



Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment – Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Overview

Amy Clouter

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

Key Areas of Budget Responsibility

- I. Providing curriculum materials, including textbooks, trade books, workbooks, math manipulatives, science materials, etc.; providing digital curriculum resources, including online texts, interactive applications, etc.
- II. Ensuring instructional leadership and support of strong teaching practices, with primary supervision of Department Directors, Curriculum Coordinators, and Reading Specialists who work across multiple schools, and secondary supervision of those roles assigned to an individual school
- III. Coordinating state and local assessment systems, including state MCAS testing, English Language Education state ACCESS testing, and district-based formative assessments (such as the Star assessment)
- IV. Facilitating district professional development offerings, including working with the Professional Development Committee regarding offerings on professional development days and early release days; necessary training for implementation of new curriculum and instruction (such as the K-8 literacy program); planning and implementing the Summer Institute professional development conference; etc.

Key Budget Investments for Fiscal Year 2027

Textbooks/Curriculum Materials

Key investments of \$313,715

Included in this category are:

- \$139,715 to cover the cost of contracts for critical software, including:
 - Renaissance, the platform that we use to conduct the Star assessment universal screenings in reading and math (One year contract at \$93,515)
 - Desmos (math) curriculum resources for Grades 7 & 8 (\$14,500) and ST Math, used by students in Grades K-4 (Thanks to a competitive grant, this cost is \$17,500 for FY27); both tools used for differentiated practice for students who need more support or who will benefit from higher level work

- ELlevation, a software tool we use to support English Language learners in meeting DESE targets (Cost for FY26 will be approximately \$7,000)
- Listenwise, a tool used by English and Social Studies teachers at SHS to improve listening comprehension while connecting curriculum content to current events (One year subscription at \$7,200)
- Funding to support the proposed Medical Interpretation Pathway at SHS (currently estimated at \$20,000)
- Approximately \$54,000 to purchase new textbooks/curriculum materials (Quotes are still coming in; considerations include curriculum and progress monitoring tools to support intermediate English language learners, French textbooks for SHS, math intervention materials for Grades 5-8 and updated safety equipment and curriculum to expand Open Sci Ed at Sherwood)

Note: The cost of provisioning consumable literacy materials (student workbooks, etc.) for Grades K-8 (projected at approximately \$150,000) as well as the cost of additional supplemental texts for the EL Education Language Arts curriculum in Grades 5 & 6 (budgeted at \$20,000) will be funded with available FY26 dollars.

1.0 Math Specialist for Sherwood & Oak

- A shared full time Math Specialist will provide daily intensive (Tier 3) math intervention for students in grades 5 to 8 who are two or more grade levels behind in foundational skills (at an estimated salary of \$100,000)

Examples of Efficiencies in Fiscal Year 2026

Grant or alternative funds used for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment and Professional Development include:

- Federal entitlement grants ≈\$382,773
- Continued access to the ST Math interactive digital math program for K-4 students worth ≈ \$50K through a DESE-sponsored program with the One8 Foundation
- Receipt of a \$13,510 competitive grant to fund the Seal of Biliteracy
- Use of Adult Ed professional development revolving account to fund the Summer Institute professional development conference ≈\$110,445 (tuition and fees paid by Shrewsbury and Westborough educators and nurses)
- Repurposing donated materials for use in the Career Technical Education program to offset the cost of implementing Project Lead the Way (approximately \$6,000)
- **Estimated total use of grants/alternative funds in FY26: ≈\$562,728**

SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545

Phone: 508-841-8403 Fax: 508-841-8490



Amy Clouter

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

To: School Committee

Re: Fiscal Year 2027 Budget for Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Context

The investments made in both literacy materials and personnel have improved the district's capacity to support students in need. While we have a robust system for supporting our young readers, we recognize that it's just as important to strengthen supports related to improving math outcomes – particularly for students in Grades 5-8 that experienced disrupted schooling. For this reason, in the coming year, the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment budget includes requests for resources needed to sustain and strengthen math intervention.

