and more manageable deadlines, homework preparation (i.e. ensuring students know what assignments they have, where to find them, have a system in place, and are prepared to do their homework independently), as well as test preparation and study skills. The number of learning skills classes provided weekly is determined on an individualized basis, based on a number of factors including level of student need, as well as other services required by the student. Learning skills/academic support classes are available to students receiving inclusion supports, co-taught model, and Essential Skills models of service delivery. For fifth grade students, learning center/academic support classes are provided in lieu of enrichment/curriculum connections classes; for sixth grade students, they are offered in lieu of foreign language classes.

Intensive Learning Needs:

Students with Intensive Learning Needs are provided programming that is consistent with their identified need areas and levels of current performance. For students whose IEPs prioritize academics, but require substantial modifications to curriculum due to working years below grade level, a special education teacher licensed at the Intensive level is available to teach small group, intensive instruction as identified in student IEPs.

High School:

Educational Learning Center:

The focus of this program is to provide an age appropriate, functional and inclusive education for students with moderate to intensive special needs. The program is highly individualized to meet each student's unique learning needs. The curriculum includes reading, writing, math, functional life skills (community based, work based, and independent living skills), activities of daily living (home based living skills), social skills instruction, and pre-vocational training. Students may also require behavior support across their educational settings. Science and social studies are taught either in the ELC or in the general education setting with modifications and support from either a special education teacher or paraprofessional. Integration into the general education setting is determined by the student's IEP. Students have opportunities to participate in general education electives and any appropriate courses with support. The goal is to teach skills that can be applied at the greatest level of independence.

Twice weekly, students are involved in a community based learning experience in which they are transported to local stores, restaurants, and businesses. Prior to any trip to the community the students prepare and plan for the trip. If they are going to the grocery store, a meal is planned, a shopping list and budget developed, and upon return to school, the students prepare the meal. Other trips are planned to purchase specific items at the pharmacy or the local department store. These trips are coordinated with parents so that the students may make meaningful purchases.

Inclusion Support:

Students are assigned to supported classes, based upon their level of need and the service delivery of their Individual Education Program. Special education teachers or instructional aides provide support within the general education classrooms. Supports can range from assistance with organizational strategies, reading, writing, and math within the context of the curriculum being delivered.

Learning Skills:

Students are assigned one or two learning skills classes daily to develop learning and compensatory strategies that will enhance the progress that they make in their general education courses. Compensatory strategies are simply ways to use one's strengths to compensate for one's weaknesses. For example, reading compensatory strategies are thinking strategies that empower the reader to have a reflective cognitive learning style that renders interactive and meaningful dialogue between the reader and the printed page. Other areas addressed include test taking, study skills, and an emphasis on self-advocacy. Students in Learning Skills classes also work on transition skills with their liaisons. These include, but are not limited to: resume writing, career exploration, aptitude and interest surveys, and self-advocacy skills. Students earn elective credits for their participation in a Learning Skills class.

Students access Naviance, a web-based program that enables the student to develop a portfolio of their interests, aptitudes and abilities. The program provides opportunities to complete interest inventories, complete resumes, explore colleges, majors, and jobs in the community through virtual interview and tours. Students can share their progress with their parents as the program can be accessed from any computer. The students have access to their specific files throughout their high school experience. Learning Skills teachers organize and implement field studies that bring students to disability offices of local colleges, in preparation of college self disclosure. Other field studies are arranged for very small groups and support students in needed transition skills.

Mobile On Site Vocational Education (M.O.V.E):

The M.O.V.E. program, in conjunction with a partnership with the Best Western and Marriott hotels in Marlborough, provides students with a unique vocational experience. The students in Project M.O.V.E. have been recommended through the TEAM process and attend classes at the high school for part of the day and then attend the M.O.V.E. program for the remainder of the day. These students typically need direction in the areas of social/personal behavior, classroom achievement and/or appropriate attendance levels. M.O.V.E. is an alternative vocational training program and provides site based training in the food trade area and in the laundry. The primary goal is to help students gain vocational skills and develop appropriate work behaviors (soft skills) to better equip them for the world of work. Students who participate in M.O.V.E. earn elective credits for their participation.

