

# **SOUTH SHORE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE**

**[www.ssec.org](http://www.ssec.org)**

## **ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COLLABORATIVE BOARD of DIRECTORS 2023 - 2024**

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# **SOUTH SHORE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE BOARD MEMBERS**

**2023 - 2024**

Richard L. Reino,	Executive Director
James Lee Superintendent	Braintree Public Schools
Patrick Sullivan, Ed.D. Superintendent	Cohasset Public Schools
Margaret Adams Superintendent	Hingham Public Schools
Judith Kuehn Superintendent, Chairperson	Hull Public Schools
Jeffrey Granatino Superintendent	Marshfield Public Schools
Peter Burrows Superintendent	Milton Public Schools
Matthew A. Keegan Superintendent	Norwell Public Schools
Kevin Mulvey, J.D. Superintendent	Quincy Public Schools
Thea Stovell Superintendent	Randolph Public Schools
William Burkhead Superintendent	Scituate Public Schools
Robert Wargo Superintendent	Weymouth Public Schools
Jeffrey Szymaniak Superintendent	Whitman Hanson Public Schools

# **STAFF OF THE SOUTH SHORE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE**

**2023 – 2024**

Richard L. Reino	Executive Director
Arthur Sullivan	Treasurer
Jill Lawrence	Executive Secretary
Catherine A. Cole	Accounts Payable
Stacy Lemieux	Accounts Receivable
Diane Baiardi	Business Office Assistant
Kathleen Flaherty	Payroll
Erin Holder	Director of Student Services
Anne Rowland	Careers Program Coordinator
Denise Demaggio	Program Secretary
Jon Reynard	Community School Program Director
Karen Ring	Program Secretary
Maureen Gattine	Mini School Program Director
Karen Thomsen	Program Secretary
Rosanna Warrick	Quest Program Director
Mike Pagan	Program Secretary
Cheryl Jacques	South Shore High Coordinator
Tara Sepeck	Program Secretary
Dawn Flaherty, OTR/L	Director of Ancillary Services
Anne Rowland	STARTS Program Coordinator

## **1. Letter of Introduction**

This annual report is submitted by Michael Losche, Executive Director, and the administrators of the schools and programs that comprise the South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC) to describe significant challenges, events, and accomplishments that occurred during the 2023-2024 school year.

The SSEC primary location is 75 Abington Street in Hingham, MA. In addition, we have programs in both Hull and Randolph public school buildings. Thank you to both the Randolph and Hull public schools for their continued support of our program.

With the collaborative still experiencing the impact of staffing shortages in the education field, we took a more reserved approach to student admissions, only admitting the number of students we could safely support. With this approach, we avoided utilizing staffing agencies so as to not experience the deficit caused by this in 22-23. With this in mind, we were still able to come closer to pre-pandemic enrollment of 319 students. The collaborative also had a budget freeze for the majority of the school year, only purchasing items of critical need for programmatic continuation and IEP-based needs. This resulted in a positive financial effect for the collaborative.

The final FY25 budget was approved by the SSEC Board on April 5, 2024, with a tuition increase of 5% for Member Districts and 7% for Non-member Districts. The FY25 final board-approved budget with the aforementioned tuition increase was implemented for the start of the FY25 School Year. Enrollment for the FY 24 school year remained relatively static with a net loss of 3.07 FTE's from beginning to end (315.75 FTE's). The Community School for students with complex physical, medical, and educational needs as well as the Quest and Mini School programs for social, emotional, and autistic students respectively remain our most in-demand programs. All have waiting lists that are constrained by the lack of qualified staff. Our therapeutic pool has experienced significant technical issues, however, maintenance staff anticipates it will be up and running by November of 2024. The two high school programs, South Shore High School and Careers High School are housed at our Hingham location. Students in these two programs have access to improved technology infrastructure and classroom space. We offer cafeteria, kitchen, and greenhouse course offerings as well as work in our print shop. These vocational opportunities help students prepare for employment opportunities after graduation if they so choose. Our two transition specialists provide off-site field trips to both local employers and local colleges.

Our Director of Student Services, Erin Holder, (who has been in the role since 2019), continues to provide direct support to our program directors and ensure consistent programmatic growth with the goals of meeting student and staff needs. Erin is also responsible for ensuring DESE Program Review compliance, SSEC Policy and Procedure compliance, and ELL and Assessment Procedures and Practices. Over the FY24 school year, eight pre-existing SSEC policies were revised and/or updated and approved by SSEC's Board of Directors. One new policy was proposed and approved by the Board in May 2024 eliminating the use of unauthorized electronic devices (to include but not limited to student cell phones, tablets/iPads, smartwatches, and any technology determined by SSEC Administration) during the school day at SSEC. \*This does not include any unaided or aided Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices. The Director of

Student Services role was also critical in revising the Title IX policy, the training of staff, and conducting any Title IX investigations.

In accordance with the law governing collaboratives, the administration of SSEC has been working to meet the requirements of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). As part of a six-year cycle, SSEC participated in DESE's Coordinated Program Mid-cycle Review in the winter and spring of FY24. Over the FY24 school year, all SSEC programs audited by DESE received Full Approval as Approved Public Day programs. The next expected Program Review will be conducted by DESE in the 2026-2027 school year (FY27).

A new Strategic Plan was developed throughout 2023, and approved by the Board at the Friday, May 26, 2023 meeting. The plan spans from 2023-2026 and has five long-term strategic goals and objective areas, they are as follows:

Long-Term Strategic Goals and Objectives :

1. Sustainability
2. Data Collection
3. Program Development
4. Organizational Operation
5. Facilities

This strategic plan will guide the work of the collaborative through the Fall of 2026, when the next strategic plan process will commence.

Coming off of the fiscal challenges of FY23, and because of stagnant enrollment and staffing challenges during FY24 there were budgetary concerns throughout the year. SSEC implemented a budget freeze which lasted the majority of the school year and we did not make any contributions to OPEB during FY24. Our cumulative surplus for FY24 was 13.94%. We continue to be one-to-one in terms of the student-to-device ratio.

Despite the challenges noted, all programs were able to continue providing a high level of support and services to students. Our high school therapeutic programs were able to re-engage several students from member districts who exhibited school refusal through modified schedules and intense therapeutic support. The Quest program was able to develop a K-2 classroom to meet the needs of students who lacked the readiness skills to attend in a less restrictive environment. The Community School continued to meet the needs of over 100 students with complex medical and cognitive disabilities. The Mini-School program has continued to evolve to meet the needs of both our moderate and severe ASD population.

For the past six school years, SSEC has had a full-time school resource officer. This position is now filled by Officer Terrance Low from the Hingham Police Department who has proven to be an invaluable addition to our program. Given all that has transpired in recent years, all have benefitted from this positive police presence. Students and staff get to interact with a uniformed police officer on a more informal level. SSEC staff participates in yearly A.L.I.C.E. emergency response training facilitated by Officer Low. Officer Low also runs DARE classes with Quest Middle School classes as a prevention and intervention tool for students.

At the May 26, 2023 Board meeting, prior Executive Director Rick Reino announced his plan for retirement at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. The collaborative employed Michael Palladino from the New England School Development Council to lead the search for a new Executive Director. During December 2023, the screening committee and Mr. Palladino screened applications for the first round of interviews that occurred on January 4th with three candidates. On January 11th, site visits and an interview with the full board occurred with finalists, Michael Losche M. Ed CAGS, Director of Special Education for member district Whitman-Hanson Regional School District, Jon Reynard, Director of the Community School at SSEC and Anna Maria Bishop, Director of Finance and Operations at Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. At the January 11th meeting the Board agreed to enter into negotiations with Mr. Losche offering him the position of Executive Director with a July 1, 2024 start. At the March 8th Board meeting, the board discussed the creation of the role of Business Manager and asked for a job description to be created. At the Friday, May 17th meeting the Board interviewed Jon Reynard for the position of Business Manager. The Board voted to enter negotiations with Mr. Reynard to become the next Business Manager for SSEC. Mr. Reynard accepted the position with a July 1st, 2024 start date.

## **2. General Information**

The South Shore Educational Collaborative (SSEC) principal address is 75 Abington Street Hingham, MA 02043. The executive director and administrators for SSEC are available at this location. The telephone number is 781-749-7518. This annual report provides a summary of the schools, services, and programs for the academic and fiscal year July 2023-June, 2024. The core values of safety, respect, relationships, and growth are always considered as decisions are made for SSEC. The mission statement states that the SSEC is responsive to the emerging needs of communities by providing innovative, fiscally sound, high-quality educational programs and services for individuals with special needs. The vision of SSEC is to continue to provide excellence in educational services with state of the art technology in a safe and respectful therapeutic environment.

## **3. Governance and Leadership**

The SSEC is governed by a board of directors comprised of the superintendents from member districts. Each school and program has a director or coordinator who reports to the executive director. The program directors are responsible for daily operations. The board members and SSEC administrators for fiscal year 24 are listed elsewhere in this report.

The following member districts' school committees have appointed their superintendents to serve on the SSEC Board of Directors for fiscal year 2024:

Braintree	James Lee,
Cohasset	Patrick Sullivan, Ed.D
Hingham	Margaret Adams, Ph.D
Hull	Judy Khuen

Marshfield	Jeffrey Granatino
Milton	Peter Burrows
Norwell	Matthew Keegan
Quincy	Kevin Mulvey
Randolph	Thea Stovell
Scituate	William Burkhead
Weymouth	Robert Wargo
Whitman Hanson	Jeffrey Szymaniak

#### 4. **Programs and Services Provided**

The SSEC school and program information presented later in this report will clearly define the goals and outcomes of the programs while presenting a clear profile of the students served in each school. Each school and program operated by the SSEC provides a specialized educational setting for students who could not make adequate progress in their school district after many interventions. The SSEC school and program reports are provided by the director/coordinator of that program. The student referrals from sending school districts have complex learning challenges. The primary profiles of student needs are in the disciplines of social/emotional, physical/medical and autism spectrum. The districts have made great efforts to meet the educational needs of the students at their home schools before being referred to SSEC.

#### 5. **Cost Effectiveness of Programs and Services**

Each year brings different programmatic and financial challenges. The staffing challenges specifically related to paraprofessional support of FY23 continued into and throughout FY24. SSEC limited the use of agency staff due to their high cost and attempted to attract candidates by hiring at a minimum of step 3 on the paraprofessional scale. As a result, staffing costs were lower than projected. The lack of staffing resulted in the previously mentioned stagnant enrollment which also dramatically impacted revenue. Because of these offsetting factors and the steps taken by the board in FY23 to address budgetary concerns, SSEC had an FY24 surplus of \$1,091,744.30.

With the enactment of Chapter 43 of the Acts of 2012- *An Act Relative to Improving Accountability and Oversight of Education Collaboratives*, one of the areas to be included in the annual report is the cost-effectiveness of our programs and services.

The schools, programs, and services offered at SSEC are specialized and focused to meet the needs of students with intense, complex learning profiles that include physical, medical, emotional, cognitive, and learning challenges. By the time a student is referred to SSEC, the public school has initiated interventions that have not been able to demonstrate that adequate progress can be accomplished. The SSEC mission states that the collaborative will provide innovative, fiscally sound high-quality educational programs and services. Due to the level of specialized educational services required, the tuition and fees must be reviewed annually to keep cost increases to a minimum. Each year, the Board of Directors and SSEC administrators review the budget and compare tuitions of other collaboratives and private day schools before approving annual costs.



Negotiated salary increases, health insurance, utilities, and lease expenses are required financial obligations that have an impact on the budget each year.

Since most of the revenue and expenses are related to the schools and programs at SSEC, this report will include cost comparisons with some of the schools where students apply and/or attend before enrollment at SSEC.

During 2023-2024, SSEC leased one building at 75 Abington Street in Hingham and classroom space in Randolph and Hull. The classroom rentals in public schools are the most cost effective to the SSEC and also for the districts. The students from the district where a classroom is rented may save significantly on transportation and the families are pleased to have the students in their hometown. However, the needs of the students who attend the Community School, Quest School, South Shore High School, and Careers High School require a location with a different setting than a traditional school. The physical, medical, and emotional needs of the students require a substantially separate location with the ongoing goal of considering the return to a traditional school whenever feasible. The SSEC schools are licensed by DESE and are able to compete with more costly private schools. We are located geographically where all member districts have access with a minimum transportation expense. This is a significant cost effective measure. The town of Hull is the furthest away which leased 9 classrooms to SSEC in 2023-2024 allowing for minimum transportation costs for Hull students enrolled in the program. Situations where students travel long distances to attend a private school may cost a school district \$25,000 or more when a monitor is required.

As requested, the following comparisons by program will demonstrate cost effectiveness to districts when a student is placed at SSEC rather than a competing private school.

SSEC Community School- FY24 tuition- \$79,321 (includes summer)

Private School-Perkins Watertown FY24 tuition- \$163,392

Private School- BC Campus School FY24 tuition- \$114,404

**Savings per student \$35,083 to \$84,071**

SSEC Mini School- FY24 tuition- \$79,321 (includes summer)

Private School- Boston Higashi FY24 tuition- \$96,679

Private School- May Institute FY24 tuition- \$146,197

**Savings per student \$17,358 to \$66,876**

SSEC Quest School- FY24 tuition- \$68,599 (includes summer)

Private School- Brandon FY24 tuition- \$99,193

Private School- Walker FY24 tuition- \$112,562

**Savings per student \$30,594 to \$43,963**

SSEC SSH and Careers- FY24 tuition- \$57,793 (includes summer)

Private School- Brandon FY24 tuition- \$99,193

Private School- Walker FY24 tuition- \$112,562

**Savings per student \$41,400 to \$54,769**

The potential savings on tuition to districts demonstrates the cost effectiveness of placing a student at SSEC rather than a private school. The private schools selected for comparison with the SSEC schools are the schools where students of similar profiles have been referred or accepted in the past.

The SSEC has sponsored advanced energy purchasing through an RFP bid process for natural gas and electricity. Several south shore towns have participated in this joint purchasing program. The data collected by the consultant who coordinates the purchasing program on behalf of SSEC member districts and other municipalities provides a significant savings. The consulting company used again this year was Titan Energy. The electricity and gas bids result in significant savings to the participants when comparing the open market price to the **24**-month bid price of the contracts. The approximate savings for each participant are listed below.

<b>GAS</b>	<b>Savings</b>	<b>ELECTRIC</b>	<b>Savings</b>
Plymouth Public Schools	\$103,888	Plymouth Public Schools	\$5,402,952
Town of Plymouth	\$43,569	Town of Plymouth	\$1,764,462
Cohasset PS	\$48,248	Cohasset PS	\$439,857
Cohasset Town	\$6,989	Cohasset Town	\$938,037
Scituate schools	\$79,648	Scituate Schools	\$567,310
Norwell schools	\$48,250	Norwell schools	\$433,169
Hull	\$39,733	Hull	\$0
SSEC	<u>\$531</u>	SSEC	<u>\$0</u>
<b>Total gas Savings</b>	<b>\$370,856</b>	<b>Total electric saving</b>	<b>\$9,545,787</b>

#### **6. Progress toward achieving the purpose and objectives**

The SSEC continues to strive toward achieving the purpose and objectives as stated in the approved agreement. The schools and programs that comprise SSEC include students who are low incidence in the member districts. The merging of the Language Enhancement program with the Mini School is an example of responding to needs of the districts.

Our programs offer academic and therapeutic services in a safe environment at staff-to-student ratios where students are able to achieve success in a setting near their community. The educational services are provided with state of the art technology in a respectful environment. During FY24, we took additional steps toward standardizing data through reviewing our Educata, Risk Eraser, and iReady platforms and providing additional professional development for data analysis. Towards that end, all programs continue to input data in the Risk Eraser software package. All staff have and will participate in training programs to help facilitate consistent and standardized data collection. In addition, due to Medicaid reporting requirements, we have customized our student information software, School Brains to seamlessly interface with the new and ever changing requirements. Both of these initiatives are ongoing and continue to be refined and improved as we move forward. The need for accurate Medicaid reporting will allow districts to submit proper Medicaid reimbursement requests to the federal government. SSEC has always kept student data for all students. Employing Risk Eraser will not only standardize the process but will help us to consistently analyze that data. Once that data is gathered and analyzed; this will

help us in formulating individual student learning plans. Students will then be able to learn at their own pace with instruction that is presented at a level that is challenging, yet attainable.

Cost-effectiveness and value for high-quality programs and services are considered with all program development. The programs, schools, and services at SSEC strive to reduce the need for placements at private day and residential schools. The dedicated, SSEC personnel strive to build trusting relationships and confidence with public school representatives, parents, and students to form a team that will provide a safe, respectful environment for educational, emotional, and social success for all students.

Professional development has also been offered in a cost effective manner for educators to participate in English Language Learner preparation such as W.I.D.A. Unfortunately, we were only able to offer internal training on digital media tools, writing I.E.P 's. and E.L.L. due to the pandemic. As we go forward we will be attempting to broaden these initiatives.