Specifically, educators will continue to use screening assessments and technology tools to identify students in need of support, to monitor progress and to differentiate instruction. Professional development and ongoing training play a big part in this work – as do the members of the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment team. The district's expansion of intervention systems will require continued investment in the structures that support student learning and in professional development for teachers.

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Overview

I. Key Areas of Budget Responsibility

The budgets for curriculum, instruction and assessment are closely aligned to the district's commitment to educational excellence. Notably, our strategic goals center both student and educator learning. For that reason, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment budget expenditures reflect the resources needed to meet them.

Our current strategic plan outlines four key priorities related to our shared commitment to educational excellence, including ensuring high quality teaching and learning, closing gaps, advancing career and technical education and developing a districtwide data culture.

Related goals for this year are captured in detail below:

Strategic Goals	Action Steps	Staff Responsible
<p>1.1 Continue to implement the EL Education literacy curriculum in grades Kindergarten-Grade 6 and fully implement in Grades 7 & 8 in order to provide all students with the research-based instruction necessary to support reading and writing achievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement the curriculum content and pacing with fidelity, with ongoing review of progress and support through department meetings/grade-level meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Use resources created by teacher leaders to create common assessment guides for each grade <input type="checkbox"/> Continue to provide robust professional development to strengthen Tier 1 instructional practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment ● K-8 Principals, Assistant Principals, Preschool Director, Special Education Directors ● Instructional Coaches/Curriculum Coordinators & Reading Specialists ● All K-8 General and Special Educators who teach reading/English language arts ● All K-8 paraeducators who provide tutoring or support for literacy
<p>1.2 Continue to develop collective expertise of PreK-Grade 12 instructional leaders to identify and provide feedback on key elements of effective, high-quality teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a minimum of three formal cycles of instructional rounds in each school <input type="checkbox"/> Provide professional development opportunities at no fewer than five District Leadership Team meetings focused on coaching models that provide effective feedback to staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment ● Members of the District Leadership Team
<p>1.3 Consider changes in existing policies and/or development of new policies regarding the use of technology, in anticipation of new state legislation regarding cell phones and electronic devices in schools, and in response to new state guidance related to the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider evolving best practices and pending legislation regarding cell phone use in schools <input type="checkbox"/> Review new state guidance on AI from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE) Develop policies at the School Committee and administrative levels, as appropriate, to clarify expectations regarding how AI may appropriately support teaching, learning and workflow for both students and staff <input type="checkbox"/> Monitor incidents regarding breaches of academic integrity to better respond to student use of AI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Superintendent of Schools ● School Committee Policy Subcommittee ● Director of Information Technology ● Director of Instructional Technology & Media Services ● District Leadership Team

The investments made in Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment have helped to strengthen instructional practices, secure effective tools for teachers and maintain strong systems of support for students. Implementing a system for reviewing student data and aligning interventions in consistent ways across schools has led to improved academic outcomes. Similarly, providing high quality professional development for educators and district leaders is a key responsibility of the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment team.

Professional development should be aligned with district needs and sustained over time to be effective. In previous years, educators in Grades K-6 learned about the Science of Reading and worked to integrate the teaching of foundational reading skills into their practice. This year, educators are deepening their knowledge of grade level standards and using the new curriculum to strengthen both reading and writing practices. As noted previously, literacy will remain an area of continued focus; our instructional coaches and coordinators continue to support educators in refining planning and pedagogy.