In-School Work Experience:

The In-School Work Experience program provides each student enrolled the opportunity to have a hands-on work experience in various skill areas within the high school setting. The intent of this high school program is not to train the student for a specific job, but to build and master general employable skills. These skills include following directions, responsibility and time management, completing a task, troubleshooting and quality of work. These are all areas that students must master to possess a job.

Transition:

The term “transition services” means a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that:

- Is designed to be within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment); continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation
- Is based on the individual child’s needs, taking into account the child’s strengths, preferences, and interests
- Includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation. Shrewsbury High School has developed a comprehensive approach to transition services for students in grades 9-12.

An Interagency Transition Team was developed that includes many community agencies and businesses. The purpose for this team is to provide a comprehensive approach to supporting students and families understanding the breadth of options and services available post graduation. For detailed information, please visit the Transition Website, <http://www.shrewsburytransition.com>.

Related Services, Preschool - Grade 12:

All related service providers are responsible for many other duties other than direct or indirect services for students. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: Medicaid documentation, attending parent and team meetings, research of specific disabilities and best practices, data collection, collaboration and coordination with other related service providers, regular education teachers and special education teachers, implementing behavior support plans, modification to curriculum, and developing home programs for carry over.

School Health Services/Nursing:

In regards to Special Education, school health services and school nurse services means health services that are designed to enable a child with a disability to receive free appropriate public education (FAPE) as described in the child's IEP.

Speech and Language:

Speech-language pathology services includes: identification of children with speech or language impairments; diagnosis and appraisal of specific speech or language impairments; referral for medical or other professional attention necessary for the habilitation of speech or language impairments; provision of speech and language services for the habilitation or prevention of communicative impairments; and counseling and guidance of parents, children, and teachers regarding speech and language impairments.

In addition, students with communication disabilities who are not enrolled in the district public school can receive "walk-in" services if they are found eligible for services on an Individualized Education Program. Therapists maintain and train students and educators in the use of amplification equipment, including hearing aids and personal FM auditory trainers. They consult with educational audiologist/teacher of the deaf/blind re: students' audiological needs. Speech and Language Therapists implement and train students and educators to use AAC to access the curriculum and communicate in the school and vocational environments.

Therapists supervise, provide lessons, review data, observe and provide feedback to Speech/Language Pathology Assistant (SLPA). Under the supervision of a Speech and Language Pathologist, the SLPA provides direct services outlined in an IEP to students. The SLPA implements speech and language interventions developed by the SLP. They may either work

directly with the student or within a classroom environment. They assist with preparing the educational materials needed for the various programs as well as for the classrooms.

Occupational Therapy:

The role of the Occupational Therapist is to evaluate a child, which involves standardized testing in the areas of fine motor skills, perceptual motor skills and sensory processing, along with clinical observations of the student in the classroom and other school environments, and consultation with the child's teacher and parent as needed. The goal is to ensure student access to educational curriculum and environments. In occupational therapy terms, ensuring access means helping students attain optimal occupational performance in their student roles. Under the supervision of the Occupational Therapist, a Certified COTA provides direct services outlined in an IEP to students. Areas they provide direct services in include fine motor development, postural stability, sensory processing skills, attention, motor planning, visual perceptual function, writing/drawing ability, or self-care skill. Of note, a three-credit graduate course developed and taught by an OT has been provided help teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals understand how children with sensory processing difficulties learn, and what classroom accommodations they can make for successful inclusion of these students.