All of the SSEC direct care employees participate in Non-Aggressive Psychological and Physical Intervention (NAPPI now called WELLE). The SSEC has personnel approved to conduct the training at SSEC which is also a significant savings.

The '22-'23 school year was an extremely challenging year for the reasons previously mentioned in this report. That said, I would be remiss in saying that given the difficulties in staffing last year the SSEC staff went above and beyond to provide an outstanding education to our students. The difficulties we encountered last year were beyond their control. The work that goes on here on a daily basis is truly remarkable. I continue to be honored and humbled to be part of this amazing group of people.

The Board of Director's support of the strategic plan has continued to allow the SSEC to accomplish many of its goals. The three-year plan for 2024-2026 has been completed and now serves as the guide for the future development of SSEC. The directors' reports that follow provide specific details and data related to the programs and schools of SSEC for the '23-'24 school year. They present information that provides pertinent information and outcomes relevant to their respective programs.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Board of Directors, Jill Lawrence, Executive Secretary, Erin Holder, Director of Student Services, Jon Reynard, School Business Manager, our program directors, coordinators, and all personnel for their ongoing support and dedication to the students and families of SSEC.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael Losche M.Ed CAGS  
Executive Director  
South Shore Educational Collaborative  
75 Abington Street  
Hingham, MA 02043

## **2023-2024 Director of Student Services Annual Report**

### **Position Responsibilities**

The Director of Student Services at SSEC has responsibilities and job duties designed by the SSEC Board of Directors. They are as follows:

- DESE Program Review Compliance
- DESE License Compliance
- Budget Management
- Title IX/VII Discrimination Civil Rights Coordinator (investigator)
- English Learner Coordinator
- Professional Development Coordinator
- Direct Supervision & Evaluation of Assigned Personnel
- Mentor and Induction Program Coordinator
- Curriculum and Technology Coordination
- Assessment Procedures and Practices including Mandatory Screenings
- Equity Development
- MTSS
- Collaborative Student Transportation
- Coordination of Psychiatric Services
- Coordinate Services Provided by Dr. Marc Hauser
- Coordinate Operating Committee (Sp.Ed. Directors /Dir. Student Services)
- SSEC Committees

### **Programming Overview**

During the 2023-2024 school year, all SSEC's programs ran in a typical manner. We continued to look at ways to expand our five programs overall, support our member districts with new enrollments and adapt to the continued staffing shortage still apparent across all programs. We continued to offer our member and non-member districts ancillary services (i.e. Developmental/Behavioral Pediatric Evaluations, Assistive Tech Evaluations, Vision and O&M Services) when needed, however decreased staffing levels continuing from the previous year resulted in a wait list in some cases and even unavailability in others.

All activities, including Community Based Instruction and Transitional Vocational job opportunities on- and/or off-site, continued. Community Based Instruction across our SSEC programs can include: college/career focus, leisure/recreation, part-time jobs/internships and functional life skills. For transition-aged students, Community Based Instruction is tied directly to the transition plan, as well as to the vision statement, which is developed with the student across all ages but tied more directly to goals during the transition period. Students in our high school programs were able to consistently work in

our on-site locations such as our greenhouse, kitchen and copy center. These on-site work opportunities were also able to welcome students from our other programs to participate and integrate with students from differing programs and explore preferred activities and new interests.

### **ELL Teacher and Home Liaison**

Our ELL teacher continues to support students and families across all five programs of SSEC. Over the course of the year, SSEC was able to continue to establish more consistent services and structures to support those who either required or could benefit from ELL services. For many of our students, there is the presence of a language/communication based disability in addition to having English as a second language.

Additional curricular content and materials (i.e. Bilingual Picture Dictionaries) continue to be used. Using, and sharing with families, applications like Unite for Literacy allows students and families to hear stories both in English and in home language. As we continued to expand our ELL resources, the PTO for Community School has upgraded their email platform to allow easy translation. Our ELL teacher models for other teachers on how to better support both the students and their families. Additionally, our ELL teacher shares materials and consultation for staff completing the SEI course. ELL services were also available for homebound students and as part of our home visitation as needed or per request of the family. This continues to be a successful expansion and will continue to be a focus.

We had 12 students taking ACCESS, in mid-January through early February. Three students (two in Quest and one in Careers HS) took the ACCESS test. Nine students (five in Community and four in Mini) took the Alternate ACCESS. The four Mini students were supported through the year by an SEI Certified Reading Specialist. Their ACCESS testing was completed by the ELL teacher. In addition to the students who took the ACCESS test last year, we have since added four new students (three in Community and one in Mini). There are four students (all in Community) who are not designated as ELs but whose families speak languages other than English. Our ELL teacher acts as a home liaison, consulting with teachers and providing resources and assistance with parent contact as needed. Early in 2024, SSEC participated in WIDA's Alternate ACCESS Inter-rater Reliability (IRR) study. During our Alt ACCESS testing, Jason Kemp, a representative from WIDA observed testing in both Hingham and Randolph locations of the Community School.

The families currently served by the ELL Department represent speakers of the following Languages:

- Brazilian Portuguese
- Burmese
- Cape Verdean (Kriolu)
- Chinese: Cantonese
- Chinese: Mandarin

- Haitian Creole
- Moroccan Arabic
- Nepalese
- Pashto
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

### **ELL Learners Translation Services**

SSEC continues to contract with Lexikeet to provide written, spoken and multi-language interpretation for our needs. This allows for more genuine, real-time communication with families on a routine and emergency basis.

### **ELA with Focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA)**

Over the course of the FY24 school year, SSEC continued to consider ways to expand the type of literature the students across programs are engaged with to promote well-being, belonging and to reflect the backgrounds and lived experiences of our students. Working with programs one at a time, we considered types of texts and resources that are needed along with consideration for how the content will be explored.

### **Critical Thinking Content & Instruction**

SSEC continued to implement some critical thinking content within the Quest, Quest/Community AIM, South Shore High and Career's High School programs FY24. This was facilitated by Dr. Marc Hauser who is under contract with SSEC to support data and some of our educational initiatives. Different from FY22 and FY23, in FY24 each program differentiated their priority needs and utilized Dr. Hauser's skills to best meet the needs of staff, students and programmatic strategies. This included data management, classroom observation, High School paraprofessional competency PD, and a continued co-teaching model that was highly successful in SSHS.

### **Curriculum Equity Reviews**

The Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard continues to be used to conduct the audits when new resources and materials are adopted. Through these ongoing audits, SSEC can improve representation in our curriculum and will continue to address diversity of representation, traditions, points of view and the types of problems faced by people to demonstrate a more comprehensive representation as needed. Across all content, SSEC continues to look at ways to adapt the scorecard to improve upon the types of characteristics in content we address.

<https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/ejroc/culturally-responsive-curriculum-scorecards>

J. Bryan-Gooden, M. Hester, & L. Q. Peoples (2019). Culturally Responsive Curriculum Scorecard. New York: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University.

Content	Title	Grade	Implementation	Equity, Inclusivity, Diversity Review
Math	Business Math McGraw Hill (Hybrid)	9-12+	SSHS & CHS	Completed FY22
Math	Reveal Math	9-12+	CHS	on-going
Math	Stemscopes Math	K - Algebra	COMM, QUEST, AIM, MINI, SSHS, CHS	on-going
Soc Studies / ELA/ Science	Benchmark Curriculum	K-8	QUEST, COMM, MINI	Completed FY21
Social Studies:	McGraw Hill (Hybrid)	8-12	QUEST, SSHS, CHS	Completed FY21
Science/ ELA	Panorama Science - Hybrid (National Geographic: engage)	K-6	QUEST, MINI	Completed FY21
Science	Science Stemscopes	K-12	QUEST, MINI, AIM, SSH, CHS	Completed FY22

### Evidenced Based Reading Programs

Name	Grade	Implementation	Equity, Inclusivity, Diversity Review
Reach Reading (hybrid): (National Geographic: Engage)	Prek-6	QUEST	FY25
Wilson Foundations	Prek-1	QUEST, MINI	FY25
Wilson	2-12+	QUEST, MINI, CHS, SSH	FY25
Reading A-Z	K-12	COMM, QUEST, MINI	Completed FY21

## **Stonehill Partnership**

FY24 was the fourth year SSEC participated in the Stonehill College Teacher Residency Program. SSEC had 3 participants who worked as paraprofessionals and/or Long Term Sub Teacher in Community, South Shore High School and Mini School. Teacher Residents participating in this program continue to receive a special tuition rate from the college and have an opportunity to finish their degree and license in one year (moderate Pre-k-8 or 5-12). We will be offering this opportunity again in the FY25 school year as the planning stages take place a year in advance.

## **Psychiatric services**

SSEC brought on a Developmental Behavioral Pediatrician, Dr. Jeanine Audet for the FY23 and FY24 school year. Dr. Audet was able to take referrals from each of SSEC's five programs as well as outside referrals from member and non-member districts.

## **Professional Development**

SSEC continued to offer in-house training throughout the FY24 school year. These included Title IX/Civil Rights, ALICE, Welle (our Non-Abusive, Physical and Psychological Intervention) and CPR/First Aid. Four new staff Welle trainings were held periodically throughout the FY24 year in addition to the recertification training that takes place annually for returning staff. Our Welle Trainers (thirteen staff) participated in their annual Train the Trainer Recertification on-site with Welle facilitators. CPR/First Aid train-the-trainer courses continued to follow their bi-annual schedule.

The Plymouth County District Attorney's Office provided in-person student assemblies on "Cybersense" to multiple age groups across our SSEC programs.

For ongoing consistency, SSEC hosted a representative from iReady, our benchmarking tool, to return from the previous year to provide three specific professional development opportunities for staff across SSEC. For new staff, iReady provided an introduction and solid basis to better understand and become familiar with the tool itself. For SSEC Leaders, iReady revisited our leadership goals from FY23 to explore and expand our next steps. For veteran users, iReady provided personalized instruction and usage guidance to reinforce the many tools and resources available. SSEC hopes to provide ongoing professional development with iReady throughout the FY25 school year in order to continue to increase its use and effectiveness across programs.

Our two High School programs (SSHS & CHS) customized paraprofessional competency groups facilitated by Dr. Hauser to address the para role, responsibilities and skills. They utilized real time case studies for specific students to maximize real life, daily situations. This helped to personalize the information to our different student populations.

## **Benchmark & Screening Assessments**

- **iReady:** iReady continued to be implemented in each program during FY24. Our SSEC leadership team's goal for iReady was to increase usage across all programs. All five SSEC programs increased their student participation and completion rate throughout FY24 from



FY23. Testing can be difficult for some of our students due to frustration, regulation and other needs which may take priority at any given moment. Staffing shortage also created a problem for test completion in that some students may just need supervision and reinforcement to even attempt participation. Administrators, Reading Specialist, our ELL and Assessment teachers were all available to step in to help support a student using iReady if needed.

- **IXL:** IXL can be used for discrete skill development across ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies in grades K-12+ in all programs (to varying degrees and as appropriate). IXL provided direct support for content and skills with formative data tracking, assessment and skills/concept reinforcement if used.
- **Dyslexia Screening:** SSEC first implemented the Shaywitz Dyslexia Screener for grades K-3 in FY21. FY24 was the fourth year of implementation. In FY24, SSEC also implemented the adolescent version of this tool, which was used to screen students aged 14+. The Shaywitz Dyslexia Screener is used in combination with iReady information to make initial judgments around possible reading-based disabilities as well as to monitor those who have been identified. Students receive one of two ratings – “at risk” or “not at risk.” Each program used a MTSS approach to determine next steps. The family and the district liaison were notified of the results, and if appropriate, a team meeting was held to discuss any additional needs for testing and possible support needed.
  - K-3rd grade students screened at SSEC: 10 of the 15 screened “at risk.”
  - 14+ aged students screened at SSEC: 21 of the 29 screened “at risk.”
  - Total screened at SSEC: 44 students screened
  - Total screened “at risk”: 31

## **Policies and Procedures**

Over the course of FY23 and FY24 the following SSEC policies and procedures were revised or updated and/or newly proposed and presented to SSEC’s Board of Directors for approval.

### **Update and approval in FY24:**

- SSEC Bullying Policy & Prevention and Intervention Plan 2023-2025

### **Update and approval in FY24:**

- SSEC Suspension Policy and Procedures 2024
- SSEC Physical Restraint Policy and Procedures 2024
- SSEC Sexual Harassment / Title IX Policy and Complaint & Grievance Procedures 2024
- SSEC Title IX / Policy to Support Pregnant Students 2024
- SSEC Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Procedures EXCEPT for Title IX - 2024
- SSEC Hazing Conduct Policy
- SSEC Wellness Policy.

### **Newly proposed and Approved in FY24**

- SSEC Students' Electronics & Cell Phone Policy

### **Title IX/VII, Discrimination officer (investigator)**

The Director of Student Services position is also the Civil Rights/Title IX coordinator. SSEC's Civil Rights page on the SSEC website is updated annually. All civil rights and bullying information (also housed on the SSEC website) received a biennial refurbish in FY24. In addition to the refurbishment and updated materials on the website, SSEC's Sexual Harassment/Title IX Policy and SSEC's Civil Rights/Deiscrimination Title II and VI Policies were updated and presented to the SSEC Board of Directors. Title IX policy was updated from its previous version and approved in December 2023 but new Title IX regulations were presented in the spring to become effective as of August 2024. SSEC's Title IX policy was updated again to reflect the changes and included a policy for support for pregnant students. The following SSEC policies and procedures were presented to the SSEC Board of Directors:

#### Approval December 2023:

- SSEC Sexual Harassment / Title IX Policy and Complaint & Grievance Procedures 2023

#### Approval May 2024

- SSEC Sexual Harassment / Title IX Policy and Complaint & Grievance Procedures (updated May 2024 to reflect regulation changes effective 8/1/2024)
- SSEC 2024 Title IX / Policy to Support Pregnant Students (updated May 2024 to reflect regulation changes effective 8/1/2024)
- SSEC Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Procedures EXCEPT for Title IX - 2024

### **DESE New IEP Improvement Project**

- **Transitioning SSEC to the New IEP:** Beginning in the spring/summer of FY23, three members of SSEC's leadership team began participating in DESE's training of trainers offerings for the transition to the New IEP planned for Fall FY25. DESE offered training to help school and district teams design, lead, and coordinate the roll-out of the new form. These sessions included reviewing and understanding the technical changes the new IEP form makes to existing forms, systems, and policies. In addition, the trainings provided guidance in learning how to train our educators and other stakeholders in the use of the new IEP form as well as explore resources to support effective IEP implementation that guided our own training. SSEC developed a plan for training all professional staff in the five programs across the collaborative throughout the FY24 year to be prepared for implementation of the new form in fall FY25. The plan addressed all categories of the new form and was initially offered to all leaders in SSEC's programs. The leaders then offered the replica trainings with specific characteristics appropriate for their programs needs to their staff with support from the original trainers.
- **DESE's IEP Improvement Project Grant /FC 0274 IEP GRANT :** SSEC leaders applied for and were awarded DESE's FY 2024 Fund Code 274 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B (IDEA) Federal Targeted Special Education Program Improvement Grant of \$18,161.00. This

funding allowed SSEC to create a one year New IEP Improvement Project Team with Resource members that will support the implementation and roll out of the new IEP form across all SSEC programs in the Fall of FY25.

### **DESE's Coordinated Program Review /Mid-Cycle**

SSEC participated in DESE's Coordinated Program Mid-cycle Review. SSEC is half way through the six year review cycle that was previously held in 2020 (FY21). SSEC completed the self assessment process and submitted criteria through the Departments Communication Hub and monitoring Portal (CHAMP) in December 2023 and January 2024. The criteria and data included were policies and procedures, student documentation including a sample of student records, staff documentation, including a sample of staff records and documentation for our facilities, buildings and grounds. DESE completed their onsite visit the week of May 20, 2024 and the final report was issued on July 19, 2024. All SSEC programs audited have received Full Approval as Approved Public Day programs. Their status expires August 31, 2027. The next expected Program Review will be conducted in the 2026-2027 school year (FY27). The Final Report can be found under resources on the SSEC website "about" page or the following links. <https://www.ssec.org/about>

## **RELATED SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024**

### **OVERVIEW**

During the 2023-2024 school year, requests for occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, and assistive technology services were fulfilled for each of the Collaborative programs and local school districts. Our main objective is to evaluate the need for, and if necessary, provide supportive services so that students can access the school environment, participate in classroom learning and learn life skills. We also aim to provide awareness about assistive technology, and to link students with disabilities to technology systems that will increase opportunities in education, daily living, and employment.