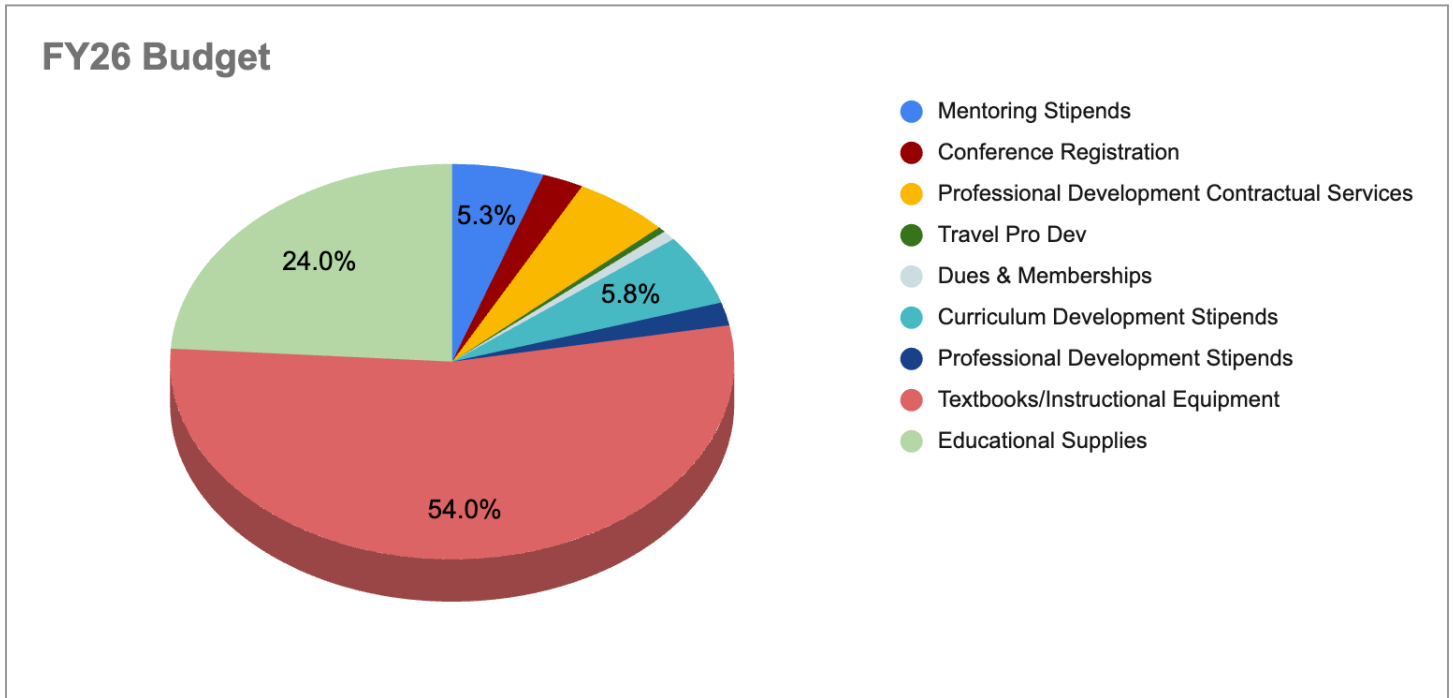
Here's a key thing for us educators to remember: Only the learner learns. That may sound cryptic, but it is the reality of teaching and learning. Just because we taught something doesn't mean that the student learned it. (Zaretta Hammond)

Our assessment data is showing improvement in the number of students who need additional reading support, but it is also evident that not all students have reached pre-pandemic benchmarks. As detailed in the midyear literacy update, sent separately, the district continues to focus on raising rates of achievement for students with disabilities, low income students and English learners. Just as importantly, we see similar disparities in math achievement for student subgroups, which is why a specialist position to support our neediest middle school students in math is recommended.

