



## Special Education and Pupil Personnel Department Overview & Budget Report to the Shrewsbury School Committee February 2020

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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, 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.

Our department continues to prioritize the following focus areas. This ongoing work has ensured that the Shrewsbury Public Schools continues to meet high expectations with efficient and thoughtful resources and programs to meet the needs of all learners.

- 1. Inclusive Practices/Co-Teaching:** Professional development opportunities for teachers working in years 1-4 of co-teaching have been deployed this year. Instructional Coaching has been provided, which has been designed to provide classroom and special educators with an overview of current co-teaching models for Kindergarten through Grade 12. The

district has over 40 teams of co-teachers. Topics include: common planning time, specially designed instruction, research-based instructional strategies, and communication/collaboration tools.

2. **Social, Emotional, Mental and Behavioral Health Collaborations:** Social Emotional Learning committees (district and building) along with current department services (Psychologists, Adjustment Counselors, Clinical Coordinators, etc.) continue to gather data around practices, processes and interventions as the district works through an implementation plan.
3. **Staff Caseload and Schedule Analysis:** All department staff have shared various caseloads and schedules. Special education and building leadership continue to analyze the information in an effort to maintain efficiencies and share resources as necessary.
4. **Annual Professional Development for Professional and Paraprofessional Staff:**
  - a. Charlie Applestein, M.S.W. shared hands-on tips, techniques, sample dialogues and science-based practices in working with students struggling with emotional and behavioral challenges. Mr. Applestein's strength-based approach delivered a message of hope and possibility to our most vulnerable youth and those who shape and influence their lives.
  - b. David Nowell Ph.D presented effective ways to support students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Executive Functioning and Anxiety. Dr. Nowell shared strategies and applications which could be used for immediate results.
  - c. Compliance Training to review state and federal guidelines.
  - d. Many of our school psychologists and school adjustment counselors had the opportunity to attend the School Mental Health Conference at Harvard University.
  - e. Pearson Online Testing Platform training for our school psychologists, and members of our special education teachers and related services teams.
  - f. Occupational Therapists' national conference in Boston will allow OTs the opportunity to collaborate and learn with OTs from across the United States.
5. **Out of District Analysis with Multi-year Projections:** In an effort to understand our out of district tuitions and needs, an ongoing budget analysis continues to be monitored, including projections. This data is ongoing and shared with the Central Office Leadership.
6. **Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC):** The SEPAC and Special Education leadership continue to have open communication. Special Education administration, Superintendent and School Committee representatives meet on a quarterly basis. This year SEPAC will hold multiple events including: General Meeting, *Ask the Advocate*, and Turning Three Essentials..
7. **High Leverage Practices:** Department time is devoted to staff researching and reporting on the 22 high leverage educational practices developed by the Council for Exceptional Children Professional Practice and Standards Committee. These practices are found to be the most important tools to make a positive difference with students struggling to find success in school due to learning and behavioral complexities.
8. **Paraprofessional Support:** Special Education leadership partner with building teams to assist in determining level of additional support for Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

Technicians, Child Specific Aides, and Special Education Aides to ensure our students are accessing their Free and Appropriate Public Education.

9. **Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services (SYFS) Partnership:** In an effort to provide support to families identified and referred through SPS personnel, SYFS clinical staff provide family support services such as counseling, crisis management, links to other supportive agencies, assistance with problem solving and communication with other collateral contacts.
10. **Program Evaluation:** SPS Equity Audit is currently underway and will examine ways in which as a district we are succeeding at providing students with an equitable education, and where we should focus our efforts to improve and address any inequities where they do exist. This process will include site visits to our schools, interviews and focus groups with various staff, students, and families, along with analysis of data and documents.
11. **Unified Champion Schools:** Unified Champion Schools are accomplished by implementing inclusive sports, inclusive youth leadership opportunities, and whole school engagement. The program is designed to be woven into the fabric of the school, enhancing current efforts and providing rich opportunities that lead to meaningful change in creating a socially inclusive school that supports and engages all learners. SHS was recognized as a National Unified Champion School in November 2019. SHS Unified Club was recently given the Shrewsbury Education Foundation Community Impact award. Currently, a middle school unified basketball team is being formed and will play three games in the spring.
12. **Safety Care Training:** Safety Care is our district's new program for teaching staff how to respond to students engaged in problem behavior with a focus not only on reacting effectively to a crisis but also in preventing future events from occurring. Initial trainings were funded through the Mental and Behavioral Health grant from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. We have made the decision and commitment to provide the district with this training which is a leading crisis prevention training course that focuses on how to prevent behavioral challenges, de-escalate early and manage behaviors safely.
13. **Parenting Strategies:** This is a course offered free to all parents residing in Shrewsbury including private schools. Parenting Strategies is taught by the consulting Child Psychiatrist and one of the Clinical Coordinators. It is currently running and has approximately 35 parents attending.
14. **Child Find:** This mandate requires all school districts to identify, locate and evaluate all children with disabilities, regardless of the severity of their disabilities. This obligation to identify all children who may need special education services exists even if the school is not providing special education services to the child. Child Find expands to children who are residents of Shrewsbury, but are enrolled in private schools, preschools, and daycare.

### **Department Overview**

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

## Student Demographics

Our SPS special education records indicate, as of February 2020, 942 students, ages 3-22, are receiving special education services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The concurrent data indicated that there are 78 active referrals for Special Education services. This number is included in the total Special Education number of 962. Students in referral are considered special education students until eligibility has been determined.

