

Budget Analysis Requested by the SOMSD Board of Education for discussion of 2005-06 Budget

Explore potential savings to be realized from the possible creation of additional special education programs in-district, allowing us to serve at least a portion of the students now placed out-of-district and possibly hosting tuition paying students from other districts as well. This analysis should consider where we would house such programs and the feasibility of any near-term implementation (fall of 2005) as well as program possibilities for fall 2006.

Identification of Need

Students in the South Orange and Maplewood School District who require special education and related services are offered a variety of programs and supports designed to meet the requirements of least restrictive environment¹ (LRE) and their individualized educational programs (IEP). Resource programs, both support and replacement, are offered in every school. Self-contained programs include preschool disabilities, multiple disabilities, language/learning disabilities, and behavioral disabilities and are located in various schools within the district.

N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-4.3(a) mandates the availability of a full continuum of alternative placement options that range from regular class with supplementary aids and services to separate facilities for the handicapped. To date, 133 students are placed in separate schools for the handicapped as required by their IEPs.

Resources Provided by the District

The Department of Special Services provides educational and support services to students classified “eligible for special education and related services” as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14. Additional services provided through the Department include home instruction and nursing services. The Department employs six secretaries, 18 child study team members, 64.7 special education teachers, 51 paraprofessionals, 8.4 speech/language specialists, two counselors who total one FTE, and 11 nurses.

The Department provides special education and related services to approximately 640 students in district in grade PK-12. These services are offered in a variety of settings

¹ The IDEA requirement for placing students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment has three components: To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are nondisabled; special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular classroom occurs only when the nature or severity of the educational disability is such that education in the regular class cannot be achieved satisfactorily with the use of supplementary aids and services; and to the maximum extent appropriate, each child with a disability participates with nondisabled children in nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities.

including separate classrooms (i.e. self-contained), support and replacement resource programs, and general education classrooms. Related services are provided and include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech/language therapy, transportation, and counseling. The Department enters into contract agreements with various service providers who offer occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, behavioral support, blindness services² and autistic services³. Support services are provided and include the provision of personal or classroom instructional aides, assistive technology, along with adaptive equipment and materials (i.e.: taped textbooks, FM Systems, etc.).

Alternative Approaches

Auditory Impairments

Three students with auditory impairments are placed in out of district schools. Two students are currently enrolled in Lakedrive School for the Hearing Impaired and are in Kindergarten and ninth grade. A third student, enrolled in Summit Speech School, is in preschool and will enter kindergarten in September.

2004-2005 average tuition per student	\$36,367
2005-2006 projected total tuition ⁴	\$145,420

Return to District

Additional staff in the form of three full-time interpreters and one itinerant teacher of the hearing impaired, which totals approximately \$195,000,⁵ would be required to return these students to district. Additionally, materials and supplies for these students would average \$5000.

Returning these students to District would result in an initial cost increase to our district of \$54,580⁶, an increase of \$12,106 per student. This action is not recommended.

Students with hearing impairments, who do not require the use of sign language or cued speech, are currently enrolled in district with minimal supports and services provided.

² Blindness services are provided via the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and range in price from \$1000 for consultation to \$11,000 for direct instruction. Fees include the provision of materials and equipment.

³ Autistic services are provided via a variety of service providers.

⁴ Projected tuition totals were calculated using figures provided by the NJDOE and estimated increases of 10%.

⁵ Average teacher salary with benefits equals \$79,800 and average instructional aide/interpreter salary with benefits equals \$38,400. These figures were used to calculate all additional staffing needs.

⁶ Average SOMSD per pupil cost for the 2004-2005 academic year equals \$10,795. This figure was not included in the projected cost increase/decrease for any student returning to district.

Visual Impairments

One student with visual impairments, currently enrolled in St. Joseph's School for the Blind, is in third grade. The tuition for this student totals \$60,206. This student is expected to return to district for the 2005-2006 academic year and will enter a general education classroom with support provided by the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), resource program teachers, and a personal aide. Services from the CBVI will be provided at an approximate rate of \$10,280 and will include a consultant for the blind and visually impaired along with materials and equipment.

This action will result in a cost savings to our District of \$11,526 and is recommended.

Students with visual impairments are currently enrolled in district with support provided by the CBVI. These students are included in general education programs or special education programs depending upon their individual needs.