Physical Therapy:

Physical therapy services generally address a child's posture, muscle strength, mobility, and organization of movement in educational environments. Physical therapy may be provided to prevent the onset or progression of impairment, functional limitation, disability, or changes in physical function or health resulting from injury, disease, or other causes. The purpose of physical therapy services in the public schools is to ensure that students can safely and effectively access their school curriculum. This includes participation in activities in and out of the classroom including recess and in PE (Physical Education) or APE (Adaptive Physical Education) classes. It is also designed to ensure that students are as functionally independent as possible within the school building. It is the role of the PT to evaluate a child for issues with gross motor development and activities that prevent or limit a student's ability to access their educational program and to develop a plan for appropriate intervention.

Assistive Technology Specialist:

The Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist consults to educators, related service providers, and paraprofessionals on how to identify and use the best technological tools and methods for engaging students in the curriculum. The specialist evaluates Assistive Technology needs; help in acquiring AT devices; guidance in selecting, customizing, adapting, maintaining, repairing, or replacing AT devices; coordinating and using necessary interventions (for example, low vision services) with the use of AT devices; training or providing technical assistance to individuals with disabilities, family members or significant others, professionals, and employers in the effective use and integration of AT devices.

Psychological and Counseling Services:

A collaborative approach is taken to working with students presenting with mental health, emotional, social, and/or behavioral challenges. School teams consisting of School Psychologist(s), School Counselor(s), Administrators, Special Educators, and consultation with Clinical Coordinators, Psychiatrist, and/or Clinical Fellows, work together to identify students with needs in this area, provide recommendations, interventions, and support, and closely monitor cases. Identification of students in this area is accomplished by a variety of means, which includes at a minimum, a district wide Mental Health Check and Reflect Survey completed at least twice per year, Early Intervening Teams, referrals by individual faculty members, and review of discipline logs. Once a student has been identified with needs in these areas, team of professionals are available to assist students, offer strategies and interventions, monitor progress, provide counseling as needed, and to communicate with both families and outside service providers. Evaluations can also be conducted within the district to answer questions related to a student's disability area, if any, as well as the student's ability to access curriculum, and any needs for outside supports. Finally, the district works with families to obtain outside services as appropriate, via individual insurance policies.

Psychologist: The school psychologists are responsible for assessing students who are initially referred to special education and re-evaluating students who are receiving services a minimum of every three years. They also meet with individual and small groups of students to provide counseling services. Since there are no adjustment counselors at the high school, early childhood, or elementary schools, the school psychologists there provide both the evaluation and counseling services for all students who require these services.

Adjustment Counselor: Adjustment counselors, available at the middle schools, play a vital role in identifying, supporting and intervening when students' exhibit mental/behavioral, social/emotional challenges in the school environment. They meet with individual and small groups of students to support them with school and/or home issues that may prevent the student from achieving his/her academic potential. The adjustment counselors interact regularly with staff, parents, and administrators in an effort to build relationships that will foster positive strategies to assist students. They may also interact with representatives from state agencies such as Department of Social Services and Department of Youth Services.

Additional Mental & Behavioral Health Services:

Clinical Coordinator: The Clinical Coordinator is a full time Master's level Behavior Analyst who works with all students across the district. SPS has two Clinical Coordinators to meet the needs of our student body. The Clinical Coordinator's primary responsibility in general education is to support the classroom teacher(s) in the implementation of evidence-based behavioral strategies that help struggling students more successfully engage in learning. This support may be provided through any of the following: consultation, staff training, conducting behavioral observations or more formalized evaluations, and/or the development of Positive Behavior Support Plans. The primary responsibilities in special education are to develop instructional procedures, develop data collection and analysis procedures, supervise home support programs, consult to district-wide programs, and provide professional development. In addition, the Clinical Coordinator works closely with building

administrators, school psychologists, adjustment counselors and other service providers, using a problem-solving model to support students.