An additional 235 students were receiving accommodations within the regular education setting through 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. 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 such an impairment. Of note, when analyzing the 504 accommodation plans for Shrewsbury, about 162 of 235 students are categorized as ADD/ADHD or Health; 25 of 235 students are categorized under Multiple Disabilities; 26 of 235 students have Emotional diagnoses requiring accommodations in the school setting.

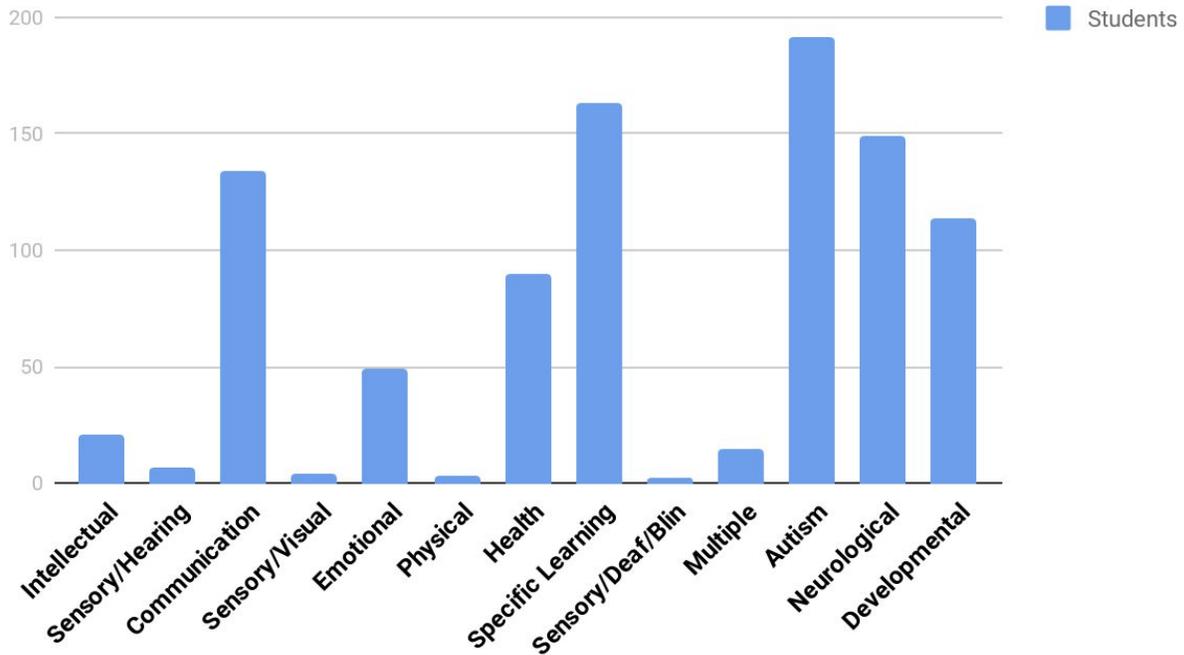
Year	Total Number of Students (financially responsible)	Students with Section 504 Accommodation Plans	Percentage of Students Receiving 504s	Students with Individualized Educational Programs	Percentage of Students with IEPs
2018	6,207	206	3%	962	15.4%
2019	6,251	235	3%	1,020	16.3%

\*Note: percentages include students currently in referral

In comparing 2018 to 2019, there is an increase of 0.9% of students in special education. This increase is due to the larger number of referrals; students moving into district; students moving from 504 Plans to IEPs; students with both IEPs and 504s; and continued Child Find activities.

Utilizing DESE's state categorization of disability for eligibility for special education, SPS shows the following distribution for students with IEPs:

## DESE Disability Categorization

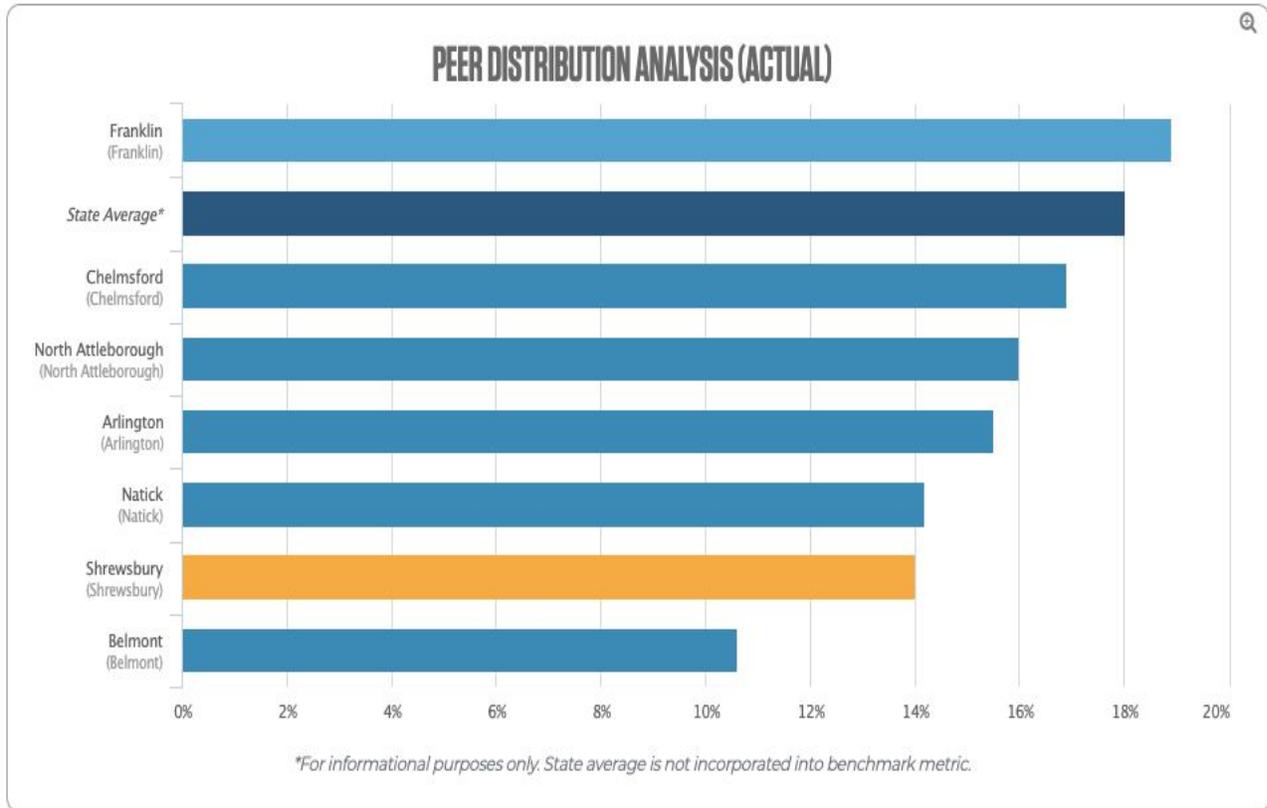


Shrewsbury remains below the state average and below comparable districts regarding the percentage of students with disabilities, as this data and the following chart from ClearGov with the last year of available state-level data demonstrate.



\*Note: The above statistics do not include students in referral.

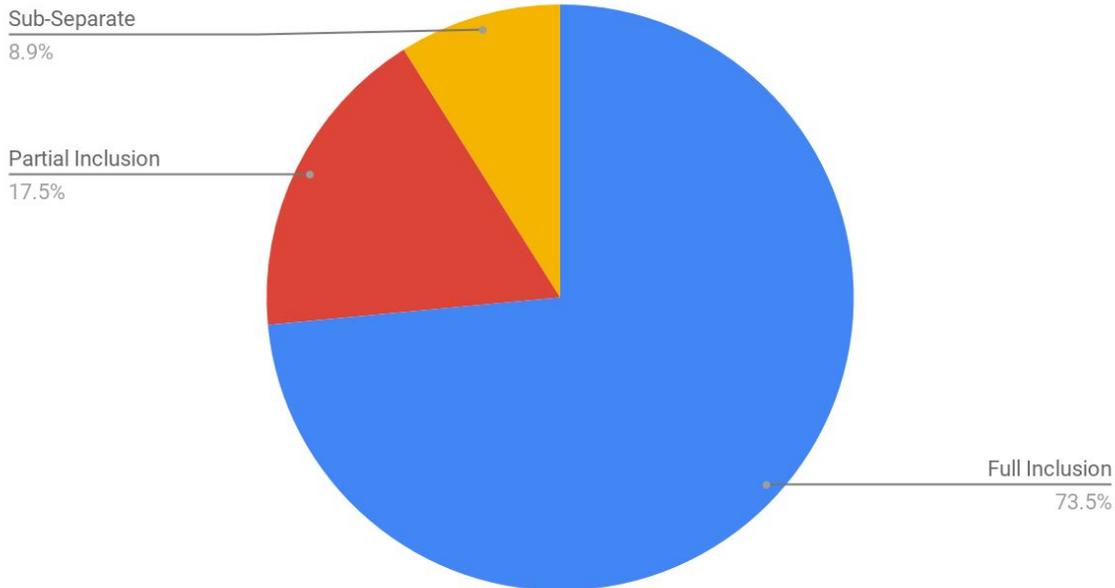
**Shrewsbury compared to peer districts selected by ClearGov regarding percentage of students with disabilities:**



**Specialized Instruction Services**

Each SPS building offers a myriad of services to meet each child’s specific needs (See Appendix for program descriptions). 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 least restrictive setting for individual students. 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 defined as special education services outside the general education classroom more than 60% of the time. We will continue to see our enrollment statistics shift based upon the need and complexity of our student demographics, and as we continue our professional development work on Co-Teaching, Inclusive Practices/Instructional Coaching, Safety Care, and High Leverage Practices. Our mission correlates to the graph below of educating students within the least restrictive environment. General education in a full inclusion program should always be the first instructional placement of a child. Seventy three percent of our students are receiving their specially designed instruction within full inclusion programs.

## Placement Options



### Professional Staff

Students access their education through specialized instructional programming using the aforementioned criteria of inclusion, partial inclusion, and substantially separate. Contingent on calculating the least restrictive setting, students may access instruction from general education teachers, special education teachers (carrying a license in either moderate or severe needs), related service providers (such as speech & language therapists, occupational therapists, etc.), and/or paraprofessionals.