Cognitive Impairments

Twenty-one students attend out of district programs for children with significant cognitive impairments. Projected grade levels for the 2005-2006 academic year range from Kindergarten to 12th grade and are delineated as follows: 10 students of elementary age, 2 students of middle school age, and nine students of high school age. These students present with significant cognitive impairments along with physical limitations that require the use of mobility equipment. Students who attend these schools receive intensive physical therapy (PT), occupational therapy (OT), and speech/language therapy (SLT) in a sensory rich environment with a very low student/teacher ratio. Additionally, music therapy and adapted physical education programs are provided.

2004-2005 average tuition per student	\$38,192
2005-2006 projected total tuition	\$840,224

Return to District

The development of four programs; two at the elementary level, one at the middle school level, and one at the high school level would be required to return these students to District. According to N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-4.7(b) 3, the total number of students enrolled in a classroom for children with severe cognitive impairments is nine with two instructional aides. Four additional special education teachers along with seven instructional aides would total \$588,000. Furnishing each classroom with the necessary materials, supplies, furniture, and adaptive equipment would total approximately \$60,000 (\$15,000/classroom). The district would require additional therapists from

Livingston Services who currently provide occupational and physical therapists. Additional speech/language specialists would be required to provide speech and/or feeding therapy at an hourly rate of \$120. An adaptive physical education consultant at a rate of \$139 per hour would be required. Additional services from the CBVI would be required since many of these students are visually impaired.

Returning these students to District would result in a cost savings to our district of \$192,224. This cost savings does not take into account the additional costs associated with the need for additional SLT, OT, PT, and APE personnel or CBVI services.

Due to intensive related services, support services, adaptive equipment, and additional classroom space required this action is not recommended.

Emotionally Disturbed/Behavioral Disabilities (ED/BD)

Forty-one students attend out of district schools for children with emotional/behavioral disabilities. Grade levels range from first grade through 12th grade and are delineated as follows for the 2005-2006 academic year: 5 students of elementary age, 12 students of middle school age, and 24 students of high school age. Students in these programs exhibit extreme acting out behavior and require extensive emotional and academic support. Programs typically include on site psychiatrists, crisis intervention specialists, daily counseling sessions, and separate rooms designed to de-escalate behaviors.

2004-2005 average tuition per student	\$35,236
2005-2006 projected tuition total	\$1,225,271

The district currently operates three ED/BD programs; one located at Clinton School and two located at Columbia High School. The program located at Clinton School will be disbanded effective January 28, 2005 because of the need to place several of these students out of district due to their severe behavior issues.

Return to District

The development of an additional elementary level program along with one middle school program and two additional high school programs would be required to return these students to District. This would necessitate additional staff in the form of four teachers with a minimum of eight instructional aides totaling \$626,400. A full-time behaviorist along with four full-time crisis intervention counselors would be required at a minimum cost of \$319,200. A minimum of a psychiatrist on call would be required to address the needs of students with psychotic episodes. Providing furniture, equipment and supplies per classroom would total approximately \$40,000. Additional classroom space would be required for separate rooms to be utilized by crisis intervention counselors.

This action would result in an initial cost savings to the district of \$239,671 but does not include the fee for a psychiatrist.

Within the last four years the district developed and implemented two elementary BD programs without success. Both programs were disbanded due to excessive, aggressive behaviors displayed by students and resulting unsafe conditions for students and staff members. It has long been established that children with emotional disturbance typically require multiple, comprehensive services. The National Agenda for Children and Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbance (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) calls for the coordination among the numerous agencies including education, mental health, health, substance abuse, welfare, youth services, correctional, and vocational agencies.

The return of students with significant emotional/behavioral disabilities is not recommended due to the extensive and intensive supports required for successful inclusion of these students into general education schools.

Autistic

Twenty-seven students currently attend out of district programs designed for children with autism. These students range in age from preschool through 12th grade and present with varying degrees of ability. These programs provide an intensive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program that incorporates discrete trial methods that require an extremely low student to adult ratio. Intensive physical, occupational, and speech therapy are included with an emphasis on sensory integration and communication. Music therapy, art therapy, adaptive physical education programs, and CBVI services are also included. Grade levels for the 2005-2006 academic year are delineated as follows: three students are preschool age, 13 are of elementary school age, five are of middle school age, and six are of high school age.