### **Therapy Services (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech-Language Therapy)**

- SSEC Therapy Staff provided occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy to all 5 SSEC programs and 2 local school districts.
- During the 2023-2024 school year, SSEC therapy staff utilized grant funding to purchase sensory materials and literacy supports that promote classroom instruction and access.
- Occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech language pathologists who work in SSEC programs continued to utilize a comprehensive documentation tool to develop therapy intervention plans for students, track student attendance and service delivery, record therapy session notes, collect data on student IEP goals/benchmarks for monitoring student progress, complete School-based Medicaid billing documentation and therapy outcomes.
- SSEC updated our standardized testing to include the Movement ABC 3.
- SSEC Therapy staff supported 3 Occupational Therapy interns, 2 Physical Therapy interns, and 2 Speech Therapy interns from 7 different graduate programs throughout the 2023-2024 School Year.
- On a bi-monthly basis, all SSEC occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech language pathologists met in-person to discuss topics related to therapy service delivery, intervention planning and implementation of School-based Medicaid Program directives.
- SSEC Community School hosted 24 scheduled equipment repair clinics, 17 new equipment clinics and 38 orthotic clinics for bracing needs. These clinics allowed therapists to be involved in the process of acquiring and maintaining equipment and bracing options for our students.
- SSEC OT and PT's attended 2 wheelchair trainings related to power and manual mobility.
- SSEC Administration provided New IEP Training to all therapists.
- Therapy Administration provided training and support in utilizing the Q-global platform for therapy evaluation tools.

## Assistive Technology Services

- AT consultation hours embedded into all SSEC programs to promote access to the school environment and curriculum.
- SSEC assistive technology specialists provided AT evaluations for 4 SSEC students.
- SSEC Assistive Technology Specialists provided regular consultation in 6 local school districts and supported 3 trials of new speech devices.
- Assistive Technology Evaluations were completed for 19 district students across 8 local districts.
- The SSEC Center for Assistive Technology coordinated the purchase and implementation of bulk Assistive Technology software, app and subscription purchases at reduced costs for SSEC programs.
- SSEC Center for Assistive Technology and SSEC Speech Therapists continued to assist in the coordination of repairs, adaptations, and ordering of new adaptive equipment through meetings, email and phone communication with the families and vendors.
- 10 SSEC student trials for new speech devices were completed to ensure the students have access to the most appropriate communication device. The assistive technology team and speech therapists wrote funding letters and letters of medical necessity for any necessary adaptive equipment.

# **Careers High School - Annual Report**

2023 – 2024 School Year

Anne Rowland, Psy.D., Program Coordinator

## ***CHS Program Description***

The Careers High School is designed for high school students with severe emotional challenges who respond best when engaged in competency-based curriculum and projects. CHS is therapeutic, collaborative, flexible, and focuses on helping students earn their high school diploma from their sending school districts. Most of the students who succeed in CHS have a history of poor experiences with schools in general and are reactive to traditional educational approaches. These students respond to the ‘family feel’ of CHS, the individualized educational approaches including independent studies, credit-recovery, and the strong emphasis on preparation for transition to post-secondary experiences, especially opportunities to move from pre-vocational projects to entry-level jobs. Through increasing skills in social pragmatics and emotional regulation, greater time is then available to spend focused on academic and vocational endeavors, credit acquisition and employability.

### **Capacity**

Careers High School moved from a programmatic capacity of 37 to 40 students in 2015-16. Since then, while the age range of the student population typically is from 13 through 18 years, older students have remained enrolled if the educational Team determines it meets the students’ needs. In 2023-24, the age range was 13 - 19, and one waiver request was required and granted in order to have two students in the same class who were more than 48 months apart in age.

Careers High School assists students in modifying decision-making behaviors, improving academic skills, and managing the emotional interference that prevents them from being successful in a less-restrictive setting. When a student has met the emotional and behavioral goals of the IEP to the extent that s/he can return to a less restrictive setting, the Team ensures this happens. If the behavioral or emotional issues are too severe for success in a less restrictive environment, then a student could remain in placement at CHS until graduation.

There are five academic classrooms, the Copy Center and one Greenhouse Lab in the Careers High School wing of the 75 Abington Street campus. Classrooms are staffed by special education teachers with the support of paraprofessionals. Four of the classrooms emulate the more traditional comprehensive high school model in the sense that the students move from one content class to another content class. While class size is dependent upon population need, it generally ranges between six and nine students.

The fifth classroom is the Transition Classroom that is partially self-contained for the core academic classes (with some exceptions). It too is staffed by a special education teacher and a paraprofessional, and can accommodate up to 12 students. The student population identified for this classroom tends to have greater difficulty with change and may have diagnoses that include Autism Spectrum Disorder (DSM-V), anxiety disorders and nonverbal learning disabilities. These are also typically the younger students enrolled in CHS. Students are encouraged to take one or more classes in the other four classrooms as their comfort level and skills increase.

### **Staffing**

All staff, including the Administrative Assistant, Transition Specialist, Speech and Language Pathologist, Reading Teacher, Occupational Therapist, BCBA and two clinicians work together with the teaching staff as a comprehensive, collaborative team committed to working with CHS students in navigating specific difficulties to then result in their successful completion of high school. This may be accomplished in any number of ways, such as within the classroom, in dyads, in the Greenhouse Lab, Industrial Kitchen, through individual or group therapy situations, or social skills group, e.g. These sessions may be scheduled or on an as-needed basis. The clinical team (Katelyn Hagan and Caitlin Foley) works closely with classroom teachers, students' families, and outside collaterals. They hold individual sessions, conduct student training (Anti-Bullying, Civil Rights, e.g.) and are embedded within the classrooms. Together, all staff members work on developing and implementing an effective program to help each student increase effective decision-making skills and progress towards their post-graduation goals.

Careers High School and SSHS share the Speech and Language Pathologist (formerly Ellen Bernier, and now Amelia McKenzie beginning in the 2024-25 school year), who completes evaluations and coordinates and runs groups focused on social pragmatic skills. The BCBA (Julie Foshey) is shared between the two high schools as consultant to staff regarding student behavior; if required, Julie completes FBAs and behavior plans. The Transitional Specialist (Bobby Nelson) and Transition Assistant (Drew Himberg), who are also shared between CHS and SSHS, are critical to facilitating most aspects of the students' goals and plans upon achieving their diplomas. Mary Anne Kahler, the Reading Teacher, meets routinely with CHS students who require this service throughout the year, and Alicia Kearney, OT, also provides direct service to students and consultation to staff.

### **Transition Programming**

Originally, Careers High School developed a Transitions Program based on Jobs for American Graduate work standards. This program embedded these standards into the daily schedule. Students' schedules have them participating in on and/or off site transitional-vocational projects during their school day. These include work study experiences, community service activities, one time job shadowing, paid positions in employment situations, hands-on pre-vocational projects during school, and dual enrollment in college courses.

Students learn basic employment expectations, vocabulary and experience that translate directly to the work world. In addition, basic “soft” employment skills are built into the program to reinforce real world expectations. One of the Strategic Planning goals from administration for SSEC is to sharpen the focus of the pre-vocational offerings so as to increase employability skills. As this transpired, Bobby Nelson designed tracking sheets and gathered data about the use of the various opportunities. Bobby and Drew develop and coordinate the vocational program, including monitoring the students’ progress in competency level as measured by each Workplace Softskills Rubric.

The Transitional Specialist also assists students in exploring college and other post-secondary education and training, such as (P)SAT’s, ACT’s, Accuplacer test, college applications, college campus visits, and meetings with admissions officers to make the transition to college more manageable and successful. Resume development, mock job interviews, online applications, and support in the pre- and post- phone calls are part of the efforts with students, as well as assisting students’ connections to other job/vocational agencies, such as MRC. The Transition Specialist also completes and writes Transition/Vocation Evaluations as part of the IEP 3 year re-evaluation process.

## ***2023-2024 Year in Summary***

### **Student Population**

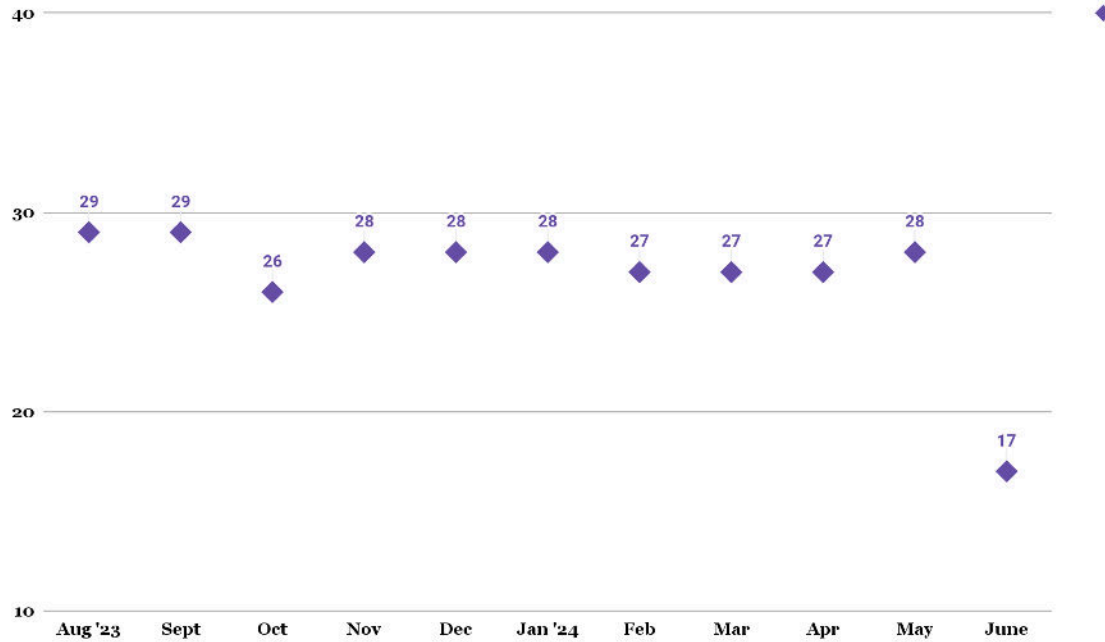
Careers High School students have serious mental health, emotional and behavioral issues. The clinical team takes the leadership role in helping students maintain stability so they are able to access the curriculum and earn credits towards graduation. The therapeutic success of our students is ultimately gauged by successful credit acquisition toward graduation, or readiness to return to the district, whichever comes first.

As seen below in Table 1, CHS began the year with a census of 29 students. While overall enrollment fluctuated only slightly throughout the year in total number, of note there was significant turn over of students again this year: five unenrolled during the year and five new students enrolled. Of those who unenrolled from CHS during the year, two moved out of state, one went back to district, one graduated early, and one went to another Collaborative. In June, CHS unenrolled 11 more students: seven more graduated, three returned to district, and one returned to a residential program due to behaviors at home.



Table 1

CHS STUDENT ENROLLMENT 2023-2024



***Highlights 2023-2024***

The 2023-24 academic year's greatest challenge was again not being able to establish the necessary staffing level to effectively run the classes with a higher student census. CHS did experience multiple "firsts": in ESY 2023, all 16 students earned credit; one student who had been working during the school day at Bolt Depot was offered a job working on the weekends; we successfully completed an application for MCAS waiver on behalf of a student, who then graduated; "firsts" that were not positive (but were learning experiences) included CHS staff being accused by a student and parent of bullying, but investigation showed no findings; CHS completed a bullying investigation/report regarding two students; another student's behavior led to a suspension hearing and planned termination; and CHS worked in conjunction with the SRO and Rockland Police Dept regarding the theft and spending of a kitchen staff's personal belongings by CHS students. These multiple 'negative' events in the same year definitely took a toll on staff in terms of morale, but this was matched with a steep learning curve and corresponding building of competence and confidence.

When this writer completed the Bullying Investigation/Report in December regarding the two students, several programmatic suggestions were implemented:

Have all students take the new asynchronous version of the anti-bullying, harassment, civil rights, Title IX training again with required quiz (all had a verbal training in October). Clinicians/Homeroom teachers review quiz results with students to check for understanding.

Request SRO to speak about/provide resources to CHS students regarding freedom of speech and its consequences and legal ramifications with protected categories of people.

Student Council to discuss civil rights and restorative justice project(s) for the program.

Continue Random Acts of Kindness initiative.

Implement and reinforce consistency of response by staff to discriminatory/derogatory comments between students.

Solicit staff for support they see needed to implement in order to reduce occurrences of derogatory/disrespectful comments and increase incidents of collaboration/respect/kindness.

CHS continued to participate in the newly established monthly Clinical Review Team, where Program Directors and clinicians present various student cases for ‘peer consultation/supervision’ within the group, which included Dr. Audet, the Executive Director Rick Reino, Erin Holder, Director of Student Services, and SRO Terry Low when available. Additionally, some of the four CHS staff people who had joined the newly developed Threat Assessment Team for SSEC, met several times to review specific student behavior/accuity.

As part of the DESE ongoing Accelerated Learning initiative, CHS continued to engage in related pursuits and activities in 2023-24. The teachers implemented increased regularly scheduled time for teaching and assessments with iReady in an effort to support and increase student learning, incorporated the data into IEP goals, and created a hallway record of participation levels including incentives.

The Data Team continued to focus this year on relating Goalseeker performance measures in the classroom to credit acquisition, and routinely utilized the early warning system of data to use in mid-term report cards when needed. The staff made progress integrating PBS and the Tiers of Student Support throughout the year, also progressively moving into more routine visiting of the Tiers to assess best next steps for individual students.

Our Milieu Coordinator, Frank Cammisa, developed and improved the tracking and documentation process by which a student who has engaged in a disciplinary incident is assessed; in an effort to avoid suspension out of school, the system reflects the staff’s efforts to engage the student in alternative consequences and processes. Frank also created and

implemented the Restorative Justice Process that students complete if their behavior warrants this intervention.

One of the goals for CHS for 2023-34 was to continue to build feelings of belonging and inclusivity, which was achieved in several ways and by several groupings (Student Council, Greenhouse and Basketball Team). More frequently, regularly scheduled Student Council meetings were held to discuss students ideas for community improvement. Activities included Coffee fundraiser for Senior class trip, Halloween Party for Community Program students, Monthly themed Careers HS billboard/photo wall, Themed spirit days (wear your favorite t shirt, crazy sock day), Made and hung anti- bullying, diversity, inclusion posters in the program, Student mentorship (CHS students paired with students from Community & Quest in the Greenhouse and Basketball Team), Ice cream/pizza party, Themed holiday activity day (cookie decorating, ice cream bar, holiday themed movie, etc.), and the End of year activity day (tie dye shirts, water balloon toss, movie, corn hole, ping pong).

This year, the Greenhouse and Basketball Team (Cobras) branched out even further by including more students from other programs in their activities. In addition to establishing a system where CHS students mentor Quest and Community Program students in the Greenhouse, they also built indoor raised beds in order to promote growth of fresh produce during the winter months for the cafeteria to use. Jeff Stanford connected with Northeastern University Enabling Engineering students who designed and helped implement a watering system that is adaptable to differently abled students so they too can water the gardens. In terms of the Cobras, it has been Mark Lemieux's wish for decades to establish a basketball team in order to increase a sense of community and collaboration within the building. 2023-24 was the Team's second year, during which they played three staff v students games (one more than last year), and they held clinics with Quest and Community Program students to include and provide opportunities for their participation, and for the Team's students to learn tolerance and how to teach. The Team's goal next year is to provide Team T-shirts for all students involved (not just CHS/SSHS students). The development and expansion of the Team has continued to have an incredibly positive impact on most of the CHS students, where it has been evident that they have channeled much of their energy and focus on playing on the team, rather than showing negative behaviors in the classroom. The collegiality and empathy among the team is also quite evident.

This was the third and final year incorporating the Critical Thinking class (which we titled Perspective-Taking) with Marc Hauser. Over time, Marc joined at least one of each teacher's classes, helping them to see new ways to deliver curriculum in a way that increases and deepens the learning process.

During this past year students also were able to work in the Copy Center (and again produced and sold 13,700 greeting cards as in past years), and Kitchen. Students were again able to participate in Custodial Arts including walking next door to Bolt Depot, as seen in the re-introduced chart (Table 2). One of the students was offered a job outside of school hours. The

New England Wildlife Center was established as a new off-site offering this year, providing students to visit with various animals and learn about their feeding and care needs. Additionally, CHS issued five work permits to students who had gained employment out in the community, and a total of 11 CHS students gained employment by the end of the year.

### Student Vocational Hours

Table 2

#### **Student Vocational Hours**

<b><u>Area</u></b>	<b><u>'15-'16</u></b>	<b><u>'16-'17</u></b>	<b><u>'17-'18</u></b>	<b><u>'18-'19</u></b>	<b><u>22-'23</u></b>	<b><u>'23-24'</u></b>
<i>On-Site</i>						
Greenhouse	1973	1934	n/a	1460	1220	2363
Kitchen	1889	1138	1774	864	813	639
Audio Visual	1083	941	398	641		516
Print Tech	1013	1426	1327	1255	1216	1197
Basketball	716	627	705	835	n/a	n/a
Quest Intern (Art)	n/a	23	4	n/a	0	0
Quest Intern (Para)	n/a	57	50	n/a	0	0
Community Classroom	n/a	n/a	20	24	0	0
AIM Classroom	n/a	n/a	1.5	n/a	0	0
Custodial Arts	n/a	n/a	n/a	36	518	26
<i>Off-Site</i>						
Boston Bowl	85.5	58	75	14	n/a	n/a
Bolt Depot	n/a	n/a	52	24	210	259
Old Navy	n/a	n/a	26	59	n/a	n/a
New England Wildlife Center	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	38

#### ***CHS Plans for Future: 2024 - 2025***

The high schools have been planning for a post-COVID return to continued integration of CHS and SSH, specifically staff overlap, course integration, and an increase in standardization of

training for staff. This has not yet fully come to fruition but greater efforts will be made this year. Additionally, CHS is striving to continue to expand and increase student vocational offerings and opportunities when/where possible in the community, including more trips to the Weymouth Wildlife Center. Bobby and Drew have organized a membership with the Chamber of Commerce which has begun to help provide job shadowing opportunities for students. There will be a push to hold another Transition Services Fair, showcasing representatives from various services/organizations, open to students and parents.

