



SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT UPDATE

School Committee Meeting
October 6, 2025



>> Shared Responsibility

A Shared Responsibility for ALL Students

Centering our Core Belief

All students, with their unique cultural and linguistic experiences, diverse abilities, learning characteristics, and interests, are capable of learning.

Focusing on Academic Equity & Excellence

All students require access to high expectations, grade-level curriculum and instruction. All educators share responsibility for students' academic, social-emotional, and inclusive success across all classrooms.

Guiding our Decisions with Data

Data is essential, as it informs the processes and procedures for both Special Education and MLE, guiding decisions to better support student needs and promote equitable outcomes.

Special Education Administrators

Ildefonso Arellano

Director of Special Education

Dorothy Scally

Department Coordinator
at Brown and Out of District

Dr. Iris Miller

Department Coordinator
at Argenziano and West

Will Verbits

Department Coordinator
at Kennedy

Jack Haverty

Department Coordinator
at Next Wave/Full Circle

Keveny Landry

Department Coordinator
AIM

Kathleen (Kate) De Lisi

SEEK Director

Marisa MacDonald

Assistant Director of Special Education

Siobhan Aberdale

Department Coordinator
at Capuano Early Childhood Center

Marianna Stewart

Department Coordinator
at East and Specialized Programs @SHS

Jared Wickham (Oct. 6, 2025)

Department Coordinator
at Healey and Winter Hill

Konstantina Kalogridis

Department Coordinator
at SHS

Laura Walley

AIM Director

SPECIAL EDUCATION NUMBERS - As of 9/29/2025

	NUMBER OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES	PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES
DISTRICT	1032	18.5%
CAPUANO	82	34.2%
ARGENZIANO	91	16.6%
BROWN	22	9.5%
EAST	107	14.4%
HEALEY	92	19.8%
KENNEDY	87	18.4%
WEST	63	16.5%
WINTER HILL	106	39.7%
NEXT WAVE / FULL CIRCLE	9/47	81.8%/77.0%
SHS	242	17.4%
OOD	60	
WALK-INS	22	

Dually Identified Students (Multilingual / Special Education)	313	30.3%
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SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- **Capuano**
 - AIM (Adapt Include Motivate)
 - ECIP (Early Childhood Intervention Program - Integrated and Substantially Separate)
- **Argenziano**
 - Language Based Learning Disabilities Classroom
- **Healey**
 - Multi-Graded
- **Kennedy**
 - SKIP (Specialized Kennedy Intensive Program)
 - SEEK (Social Educational Enrichment at Kennedy)
 - Life Skills
- **Next Wave/Full Circle**
 - Therapeutic Alternative Middle and High School
- **Winter Hill**
 - AIM (Adapt Include Motivate)
- **Somerville High School**
 - SHIP (Specialized High School Intensive Program)
 - Life Skills
 - AIM (Adapt Include Motivate)
 - Path Program
 - Transition (18-22)

SPECIAL EDUCATION – ACCOUNTABILITY DATA

2025 Points awarded

2025 Progress toward improvement targets							
Indicator		Students with Disabilities Student Group (Non-high school grades)			Students with Disabilities Student Group (High school grades)		
		Points earned	Total possible points	Weight %	Points earned	Total possible points	Weight %
Achievement	English language arts achievement	2	4	-	0	4	-
	Mathematics achievement	0	4	-	0	4	-
	Science achievement	2	4	-	0	4	-
	Achievement total	4	12	67.5	0	12	47.5
Growth	English language arts growth	2	4	-	1	4	-
	Mathematics growth	2	4	-	1	4	-
	Growth total	4	8	22.5	2	8	22.5
High school completion	Four-year cohort graduation rate	-	-	-	0	4	-
	Extended engagement rate	-	-	-	0	4	-
	Annual dropout rate	-	-	-	4	4	-
	High school completion total	-	-	-	4	12	20.0
Progress toward attaining English language proficiency	English language proficiency total	-	-	-	-	-	-
Additional indicators	Chronic absenteeism	4	4	-	4	4	-
	Advanced coursework completion	-	-	-	0	4	-
	Additional indicators total	4	4	10.0	4	8	10.0
Weighted total		4.0	10.3	-	1.7	10.7	-
Percentage of possible points		39%			16%		
Percentage of possible points by gradespan		39%			16%		
		Weight of non-high school results:66%			Weight of high school results:34%		
2025 Annual criterion-referenced target percentage		31%					