2004-2005 average tuition per student	\$51,930
2005-2006 projected tuition total	\$1,542,339

Return to District

One full-day preschool along with two programs at the elementary school level, one at the middle school level, and one at the high school level would be required to meet the needs of these students. N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-4.7(b) 3 requires that programs for children with autism at the elementary level cannot exceed six students and at the secondary level they cannot exceed nine students. Additional staff including five teachers, 15 instructional aides, and a full-time Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) would be required at a total cost of approximately \$1,054,800. Additional occupational, physical, and speech therapists would be required to provide intensive services. Furnishing five classrooms with materials, supplies, and adaptive equipment would total approximately \$75,000. Additional speech/language specialists would be required to provide speech

and/or feeding therapy at an hourly rate of \$120. An adaptive physical education consultant at a rate of \$139 per hour would be required. Additional services from the CBVI would be required to address the needs of students with visual impairments.

This action would result in a cost savings to the district of \$412,539. This cost savings does not take into account the additional costs associated with the need for additional SLT, OT, PT, and APE personnel or additional CBVI services.

The implementation of a full-day preschool program, a second elementary program, and eventually a middle school program for students with autism spectrum disorders would allow for the immediate education of 18 students with autism in district and the potential to include an additional nine students in the middle school program. This would enable students to enter the district at age three and remain through middle school.

It has been established that students with autism spectrum disorder require programs that include intensive educational experiences that focus on engagement, communication, social domains, and academics. Services for preschool students with autism should include a minimum of 25 hours per week and an extended school year program of 210 days per year⁷.

The development and implementation of a full-day preschool program and a second elementary program for the 2005-2006 academic year is recommended. A middle school program for 2006-2007 will be considered after the preschool and elementary programs have been implemented. This action would result in a cost savings of \$360,000 for 2005-2006.

Multiple Disabilities (MD)

Seventeen students, in grades Preschool through 12th grade, currently attend out of district schools for children with multiple disabilities. These students present with concomitant impairments requiring specialized instruction and intensive therapies to meet their educational needs. These programs are designed around a life skills curriculum and include adaptive physical education. Students are delineated as follows for the 2005-2006 academic year: four preschool aged students, one student of elementary age, two students of middle school age and 10 students of high school age.

2004-2005 average tuition per student	\$51,930
2005-2006 projected tuition total	\$1,542,339

The district currently operates three programs for students with multiple disabilities. They are located at Marshall School, Clinton School, and South Orange Middle School.

⁷ Autism Program Quality Indicators, NJDOE, 2004.

Return to District

The development of additional programs including a preschool program and one high school program would be required to meet the needs of students with multiple disabilities. Two additional teachers along with a minimum of two instructional aides would be required at a cost of \$198,000. Additional occupational, physical, and speech therapists would be needed to accommodate the needs of students. An adaptive physical education consultant at a rate of \$139 per hour would be required. Providing materials, furniture, and adaptive equipment for two classrooms would total approximately \$30,000.

This action would result in a cost savings to the district of \$1,314,339. This cost savings does not take into account the additional costs associated with the additional need of SLT, OT, PT, and APE personnel.

Due to intensive related services, support services, adaptive equipment, and additional classroom space this action is not recommended. The district provides programs for students with multiple disabilities who require an academic program. Students sent to special schools require sensory-based programs that promote development rather than academic instruction.

Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)

Twenty-two students, in grades 2 through 12, attend schools for children with language/learning disabilities. Students are delineated as follows for the 2005-2006 academic year: three students are of elementary age, eight students are of middle school age, and 11 are of high school age. These students require an intensive multi-sensory language arts program provided in conjunction with rigorous speech/language therapy.

2004-2005 average tuition per student	\$30,292
2005-2006 projected tuition total	\$766,392

Return to District

The purchase and implementation of multi-sensory reading programs would allow for the return of these students to the district. Specific dollar amounts cannot be provided due to the need to identify and pilot K-3 language arts programs. Additional speech/language specialists and special education teachers would be required to educate these children in their zoned schools. Additional classroom space would be required for self-contained classrooms at the K-2 level.

The district currently operates various programs for children with learning disabilities in all schools and provides both self-contained and resource programs to address their individual needs. A pilot program, designed to address literacy among students with special needs, was implemented this year in grades 4-12. Nine special education teachers were trained on the *Language!* program, a scientifically based comprehensive scripted language arts program. Students in targeted replacement language arts classes in Jefferson Elementary School, Tuscan Elementary School, Clinton Elementary School, South Orange Middle School, Maplewood Middle School, and Columbia High School are instructed using the *Language!* program. The goal of this pilot is to reduce the number of students who require intensive special education services due severe reading difficulties.