Within the building, thanks to two years of the ESY Grant, CHS has been able to offer more opportunities for team building and belonging through recreation. As we have all experienced, especially in schools, a result of COVID has been separation, isolation, fatigue, and fewer electives and activities. However, the addition of more recreational activities (pickleball, Squat bench, corn hole and art supplies, e.g.) continued to allow our students and staff to play, laugh and create together. We believe that this joy and community bonding is part of why the student body has been more engaged academically, socially, and receptive to and compliant with the 'reduced use of cell phone' policy that was new last year. Similar to last year where staff and students learned together how to integrate technology such as 3-D printing and the new Lego sets that require programming, these new activities in particular also provide opportunities for OT and S/L specialists to work with students in different, more creative ways than they had been able to do previously.

CHS staff will be adjusting and recalibrating the Goalseeker measures (student data taken in classes) which currently is reflected in four categories: level of support, work production, participation, expected behavior. This data is incorporated within most of the students' IEP goals. And finally, of course, time will be spent (especially in the fall) creating IEPs within the new 2.0 format.

# 2023-2024 Community School Annual Report

## Description of School/Student Population

The South Shore Educational Collaborative's **Community School Program** is a day school that provides educational services to students with severe and multiple disabilities from preschool through transition age (up to their 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday). Students typically engage in the curriculum at access and entry levels and may present with communication deficits, mobility challenges, complex medical needs and/or behavioral challenges. Classroom cohorts are developed by taking student age, academic level, social interests and functional skills into consideration. These variables may lead to classrooms that have students at either end of the forty-eight month age span. Due to the extensive needs of the student population, the Community School attempts to provide a 1:2 staff to student ratio. Additionally, when determined by the team process, a student may have 1:1 staffing assigned (nurse or paraprofessional). Enrollment is based on a referral process and students may be accepted on a year round basis.

Over the course of the 2023-2024 school year 105 students were enrolled in the program. The Community School had nine classrooms in Hingham and three classrooms housed in a substantially separate section of Randolph High School. In addition, we maintained five classrooms for the AIM model which includes students from both the Community and Quest Programs.

## 2022-2023 Classroom Breakdown:

### Community School Classrooms at 75 Abington Street:

Early Childhood:	Three classrooms for students grades preschool through first.
Elementary:	Two classrooms for students grades two through six.
Middle School:	Two classrooms for students grades six through eight.
High School:	Two classrooms for students grades nine through 12+.
AIM:	Five classrooms for students grades one through 12+.

### Community School Classrooms at Randolph High School:

High School/Transition:	Three classrooms for students grades nine through 12+.
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## Program Overview:

The Community School uses a standards based curriculum linked to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. This curriculum is adapted to meet the diverse needs of each student with a focus on functional academics geared toward individualized developmental needs. Thematic interdisciplinary units, standards based math and reading instruction programs are utilized to allow the students to access the general education curriculum while working on skills related to academics, communication, activities of daily living, social/emotional development, self-regulation, adaptive behavior, vocation/pre-vocation and leisure/recreation. Most

Community School students enter the general education curriculum and participate in the MCAS Alternate Assessment through access and entry points according to grade level standards. The content related to each standard area is then individualized to meet the student's needs. A small portion of Community AIM students access the curriculum at or close to grade level and participate in on-demand MCAS testing with individualized accommodations.

The Community School uses a number of specialized curricula to support student learning. Individualized accommodations and modifications are identified based on student assessment and data analysis and include an extensive use of assistive technology to improve access, engagement and understanding. Content is individualized as appropriate and presented utilizing a variety of methodologies. Some of the formalized curricula and resources include;

1. Reading A-Z (online program)
2. iReady
3. Unique Learning Systems (differentiated fully adapted integrated units)
4. Brain Pop
5. Scholastic online
6. News 2 You adapted readers
7. Social Thinking
8. Zones of Regulation
9. Help Kidz Learn
10. Flocabulary
11. Mystery Science

In addition to these structured programs, each teacher adapts curriculum, content and materials while supplementing with a variety of thematic activities to enhance student learning and support effective progress.

### **AIM (Achieve, Inspire, Motivate):**

The AIM classrooms are a hybrid program model that includes the South Shore Educational Collaborative's Community School and Quest Programs. This model was introduced at the start of the 2015-2016 school year and has now grown from a single classroom to five classrooms serving students from both the Community School and the Quest School. AIM classrooms focus on higher level academic content for students who would typically attend the Community School and more individualized modifications for the students who would typically attend the Quest school. Students in these classrooms receive individualized attention for social, emotional, and academic needs. Students benefit from the diverse experience provided to them with access to social groups and a focus on their social learning through the social thinking curriculum. There is an integrated social skills curriculum that includes strong positive behavioral supports. Social skills focus on the recognition of feelings that occur throughout the day and the affects these have on the student's academic and social relationships. Each classroom utilizes the Social Thinking Curriculum to help students identify how our social interactions impact the way others think and feel, and how we, ourselves, interpret the world and social situations around us. Students learn a variety of skills which include sharing space effectively with others, learning to

work as part of a team, and developing relationships with family, friends, and classmates. The curriculum focuses on various strategies and coping skills to help manage emotions throughout the school day in order to better access academics and social situations. Counseling based on individualized student needs is also offered. Students at the High School level participate in many volunteer vocational job opportunities either at school or in the community. Opportunities to collaborate on a social, vocational and academic level with students from the Careers and South Shore High Programs continues to grow and be explored on an individual student basis.

### **Evidence Based Methodologies:**

In order to meet the individualized needs of our students, the Community school utilizes a variety of methodologies. The overarching principles of Applied Behavioral Analysis are integrated based on the individualized needs of each student. Teaching methodologies focus on structured learning programs that capitalize on repetition and consistent implementation. Once mastery criteria is achieved, opportunities to generalize and apply skills in natural settings are offered. Essential learning skills are integrated into all aspects of the day including manding skills, imitation, turn-taking and joint attention. These skills are worked on at varying levels of complexity and are central to the learning process.

**Task Analysis:** A task analysis is often used for instructional purposes to break down specific skills and to target acquisition in a more precise manner. This allows for IEP goals and broader content to be taught in a systematic and consistent manner across teachers/trainers while detailing individualized step sequences, reinforcement strategies and correction procedures.

Behavioral supports and interventions include such practices as; antecedent based intervention, varied reinforcement procedures, functional communication training, replacement skills training, modeling, formalized prompting hierarchy, naturalistic intervention, exercise and visual supports.

Social skills training integrates many methodologies in addition to specific social groups using the Social Thinking content, social stories, social scripts and self-management supports such as the zones of regulation.

**Technology-aided Instruction and Intervention:** This includes the extensive use of advanced speech generating devices (SGD) to support the augmentative communication needs of the students. The Picture Exchange System (PECS) is used with specific students in both low tech and high tech formats. Other low tech options include tangible symbols, real and representative pictures and modified sign language.

Aided Language Stimulation is provided by the staff when they are communicating with a student. Staff will model the use of the communication system with the student to facilitate greater understanding of language use as well as the operational aspects of the system. This supports natural language use and language immersion.



### **Technology:**

Technology is utilized throughout the program in a variety of ways. It is embedded in a manner that supports students in accessing content and developing increased independence and participation while also acting as a motivator and reinforcer. Advanced communication devices along with some of the latest technology that is student or Collaborative owned is utilized to support our students. This allows them to have greater access to educational materials, and their environment. These devices frequently make more clear and detailed communication possible. This allows for more robust communication opportunities and helps students to participate more fully and effectively while also building social skills, other reciprocal communication and an understanding of cause and effect. These devices also promote the generalization of skills to a larger number of potential communication partners.

### **Accommodations:**

The Community School embraces the principles of universal design through curriculum and environmental accommodations that are available to all students in addition to their individualized supports, accommodations and methodologies. This allows students to have consistent access to their school environment and curriculum. Examples of such supports include but are not limited to; varied seating and seating supports (sensory input), multimedia instruction, assistive technology, broad based sensory supports available to all students, flexible overlapping curriculum, movement, sensory and cognitive breaks, sound dampening ceiling panels, sensory sensitive lighting, consistent tangible symbol sets used in common areas, language accessible environment and materials and additional common augmentative and alternative communication supports available at all times.

### **Community Based & Community Referenced Instruction Content**

Beginning in preschool, students attend field trips related to the curriculum and individual learning goals with a focus on generalization of learned skills and acquisition of novel skills related to safety, communication, socialization and overall independence. Community based instruction is expanded throughout each grade with increased focus on functional life skills. Examples include;

1. Weekly shopping trips for school supplies
2. Leisure based opportunities
3. Varied vocational and vocational related opportunities
4. Academic/content themed outings

In addition, community referenced activities are practiced within the school based environment to reinforce the skills needed for planned community outings.

**Program staff & services include:**

Special education teachers, teachers of students with visual impairments, multi-sensory impairment, orientation & mobility services, assistive technology services, paraprofessionals, speech, physical & occupational therapists, nursing, social workers/clinicians, adaptive physical education teacher, music therapist and BCBA or behavior level staff.

The program offers additional services including; onsite wheelchair/equipment assessment, repair and ordering through local vendors with parental consent. We also have an established lending program with AAC vendors to trial various communication devices with the students at the Collaborative prior to purchase or official insurance based trials.

**School Year Program:**

During the 2023-2024 school year, students attended 180 school days beginning in August/September through June. Program hours are 9:00am to 3:30pm. 1-2 Mondays of each month are designated as early dismissals at 12:00pm. This provides time for staff to participate in professional development opportunities.

**Extended School Year Program:**

The extended school year program runs six weeks from July through August. Students attend Monday through Thursday from 9:00am to 2:45pm. This is offered to current students attending the Community School as indicated within the IEP and through the referral process for those who attend different programs during the regular school year. Students are engaged in thematic based academic, therapeutic and leisure activities which change weekly over the course of the six week session. Special electives are offered throughout the summer. Vocational activities and both community referenced and community based instruction continue throughout the ESY program. Many professional and paraprofessional staff who are contracted throughout the school year apply for and are hired to work the extended school year program. This allows for continuity of services. This is supplemented by many returning summer staff that include college students studying in a related field (education, nursing, occupational/physical/speech therapy etc.).

**2023-2024 Program Information and Outcomes:**

The 2023-2024 School Year began with 105 students across 14 classrooms at 75 Abington Street in Hingham and 4 classrooms located at Randolph High School. The school year continued to have challenges related to staff turnover and a lack of applicants to fill open positions. This year this included three vacancies in classroom teacher positions. To resolve this issue, at the Randolph High School location 4 classrooms were able to be condensed into 3 classrooms. In Hingham, 2 long term substitutes filled in as classroom teachers. One of the teachers worked toward and obtained a MA teaching license, and the other returned to a paraprofessional role when a licensed teacher was hired in January 2024. In addition to staffing vacancies, illness

related staff shortages continued to place increased demand on the Community School's dedicated staff, making it challenging to accept new referrals without affecting current programming. Nevertheless, the program's team went above and beyond to deliver outstanding programming for our students, as demonstrated by the successes highlighted below.

1. Regular Community Based Instruction continued this year. Student groups went on recurring visits to BJ's, Stop and Shop, and Ryan Family Amusements for life skills/vocational training. Content based/leisure outings included farms, restaurants, shopping, and the Franklin Park Zoo.
2. AIM classrooms continued to run their highly popular Snack Cart. Students shopped for new items monthly and practice social skills along with their functional academics as they deliver snacks around the school building on a daily basis. The School Store at the Community Randolph High location continued to open on a weekly basis and deliver snacks to Randolph High School staff members.
3. Community School students joined students from the therapeutic high schools to participate in integrated basketball practice.
4. The Community Randolph High Student Council continued to meet on a bimonthly basis. Student Council activities include fundraising and event planning. Students are given a voice to vote on any relevant school activities and issues.
5. Parent Teacher Organization
  - a. The Community School Parent Teacher Organization continued to grow this year. Fundraising activities included Valentine's Day flower sales and a Penny Wars competition.
  - b. The PTO recognized the Community School staff during Teacher Appreciation Week which had positive impacts on staff morale.
  - c. A Family Fun Day was held at SSEC on a Saturday in June. Families came together for music, arts and crafts, outdoor activities, and snacks. This was a wonderful opportunity for Community School students and their families to get to know each other better and make new connections.
6. School wide events and activities
  - a. A therapy dog visited both locations and provided a boost in morale for students and staff alike. His handler shared valuable information about therapy dog benefits along with the training process.
  - b. A Talent Show was held at the Randolph location in April. 10 students participated showing off talents including singing, ballet, drumming, and a light show.
  - c. An Art Show was held at the Hingham location in May. The theme was "The Four Seasons."
  - d. A Scholastic Book Fair was held in June.
  - e. Field Days were held at both Hingham and Randolph locations.
  - f. Graduation was held in June 2024 to recognize students who will turn 22 during the 2024-2025 school year. This year there were 3 graduates in Hingham and 8 at Randolph High and ceremonies were held at each location. Eighth Grade Graduation was also held to recognize students in the AIM program who will be moving on to high school age classrooms.

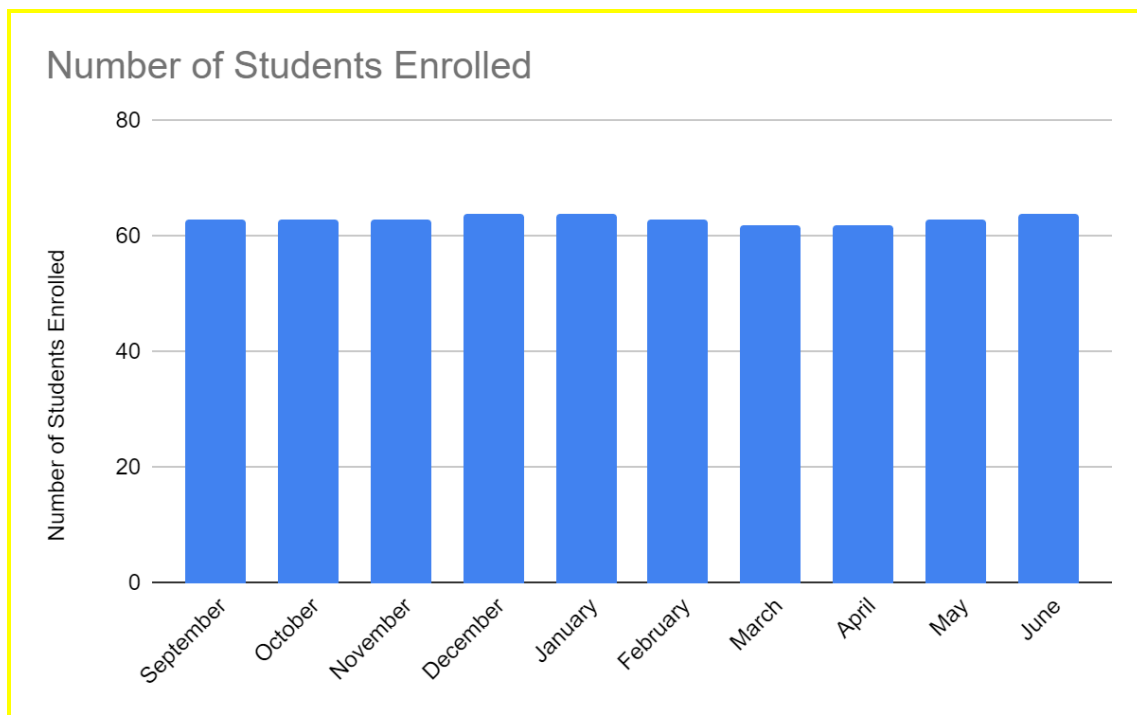
7. Although the pool in Hingham unfortunately remained closed for the duration of the 2023-2024 school year, students attending in Randolph were able to participate in swim sessions in the Randolph Community Pool during May/June.
8. A successful Extended School Year program included a multitude of activities for student enrichment and an overall fun atmosphere. These included horseback riding, field trips, farm animal visits, “crazy critters” visits, food trucks, and alternating weekly visits from an ice cream truck and a shaved ice truck.