SPECIAL EDUCATION - PROACTIVE STEPS

The Special Education Department has undertaken a proactive initiative by scheduling meetings with building leaders to conduct a comprehensive analysis of MCAS data for students with disabilities. The purpose of these meetings is to identify areas of need, determine appropriate supports, and engage in a root cause analysis to better understand underlying challenges. The outcomes of this work will inform the development of targeted action steps, which are fully aligned with DESE's recommended practices and directly support the district's work on the [IDEA LEA Special Education Determination](#) of Needs Assistance, ensuring that our initiatives reflect DESE guidance and address identified priorities.

CHILD FIND – Ensuring Every Child is Identified and Supported

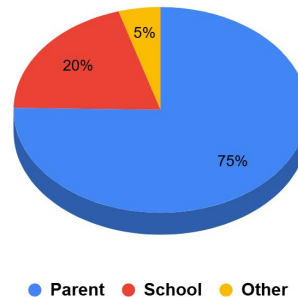
- **Legal Requirement (IDEA Part B/ 603 CMR 28.00):** Districts must identify, locate, and evaluate children ages 3–21 suspected of having a disability.
- **Referral Sources:** Parents, teachers, and community agencies.
- **Timeline Compliance:** Consent sent out within 5 school days / Evaluations completed within 30 school days of parental consent / Meetings held within 45 school days of parental consent
- **District Commitment:** Early identification, equitable access, full parent participation.

Referral → Consent → Evaluation → Team Meeting → Eligibility Decision

CHILD FIND – Ensuring Every Child is Identified and Supported

- **DISTRICT ACTIVITIES:**
 - [Community Screenings](#)
 - Collaboration with early childhood centers and community partners
 - Collaboration with private schools
 - Ongoing monitoring of evaluation timelines
- **REFERRAL DATA (2024-2025)**
 - 234 Referrals submitted (staff, parents, EI, outside agencies)
 - 75% Parent/Guardian-Initiated
 - 91.2% Referrals Complied with Mandated Timelines

Percentage of Special Education Referrals



STRENGTHENING PROGRAMMATIC DESIGN

- **New Staffing for 2025–26:**
 - Additional special education staff were allocated to Winter Hill and East Somerville to address known staffing shortages.
 - A new AIM classroom (1 special educator, 2 paraprofessionals) was added at Capuano to support increased enrollment and maintain compliance with required group sizes in substantially separate settings.
 - Two new Inclusion Co-Teachers were hired this year to advance our Inclusive Practices and Co-Teaching initiative, supporting the goals of the working group and upcoming inclusion audits.
- **Workload-Based Staffing Model:**
 - In alignment with the new collective bargaining agreement with SEU, the district is now using a weighted workload model to more accurately assess and respond to staffing needs based on the IEP service requirements of students.
- **Staffing Adjustments:**
 - In response to ongoing monitoring and staff feedback since the start of the school year, the district added the following positions to further support caseloads:
 - 1.0 School Adjustment Counselor (0.5 at Winter Hill, 0.5 at East Somerville)
 - 1.0 Resource Room Teacher (0.5 at Argenziano, 0.5 at Kennedy)
 - 0.6 Speech-Language Pathologist (0.3 at SHS, 0.3 at Argenziano)