Psychiatric Consultation: SPS currently is currently has a contract with Assabet Valley Collaborative for four hour,s bi-weekly, psychiatric consultation across the district. Dr. Kimberlee Kusiak works with both Clinical Coordinators and school-based teams to address student needs across the district. She also consults to the School Psychologist & Adjustment Counselor Department. In addition, Dr. Kusiak and the Clinical Coordinators offer a “Family Strategies” course to families, free of cost, that provides parents with strategies to identify and respond to mental health and behavioral challenges.

Social Work: The Family Success Partnership, through the Assabet Valley Collaborative, is a family centered program that expands the mutual capacity of schools, state agencies and programs, human service agencies, and community-based resources to provide a flexible, comprehensive and accessible system of services to children with mental health needs that are beyond the scope of the school, but who do not meet traditional eligibility requirements for state agency support. FSP utilizes a wraparound model to serve at-risk students and their families whose challenges prevent success and well being in school. Shrewsbury currently contracts for support of up to 15 families each school year.

Partnership with UMass Child Psychiatry Fellowship Program: Shrewsbury has entered into a partnership with the UMass Psychiatry Department to host the Child Psychiatry Fellows. Each Fellow completes a six-month rotation across the district. They have the opportunity to visit classrooms and participate in building-based consultation meetings. They observe classroom behaviors of both typical children and children with disabilities and learn about the provision of services in the Shrewsbury Public Schools. In addition, once a month they meet with the district’s consulting psychiatrist and clinical coordinators to review cases.

Paraprofessionals:

Paraprofessionals are support staff that work directly with our students to maximize instructional opportunities that yield generalization of skills and increased independence. Our paraprofessionals encompass a large portion of the Special Education Department. Paraprofessionals are categorized by specific job titles relative to the position that they are assigned: Applied Behavior Analysis Technician (ABA Tech), Child Specific Aides (CSA), Classroom Aides, Instructional Aides, and Special Education Aides. The district also employs 3 Speech and Language Assistants (SLPA), and 2 Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTA). As of January 2017, the district has 188.83 FTEs as paraprofessionals. In order to maintain programming to align with individual student needs, the district is proposing an increase of 8.0 FTE for the upcoming school year. As part of the ongoing analysis work, the district will continue to look at criteria, need, process and procedures around paraprofessional placement in the various programs, classrooms and buildings.