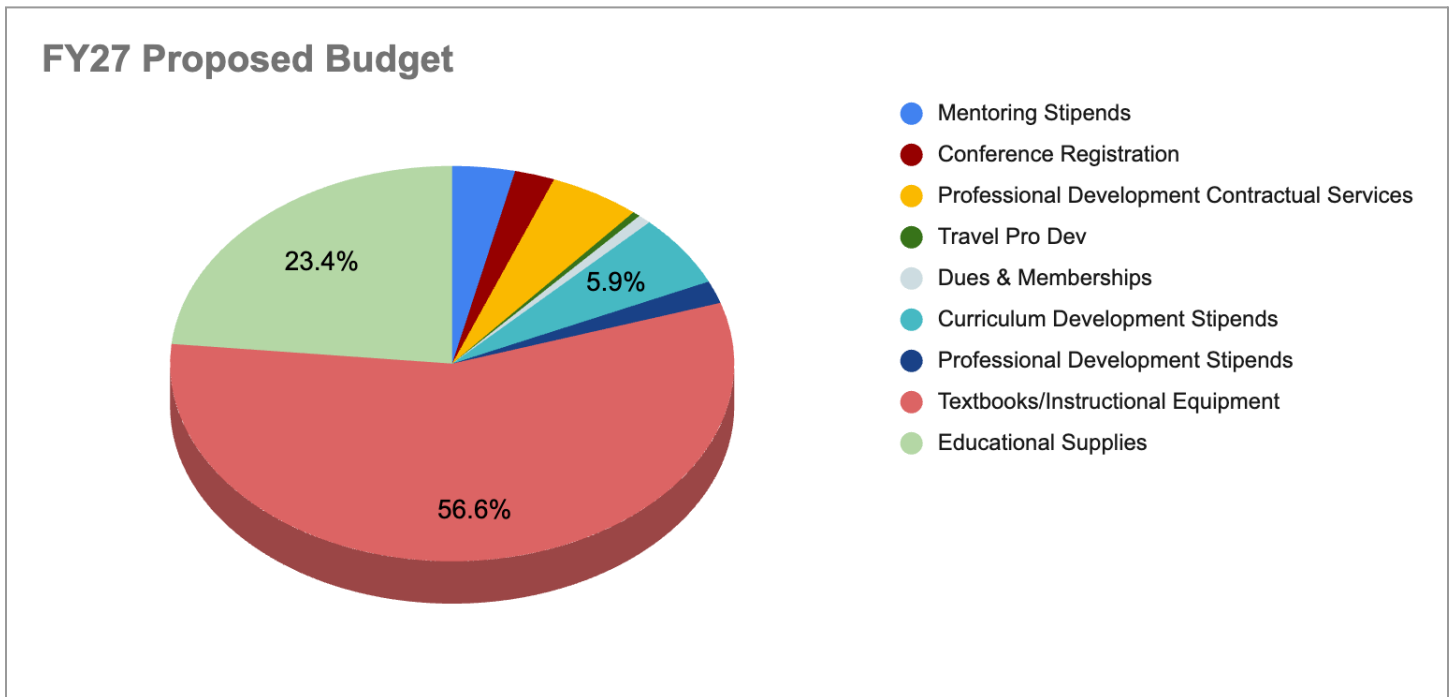
In addition to funding the personnel that support students, the Curriculum budget must cover the ongoing costs of providing both students and teachers with a wide range of instructional materials in all the major subject areas at all levels. Funds for math workbooks, digital subscriptions, student manipulatives (like magnetic letters, base ten blocks and sound cards) and textbooks for older students are appropriated annually as well. As shown below, the budget for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment is made up of nine categories including portions of several cost centers in the FY27 Budget Summary, like Textbooks/Curriculum Materials, Professional Development, and Educational Supplies.

Pie charts for both years show how the cost of educational supplies compares to other expenses such as professional development and mentoring.

FY 2026 Total Non-Personnel Budget for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: \$714,300



FY 2027 Total Non-Personnel Budget for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment: \$752,732



The Curriculum budget also manages a revolving account that is used to run the Summer Institute, a four-day conference that takes place in June. Educators from area districts are invited to take classes for in-district credit, and Shrewsbury partners with Westborough Public Schools to offer professional development to area educators. For the past two years we have also included area nurses in a learning program specific to their roles.