Historically, special education teachers utilize various methods and strategies in an attempt to teach children to read. Some teachers use the Wilson program or an Orton Gillingham program, others use the district's curriculum while others use any combination of programs. This practice did not offer consistency of skills to students whose academic needs are well documented. This pilot provides teachers with a scientifically based comprehensive scripted program designed to address the needs of dyslexic⁸ students thereby reducing the number of students who require ongoing intensive special education services. If this pilot proves successful, the *Language!* program will be offered in every replacement language arts class in the district in grades 4-12.

The *Language!* program expenses include \$1000 per teacher kit, \$45 per student packet, and staff training, which totals approximately \$5000. Teacher kits and student packets include all materials and supplies required to implement the program. The Department continues to research viable comprehensive language arts programs for grades K-3 and mathematics programs for grades K-12. Providing special education teachers with programs that address the needs of special education students will reduce the number of students in long-term intensive special education programs.

The return of students with learning disabilities is recommended for the 2006-2007 academic year if the adoption of comprehensive language arts programs is completed. This process should be completed in stages beginning with students deemed most likely to be successful. The ultimate goal is to maintain students with learning disabilities in district.

*Transportation*⁹

Total transportation expenditures for out of district students averages \$2,000,000 per year with an average per pupil fee equaling \$15,038 per year.

⁸ Dyslexia is a language-based learning disability that refers to a cluster of symptoms, which result in difficulties with specific language skills, particularly reading.

⁹ Transportation costs provided by Thomas Cunningham, Transportation Supervisor.

The implementation of self-contained programs within district will incur transportation expenses in the form of additional vans, drivers, and aides. The average total cost of one van with one driver and one aide equals \$55,000 per academic year. Students who exhibit extreme behaviors may require a transportation aide and/or reduced number of passengers resulting in a maximum of 10 students per van. The full impact on transportation costs should result in savings; however, the full extent of the savings cannot be determined at this time.

Impact/Considerations of returning students with special needs to district

- ✓ LRE and the provision of nonacademic and extracurricular activities

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2(b) mandates that “boards of education shall provide nonacademic and extracurricular services and activities in the manner necessary to afford students with disabilities an equal opportunity for participation in those services and activities.” Our district would have to be prepared to provide extracurricular and non-academic services to students with significant disabilities. Many out-of district schools for the handicapped provide these nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

- ✓ Training/Professional development for building level administrators, general education and special education teachers, instructional aides, custodians, secretaries, and cafeteria employees.

Before returning children to our district that have behavioral disabilities, employees in the district must be provided with extensive training. Lack of sufficient staff training will encourage numerous, potentially harmful, behavioral episodes. Children with behavioral disabilities are included in programs designed to meet the needs of ED/BD, MD, cognitively impaired, and autistic students.

- ✓ Training/Information sessions for parents whose children are educated in targeted schools in our district

Training/information sessions for parents must occur before special education children are returned to the District. Parents of all students, both general education and special education, must be included in these training sessions to ensure that they have a complete understanding of the programs so that the special education students feel welcomed in these schools. Without the support of the parent community, these programs cannot be successful.

- ✓ Increased need for support services

Bringing special education students back to the district will require the need to increase the number of counselors, adaptive physical education teachers,

speech/language specialists, occupational therapists, and physical therapist to provide required services.

In addition, there will be an increased need for ongoing and fluid assistive technology, specialized equipment, and specialized transition services.

✓ Additional classroom space

Additional classroom space will be required for self-contained classrooms. The NJDOE placed a moratorium on all newly established separate facilities for the handicapped. For this reason, all newly established programs must be located in schools with general education students. Special education students cannot be housed in one school building in isolation.

✓ Outsourcing

Some schools for the handicapped will replicate their services within a local school district. They will provide the staff, staff training, material, equipment, and supplies. The local school district provides the space. This arrangement saves the local district on transportation costs and possibly a portion of the tuition costs. The local district also receives a rental fee from the private school.

Another consideration: Integrating School Social Workers into Special Education

As stated previously, the Department provides counseling services to students who are classified. The Department employs two part-time social workers (1 FTE) that offer counseling to those elementary school students whose IEPs include counseling as a related service. Students at the middle school and high school level are provided counseling via a contract with Family Connections, which totals approximately \$70,000 per year. Currently, Family Connections provides 1.4 counselors to address this need.

The district currently employs three school-based social workers who are assigned to Clinton, Seth Boyden and the middle schools and who provide counseling services to students who are not classified. In the current structure the elementary social workers report to the building principals, while the middle school social worker reports to the Director of Guidance. School based social workers provide counseling services to classified students when district employees and Family Connections cannot address the continual increased need for services.