## MINI SCHOOL PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT

Maureen M. Gattine, MS., BCBA, LABA  
Program Director  
School Year 2023-2024

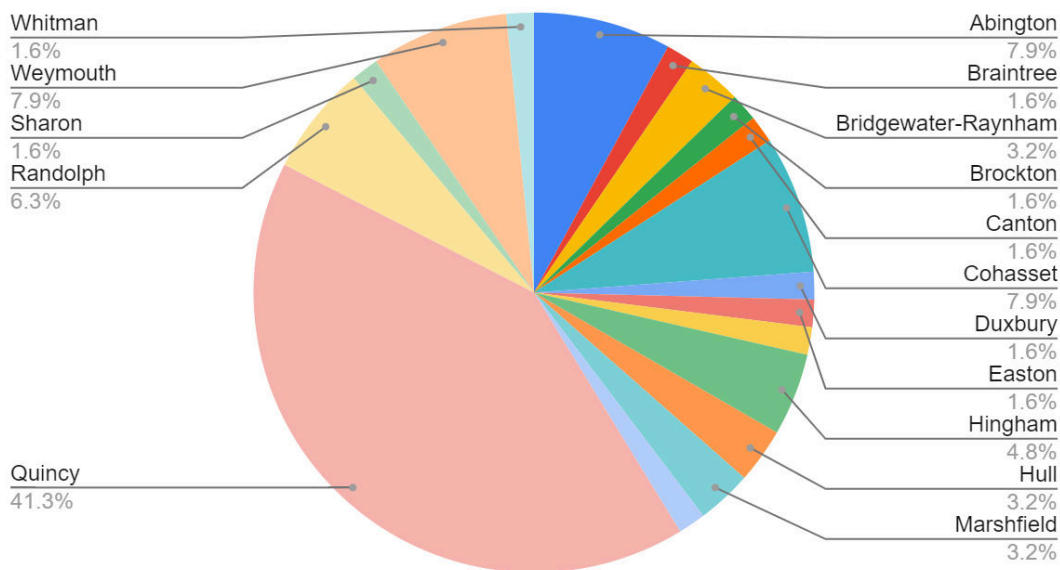
Established in the early 1970's as part of an initiative of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to start "mini-schools" for special needs students throughout the state, the Mini School program has served students on the autism spectrum, joining the South Shore Educational Collaborative in 1987. During the 2023-2024 school year, the Mini School Program provided educational services to 62 students in classrooms located at the Memorial Middle School, Hull High School and Randolph High School. During the summer of 2023 the Mini School moved four classrooms from the Jacobs Elementary School to the Memorial School in Hull totaling 6 classrooms. The Memorial School is now the setting for Mini School students grades Kindergarten - Eighth grade. The Mini School specializes in educating children with a diagnosis of Autism, Developmental or Intellectual Delay, and/or other learning profiles. The Mini School uses a multidisciplinary approach that includes best practices in applied behavior analysis, positive behavioral programming, language based instruction, incidental teaching, augmentative and assistive technology and sensory integration. Our values focus on safety, respect, relationships and growth in an environment to promote student growth in the educational setting.

Enrollment Data:



## District Data:

### Number of Students



SSEC Mini School students require a multi-disciplinary team teaching approach with a high staff/student ratio. Each student's daily programming focuses on teaching skills he/she needs in order to be as independent as possible. Students receive the following services from specialist services: Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Assistive Technology and Adapted Physical Education. We also have instruction in a Drums Alive class with the three instructors that we have. Drums Alive is an all inclusive, comprehensive, multi-generational, culturally diverse brain and body program for all ages and abilities that empower participants to achieve healthy lives through research based fitness and wellness applications. This evidence based program encompasses music, rhythm, psychological, educational, emotional, physical and social skills. The Mini School also had a Music Therapist contracted through South Shore Music Conservatory. The Mini School hours are 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday through Thursday and 8:30 AM – 2:45 PM on Friday, totaling 36.25 hours per week of direct instruction. The program follows the public school calendar of the town in which each class resides (Hull and Randolph).

Summer programming runs for six weeks, Monday through Thursday, 8:30 AM – 2:45 PM. During the summer students engage in recreational activities that include swimming at the Cohasset Town Pool and going to the beach. The Mini School has a lifeguard on staff for the beach and Cohasset Town Pool has their own lifeguards. Mini School staff go swimming with the students at these events. This gives students an opportunity to work on recreational skills as well as activities of daily living and transition skills. Also, recreation programs at the school during the summer such included Magic Show, Crazy Critter Show, Water Slide Day and we had a Field Day in which activities included a water foam play area, sensory centers, face painting, cotton candy, and sport activities. We hosted a SIBLING day in which brothers and sisters of

students were invited to spend the day with their siblings. We had 12 siblings attend and they engaged in activities in their sibling classrooms as well as groups with the Social Worker in which they were able to have discussions with each other about what it's like to have a sibling with Autism and meet others. It was a very successful day.

Staff training and professional development are held on Thursday's during the school year, following early dismissal, once to twice a month. This year training included in depth WELLE to all new staff and a review to returning staff. Welle is a methodology that SSEC uses to de-escalate behavioral issues both before and when they occur in a safe, humane and effective manner as well as teaching a physical skill set in working with students. Staff also received training in DESE physical restraint regulations. They also received annual trainings in policies, procedures, health care, emergency drills, child abuse and neglect and bullying intervention and prevention, MCAS standard and alternate testing and First Aide/CPR training, Civil Rights and Title IX training. Shannon Sullivan, Mini School Clinician, educated by MARC (Bridgewater State College) as a trainer for Anti-Bullying/Cyber Bullying Intervention and Prevention. Our Nurses continue to be a Trainer in CPR and First Aid and trains 1 of 2 groups every school year. The Mini School also has 5 trainers for WELLE. The Mini School also spent a lot of professional development training Teachers and Specialists on the new IEP Form. Myself, Erin Holder, and Kristen Skjerli attended the Train the Trainer for New IEP Form through DESE. We took their guidance and materials and trained all Program Staff.

The Mini School continues to use Panorama Science by National Geographic with printed texts. It is science based content that engages students to learn more about the world around them. The Mini School continues to use Stemscopes for science curriculum in three of the classrooms that are working toward grade level standards with modifications. It is aligned with the curriculum frameworks and is an online 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum that guides students in rich scientific discourse through modeling, questioning, and interactive activities. The Mini School also uses Benchmark books to help support the History and Social Science curriculum. This is for emerging, early and fluent readers. The Mini School also has Math Stemscopes. Other online curriculum resources that the Mini School uses across the classrooms are Flocabulary, an online, fun engaging and musical way to learn vocabulary across the content area. Mathematics is also taught using Touch Math (a program geared towards visual learners) as well as the Saxon Math program. English Language Arts is taught through a guided reading program, Edmark Reading Program, and Read Naturally Live as well as instruction in phonics and spelling programs. The Mini School uses i-Ready in three of the classrooms, which is a comprehensive assessment and instruction program that empowers educators with the resources they need to help the students. This also helps in developing differentiated instruction for the students. Some classrooms also use IXL to determine current performance levels. It helps in assisting the teachers to determine grade level proficiency based on state and national standards. The Mini School also used McGraw Hill Social Studies curriculum. The Mini School also uses a reading specialist that travels to all the classrooms and consults with teachers as well as direct services with some students. The Mini School also has an EL teacher that supports students in our program and gives direct as well as indirect services and consultation. The Mini School has also been trained and uses Lexikeet for translation services.

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### **Delineation of Mini School Staff**

<b>Position</b>	<b>FTE</b>
Program Director and BCBA	1.0
Assistant Program Director	1.0
Teachers	10.0
Clinician	2.0
Home-School Behavior Consultant	1.0
Behavior Specialist (2)	1.84
Occupational Therapists (2)	1.43
OT Assistants (1)	.84
Physical Therapist	.07
Speech Therapists	2.5
Adaptive PE Teacher	.84
Music	.12
Nurses	1.84
Paraprofessionals	22

Traditionally, the Mini School has served students with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder who present with developmental delays from ages 5 -22 years old. Over the years the Mini School has expanded to serve students on the autism spectrum in grades K-8 who function at or close to their grade level, but have deficits in the socialization and self-regulation skills necessary to be educated in their home districts, as well as needing extra educational support. Some students have participated in inclusion classes with the support of Mini School teachers and/or paraprofessionals. Examples of classes would include gym, music, technology, art, ELA, Math and Science.

Mini School curriculum emphasizes language based programming, positive behavior management techniques, social skills training and acquisition of functional life skills. Instructional methods include prompt hierarchies, systematic instruction, task analysis, incidental teaching and discrete trial training. Emphasis is also placed on the acquisition of academic skills: reading, English Language Arts, mathematics, social studies and science. Students learn at their developmental level following the Curriculum Frameworks. Students are assessed for



MCAS each year by either standardized testing or by portfolio assessment at their chronological grade level according to the state model. The three Mini School high school classrooms and one middle school classroom focuses on transitional skills to include vocational training, functional academics, life skills, social skills and communication. The students at the high school have vocational opportunities within the classroom, school environment and the community. Job training for work skills in the community occurs at the SaltWater Diner, Papa Gino's and Blazing Saddles. Both Randolph and Hull High School classrooms participated in Meals on Wheels multiple times per week. The Mini School participated in Swim with a Special Child program located in Weymouth and is a program in which our students are assigned a 1:1 volunteer that is swim certified and gives instruction for 45 minutes. This is an elective and 76% of our students participate in it.

Students with a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder display challenges in many areas which impact their ability to access the general curriculum. These challenges include delays in the ability to communicate effectively, develop social skills, interpret sensory input, and understand and control their emotions. The Mini School uses an extra space for de-escalation and as well as another room for sensory needs. The sensory room includes a ball pit, swings, crash pad, beam, stationary bike as well as small trike and adult trike and sensory centers of a variety of activities (magnets, sensory bins, etc.).

Students also participate in social skill and regulation learning groups from the clinicians and/or behavior specialists. Zones of Regulation is a widely used curriculum that is focused on learning vocabulary, strategies and coping skills. The Mini School uses a computer system, *Educata* for purposes of data collection, analyzing and interpreting, as well as fulfilling the reporting requirements of DESE for physical intervention and behavior support strategies.

At the Mini School, 14 students participated in standard MCAS for grades 3-8 with accommodations. The Mini School uses Computer Based Testing for grades 3-8. The students all have chrome books that they used throughout the school year. 28 Mini School students participated in MCAS testing by Alternate Assessment. Students with a significant cognitive disability are eligible to participate in MCAS-Alt in all content areas. Results were in the 'progressing' category in most subject areas with some "emerging" scores in the area of writing. Teachers also started to use the Participation Alternate Assessment Tool from DESE this school year.

The Mini School provided parent training services to families who wanted to engage in this service. The delivery of services range in the area of communication, behavior and activities of daily living. The parent home consultant also helps with communication between home and school. This is a meaningful service and available to all families.

Mini School teachers use many strategies and accommodations to help our students develop the prerequisite skills needed to learn. In order to be able to sit and attend, sensory input and schedules are provided throughout the school day. Positive reinforcement programs, visual schedules, timers, topic boards and social stories help organize the students' day, as well as remind them of classroom expectations. Middle school classrooms continue their academic learning as well as beginning instruction in pre-vocational and functional life skills. Planning

for transition to adulthood is a major component of the curriculum for our high school students. Emphasis is placed on helping students prepare for adulthood with a focus on transitioning. Students receive educational, speech and occupational therapy services which are directed toward building independence in social pragmatics, leisure activities, recreation and exercise, vocational skills, personal hygiene, self-advocacy, finances and daily chores. Vocational opportunities were offered both in the school and community settings. The Mini School works closely with the families and Department of Disability Services for transition purposes. We did not have students this year that turned 22 and moved on to adult services. We did have some eighth grade students that moved on to high school. Two went back to their home district for 9th grade.

The Mini School program participated in the Evan Henry Road Race in May, 2024. The Mini School had a Team and received a grant of \$2000.00 that was used for recreation activities during the summer. The Evan Henry Mini School Team had the highest turnout of employee participants at 42 this year. The Mini School also received a grant from the Doug Flutie Foundation for technology/Stem. With this grant we purchased an ActivPanel, two touchscreen monitors and for STEM we purchased science robotic Lego kits.

By using best practices in the field of autism, the Mini School strives to provide all of its students with a free and appropriate public education so that each student is able to reach his or her full potential.

## **QUEST PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024**

### **Quest Mission Statement**

The mission of the **Quest Program** is to provide a safe and respectful learning environment where relationships between staff and students can be nurtured and developed and where students can learn new skills for continued growth.

### **Description of Program, Student Population and Staff**

The Quest Program is a public day school located at 75 Abington Street in Hingham, MA designed to serve special needs students in grades K-8 with social, emotional and behavioral challenges. The program/school provides a highly structured, safe environment that ensures consistency and support needed to help these students succeed.

Our student population continues to diversify. The majority of our students' primary disability is Emotional. We are also serving students with significant learning disabilities as well as students on the Autism spectrum. Quest students have a variety of mental health diagnoses. A significant portion of the student population carries attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as a primary or secondary diagnosis. Anxiety disorders (trauma related disorders, generalized anxiety disorder, school phobia, and obsessive compulsive disorder) as well as mood disorders (bipolar disorder, depression and disruptive mood dysregulation disorder) comprise other prevalent disorders. The majority of students attending the Quest Program have experienced some sort of trauma in their young lives. These disorders, along with diagnosed specific learning disabilities, make learning a challenge for the majority of our students. During the 2015-2016 school year, we expanded the program to also provide programming for students with more severe special needs who have concurrent social skills and mental health challenges. Providing programming for this very specialized population has allowed the program to expand and support an additional 10 to 15 students each year. Many students referred to the Quest Program struggle to attend school on a daily basis. Once in school, the inability to remain focused combined with intrusive thoughts, mood lability and/or weak social skills make academic progress a daily struggle for many of our students. It is only with comprehensive academic, behavioral, and therapeutic support that our students are able to make progress toward their IEP goals. The program integrates an evidenced based multisensory academic curriculum which has been aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Where needed, students are also provided with a functional, remedial curriculum in 1:1 and/or small group settings.

The Quest Program continued to have 11 classrooms during the 2023-2024 school year. Eight classrooms are traditional Quest classrooms and three of the classrooms continue to be a joint venture with the SSEC Community School. These classrooms, given the name AIM (Achieve, Inspire, Motivate), are designed to meet the needs of students that required the therapeutic and behavioral support of the Quest Program but required modifications to the academic programming and social skills instruction typical of a Quest classroom. In these areas, the students require programming more similar to what was available at the Community School. In conjunction with the Community School, the three AIM classrooms served 18 students (14

enrolled in the Quest Program) over the course of the school year. The classrooms are led by a Special Education teacher with the support of 2 or more paraprofessionals in each classroom. A full time licensed social worker works with all students in these three AIM classrooms to provide counseling and social skills instruction. This social worker is a part of the Quest clinical team and is supervised by a licensed independent social worker working in the Quest Program. Further support was provided by Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists from the Community School as well as Reading Teachers from the Quest Program. The classrooms access the Quest Art teacher and both the APE teacher from the Community School and the Quest PE teacher. Behavioral support was provided by both programs as needed. Students in the AIM room were able to participate in electives and activities with the Quest Program and the Community School. Staff continue to learn the best ways to work together to serve this diverse group of learners. These classrooms are truly a part of both the Community and Quest Programs. Most importantly, SSEC continues to be able to meet the needs of students with challenging and unique needs. The AIM classrooms provide a model for collaboration and flexible programming designed to meet the changing needs of our students and sending districts. Given the success of these classrooms, AIM expanded to 5 classrooms (high school and transitional aged students). These students were able to join in activities and services with the other AIM classes and access instruction and programming appropriate for their age and developmental level.

The SSEC Quest Program had a change in administration at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. The program is supervised by Program Director, Rosanna Warrick, who serves as the academic administrator of the program. Rosanna Warrick previously held the Program Coordinator position for the previous six years. Kimberly Foresta is the full time Program Coordinator responsible for supervising the behavior team, managing the milieu coordinators, supervising paraprofessionals, and running the program in the absence of the director as well as other duties as needed.

For the 2023-2024 school year our staff included: 11 full time certified special education teachers, a full time PE/Health teacher shared with 3 programs, a full time Art teacher shared with 3 programs, 21 paraprofessionals, 1 full time and 2 part time reading teachers, 5 full time school based clinicians, 1 clinical psychology intern, 2 social work interns, 1 mental health counseling intern, 1 full time behaviorist, 1 full time and 2 part time occupational therapists, 1 full time and 2 part time speech and language therapists, a part time physical therapist, a full time administrative assistant and a part time assistive technology teacher. Quest also continued to access the services of a music therapist on a part time basis. The behavioral needs of the students were served by a behavioral team supervised by a Program Coordinator and 2 full time milieu coordinators and 2 full time behavioral aides. Two full time school nurses, a food service director and 3 food service aides are shared with the other school programs in the building. Quest also shared one part time board certified developmental pediatrician with the other SSEC programs.