The Summer Institute provides good value for the district because we are able to offer graduate courses that align with district priorities and satisfy relicensing requirements for our educators. The registration fees for the Institute cover the cost of hosting it. In all, we collected \$110,445 last year and spent \$88,450. The difference remains in the account to cover anticipated costs for the 2026 Summer Institute.



Pictured here is Dr. J. Stuart Ablon, Founder and Director of Think:Kids in the Department of Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital. He delivered one of four keynote addresses last June.

II. Key Investments for Fiscal Year 2027

Personnel

All students benefit from some support. For this reason, within a given lesson teachers map out learning objectives for all students (tier 1 instruction) Educators routinely plan for addition/extended practice for students that need it (tier 2) during “what I need” (WIN) blocks. However, in recent years we’ve seen an increase in the number of students moving into Shrewsbury during their middle school years with significant skill gaps. In addition to instruction in the classroom, students that are performing two or more years below their same-age peers require specialized (tier 3) support. It’s our hope that the addition of a Math Specialist position will help provide students the means to focus on foundational skills they need to access grade level curriculum and ultimately, to make effective progress in the classroom. The salary for this position is estimated to be \$100,000.

Materials

Last year, English Language Arts Coordinator Lisa Daly, together with teacher representatives from Oak Middle School, selected EL Education's Language Arts Curriculum. Thanks to their efforts, all students in Grades K-8 will experience a rigorous, engaging and aligned high quality literacy curriculum. Predictably, provisioning new materials for Oak adds to the annual cost of student workbooks and other materials. We are still waiting on formal quotes, but the total expense for the program next year, including teacher resources, student workbooks and classroom sets of trade books, is estimated to cost approximately \$170,000, with \$20,000 of that being the cost of additional materials to provision teacher libraries at Sherwood. As noted previously, we have reserved a portion of the FY26 budget to ensure continued support for this key strategic priority.

As technology evolves, so too do instructional materials. Many curriculum materials are coupled with digital subscriptions that allow students to have broader access to content without requiring them to carry books back and forth to school. Given that these subscriptions require annual renewal they are included in the FY27 Curriculum budget. Additionally, approximately \$54,000 has been budgeted to fund new texts and curriculum materials. As mentioned previously, renewals for key software contracts in FY27 will total \$139,715.

Career Technical Education

The expansion of career technical pathways for students at Shrewsbury High School is an exciting new development. However, the expansion of the district's offerings also has implications for the budget. The cost of consumable materials and equipment has been offset by grant funds and donations. We continue to work with community partners to mitigate expenses. It's important to note that the creation of the Medical Interpretation pathway will incur new expenses, the extent of which is not finalized at this point in time.

Finally, in our efforts to support equity and systemic thinking, the district has shifted costs that may have been covered by building-based accounts in the past to be included in the district budget, such as library books and subscriptions like the online library Sora. The rising cost of inflation, continues to put pressure on the appropriated budget, which we supplement through competitive

grants where possible, but as the District Management Group report indicated last year the district should focus on decreasing reliance on grants and philanthropic funds. To that end, the total increase in the Textbook/Curriculum materials budget (which includes funds I direct plus funds overseen by various directors) is increased by \$51,737 for FY27, or 11.76%

Pictured to the left are the education professionals that were hired last year. New educators in Shrewsbury receive three years of



mentoring. Our mentoring program is funded using both the Title IIa grant and appropriated funds.

III. Grant Funds That Support Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Federal Grants

The district has consistently received entitlement grants to help address key priorities. Typically we receive federal entitlement grants annually for specific purposes. The table below shows how these grants supplement the Curriculum budget.