### Current Professional Staffing (Full Time Equivalent)

Staff FY20	Special Education Teachers	Speech and Language Therapists	Occupational & Physical Therapists	Psychologists & Clinical Coordinators	Adjustment Counselors	School Nurses
Total	75	13.4	5	13	12	12.8

During the 2019-2020 school year, the district hired staff in order to maximize efficiencies while managing diverse populations with various degrees of challenges. The district supported the addition of the following positions:

- **Elementary, SMS and SHS Adjustment Counselors - 5.0 FTE**
- **Educational Learning Center Coordinator (Preschool) - 1.0 FTE**

- **SHS Nursing - 0.7FTE**
- **SHS Moderate Special Education Teacher - 1.0 FTE**
- **PreK-4 Director of Special Education - 1.0 FTE (previously on hiatus)**

**Paraprofessional Positions**

Each year, we must anticipate that additional students with disabilities will enroll in the district through Early Intervention, other districts, or from private schools. At times, the district is mandated to hire staff in order to meet compliance and provide needed services for children to access their education. The following chart depicts full time equivalent paraprofessional employees under the titles of ABA Technicians, Child Specific Aides, and Special Education Aides employed across all schools. These numbers have increased over time as more students with intensive special needs are enrolled in the district, either due to increased programming or move-ins. Based on our current budgeted FTE and projections for next year, not overall additional FTE are not requested for FY21 (note: the FY21 budget request has one additional ABA technician, but overall numbers project a slight decrease for a “status quo” budget). This is an area where changes can happen quickly depending on student needs, and so it is constantly monitored. Over the course of this year, the Special Education Directors have been meeting to analyze the usage of paraprofessionals to support student learning.

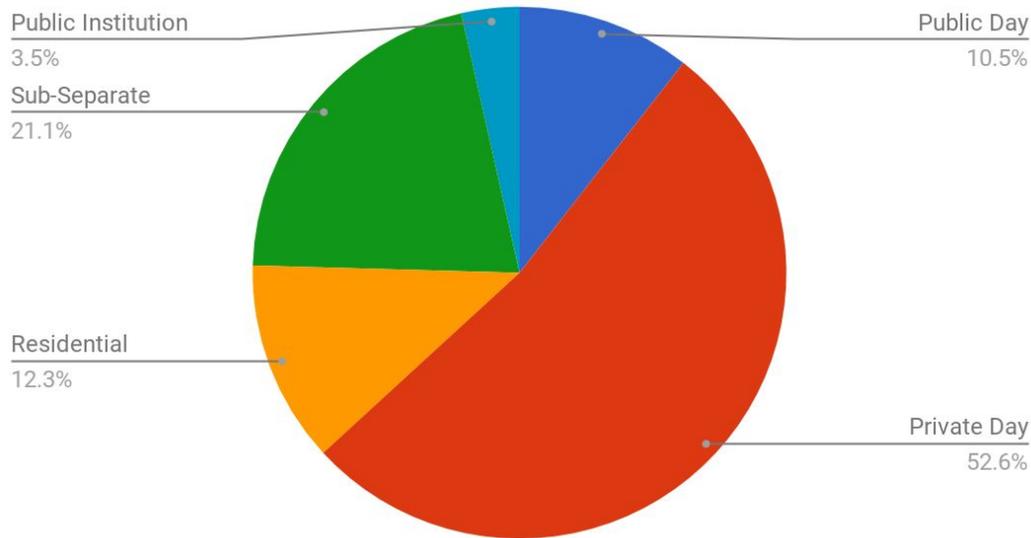
<b>Paraprofessionals (Special Education)</b>	<b>FY17</b>	<b>FY18</b>	<b>FY19</b>	<b>FY 20 Budgeted</b>	<b>FY 21 Proposed</b>
FTE	188.83	193.91	221.44	222.67	220.82

\*These figures do not include non-special education paraprofessionals such as instructional aides and tutors

**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 disability, the child will require a more restrictive programming in order to make effective progress commensurate to the student’s disability. When identifying programs for students to access their education, teams must consider placements that are gradually more restrictive than public schools. Below is a graph that highlights the programming demographics related to the proportion of the 70 out of district students we currently have enrolled in this fiscal year across public day, private day, sub separate and residential settings. In addition to this figure, 7 students are currently awaiting acceptance into special education placements.

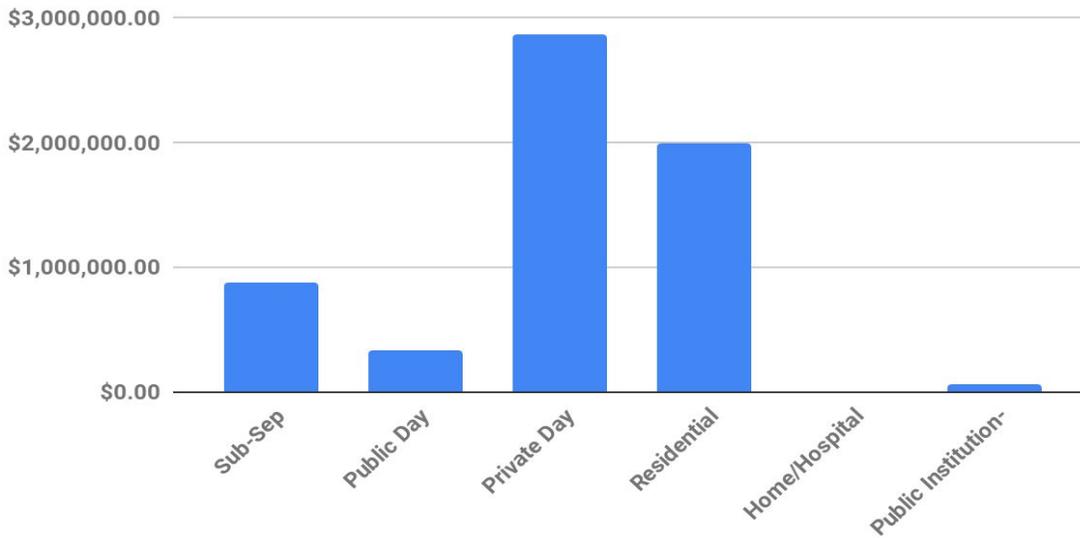
## Out of District Student Enrollment



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 district, and/or what supports and services would be needed to have students transition to a less restrictive setting.