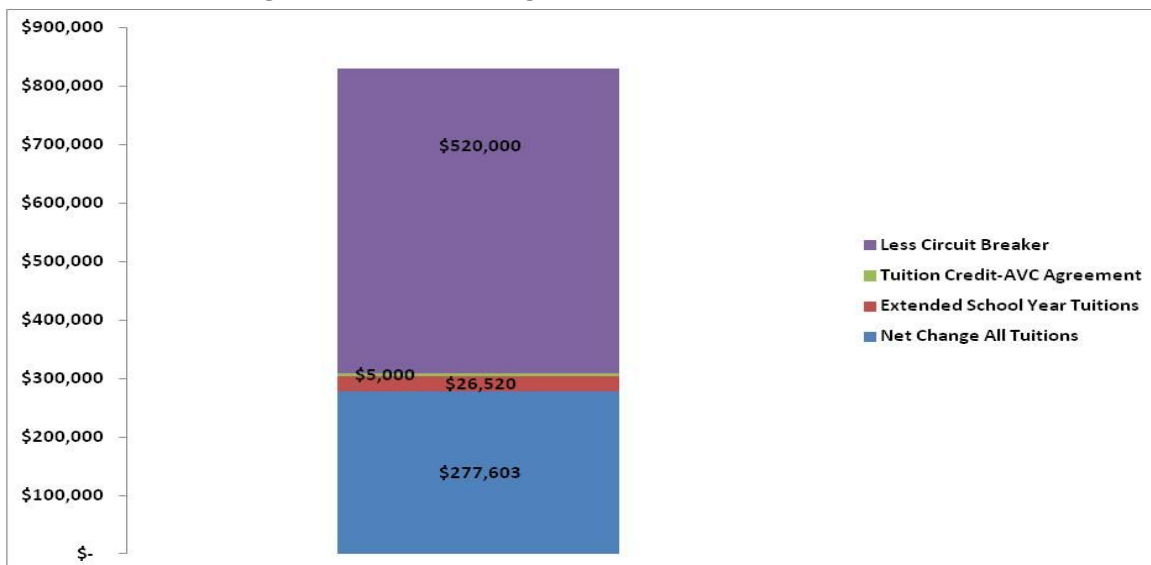
Special Education Circuit Breaker

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, our office completes and submits claim forms to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education listing the types and amounts of services, and tuitions provided to students that meet the threshold formula. Rates are determined by the department and established annually. The chart below highlights overall budget changes from fiscal years 2017 to 2018.

	FY17 Budget	FY18 Budget	Net Increase
Total Tuition	\$ 7,651,093	\$ 7,928,696	\$ 277,603
Extended School Year Tuitions	\$ 80,631	\$ 107,151	\$ 26,520
Tuition Credit-AVC Agreement	\$ (30,000)	\$ (25,000)	\$ 5,000
Total Less Credit	\$ 7,701,724	\$ 8,010,847	\$ 309,124
Less Circuit Breaker	\$ (3,920,000)	\$ (3,400,000)	\$ 520,000
Total Net Tuition-Operating Budge	\$ 3,781,724	\$ 4,610,847	\$ 829,124

The chart below is a pictorial breakdown of the total net changes related to special education tuitions and the Circuit Breaker reimbursement. Students placed out of district typically meet the threshold formula for Circuit Breaker reimbursement. The representation below highlights the impact of the projected decrease of \$520,000 in Circuit Breaker reimbursement available to offset out of district tuition costs. This is a significant factor in the overall special education budget.

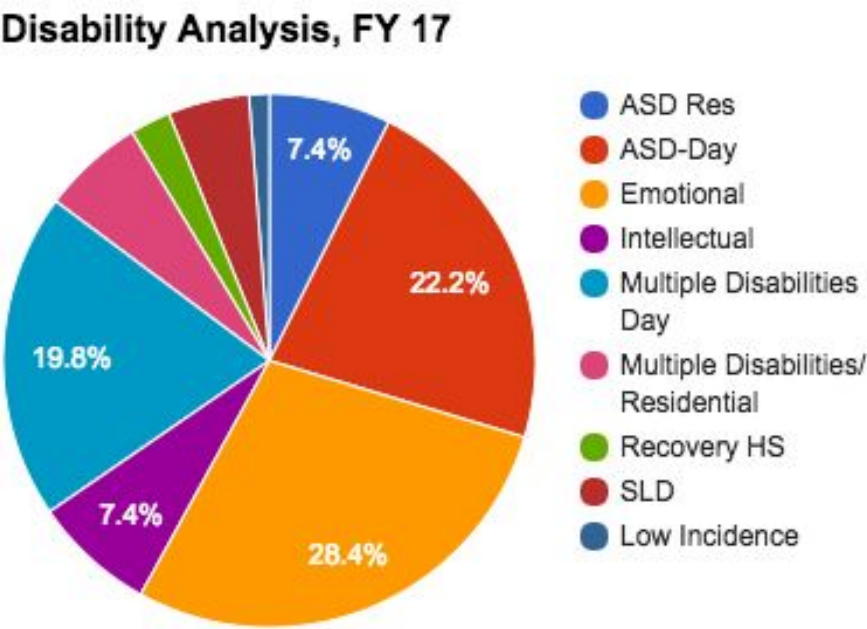
Categories of Net Change in Special Education Tuitions



Out of District Programming:

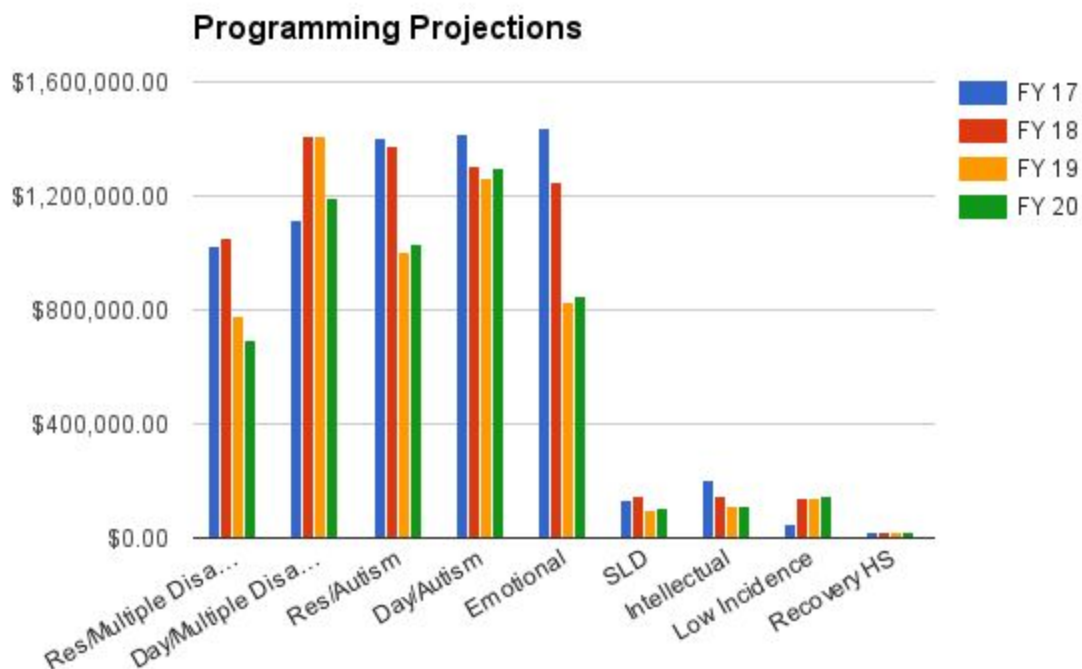
Shrewsbury Public Schools must provide each child residing within Shrewsbury the opportunity for a “free and appropriate education.” Furthermore, as a district it is our responsibility to have our students accessing supports and services within our Shrewsbury community and programs. However, there is a population of students that, due to the scope and severity of their disabilities, require more restrictive programming in order to make effective progress. During the IEP team process, team members may determine an out of district placement at either a public day, private day or residential school is a student’s least restrictive environment.

The following graph consists of a pictorial representation of the students who are accessing restrictive placements outside of their home community. As projections are being reviewed over the course of several fiscal years, the Special Education Department will also be examining 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 services in an out of district placement and identifying if their unique needs could be met within district, and what supports and services would be needed to have students transition back to SPS.



Key: ASD - Autism Spectrum Disorder; SLD - Specific Learning Disability

The Special Education Department continues to analyze efficiencies within our in-district programming. Below is a cost projection analysis over four fiscal years of the out of district budget. This data represents the current caseload of the Out of District Coordinator and does not take into account any unanticipated placements.



Special Education Transportation:

In FY15, the district began using its federal special education grant (#240) to pay for special education transportation. Previously, this grant has funded many special education personnel positions, but also required a portion of grant funds to be sent to the Mass. Teachers Retirement System. In order to maximize this grant funding, it was shifted to cover a majority of the district's special education transportation costs.

Special Education Transportation	FY16 Actual	FY17 Budget	FY18 Budget
240 Federal Grant Allocation	\$1,302,253	\$1,433,715	\$1,433,715* *Assumes level funding of grant
Appropriated Budget	\$118,591	\$0	\$175,000

Contracted Services:

We currently contract specialists in the following areas in order to support low incidence disabilities and mandated services: Physical Therapy, Psychiatry, Orientation and Mobility, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Vision Specialists, Teacher of the Deaf, Wilson Reading Specialists, home based services, Teacher of Deaf/Blind, and Audiological services.