<i>Grant</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>FY26 SPS Allocation</i>
Title 1	*provides financial assistance to schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to provide additional academic support. *Currently Beal and Coolidge benefit	\$226,785
Title IIa	*used to improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals and other district leaders by supporting mentoring and professional development	\$89,542
Title III	*earmarked to help English Learners succeed in school by providing access to rich educational experiences, including summer support	\$51,695
Title IV	*designed to support safe and healthy schools that provide all students and particularly marginalized children access to technology and experiences with the arts	\$14,751
FY26 Total Federal Grants		\$382,773

Overall the table depicts an increase of \$26,124 in entitlement funds over FY 2025. While it's typical to assume that our grant allocations will remain stable from year to year, federal grant funds are not assured for 2027. More to the point, these funds alone are not sufficient to cover the cost of needed materials and programs. For example, the cost of the district mentoring program continues to exceed the district's Title IIa grant allocation. This same grant typically augments funds allocated within the budget for professional development, which means that for the past few years more of the appropriated budget was used for this purpose, leaving fewer dollars available for other expenses. As we prepare for FY 2027, the possibility of reductions in our Title 1 allocation (our largest federal grant) is cause for concern, based on new information provided just this past Wednesday. We will learn more about this and keep you apprised.

IV. Optimization of Resources and Additional Fiscal Efficiencies

In addition to making good use of the materials we have, leaders in the Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment department work hard to secure resources to supplement the appropriated budget. For example, this year once again the Director of English Language Education Christina Manos was successful in securing professional development for Shrewsbury High School at no cost as a result of her efforts to join DESE's High School English Learner Redesign cohort. Similarly, the Instructional Coach/Curriculum Coordinators continue to benefit from participating in a grant-based multi-district cohort focused on high-quality instructional materials.

Competitive Grants

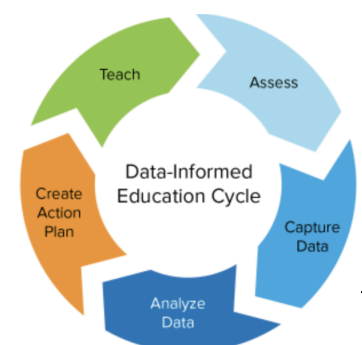
As mentioned in previous reports, uncertainty at the federal level has resulted in fewer opportunities for competitive grants overall. This means that the district will continue to bear the full cost of accessing the consultant support. Given that literacy intervention supports are linked to Title 1 funds, we will be paying close attention to budgeting at the state level in the coming months.

Fortunately, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has assured districts that some competitive grant funds will remain available next year. For example, the cost of ST Math for K-4 students is largely covered by a DESE program sponsored by the One8 Foundation (an estimated \$50,000 value, with the district paying \$17,500). The cost for the Seal of Biliteracy at Shrewsbury High School will also be covered by a competitive grant. Thanks to the continued efforts of World Language Director Ken Almeida, the district was awarded \$13,510 to cover the cost of testing supplies and materials. It's worth noting the value of this initiative for our graduates; last year the Shrewsbury High School (SHS) Class of 2025 garnered a total of 99 Seal of Biliteracy awards, an increase of 77% over 2024. Finally we have been fortunate to receive grants to support Career Technical Education thanks to the hard work of Dr. Jane Lizotte, Assistant Superintendent for Community Partnerships and Wellbeing, CTE Coordinator Karen Ares and Director David Hruskoci.

Finally, Shrewsbury is also fortunate to enjoy broad-based community support. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Dr. Jane Lizotte for her help in securing donations from local businesses.

V. Conclusion

A strong school district keeps the needs of students, staff and families at the fore. Shrewsbury's strategic goals are ambitious, our educators continue to work extraordinarily hard, and all our students deserve the resources they require to succeed.



Going forward, it's vital to sustain our focus on professional development while also investing in interventions designed to improve academic outcomes for students. I am hopeful that the new investments proposed here will add to our capacity to effectively serve all our stakeholders— and I'm committed to pushing for continued progress in closing achievement opportunity gaps.

As always, I look forward to your questions and feedback. Thank you for your consideration.