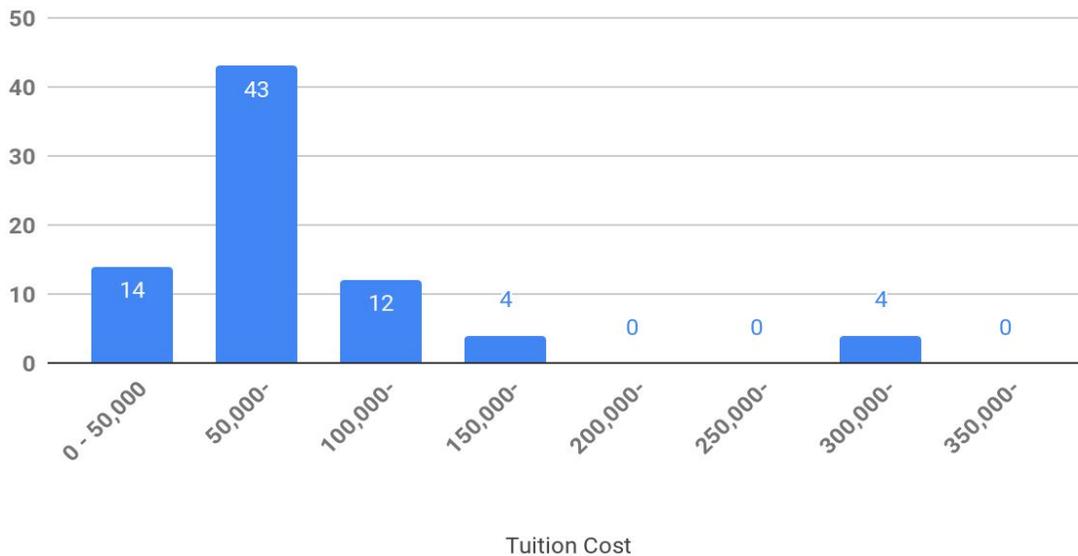
Students exiting Shrewsbury High School, whose teams continue to recommend special education services through entitlement services, ages of 18 through 22, access programming labeled as sub-separate. Shrewsbury Public Schools does not currently have an ages 18-22 program, and thus refers students to local collaboratives. The label of sub-separate is used for these students as the community and vocational sites are considered part of their programming, and they are located within our communities. The graphs below demonstrate the FY 21 projected cost expenditures per placement type, and the amount of students at each fiscal breakdown for placements.

## FY 21 Budgeted Cost



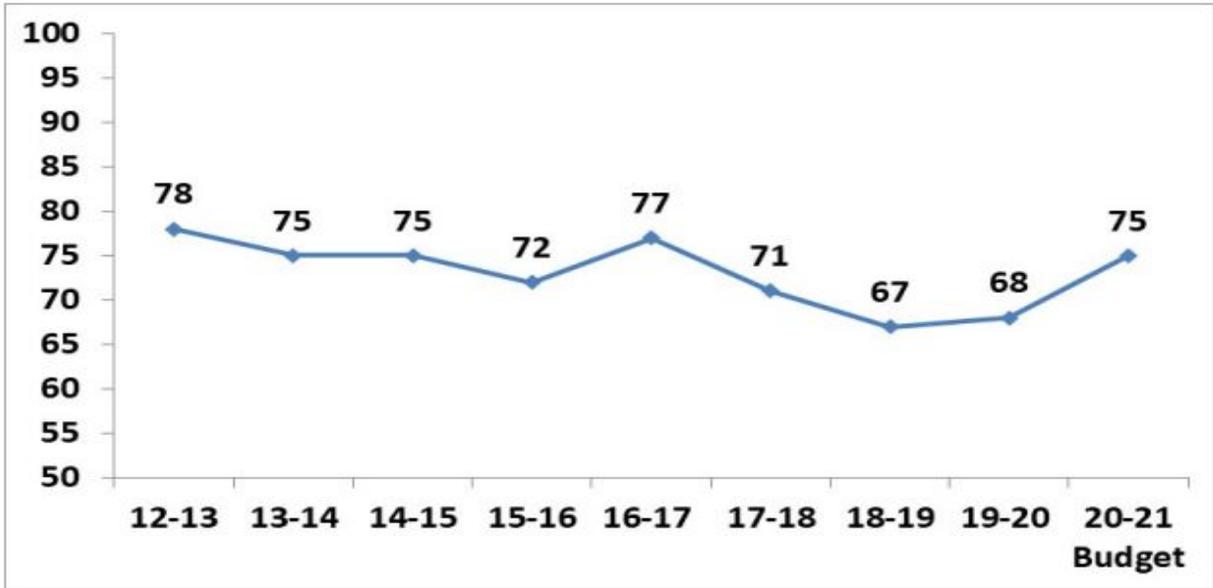
In the category of special education out-of-district tuitions, there are not only tuition rate increases of 2.7%, but for the first time in recent years we expect an increase of students who will require placement in these very specialized educational settings. Because the number of students in out-of-district (OOD) placements can fluctuate depending on varied circumstances, this projection could shift in either direction in the coming months. The chart below breaks down the number of OOD students by tuition cost.