INCLUSIVE PRACTICES & CO-TEACHING

- Expanding inclusive practices with the implementation of co-teaching models at:
 - East Somerville: 5th grade ELA & Math
 - Winter Hill: 4th grade ELA & Math
 - Two additional special educators were hired to support these inclusive classrooms.
- Inclusive Practices/Co-Teaching Working Group:
 - In partnership with SEU and family representatives, the district has launched a working group to strengthen and expand co-teaching and inclusion efforts.
 - Kickoff Meeting: September 25, 2025 3-4:30pm
 - Membership: 15 educators, 4 administrators, 1 parent
 - Goals: Review current models, define co-teaching expectations, identify professional development needs, analyze data from pilot sites, and provide recommendations for future expansion.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

SONDAY SYSTEM:

- The Sonday System is an evidence-based literacy program that provides explicit, systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Its multisensory, sequential approach supports the development of foundational reading skills while addressing the unique needs of each learner—ensuring access to high-quality literacy instruction for all students.

CRISIS PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS (CPI):

- Trauma-informed de-escalation training for staff.
 - Verbal Intervention Training
 - Nonviolent Crisis Intervention

Q-INTERACTIVE

- This session introduces Q-Interactive from Pearson, a digital platform for administering, scoring, and reporting cognitive and achievement assessments. Participants will learn how to use the system efficiently, explore its tools for real-time scoring and data collection, and discuss best practices for leveraging digital assessments to inform instruction and intervention.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

PARAPROFESSIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- This year, our paraprofessional professional development series will include five sessions designed to deepen understanding and skills in supporting students. Topics will cover how special education works, the difference between reinforcing and teaching, fostering behavior regulation and strong relationships, implementing inclusive practices in the classroom, and using data to track student progress.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION

- This professional development, currently under development, is designed for all educators and administrators. It will cover the foundations of special education, including the laws that guide it, the principles of FAPE and LRE, and the evaluation process. Participants will explore timelines, understand everyone's role in an IEP meeting, and learn about specially designed instruction (SDI) to see how supports are tailored to help every student succeed.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

FROM REFERRAL TO RESULTS: UNLOCKING SUCCESS FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

- This professional development is designed to guide educators through the process of referring, evaluating, and determining eligibility for multilingual learners (MLs) with suspected disabilities. Participants will gain a clear understanding of how to differentiate language needs from learning needs, explore the intersection of language and special education services, and learn evidence-based instructional practices that support both IEP goals and language development.

HIGH LEVERAGE PRACTICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (HLP)

- The Special Education Department is developing a series of four asynchronous professional development modules. These modules will deepen staff knowledge, expand on HLPs, and strengthen instructional practices across the district. These modules will:
 - Strengthen classroom behavioral management practices.
 - Promote high-quality math and reading instruction.
 - Deepen understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework for meeting the needs of all learners.

EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR (ESY): EXPANDED MODEL

The Special Education Department implemented a new model of ESY services designed for students at risk of significant academic regression. Under this model, students received targeted instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics for 45 minutes in each subject, five days per week, over a four-week period. This structure ensured both consistency and intensity of services to better support student learning. Based on its success, we will continue with this model moving forward.

A.P.P.L.E. INSTITUTE

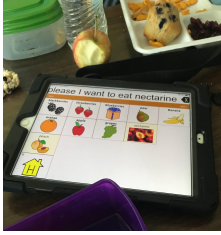
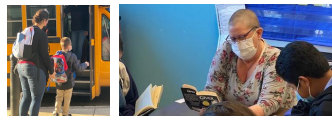
We are also pleased to share that the Somerville Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) and the Special Education Department were selected to participate in the Advancing Parent / Professional Leadership in Education (A.P.P.L.E.) Institute, sponsored by the Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN).

This free, virtual program is designed to help family leaders, SEPAC members, district administrators, and community partners build strong, collaborative teams to improve outcomes for students. The institute provides training and practice in family engagement, communication, consensus-building, goal setting, and leadership skills.

Our first A.P.P.L.E. Institute session will take place on **October 7, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM.**

We are excited to participate in this program alongside SEPAC and to continue strengthening our partnership. For more information on the A.P.P.L.E. Institute, please visit: <https://fcsn.org/apple/>







Thank you!