Program hours from August to June are 8:30am to 2:50pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Every Wednesday, students are dismissed at 12:50pm. This provides time for professional development and staff meetings. During the summer, Quest provides a 6-week extended school year program for those students whose IEP includes a longer school year to prevent substantial regression of previously learned skills. Students enrolled in the Quest AIM

classrooms follow the Community Program schedule and calendar. Their program hours from August to June are 9:00am to 3:30pm daily. Two Mondays each month, students are dismissed at 12:00pm. Quest AIM students also have a 6-week extended school year program which runs Monday through Thursday, 9 am to 2:45 pm daily.

### **Program Development for the 2023-2024 School Year**

Quest students attend school in person. Staffing continued to be a challenge during this school year. Hiring sufficient staff was challenging throughout the year as we continue to feel the COVID-19 after effects.

Physical education increased this year and students had between two and four classes per week as well as a weekly health class. Music was provided in the classrooms. Middle school students were able to volunteer with younger peers and high school students were able to volunteer in the Quest Program. Teams continue to have the option of virtual or in-person meetings and look to continue that way.

### **Data Collection**

In our ongoing effort to demonstrate efficacy in our program and to be compliant with DESE regulations, we have continued to devote considerable resources to data collection. More specifically, we continued to utilize the services of consultant Marc Hauser and his Educata system to track student behavior and we continued to use the Goal Seeker program as well. The Educata system allows the staff to track a wide variety of data and the program also helps to manage reporting requirements with regard to time out of class and physical intervention. Providing this data has allowed all disciplines (educators, therapists and behavioral staff) to tailor and to focus their approaches and interventions with our students. Goal Seeker was added as a way to more efficiently track IEP goals in the classroom. Each classroom started with one student entered in Goal Seeker to allow staff the opportunity to learn the program. This has also helped the paraprofessionals become more involved in goal development as they are frequently responsible for data collection. Their input has helped the professional staff write goals that capture a student's area of need in a manner that can be efficiently tracked in the classroom throughout the IEP period. Staff are consistently using data collection measures in place when writing IEPs and gathering baseline data on proposed goals. Staff are also using this data during pod meetings and when developing and updating individual and classroom wide behavior support plans. In addition, at our IEP meetings we have been able to present collected data in a visually and readily understandable format for parents and district colleagues. Adopting more stringent data collection measures has enabled us to keep pace with the current emphasis in the Massachusetts Professional Development Initiative. Increasing efficiency in data collection as well as improving our ability to utilize collected data continues to be a point of emphasis in the Quest Program. The Quest data team met weekly to provide analysis of collected data and implement changes needed to the data collection systems.

## **Classroom Pods**

At the core of service delivery in the Quest Program is the “pod” model. Each of the 11 classrooms has a “pod” or comprehensive team of staff that work together to provide the services enumerated in each child’s IEP. Each pod consists of the teacher, the classroom aides, a clinician, a behavioral aide, and any other staff (occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, intern) that work with the students in the classroom. Pods meet weekly to discuss any individual or classroom issues that arise. This can include training on a newly signed IEP, drafting an individual behavior plan, addressing classroom management issues, drafting IEP’s, planning social skills groups, and sharing information gained through case management. Pod members also share information with our consulting psychiatrist prior to a student’s appointment, through structured online communication forms. The pod model has evolved to incorporate the data collection completed by the Data Team and the pod members. This has allowed for focused and data driven conversations about goals and interventions.

The pod model not only makes communication between staff easier, it also makes the communication more meaningful. This model provides the opportunity for all staff working with a particular student to share their perspective. Each staff member has a different relationship with each student and each discipline has different services to provide. When all the disciplines work together, the pod is better able to understand the complex needs of our students and provide integrated interventions. At the Quest Program, we have come to understand that what makes the program successful is everyone working collaboratively.

## **Behavioral System**

Our behavior management system continues to be driven by Ross Greene’s Collaborative Problem Solving approach to behavioral intervention. At Quest, we agree with Dr. Greene that “kids do well if they can”. Staff works with students to understand their behavior so we can teach the skills needed for change. Our space for behavioral interventions includes 4 settling rooms, 2 quiet study rooms, a sensory room, a comfort room, an office shared by the Program Coordinator, Behavior Specialist and Milieu Coordinator and an office for the behavioral aides. The behavioral space in our school building was designed to be safe and away from a main hallway. This has allowed students and staff the privacy and space needed to help students settle and be ready to return to class. This year the behavioral support team along with the Program Coordinator refreshed the area to an “Under the Sea” theme making it more welcoming and comfortable for the students.

Quest students continued to take advantage of the available sensory strategies, Quiet Study and spaces for self-initiated breaks in order to help them remain in class using these rooms 5,850 times during the course of the year. Students were able to take a teacher directed break 7,984 times. In comparison to the data from the 2022-2023 school year, Quest students used less self-initiated breaks and there were less teacher directed breaks. A point of emphasis in the Quest Program is to increase the number of student-initiated breaks.

The Quest Program also continued to benefit from the training and implementation of WELLE behavior management system. The primary reason the collaborative utilizes WELLE is that their program’s physical interventions are safer for students and staff. This program also provides significant staff training in de-escalation and psychological intervention. During the 2023-2024

school year, there were 101 instances of physical intervention. That is a significant decrease from the 2022-2023 school year (381 instances). Similar to past years, a small percentage of students accounts for all of the physical intervention. Quest has seen an increase of students with trauma reactive behaviors and resort to physical harm to self and others when dysregulated. As we continue to work on building positive behavior supports and reducing instances of physical intervention it is important to remember that, though it is a last resort, these interventions allow staff and students to remain safe at school. There are students who would not be able to remain at a public day school without this intervention as they learn the emotional regulation strategies they need to remain safe in school and the community.

In addition to weekly and monthly review of restraint data, Dr. Marc Hauser worked with program administrators and staff to analyze data trends. This helps to evaluate program wide interventions as well as individual plans for the students frequently requiring physical intervention. Interventions utilized included increasing staffing ratios, completing FBAs and implementing behavior plans, consultations with our consulting developmental pediatrician and behaviorist for the school year. Reducing the need for physical restraint continues to be an important goal of the Quest Program even as we expand the program and service an increasing number of students with some of the most challenging behaviors.

### **Social Skills and Emotional Regulation Curriculum**

As a program, we adopted the Social Thinking® Curriculum in 2010 and the language and concepts of the curriculum continue to be used program wide. The Social Thinking Curriculum was developed by Michelle Garcia Winner, a Speech and Language Pathologist, through her work with school age students on the autism spectrum. This curriculum, which is both evidence based and practice informed, is a social cognitive approach to social skills instruction designed to teach perspective taking and social thinking skills to students with a variety of social challenges. The goal is to help students better understand how their words and actions impact the thoughts and feelings of others around them, making them better able to share space effectively with others. All Quest students have at least one direct instruction group based on this curriculum each week. Staff continued to receive regular training on Social Thinking both in the program and through trainings led by M.G. Winner and her staff. The Quest Speech and Language pathologist continues to incorporate Social Thinking measures into formal and informal assessments of students, better allowing us to assess this important aspect of communication often missed in standardized assessment tools. The behavioral staff continues to use Social Behavior Maps to guide processing of behavioral incidents with students. Throughout the program, students are learning to match the size of their reaction to the size of the problem. In addition, weekly planning time is built into the schedule to allow time for the clinicians, speech and language pathologist, occupational therapist, and classroom staff to plan cohesive group lessons. This time has allowed staff to create a bank of lessons that have been used successfully. Social Thinking group lessons are also discussed in pod meetings and both teaching and behavioral staff continue to participate in classroom groups. Social Thinking is not only taught during classroom groups, it is being taught and reinforced by all staff throughout the school day. Clinicians in the middle school classrooms also utilize other cognitive therapy approaches, including Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) and mindfulness strategies in conjunction with Social Thinking. All staff were trained in the Calm Classroom mindfulness program in March 2019. These strategies were piloted in the Quest and

AIM classrooms throughout the end of the year of the 18-19 school year and continue to be implemented throughout the program. All of these evidence based approaches teach students to be mindful of the cognitive processes driving their social interactions and emotional experiences. Staff are also learning about neurodiversity and there are many ways to teach social skills. Social skills instruction continues to be provided to help students have the skills they need while also respecting their differences and individual needs.

### **Responsive Classroom**

In July 2015, the Quest teachers, clinicians and SLP participated in a week long training in the Responsive Classroom method. The Responsive Classroom website describes this as an approach to ‘teaching (which) emphasizes academic, social, and emotional growth in a strong school community. This approach stresses that how children learn is as important as what they learn, and that academic success is inextricably tied to building social-emotional competencies. This approach provides K-8 educators with practical training and resources to help create safe and joyful classrooms and schools where children can thrive.’ All of the Quest classrooms continue to incorporate the Responsive Classroom methods. There is a morning message posted in each class and, at 9 AM daily, each class holds a Morning Meeting. The clinicians and SLP frequently co-lead these meetings and use the activity to reinforce previously taught Social Thinking lessons. Teachers are incorporating academic choice and a wider variety of behavioral interventions. The Responsive Classroom method has dovetailed well with Social Thinking and Collaborative Problem Solving providing even more cohesiveness and consistency across the Quest classrooms.

### **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan**

As required by law SSEC created a bully prevention and intervention plan. The following key components required by law were implemented:

1. A professional development plan was established for all staff
2. A K-8 curriculum on bullying was adopted for all of our students
3. Staff who witness or had knowledge of any bullying incident were required to report it
4. Investigation and disciplinary policies were instituted for the act of bullying
5. When criminal charges were appropriate, law enforcement was notified
6. Resources and information was made available to students, parents and guardians including curricula, the dynamics of bullying, online safety, and cyber-bullying. This topic is covered in the classrooms during Health classes and Social Thinking Groups.

In addition to meeting the requirements of the bullying prevention law, staff continue to work with students to identify both potential targets and potential bullies. We address this issue in health class, social skills groups, in individual therapy sessions, and in IEP goals to ensure that Quest is a safe and respectful environment for all students. Staff continue to receive annual training through the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center (MARC) at Bridgewater State University and the curriculum developed by MARC is incorporated into health classes as appropriate.



### **Student Activities & Learning**

Quest teachers continued to present lessons that integrated functional, remedial and grade level academic curriculum which has been aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. We were also able to provide students a weekly art class with a certified art teacher and all of our classes had access to a music therapist weekly. A certified PE teacher led all gym and health classes.

During the summer of 2024, we held many community wide activities at the school. Students took part in an African Drumming demonstration, played with baby animals and reptiles, visited food trucks and attended a science demonstration. We were able to hold our Annual Open House in September in person.

This year's graduation of 15 eighth grade students was held in person in the gym and students were able to invite all their family and friends. Students from the Quest and AIM classes participated in the graduation ceremony, many of them reading speeches they had written. Graduation is always a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the progress of our students. It was wonderful to celebrate our graduating students in person.

### **Curriculum**

Instruction in the Quest Program follows the MA Curriculum Frameworks for all subject areas. Given that all classrooms are self-contained and students are coming from more than 20 districts, planning lessons that are appropriately rigorous and differentiated at the same time can be challenging for the teaching staff. To support the teachers in their planning and instruction, the Director of Student Services continued to support teachers in implementing Math, ELA and Science/Technology curriculum that meet the needs of the majority of our students. All classrooms used Pearson's Social Studies curriculum which is aligned with the updated Massachusetts frameworks. Elementary school teachers continued to have access to the Panorama science curriculum which has been created by National Geographic. This program has the tools to differentiate for all students, including English Learners, built in. Also provided to the elementary teachers is the REACH for Reading program to teach ELA through science content and is also produced by National Geographic. Middle school teachers also are accessing the Benchmark curriculum for science and social studies. All teachers had access to STEMScopes Science and Math as well. These materials present the content into manageable parts and the texts look like magazines and graphic novels. In addition to these initiatives, teachers used many online programs, such as IXL, Mystery Science and Readworks, to support students learning in school and remotely. Students also took part in iReady benchmark testing three times during the course of the school year.

### **Summer Program**

The 2024 Summer Program was fully in person with 50 students enrolled. We had a total of 9 classrooms (7 in Quest, 2 in AIM) for ESY 2024. Academic instruction as well as all services and therapies were provided in person. As noted above, students took part in several activities and were able to interact with students outside their classroom while outside. Free breakfast and lunch were provided for all students.

### **Home and Community Involvement**

This year we continued to place an emphasis on parent involvement. Daily communication was provided between home and school. Some teachers used a communication log while others used digital formats such as the Google Classroom or the Class Dojo app. Regardless of modality, parents were asked to acknowledge the communication daily to strengthen the connection between home and school. Classroom pod members also had weekly phone or email contact with parents. This enabled us to share positive accomplishments with parents on a regular basis as well as to quickly address concerns. In addition, families were included in the Open House and graduation as described above. The Quest behaviorist provided consultation to parents as needed. Quest counselors also continue to work closely with community based providers working with our students.

### **Technology**

The Quest Program, in line with the SSEC Strategic Plan, continues to be dedicated to increasing the availability and usability of both assistive and instructional technology for students and staff. Each professional staff member has been given an iPad, Chromebook or laptop to use for instruction, data collection and accessing Teach Point and working on the DESE teacher evaluation. Students continue to use iPads, laptops and Chromebooks to support their learning. All Quest students have access to a Chromebook in their classroom throughout the school day. Having 1:1 devices has allowed students to utilize assistive technology, such as Cowriter and Read, Write, Google, to help them access the curriculum. Students receive direct instruction from an Assistive Technology teacher weekly in their classrooms to learn how these tools can be used to access their schoolwork. In the spring, students have typically then used their devices to take the next generation MCAS on the device they have been using throughout the school year. Each Quest classroom continues to have a projector with at least two computers. Members of the Tech Team also provided training in available technology to interested staff members.

SSEC continued to loan Chromebooks to any student that needed it. Teachers utilized the google classroom as well as other google extensions, IXL, brainpop and the online portion of the curriculum programs as they planned their lessons. While instruction was delivered in person, students continued to use the tools they learned during remote learning.

### **Quest School Handbook**

A school handbook was revised before school reopened in the fall of 2023. It was received positively by parents/guardians as well as staff and students. When home and school join efforts to create a safe environment that fosters academic and emotional growth, while providing care and support, each student can be successful. Close communication and clear, consistent guidelines are key to the process and are the prime reasons for the handbook.

### **Year in Summary**

In total, the Quest Program served 70 students this school year. We began the school year with 72 students and ended the year with 68 students. The 80 students that we serviced came over 20 different school districts.

We serviced 3 S.T.A.R.T.S. students, providing them with an extended evaluation. Two of the students remained at the Quest Program for part or all of the remainder of the school year.

During the 2023-2024 school year, 12 students left after graduation in June; 3 stayed in Quest for ESY 2024 and then left after ESY. Of the 15 graduates: 2 moved on to SSEC South Shore High, 3 moved on to SSEC Careers High, 2 moved on to SSEC AIM High, 6 returned to district and 2 needed more restrictive settings. An additional 4 students left after the school year. One went back to their sending district and three others went to different therapeutic programs.

Quest enrollment remained steady over the course of the school year. The enrollment was at capacity by the end of the school year. However, with the high number of graduates and students changing programs, Quest began the 2024-2025 school year with only 53 students.

SSEC and the Quest Program continued to be committed to provide high quality instruction and services to students in a safe and supportive school setting.

## **South Shore High School Annual Report 2023-2024**

### ***Program Description***

South Shore High School (SSHS) is a public therapeutic day school within the South Shore Educational Collaborative. SSHS is designed to support students with significant social and emotional challenges in a small, therapeutic environment in order to promote academic, social, and emotional success and well-being. South Shore High School services students in grades 8-12 in a highly structured environment with low student to staff ratios allowing for the ability to provide intensive support and consistency in a safe learning environment.

### ***Student Population***

The majority of students referred to SSHS have been identified as having an emotional disability via their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In addition, SSHS services students with specific learning disabilities, high functioning autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and social pragmatics difficulties. Students are mainly of solid average cognitive ability, some slightly above and some slightly below. Students tend to be treated for diagnoses that include, but are not limited to, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorders (post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder) and mood disorders (depression, bipolar disorder, disruptive mood dysregulation disorder). Many students referred to South Shore High School have a history of absenteeism due to multiple psychiatric inpatient hospital stays, short term acute care stays, and school avoidance. Many students have a history of trauma and disrupted home-life and caretaker consistency. Most students receive treatment support outside of school including individual therapy, family therapy, therapeutic case management, psychiatric/medication management, in-home behavioral consultation, and agency involvement (DCF, DMH). A small number of students attend SSHS directly from an agency run group home. SSHS has a strong population of students that also identify as LGBTQ.