## Number of OOD Students By Tuition Cost



The following graph highlights overall number of students who are accessing out of district special education placements from fiscal years 2013-2020.

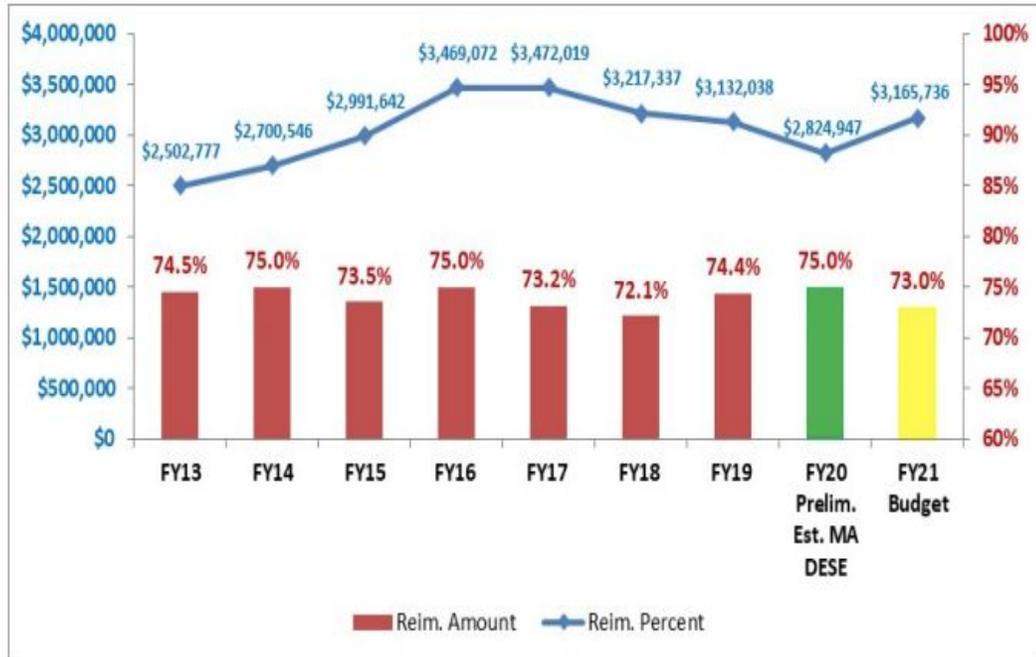
**Special Education Out of District Placements-Budgeted**



**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 DESE 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 circuit breaker account is essential to ensuring that municipalities and school districts are able to pay the costs associated with expensive special education placements without cutting from other general and special education areas. The following graph highlights overall budget changes from fiscal years 2013-2020.

### Circuit Breaker Funding FY13 - FY21 Reimbursements & Reimbursement Percentage



Below highlights the allocation of funds through the special education and pupil personnel services budget for out of district placements and circuit breaker reimbursement. After applying funds from the state’s Circuit Breaker reimbursement program for special education costs, the net increase in this category is projected to be \$1.39 million.

	FY20	FY21 Draft	\$\$ Difference	% Difference
Total Tuitions	\$ 6,382,048	\$ 6,963,830	\$ 581,782	9%
Less Estimated Circuit Breaker Reim.	\$ (2,862,000)	\$ (3,165,736)	\$ (303,736)	11%
Less CB Funds On Account Carryover	\$ (900,000)	\$ (451,000)	\$ 449,000	-50%
Less Prior Year Budget Surplus	\$ (1,263,245)	\$ (600,000)	\$ 663,245	-53%
<b>Net Cost to Appropriations Budget</b>	<b>\$ 1,356,803</b>	<b>\$ 2,747,094</b>	<b>\$ 1,390,291</b>	<b>102%</b>

**\*\* All FY21 figures are estimates subject to change prior to the final budget recommendation.**

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Special Education Grant #240:** Federal Special Education Grant #240 funds special education transportation. Over the past three fiscal years, the #240 grant also allocates funds for Proportionate Share. For FY21, the state has indicated that we will need to reserve 15% for Significant Disproportionality.

The cost of transporting students to out-of-district special education schools is projected to increase by \$585,450. Approximately \$355,000 of that amount is due to more students needing to be transported, increased rate costs, and additional costs for students requiring highly specialized support when being transported.

The remainder of the increase is due to a significant change in the administration of our federal special education grant, where we will be required to shift approximately \$230,000 of grant funds currently used to pay for out-of-district special education transportation costs to purposes related to addressing the needs of students with emotional disabilities. This requires us to plan to allocate that same amount that previously came from the grant to the town appropriated budget.

## Forced Change: Use of Federal Special Education Grant



### Proportionate Share and Disproportionality

In July 2017, DESE issued guidance regarding the IDEA funds through the #240 Grant allocation to monitor **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 where the students live. Annually, our district must calculate the proportionate share for private and home schooled students within our geographic area, demonstrate upon request that we have spent this amount of our allocation of IDEA funds on eligible students who are privately enrolled and educated in the district. For this school year, the proportionate share equals \$57,380. This year meaningful consultation has occurred with our local private institutions. We have partnered with St. John's High

School to enhance access clinical supports through contracting with Assabet Valley Collaborative-Family Support Partnership including a clinician and consulting psychiatrist. We also have contracted tutors for academic support at both Saint John's High School and Montessori.