Current Structure for Social Workers 2004-2005

Special Education		General Education	
Elementary Schools			
Social Worker	.4 FTE	Social Worker	1.0 Seth Boyden
Social Worker	.6 FTE	Social Worker	1.0 Clinton
		Social Work Interns	
Middle Schools			
Family Connections	.4 FTE	Social Worker	1.0 (combined both middle schools)
		Social Work Interns	
CHS			
Family Connections	1.0 FTE		

The following table shows the reallocation of building assigned social workers to special education. This would eliminate the necessity of outsourcing, clarify the reporting structure, and allow for additional CST case management personnel.

Suggested Structure for Social Workers 2005-2006

Special Education		General Education	
Elementary Schools			
Social Worker	.7 FTE	Social Worker	.3 Seth Boyden
Social Worker	.7 FTE	Social Worker	.3 Clinton
		Social Work Interns	
Middle Schools			
Social Worker	1.0 FTE	Social Work Interns	
CHS			
Social Worker	.4 FTE		
Social Worker	.6 FTE		

Note: Under the suggested structure for 2005-2006 at the elementary level both Clinton and Seth Boyden would have .7 less FTE in each school for general education students; at the middle school level there would be no social worker for general education students, only social work interns; and at CHS there would continue to be no social worker for general education students until the Family Connections Youth Based Services Grant is implemented.

Reallocation of building based social workers to the Department of Special Services is recommended because this action will result in a savings of \$70,000 and will improve services to students with special needs.

The following table is an attempt to summarize the contents of this budget analysis:

Special Education Category	Average Per Student 2004-2005	Total Projected Cost 2005-2006	Cost Savings (+) /Additional Cost (-) if in District in 2005-2006	Recommended?	Rationale
Auditory Impairments	\$36,367	\$145,420	-\$54,580	No	Increased cost to District
Visual Impairments	\$60,206	\$48,680	+\$11,526	Yes	Children with visual impairments are currently enrolled in district with support provided.
Cognitive Impairments	\$38,192	\$840,224	+\$192,224 ¹⁰	No	Not recommended due to intensive related services, support services, adaptive equipment, and additional required classroom space.
Emotionally Disturbed/ Behavioral Disabilities (ED/BD)	\$35,236	\$1,225,271	+\$239,671	No	The return of students with significant emotional/behavioral disabilities is not recommended due to the extensive and intensive supports required for successful inclusion of these students into general education schools.
Autistic	\$51,930	\$1,542,339	+\$360,000 ¹⁰	Yes	The development and implementation of a full-day preschool program and a second elementary program for 2005-2006 is recommended.
Multiple Disabilities (MD)	\$51,930	\$1,542,339	\$1,314,339 ¹⁰	No	Not recommended due to intensive related services, support services, adaptive equipment, and additional classroom space. The district presently provides programs for students with multiple disabilities who require an academic program. Students sent to special schools require sensory-based program that promote development rather than academic instruction.

¹⁰ Does not take into account the additional costs for SLT, OT, PT, and APE personnel or CBVI services.

Special Education Category	Average Per Student 2004-2005	Total Projected Cost 2005-2006	Cost Savings (+) /Additional Cost (-) if in District in 2005-2006	Recommended?	Rationale
Specific Learning Disabilities	\$30,292	\$766,392	To be determined as new programs are adopted	Yes	The return of student with specific learning disabilities is recommended for the 2006-2007 academic year if the adoption of comprehensive language arts programs are completed. This process should be completed in stages beginning with students deemed most likely to be successful. The ultimate goal is to maintain students with learning disabilities in district
Transportation	\$15,038	\$2,000,000	To be determined as specific students are identified to participate in self-contained programs	Yes	The implementation of self-contained programs within district will incur transportation expenses in the form of additional vans, drives, and aides. The average total cost of one van with one drive and one aides is \$55,000 per academic year. Students who exhibit extreme behaviors may require a transportation aide and/or reduced number of passengers resulting in a maximum of 10 students per van. The full impact on transportation costs should result in savings; however, the full extent of the savings cannot be determined at this time.
Integrating Social Workers in Special Education			+\$70,000	Yes	The reallocation of building assigned social workers to special education would eliminate the necessity of outsourcing, clarify the reporting structure, and allow for additional CST case management personnel.
Total Recommended Cost Savings for 2005-2006			+\$441,526¹¹		

¹¹ This does not include possible additional savings in transportation