**Monthly Enrollment**  
(SSHS students/ Bridge Classroom Students/STARTS Evaluation Students)

	Monthly Enrollment #	Bridge	STARTS
Sept. 2023	46	1	1 STARTS
Oct. 2023	48	1	1 STARTS
Nov. 2023	48	1	1 STARTS
Dec. 2023	47	1	1 STARTS
Jan. 2024	48	1	1 STARTS
Feb. 2024	51	1	0 STARTS
March 2024	51	3	1 STARTS
April 2024	49	3	1 STARTS
May 2024	50	3	1 STARTS
June 2024	50	3	1 STARTS

South Shore High School/Bridge had between 46 and 51 students enrolled between September and June of the 2023-2024 school year. In addition, over the course of the year, SSHS was able to accommodate 4 students for a STARTS extended evaluation. Of the students present through the end of the school year, ***South Shore High School successfully graduated 11 seniors, from 8 different districts***. All seniors were able to meet the credit and course requirements of their sending districts and meet all MCAS graduation requirements. The graduating class of 2024, their families, district personnel, SSHS staff, our Executive Director, and Director of Student Support Services were able to celebrate in a meaningful ceremony and small luncheon within the SSEC main building. The ceremony was held at a time that could accommodate having the entire SSHS student body participate in the graduation ceremony of their peers. This is crucial in allowing younger class members to visualize their own goals and future success, have a sense of school pride, and practice the social expectations of a large gathering with their peers' family members. In addition to the success of graduating seniors, ***SSHS successfully returned five students to their sending district***. One student required a more restrictive placement. The one student attending South Shore High School from a group home placement maintained excellent attendance and progress and therefore a more restrictive placement was avoided.

***Program Staff***

During the 2023-2024 school year, South Shore High School operated 8 classrooms led by a special education teacher and supported by paraprofessionals. In addition, SSHS added a 9th special education teacher who completed his degree. In the previous year, he held the role as a milieu coordinator. To be fiscally responsible and due to a shortage of paraprofessionals, this teaching position was added in lieu of two paraprofessional positions. This decision was made to retain highly skilled, effective staff and to provide consistency for the program and students. One of the 8 classrooms, our Bridge Classroom, is a transition classroom for students in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade who demonstrate some readiness to gain an introduction to a high school model. Students in the Bridge Classroom remain in a self-contained classroom with access to high school aged

peer role models, teaching staff, clinicians, and related service providers to support their successful transition to high school. During the 23-24 school year, there were no Bridge Students attending from the SSEC Quest Program. Bridge accommodated between 1-3 students, all from sending districts. In addition to teachers and paraprofessionals, SSHS staff included one three full time clinical social workers, a milieu coordinator, a part-time speech and language pathologist, part-time occupational therapist, part-time reading specialist, two part-time transition specialists, and a .5 BCBA. During the 23-24 school year, the program was also supported by SSEC program nurses, our program assistant, and the SSEC contracted developmental pediatrician consultant, Dr. Jeanine Audet.

### ***Academic Structure***

Students at SSHS are assigned courses designed to meet the graduation requirements from their sending school district. Upon graduation, students receive an official transcript and diploma from their sending school district. Classroom instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners in order to ensure the academic success of all students. Class sizes remained at 8 students or less to provide for maximum instructional and social/emotional support. With the exception of our Bridge classroom, the majority of students change classes each period per subject matter. SSHS follows the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. With the support of our transition specialists, students in primarily the 12<sup>th</sup> and at times 11<sup>th</sup> grade may take a dual enrollment course at a local community college. SSHS continues to be a PSAT and SAT approved testing site for our students. Students are offered a robust choice of electives which include, but are not limited to; Art, Music, Physical Education, Healthy Lifestyles, Current Events, Culinary Arts, History through Film, Sports Statistics, and Diversity and Equity Studies. Students may change elective choices by term.

***During the 2023-2024 school year students took courses at both Quincy Community College and Cape Cod Community College for dual enrollment credit.***

### ***Clinical Support and Counseling***

For the 2023-2024 school year, SSHS had three full-time clinical social workers. In addition, the program had support from a psychiatric consultant. SSHS is a trauma informed school. Principles of Solution Focused Narrative Therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) are used in the counseling work with students. In addition, SSHS clinicians write all of the social emotional IEP goals, collect data on goals, and report on IEP goal progress four times per year. Clinicians meet together with the program director weekly for advanced case consultation and discussion. Clinician's provide significant home to school communication to support families and caretakers and act as a liaison to outside treatment providers per parent request and consent. The primary focus of counseling at SSHS is to assist students in countering the problems that have had a negative impact on their academic, social, and emotional success through accurate problem identification and the development of healthy, effective coping strategies. In order to support as needed crisis assessment and intervention, SSHS utilizes an on call clinician schedule at all times throughout the school day.

***During the 2023-2024 school year, two students were sectioned for emergency mental health evaluations from SSHS and 4 students received inpatient hospital level care at some point during the school year as a result of crisis evaluations precipitated by either the school or outside of school.***

### ***Transition Services***

SSHS has two part-time Transition Specialists that meet with all students to develop solid transition plans (TPF) for every student turning 14 or older. The transition staff work with all students to assist them in:

- ☐ Self-advocacy (understanding their IEP's, their disability area, their accommodations, their strengths and weaknesses as learners)
- ☐ Vocational skills (establishing onsite vocational opportunities, off site internship sites, resume writing, mock interviewing, employment applications, assessment of vocational skills with the Workplace Soft Skills rubric)
- ☐ Career/Trade identification (online research tools, O\*Net Interest Profiler)
- ☐ College identification and readiness (scheduling PSAT and SAT testing, college search engines, college tours, assistance with signing up for and supporting dual enrollment classes at the community college level, attending college fairs)
- ☐ Establishing connections with adult support agencies (completing direct referrals to the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, attending meetings with student and MRC case managers, supporting the Pre-ETS pre-employment transition skills program through Tempus Unlimited)
- ☐ Establishing community service experiences (both onsite experiences and offsite experiences to meet sending district community service requirements or per student interest)
- ☐ Placing students in job shadow opportunities within businesses that are members of the South Shore Area Chamber of Commerce

Seven SSHS students were able to take college level dual enrollment classes at Quincy Community College. Transition staff also coordinated tours at local colleges, college fair nights, informational sessions with trade schools, and informational sessions with Job Corps. Students were also able to access onsite vocational opportunities in our industrial kitchen, with our custodial staff, working with younger students in our Quest Program, and working with multi-handicapped students in our Community Program.

### ***Related Services***

***Speech and language*** supports are provided for students with identified speech and language needs and social pragmatics needs on their individualized education plan. Most of the students requiring speech and language support at SSHS are students with identified weaknesses in social skills and social pragmatics. Our speech and language pathologist provides small group sessions to improve students' social-verbal interactions, perspective taking, and conversational skills following the Social Thinking Curriculum developed by Michelle Garcia Winner. All students in

our Bridge classroom receive a social skills group co-lead with teaching staff to support carry-over of skills and promote improved social interactions.

**Occupational Therapy** supports are provided for students with identified executive functioning deficits, sensory integration deficits, and sensory regulation needs. The occupational therapist works directly with students on understanding their sensory profile and sensory needs, creating motor break schedules when needed. The occupational therapist meets with students individually and in small groups.

**Reading Support** is provided for those students with an identified reading disability on their individualized education plan. The SSHS reading specialist meets with students individually to support improved reading skills and improved access to their curriculum.

**BCBA Consult and Intervention** is provided for those students that have an individualized behavior plan. In addition, the SSHS BCBA provides invaluable consultation to program staff with regard to promoting prosocial behavior within the program. The SSHS BCBA completed two Functional Behavioral Assessments per TEAM request.

### ***Data Collection Methods***

Staff continued to work with our data consultant, Marc Hauser and our program BCBA to collect data, track progress, and use the data to make informed program decisions and individual student interventions. The data team used two platforms, Educata and Goal Seeker. The Educata platform was able to collect data throughout each day on any time off learning, a key indicator in determining successful outcomes and a student's ability to return to their sending district. Goal Seeker was utilized to collect individual student data for both IEP goals and clinical counseling goals. The data was taken on class participation, teacher redirections, and teacher prompts. Data informed decision making was utilized for programmatic interventions and student interventions and discussed at TEAM meetings and shared with parents.

### ***Program in Review 2023-2024***

SSHS saw a **substantial decrease** in physical restraint (6 in the 22/23 school year to 3 in the 23/24 school year) and a **substantial decrease** in out of school suspensions due to significant events (11 in the 22/23 school year to 7 in the 23/24 school year). Out of school suspensions were given for episodes of assaultive behavior toward staff and possession/use of marijuana in school. One subjective hypothesis is that these decreases occurred simultaneously with a new "no cell phone" policy within South Shore High School. Students increased their positive socialization/connections with each other and with staff in lieu of the distractions of cell phones and social media.

**Parent Involvement:** Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's education. Successful outcomes occur most often when parents feel comfortable to share their expertise and unique knowledge of their child, partner in the process, and feel as though they have a trusting, mutually supportive relationship with SSHS. Parents have an understanding that they may



request to speak to their child's teacher, clinician, related service provider, or program director whenever needed. SSHS held an in person open house for parents in the fall of 2023. A weekly email entitled "The Wednesday Weekly" was sent to all parents with key programmatic information, supportive resources, important dates, and student successes.

***Noteworthy Achievements:***

- ☐ SSHS graduated 11 seniors.
- ☐ SSHS seniors were accepted and plan to attend the following colleges: Quincy Community College, Massasoit Community College, Cape Cod Community College, and Curry College. A meaningful in person graduation ceremony with families and the entire SSHS community occurred in May of 2023.
- ☐ The SSHS Class of 2024 was able to fundraise for, plan, and attend a Senior Class Field trip to Boston via the MBTA Ferry from Hingham.
- ☐ The SSHS Classes of 2024 and 2025 held a junior and senior prom at the Hingham Community Center in April.
- ☐ SSHS continued with Student Council elections at the start of the year. The Student Council planned, organized, and led school-wide events such as; spirit week, honor roll ice cream/pancake events, a junior/senior prom, "First Friday Fun" events, and set up/welcome for graduation.
- ☐ SSHS successfully returned five students to their sending school districts.
- ☐ SSHS continued to demonstrate significant **MCAS success** in the spring of 2024. 10 of 13 students passed the 9th grade Biology exam; 8 of 9 students passed their ELA exam; and 6 of 8 students passed their Math exam. All graduating seniors passed their MCAS state requirement and graduated with a diploma.
- ☐ Established relationship between the Plymouth office of NAMI (the national alliance of the mentally ill) in order to receive a \$500 scholarship to a deserving senior toward college expenses.
- ☐ Staff training in WELLE (crisis prevention and intervention training) led to limited need for physical intervention despite the significant social/emotional needs of our student population (three incidents for the entirety of the school year)
- ☐ SSEC secured a membership with the South Shore Area Chamber of Commerce in order to have students job shadow in the businesses and careers of their interest.

***Of Special Note:***

- ☐ The SSHS Student Council was instrumental in researching the pros and cons of a cell phone ban at school and in working with staff to roll out the initiative; including incentives for those cooperating with the cell phone ban and potential discipline for those who did not. In October 2023, SSHS students began handing in phones at arrival which were kept in the school office. This was an incredibly successful initiative with most students consistently cooperative. Staff and student observations noted were increased socialization and interactive game playing during lunch and earned free time, improved mood, a decrease in suspensions, and a decrease in disruptive behavior. In addition,

SSHS had the highest numbers of honor roll students during the 23-24 school year than the previous 5 years.

- SSHS created a specialized program for a student with significant anxiety and school avoidance to assist the district with avoiding an out of home placement and more restrictive school setting. The program included an abbreviated day with a later start, one to one support to gain credit in core academic subjects, counseling support, and gradual increases in socialization. The student was successful and is now fully integrated into our full day program.

### ***SSHS Goals for the 2024-2025***

In addition to the already established highly specialized and accomplished components of the program, South Shore High School will continue to evaluate and seek areas for continued growth and improvement, including the following:

- Continue to be responsive to member and non-member districts to provide comprehensive, highly effective programming for students with social and emotional challenges.
- Given the increase in students with school avoidance and attendance issues, continue to seek creative programming to promote re-engagement in consistent school attendance, academic credit acquisition, and avoidance of more restrictive placement changes.
- Continued use of Student Council to enhance student representation in programmatic decisions
- Continue to promote increased parent communication and involvement via the use of weekly parent updates. Increase dissemination of supportive resources within the email
- Continue to improve the efficacy of data collection and intervention
- Increase dual enrollment opportunities on community college campuses
- Increase psychoeducational opportunities to combat vaping
- Resume educational field trips
- Utilize professional development to better utilize the IReady Diagnostic Assessment program with corresponding interventions in Reading Comprehension and Math
- Utilize professional development to ensure effective use of the new DESE IEP format for the start of the 24-25 school year
- Work with the Student Council to improve fundraising initiatives
- Continue to research opportunities for students to gain extracurricular opportunities and vocational experience within the community

## **S.T.A.R.T.S.**

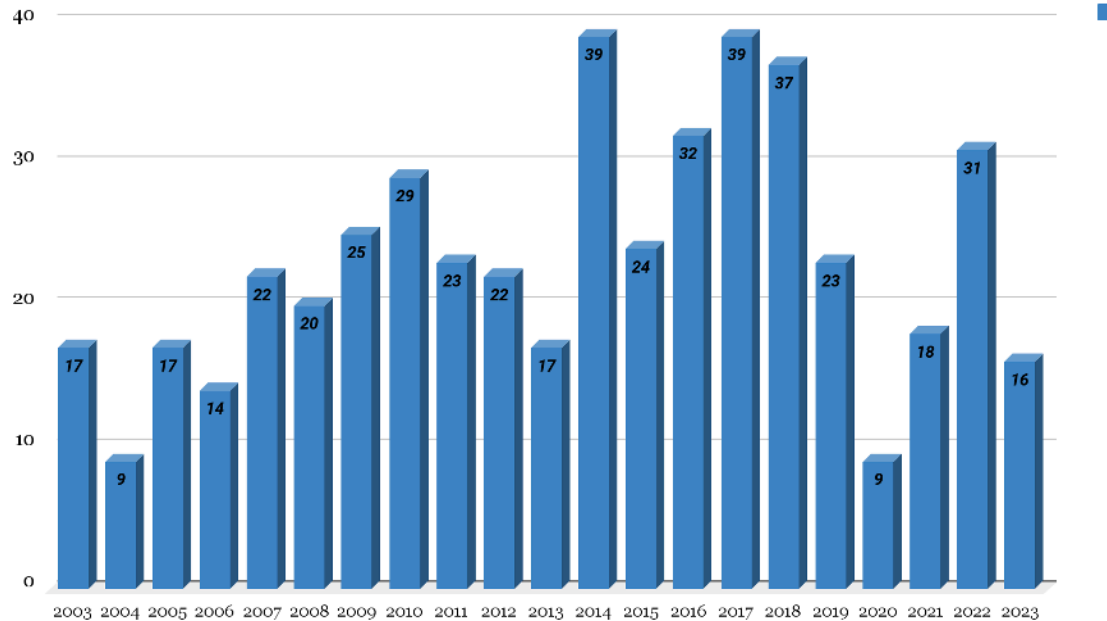
### **ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024** **Anne Rowland, Psy.D. Program Coordinator**

#### **S.T.A.R.T.S. DESCRIPTION**

S.T.A.R.T.S. (Short-Term Assessment and Return to School) is an Alternative Interim Educational Setting (A.I.E.S.) which provides an opportunity for extended evaluations utilizing educational, psychological and psychiatric assessment for students who are having serious difficulties in their school and require evaluation to better understand their challenging behavior and learning styles. It now accommodates students in grades K-12, for up to 45 school days, after which recommendations for future educational, social/emotional and psychiatric supports are made. For high school age students, STARTS students have been assessed while in small classrooms (8-10 students) within the South Shore High School (SSHS) and the Careers High School (CHS). Elementary and middle school age students are assessed while in small classrooms (7-8 students) within the Quest Program or AIM classrooms (Quest/Community Program hybrid). Some students have been evaluated while in the Mini School at Hull's Jacob's Elementary School, or in the Community Program in Hingham. STARTS students participate in and have access to all the learning and activities that are provided for all students within each age-appropriate school. For example, opportunities for job interest exploration (Graphic Design, Greenhouse, 3-D Printing, and the Industrial Kitchen) are available and are incorporated into the assessment.

Table 1

**STARTS ENROLLMENT 2003- 2023**



2023-2024 was the 21st operational year of STARTS

As seen in Table 1 above, enrollments over the years have fluctuated; the current mode (most frequently occurring student enrollment number) is 17, which has occurred three times. 39, 23, 22 and nine annual student enrollments have all occurred twice. And the current sum of the number of student enrollments over the last 21 years is 478.