In August of 2019, the district received notification regarding **Significant Disproportionality**. DESE is required under federal regulations to analyze data from school districts to identify and report to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) significant disproportionality in special education of 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 Student Information Management System (SIMS) and the Student Safety and Discipline Reports (SSDR) for the prior three years. DESE determined that our calculated risk ratio for white students with emotional disabilities exceeded the threshold rate established by the state (4.0). Next year, the district will begin the mandated implementation of so-called Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CCEIS) to develop a targeted plan to address the students in the subgroup that was significantly disproportionate from age 3 through Grade 12 with and without disabilities.

**Contracted Services:**

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

Legal Consultation: Our legal counsel supports the district with administering state and federal laws governing special education. 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.

Instructional Materials: Special education staff use standardized assessments for initial evaluations and reevaluations. 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.

The table below shows the recent history and projection for contracted expenses.

<b>Contracted Expenses</b>	<b>FY18 Actual</b>	<b>FY 19 Actual</b>	<b>FY 20 Budget</b>	<b>FY 21 Proposed</b>
Legal Fees	\$23,605	\$38,495	\$32,000	\$35,000
Translator/Interpreter	\$24,004	\$38,913	\$25,000	\$27,500
Home/Hospital Tutoring	\$3,527	\$6,061	\$13,000	\$13,000
Instructional Materials	\$30,876	\$19,443	\$51,000	\$51,000
Testing	\$29,724	\$10,575	\$30,600	\$30,600
Contracted Therapies	\$186,735	\$235,898	\$250,000	\$250,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$341,000</b>	<b>\$395,000</b>	<b>\$401,600</b>	<b>\$407,100</b>

### **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 the longer school year. The programming needs are determined based on the recommendations in order to prepare for a July 2020 start date.

Through the planning process it is anticipated that there will be a fiscal increase for FY 20 based upon transportation needs, additional nursing and level of staffing due to enrollment projections.

<b>Summer Special Education</b>	<b>FY18 Actual</b>	<b>FY19 Actual</b>	<b>FY20 Approved</b>	<b>FY21 Proposed</b>	<b>Difference FY20 to FY21</b>
Total	\$543,984	\$536,941	\$621,000	\$667,250	\$46,250

## **Staffing**

We have continued to monitor the staffing across the district to ensure we 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. Even with this focused lens, the district continues to experience staffing challenges given the number of unanticipated move-ins to SPS, along with other students who were identified with high level of academic, behavioral and complex medical needs.

## **Mental and Behavioral Health**

Under our 2018-2022 Strategic Priority of Enhanced Well-Being for All, we have an opportunity to specifically create a common understanding of the benefits of the skills, habits, and mindsets of social and emotional learning and develop a shared, systematic approach to explicitly teach, integrate, and assess these competencies.

Counselors, mental and behavioral health professionals play a vital role in identifying, supporting and intervening when students exhibit mental/behavioral health challenges in the school environment. A collaborative approach is taken to working with students presenting with mental health, emotional, social and/or behavioral challenges. School teams may consist of Psychologists, Nurses, School Counselors, Administrators, Special Educators, and consultation with Clinical Coordinators, Psychiatrist, and/or UMass Clinical Fellows, who work together to identify students with needs in this area, provide recommendations, interventions, support, and closely monitor cases. These professionals provide clinical supports which are customized to each student, including counseling, behavior management, crisis intervention, family engagement or care coordination. Counseling, and Behavioral and Mental Health support will be key to increasing our students social and emotional abilities and overall well-being.

From August 2017 to January 2020, Clinical Coordinators have worked with staff on 167 student cases which included an additional 32 Functional Behavioral Assessments.

## **Recommendations for 2020-2021:**

Through observations, analysis and collaborative conversations with administrators and staff, the following positions will further develop program integrity and consistency throughout the district.

## **Personnel:**

### ***Recommended Strategic Investments***

***Although these recommendations would enhance student programming, well-being and learning, in order to move forward with these positions, the district would need to reduce existing expenses or seek alternate sources of revenue. As an ongoing practice, the district does apply for grant funding both publicly and privately as available.***

### **Elementary Severe Special Education Teacher 1.0 FTE**

- Based on caseloads and programming projections, a severe special education teacher will improve educational services and supports at the elementary level.

### **Elementary Moderate Special Education Teacher 1.0 FTE**

- Based on programming projections, a moderate special education teacher will improve educational services and supports at the elementary level.

### **Elementary Adjustment Counselors 2.0 FTE**

- To be able to provide each elementary school additional access to interventions for students who are having social, emotional, and/or behavioral issues.

### **Resources and Programming:**

Shrewsbury Public Schools has determined that our priorities continue to be focused on our students with mental and behavioral health challenges based upon multiple advisory councils and district data. Over the next few years, our goal is to add capacity and programming for student support to further enhance our inclusive practices. We would recommend growing our counseling staff to include at least one, full time Adjustment Counselor in each elementary building and more where warranted due to size of caseload.

Our professional development (PD) efforts will focus on two of our district strategic priorities: Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters and Enhanced Well-being of All. We aim to structure PD for staff so that we enhance our shared understanding and ability to engage in inclusive and culturally proficient practices; the skills, habits, and mindsets of social and emotional learning and mental and behavioral health of all. Educators have a responsibility not only to teach and care for students, but to support them in their social and emotional development.