In addition, legal consultation is necessary in order to support the district with state and federal laws governing special education which at times can be extensive. At times, despite our best efforts, the school system must go to mediation, pre-conference hearings and/or hearings through the Bureau of Special Education Appeals and may require full legal representation.

Translator/Interpreter: Students and parents receive 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.

Testing supplies/Instructional Materials: Special Education staff use standardized assessments for initial evaluations and re-evaluations. Once a testing battery is obsolete, there is only a two-year window where it must be replaced. Department Leads take a yearly inventory and update our office with ongoing needs.

Contracted Expenses	FY16 Actual	FY17	FY 18 Proposed
Legal Fees	\$26,189	\$30,000	\$30,000
Translator/Interpreter	\$31,037	\$18,000	\$18,000
Home/Hospital Tutoring	\$7,171	\$38,000	\$13,000
Testing	\$21,814	\$30,000	\$30,000
Instructional Materials	\$42,899	\$50,000	\$50,000
Contracted Therapies	\$221,840	\$200,000	\$225,000

Shrewsbury Public Schools conducted a formal program evaluation of the Educational Learning Centers (ELC). This report was able to highlight the strengths of the department and recommendations to continue to meet the needs of our students. Of note, our ELC department was commended on using evidenced based practices and assessment methods, and designing inclusive classroom environments. The department was further celebrated for maintaining high standards for educating students with autism spectrum disorders and related developmental disabilities.

The program evaluation also focused on areas that Shrewsbury Public Schools may consider as areas of focus to meet the challenges of our growing population of students with significant disabilities. The program evaluation recommended that the ELC collaborate to define roles and responsibilities, including a Program Director to oversee and supervise ABA services and supports. In addition, the report highlights continued access to multi-tiered, research based intervention and instructional practices, high quality professional development, and further exploration of assessment tools.

Challenges:

Our district special education leadership will continue to collaborate on the previously identified focus areas of the 2016-2017 listed above. In addition, we have identified the following challenges as top priorities.

Extended School Year Services:

Extended School Year services (ESY) are required and developed for students with disabilities who exhibit substantial regression and/or significant recoupment throughout the school year. During yearly team meetings, teams determine the level and need of summer programming.

Starting in September of 2016, a group of individuals, including the Out of District Coordinator, Extended School Year Coordinators, and the Special Education Director have held monthly meetings to address: staffing, program organization, student recommendations and qualification for services. New ESY Forms were developed distributed to staff in October, November and January in order to centralize the process for Extended School Year Services. The deadline for recommendation submission to the program is March 17, 2017. We will determine staff and student need in early spring to prepare for a July 5, 2017 start date.

Summer Special Education	FY15 Actual	FY16 Actual	FY17 Budget	FY17 Actual	Proposed FY18	Increase due to mandated summer services (FY17-FY18 Proposed)
Total	\$641,838	\$520,383	\$493,224	\$631,548	\$614,577	\$121,353

Staffing:

Throughout the district, we have experienced some staffing challenges early in the 2016-2017 school year. This year, our Educational Learning Centers (ELC) programming across the district has had a significant number of unanticipated move-ins to SPS, along with other students who were identified with high level of academic and behavioral needs.

The chart below outlines the unanticipated growth throughout this academic year. As always, when there are staffing needs our department works closely with human resources to advertise, interview and hire the appropriate staff. This chart highlights that we have been working below our recommended needs. We appreciate the flexibility of building staff to help problem solve this a solution. We have also been accessing long term substitutes to work with our students to fill this need.