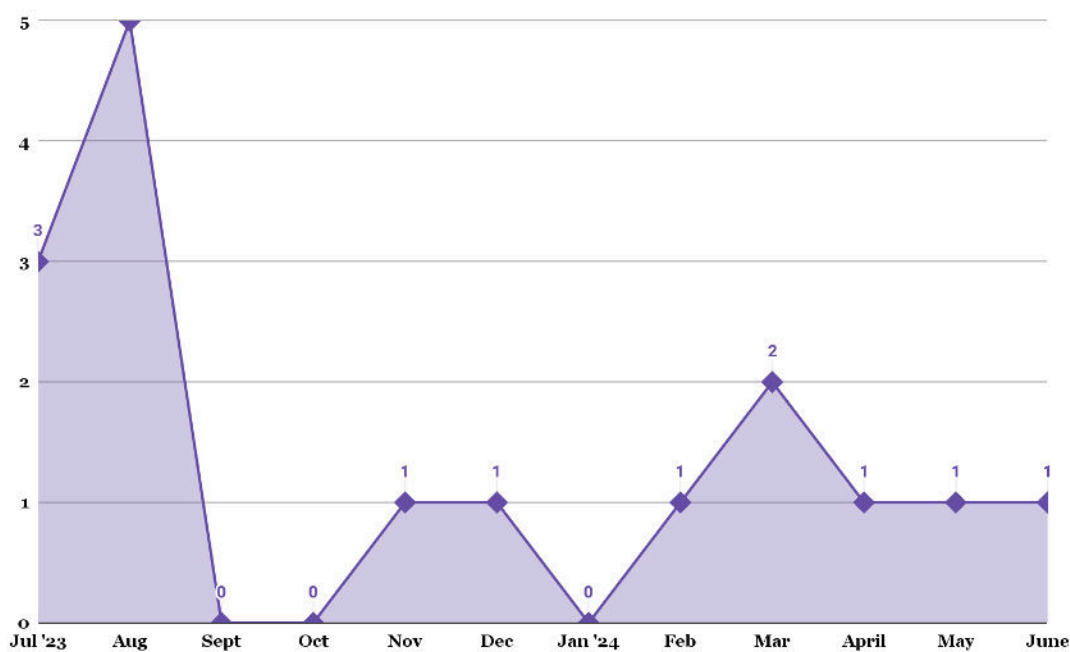
Of the 16 students enrolled in STARTS this year, 8 were males and 8 were females; with the exception of 2020-2021, STARTS has always had more males than females enrolled. Referrals came either from districts' mainstream classrooms or their alternative classrooms within mainstream buildings.

Four evaluations were completed within SSHS, five were completed in CHS, six were completed within the Quest, and one in AIM. This was the eighteenth year that a predoctoral psychology intern was placed at SSEC via Aspire Health Alliance (formerly South Shore Mental Health) APA internship program, and the fifth year that two interns were placed instead of one. This allows STARTS to continue to assess more elementary age students for evaluation, as well as greater training and opportunities for collegiality among the interns. Within Quest/AIM, the intern Caroline Kaye completed

seven evaluations. And within the two high schools, intern Cy Poon completed nine. Both Caroline and Cy also completed psychological and achievement testing (WAIS/WISC/WIAT) for students in need of their IEP mandated 3-year reevaluation processes. SSEC contracted Leah Callahan to complete additional 3-year re-evaluation tests.

Table 2

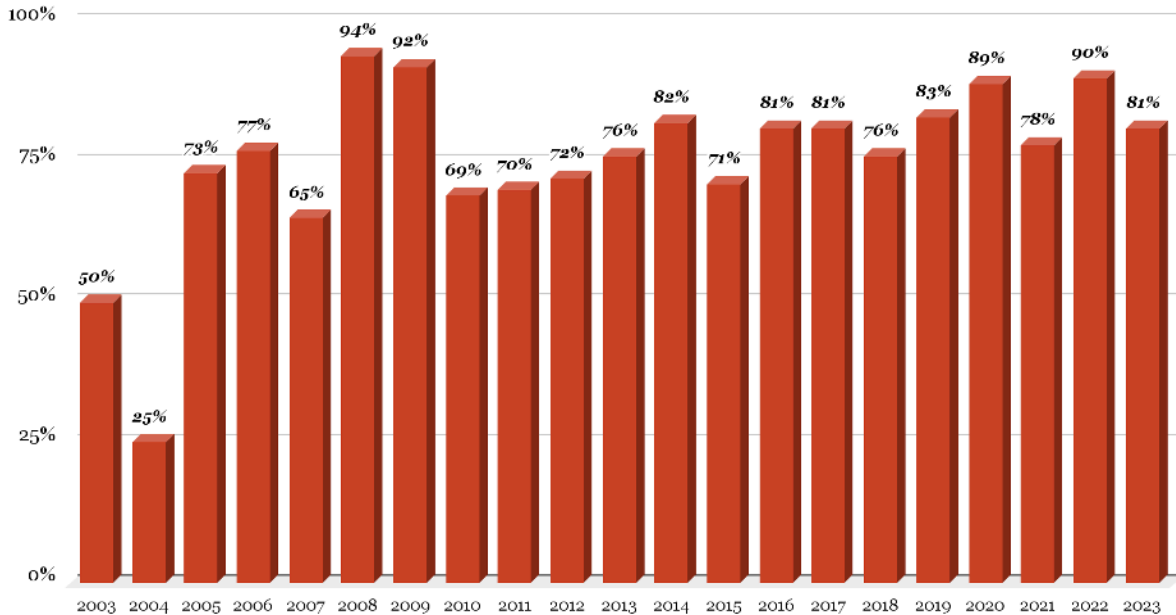
**STARTS Number of Students Beginning Assessment by Month 2023-24**



The Table 2 graph shows the number of STARTS students who began each month in order to give a more accurate visual presentation of high and low times of enrollments. The largest peaks were in the beginning of the school year, with a peak in March, which is fairly typical.

Table 3

**Percentage of Students Remaining in SSEC After STARTS**



As seen in Table 3, this year 13 out of the 16 (81%) students remained at SSEC after their STARTS assessment. This year, two students required a higher level of care, and one returned to their referring district.

Percentages of students remaining at SSEC programs from STARTS went from 50% in year one, 25% in year two, 73% in year three, 77% in year four, 65% in year five, 94% in year six, 92% in year seven, 69% in year eight, 70% in year nine, 72% in year ten, 76% in year eleven, 82% remained in year twelve, 71% remained in year thirteen, 81% remained in years fourteen and fifteen. 83% remained in SSEC programs after their STARTS evaluation in 2019-20, 89% in 2020-2021, 78% in 2021-2022, 90% in 2022-23, and 83% in 2023-24.

Table 4

Primary and Secondary Diagnoses (DSM-V)

**Number of Primary and Secondary Diagnoses by Year**

<b>Primary and Secondary Diagnoses</b>	<b>'13- '14</b>	<b>'14- '15</b>	<b>'15- '16</b>	<b>'16- '17</b>	<b>'17- '18</b>	<b>'18- '19</b>	<b>'19- '20</b>	<b>'20- '21</b>	<b>'21- '22</b>	<b>'22- '23</b>	<b>'23- '24</b>
Bipolar Disorder	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Learning Disorder/Intell Dis	1	3	2	0	1	2	2	0	5	8	2
Anxiety Dis/Social Phobia	5	10	10	11	20	21	9	3	10	15	6
PTSD(Spec'd Trauma)	2	5	3	4	7	12	1	5	1	4	3
DMDD	6	7	5	9	4	4	6	3	2	4	1
Conduct Disorder	0	1	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Substance Abuse	0	3	2	2	2	4	5	1	2	1	0
ADHD /ADD	2	12	9	8	5	9	6	5	10	9	9
PDD/Asperger's(ASD)	6	9	4	12	9	6	8	1	2	5	4
OCD	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	1
Mood Disorder/Dep'n	1	6	2	3	10	10	2	2	4	14	7
Personality Dis Traits	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Social Comm'n Dis	n/a	2	1	1	3	2	2	0	0	2	0
Unspec'd Neuro Dis	n/a	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Reactive Attachment Dis	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Other Dis, Impulse & Conduct	0	0	0	0	0	7	3	2	6	2	0
Selective Mute	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Psychotic Spec Dis	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Conversion Dis	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0

The primary and secondary diagnoses are listed in the statistics chart (Table 4) and in the corresponding Graph Version. All students presented with multiple diagnoses. Since most STARTS students receive an extensive psychiatric evaluation and diagnoses completed formerly by Dr. Jeff Turley, and from July 2022- July 2024, by Dr. Jeannine Audet, there is some consistency in the procedure. Dr. Audet completed

seven evaluations with STARTS students during the 2023-2024 school year. There were half as many psychiatric evaluations completed this year than last year. However one can see there continues to be a greater number of students carrying the following DSM-V diagnoses: Anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder and Mood/Depressive Disorders.

## Number of Primary and Secondary Diagnoses by Year

### Primary and Secondary Diagnoses

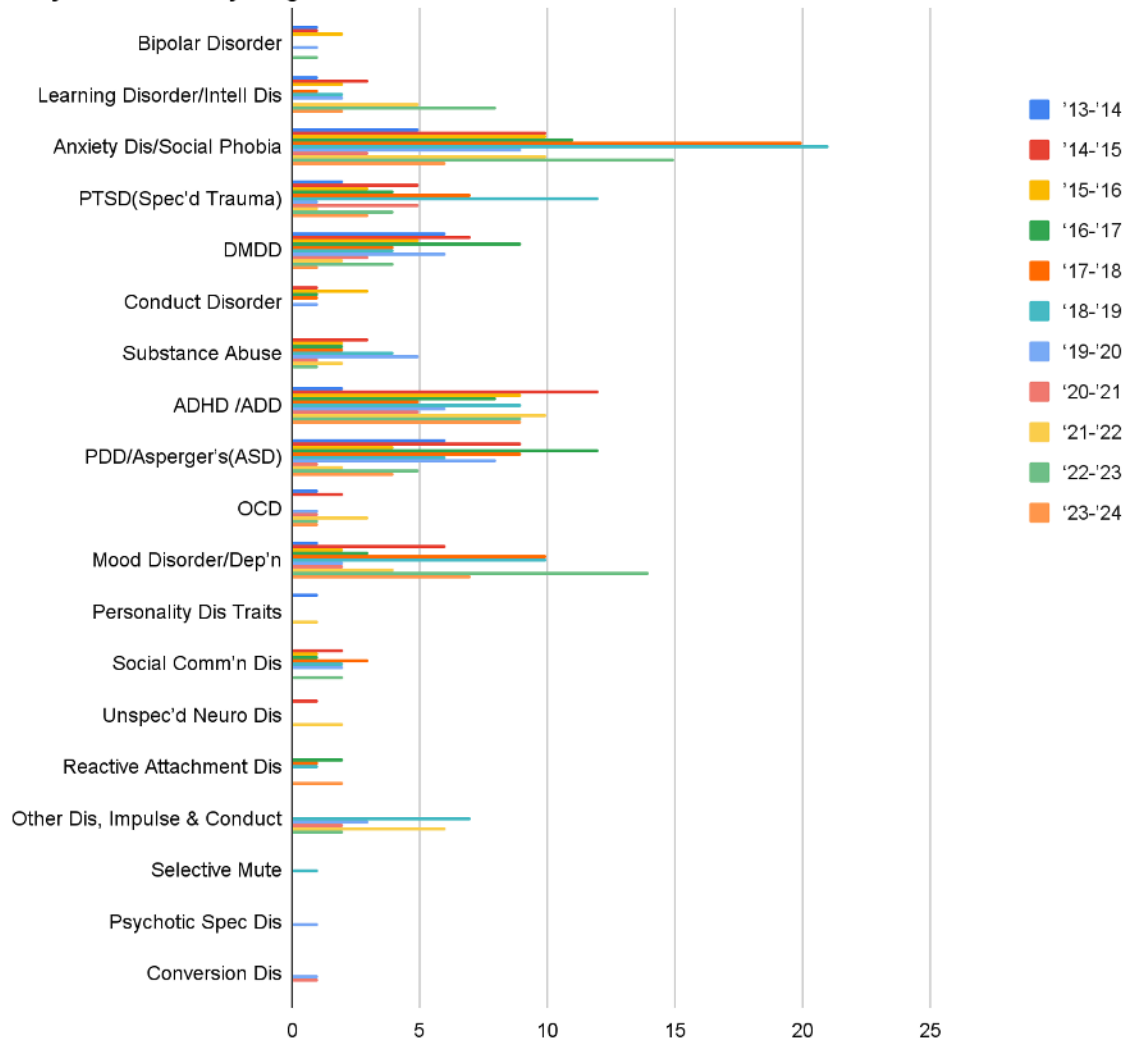




Table 5

**Number of Students Enrolled by District by Year**

<b>School District</b>	<b>'13-'14</b>	<b>'14-'15</b>	<b>'15-'16</b>	<b>'16-'17</b>	<b>'17-'18</b>	<b>'18-'19</b>	<b>'19-'20</b>	<b>'20-'21</b>	<b>'21-'22</b>	<b>22-'23</b>	<b>23-'24</b>
Abington	0	0	0	0	1	5	2	0	1	1	0
Attleboro	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Avon	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Braintree</b>	1	3	2	6	4	6	3	1	2	4	0
Bridge/Rayn	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Canton	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3	0
Carver	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Cohasset</b>	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Dennis	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Duxbury	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Easton	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
East Bridgewater	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Falmouth	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Foxboro Charter	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Foxboro Reg Dist	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hanover	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1
<b>Hingham</b>	0	4	2	1	4	1	1	0	3	1	0
Holbrook	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Holliston	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Hull</b>	2	5	5	4	2	2	0	1	1	0	0
King Philip RSD	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Marshfield	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Mashpee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Middleboro	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Milton</b>	1	1	1	2	3	1	1	0	1	1	1
Nantucket	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Nauset RSD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Needham	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	1

### Number of Students Enrolled by District by Year (Con't)

School District	'13-'14	'14-'15	'15-'16	'16-'17	'17-'18	'18-'19	'19-'20	'20-'21	'21-'22	22-'23	23-'24
<b>Norwell</b>	1	5	2	0	3	1	1	0	2	0	1
Pembroke	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Plymouth	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
<b>Quincy</b>	1	3	1	3	3	2	1	0	0	5	0
<b>Randolph</b>	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Rising Tide Charter	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Rockland	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0
Sandwich	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Scituate</b>	3	0	3	1	4	5	0	1	1	1	1
Sharon	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Silver Lake RSD	2	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
South Shore VoT	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stoughton	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Taunton	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Walpole	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Wareham	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Westwood	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0

As seen in Table 5, again this year STARTS had multiple repeat enrollments from previous years from multiple districts, indicating a level of satisfaction through meeting these goals for the districts. Of note, there were no enrollments from Braintree, and a first time enrollment from both Nauset Regional School District and Mashpee. Compared to last year, enrollments of students from *member* districts decreased from 45% to 19% of the total enrollments this year. Over the last 11 years, the districts sending the most STARTS students are Braintree (32), Hull (22), Scituate (20) and Hingham (17).

## STARTS OUTCOMES

In terms of outcome measures, the major goal of the STARTS program is to maintain a commitment to the referring school districts to: provide quality assessment and user-friendly recommendations to the school and family of students who have academic and psychological challenges; complete timely intakes and placement (periodically “at a moment’s notice”); continue to provide educational services, keeping students up to speed with their academics; and balance the needs of the student and needs of the district.

The opportunity to integrate STARTS students into other SSEC programs enriches the assessment process and final product; the small team setting provides quick, frequent and thorough communication between staff, as well as creativity and flexibility of programming to meet the myriad of needs of students and demands of districts. Additionally, immersion in other programs and utilizing multiple clinicians as evaluators enables STARTS to accept a greater range of students, thus more immediately meeting the needs of the districts.

As STARTS referrals continue to become more complex, demanding, and exhibiting more safety concerns in terms of both clinical and classroom presentations, collaboration between educators and more clinicians provides the capacity to identify the most effective interventions and support for students, their families, and the districts. The psychiatric evaluations completed by Dr. Jeff Turley for many of the STARTS students had been instrumental over many years in providing critical recommendations in addition to comprehensive differential diagnostic assessment. Dr. Turley retired from SSEC at the end of the 2021-2022 school year, and Dr. Jeannine Audet (developmental pediatrician) completed psychiatric evaluations in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. Dr. Audet partially retired, leaving SSEC in August 2024, and SSEC has hired Anne Turley Griffith, MSN, PMHNP who will be continuing in this role for the 2024-2025 school year.

As has been the case for 18 years, the APA (American Psychological Association) interns referenced earlier have been a critical component to the STARTS program. In addition to the sheer volume of evaluations completed, they bring a significant depth and breadth of clinical experience since they are in their fourth or fifth year of practical internship/placement. Many of them already have obtained a Masters Degree in counseling or school psychology. Their ability to manage two large and challenging case loads simultaneously during their 20 hours at SSEC and 20 hours at Aspire Health Alliance is noteworthy. The APA interns are placed through a competitive nation-wide selection process. And the settings (Aspire and SSEC) go through a rigorous review

process and accreditation to ensure the internship program provides the professional and scientific skills and background graduates need to protect the welfare of the public and to succeed in a career in psychology. SSEC has been fortunate to provide a secondary placement for these interns, and for the reasons previously stated, both future interns and SSEC would benefit from this continued relationship.