Continuing to expand and grow Co-Teaching to build inclusive schools, is another explicitly targeted path within the Strategic Priority, Learning Environments Where Everyone's Success Matters. This will be completed through consultation, professional development and coaching. Our contracted consultants conduct classroom observations and non-evaluative feedback sessions. The provided professional development focuses on: research-based instructional practices; specially designed instruction, modifications & accommodations; differentiated instructions/grouping practices; Co-Teaching practices; collaboration and consultation practices; and classroom management.

Continued PD in order to move towards an understanding of the Massachusetts Tiered Systems of Supports' philosophy: All students are capable of learning with adequate support. MTSS is rooted in proactivity and prevention. The system utilizes evidenced based practices. Decisions

and procedures are driven by school and student data. The degree of support given to each student is based on their needs. Implementation occurs schoolwide and requires stakeholder collaboration. This will be completed through our work with inclusive practices as well as our Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Implementation Plan presented this past December.

*In conclusion, and as stated in previous reports, our district, with continued support from families and stakeholders, 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. We aim to structure professional development for staff so that we enhance our shared understanding and ability to engage in inclusive and culturally proficient practices; the skills, habits, and mindsets of social and emotional learning, and the mental and behavioral health of all.*

# Appendix

## Program Descriptions 2019-2020

### 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 is 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 (IEP) 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 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.

**Co-Teaching Teams:**

A service delivery option designed to address the needs of students in an inclusive classroom by having a general education teacher and a special service provider teach together in the same classroom to meet the needs of individual students.

**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, multisensory reading and math programs. There are learning skills programs in all of the elementary schools.

**Middle Schools:****Educational Learning Center (ELC) Grades 5-8:**

The focus of this program is to provide an age appropriate, functional and inclusive education for students with intensive special needs. 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. 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 local stores, restaurants and businesses, 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. 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:**

A service delivery option designed to address the needs of students in an inclusive classroom by having a general education teacher and a special service provider teach together in the same classroom to meet the needs of individual students.

**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. 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.

**Learning Skills:**

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 classes are available to students receiving inclusion supports, co-taught model, and Essential Skills models of service delivery.

**Intensive Learning Needs:**

Students with complex learning profiles 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 requiring instruction at entry points to the Common Core State Standards, a special education teacher licensed at the Intensive level is available to teach small group and instruction as identified in student IEPs.

**Transitions Program:**

SMS Transitions program is a short term, time limited program for students returning to school after an extended absence due to illness or hospitalization. Students may be returning from treatment centers for emotional and substance related reasons, or from significant illness or injury-related absences. Services provided: Academic tutoring; Emotional support; Improve and stabilize attendance; Act as a liaison to home, teachers and community providers; Encourage resilience and coping skills; Provide crisis support for struggling students; Regular and frequent communication with families about their student's progress and needs.

**High School:****Educational Learning Center (ELC Grades 9-12):**

The focus of this program is to provide an age appropriate, functional and inclusive education for students with intensive special needs. The program is highly individualized to meet each student's unique learning needs. 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. The curriculum includes reading, writing, math, functional life skills (community based, work based, and independent living skills), activities of daily living, social skills instruction, and pre-vocational training. Students may also require behavior support across their educational settings. 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.

**Co-Taught:**

A service delivery option designed to address the needs of students in an inclusive classroom by having a general education teacher and a special service provider teach together in the same classroom to meet the needs of individual students.

**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.

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 an IEP 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 with the primary goal to help students gain vocational skills and develop appropriate work behaviors (soft skills). 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.

**Special Education Transition Services:**

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>.

### **Transitions Program:**

SHS Transitions program is a short term, time limited program for students returning to school after an extended absence due to illness or hospitalization. Students may be returning from treatment centers for emotional and substance related reasons, or from significant illness or injury-related absences. Services provided: Academic tutoring; Emotional support; Improve and stabilize attendance; Act as a liaison to home, teachers and community providers; Encourage resilience and coping skills; Provide crisis support for struggling students; Regular and frequent communication with families about their student’s progress and needs.

### **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. Speech and Language Pathologists 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 students’ audiological needs. Speech and Language Pathologists implement and train students and educators to use AAC to access the curriculum and communicate in the school and vocational environments.

Pathologists 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 ensure student access to educational curriculum and environments, to help students attain optimal occupational performance in their student roles. The Occupational Therapist may evaluate a child as necessary which may involve 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. Under the supervision of the Occupational Therapist, a Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant (COTA) provides direct services outlined in an IEP to students. Areas they may 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.

**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 Physical Education (PE) or Adaptive Physical Education (APE) 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:**

Contracted services for an Assistive Technology (AT) Specialist who 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 AT 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, Early Intervening Teams, referrals by individual faculty members, and review of discipline logs. Once a student has been identified with needs in these areas, a 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. 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 and SHS, play a vital role in identifying, supporting and intervening when students exhibit challenges related to mental health 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.

**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, collaborate with 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 maintains a contract with Assabet Valley Collaborative for bi-weekly, psychiatric consultation across the district. The Child Psychiatrist works with both Clinical Coordinators and school-based teams to address student needs across the district. This position also consults to the School Psychologist & Adjustment Counselor Department.

**Community Partnership/Social Work:**

Through Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, 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. SYFS utilizes a wraparound model to serve at-risk students and their families whose challenges prevent success and well being in school.

**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.