ELC Caseloads & Staffing as of December 2016:

Months	August	September	October	November	December
Students	83	91	91	94	93
Current Staff	69	78	78	79	78
Required Staffing	72	79	81	82	82

December Findings:

- Identified 3 students that required adult support for safety
- Acquired 1 student from Early Intervention at Parker Rd.
- Acquired 9 new students that moved into district
- Transitioned 3 students off ELC caseload

Recommendations for 2017-2018:

Through observations, analysis and collaborative conversations with administrators and staff, the following positions will address some mandated services as well as developing program integrity and consistency throughout the district.

Assistant Director of Special Education and Pupil Personnel Services

This position will assist with 9 buildings, and over 300 staff, and approximately 1,000 students with Special Education and 504 Accommodation Plans. This position will assist with further examining efficiencies and analyzing program development and integrity. This position will combine the responsibilities of out of district oversight and elementary programming supervision and evaluation. It is proposed that the current Out of District Coordinator position be eliminated, and those responsibilities assumed by the Assistant Director role, so there would be no additional FTE required, but a compensation adjustment to reflect the greater level of responsibility would be warranted. The current Out of District Coordinator is already overseeing supervision of the elementary special education staff, after the Elementary Special Education Coordinator position was put on hiatus for the current year due to a late resignation. This proposal does not restore the Elementary Coordinator position.

Educational Learning Center (ELC) Director

With 10 substantially separate programs across the district, this position will oversee the entire sub-separate programming with supervision, evaluation, clinical program development and hiring of support staff. It is proposed that one ELC Coordinator position at the preschool level be eliminated and replaced with this district-wide role, so there would be no additional FTE required.

Team Chair Parker Road Preschool

Team Chairperson will assume all Early Intervention functions (Initial Intake, Transition Planning Conference, Initial Evaluation Consent, Evaluation Planning, Developmental History, Case Manager from beginning to end which includes compiling final comprehensive evaluation from all evaluators) currently handled by the school psychologist. The proposal is an increase of 0.6 FTE to the existing 0.4 Team Chairperson that would be re-purposed from an FTE reduction to be determined elsewhere in the program. This will allow the school psychologist to assume functions for students on current ELC Coordinator caseloads (i.e., intermittent functional behavioral assessments, behavior support systems, behavior consultation, parent intervention/training, etc.).

Team Chair Middle Schools

In examining the department configuration, a team chair is being proposed to shift to an administrative model where there is a single Special Education Director for Grades 5-8 to provide personnel and program supervision, and a team chair in each middle school to manage the IEP processes due to the volume of need across the almost 2,000 student campus. This would convert one current Middle Level Special Education Coordinator (an administrative position) to a team chair role and add 1.0 FTE team chair role to the budget.

Paraprofessional positions

Each year, we must anticipate for students coming into the district as projected from outside agencies, such as Early Intervention, or other districts. Using the data above that outlined that we have had 9 students move into the ELC alone, the district is proposing to include 8.0 full time equivalent additional paraprofessional positions in the budget plan for for fiscal year 2018.

Adjustment Counselor (SHS)

In order to address continued enrollment increases and student mental and behavioral health needs (i.e., Hospitalization, Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention, School Anxiety) at the high school level, an adjustment counselor is warranted in order to support the nurses, guidance, and psychologists. This would represent an added 1.0 FTE position to the budget.

Conclusion

It is evident through the Coordinated Program Review of 2016 that Shrewsbury Public Schools has exemplary services in place for all students. As defined in the DESE Inclusive Practice Guidebook, inclusive practice refers to the instructional and behavioral strategies that improve academic and social-emotional outcomes for all students, with and without disabilities, in general education settings. In SPS, we will continue to work towards this goal for all students. If we believe all students can learn, and we provide appropriate instructional opportunities, we will succeed at meeting high expectations for student achievement and growth.

Since the needs of our students have become ever more diverse, the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments continues to grow. Inclusion is the implementation of systems and processes that allow all students to learn in a least restrictive environment within their own community. Our district is committed to **providing a high-quality public education to every child**, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, cultural background, sexual orientation/identity, exposure to trauma, or disability status.