Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee
Dover School Committee
Sherborn School Committee

Tuesday, September 9, 2025
6:30 PM
Dover-Sherborn Middle School Library

Livestream via Dover-Sherborn Cable Television

AGENDA

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Community Comments**

   https://meet.google.com/gre-owyp-oeu (will close after Community Comments)
3. **Superintendent Comments**
   - District and Superintendents Goals **A.R.**
4. **Assistant Superintendent Comments**
5. **Discussion Items**
   - School Committee Norms
   - Competency Determination (1st read)
   - Accounting for Out-of-District Activity
6. **Action Items**
   - Appoint METCO Liaison to School Committee **A.R.**
   - Side Letter Agreement

     Custodial Contract **A.R.**
7. **Consent Items** **A.R.**
   - District Handbook 2025-26 (second read)
   - Approval of Minutes June 10, 2025
8. **Informational Items**
   - Special Education Manual
9. **Items for January 13, 2026**
10. **Adjourn**

NOTE: The listings of matters are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair, which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may, in fact, be discussed and other items not listed may also be raised for discussion to the extent permitted by law.

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The Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn
157 Farm Street
Dover, MA 02030
Phone: 508-785-0036 Fax: 508-785-2239
www.doversherborn.org

Elizabeth M. McCoy, Superintendent
Denton Conklin, Assistant Superintendent
Dawn Fattore, Business Administrator
Kate McCarthy, Director of Student Services

To: Dover, Sherborn, and Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committees
From: Elizabeth McCoy
Re: Proposed District & Superintendent Goals 2025-26
Date: September 5, 2025

DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT GOALS 2025-26

DISTRICT GOAL #1: EDUCATOR COLLABORATION

Provide opportunities for educators to share Best Practices across classrooms and further expand their repertoire of instructional strategies aimed at student engagement and deeper learning.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Refocus ILT/Department/Faculty Meetings on Best Practices

- Dedicate a portion of each meeting to discussing instructional strategies, student engagement, and shared learning.
- Rotate presenters or facilitators to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences are shared.
- Include time for teachers to discuss challenges and collaboratively problem-solve.

2. Focus Each Teacher/Department on 1-2 Best Practices for the Year

- Ask teachers or departments to select one or two instructional strategies to develop and implement deeply.
- Encourage teachers to share outcomes and reflections during faculty or departmental meetings.

3. Conduct Cross-Building Instructional Rounds as a Leadership Team

- Organize structured observation rounds where leadership teams visit classrooms across schools to observe and document instructional practices.
- Provide reflection sessions after each round to identify trends, strengths, and areas for improvement.

4. Encourage Peer Classroom Visits

- Facilitate opportunities for teachers to observe peers within their school or across buildings.
- Develop observation protocols focused on engagement strategies, student-centered learning, and instructional effectiveness.
- Encourage reflective discussions post-observation to share insights and actionable takeaways.

EVIDENCE

1. Refocus ILT/Department Faculty Meetings on Best Practices

- Meeting agendas and minutes showing focus on instructional strategies

2. Focus Each Teacher/Department on 1–2 Best Practices for the Year

- Teachers' identified focus strategies documented in professional learning plans

3. Conduct Cross-Building Instructional Rounds as a Leadership Team

- Documented classroom observation schedules

4. Encourage Peer Classroom Visits

- Outlines of peer observation protocols

DISTRICT GOAL #2: DATA-INFORMED DECISION MAKING

Convene a PK-12 data team to analyze district data and further implement a culture of data-informed decision making relative to student growth and achievement within each school.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Convene a PK-12 District-Wide Data Team

- Identify and invite representatives from all schools, key subject areas, and specialized programs (e.g., SPED, ELL).
- Set a regular meeting schedule (e.g., monthly or quarterly) and define expected outcomes for each session.

2. Analyze Student Subgroup Data

- Disaggregate student achievement and growth data by subgroup (e.g., race/ethnicity, high risk,, English language proficiency, special education).

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- Identify patterns, gaps, and inequities across schools and grade levels.

3. Expand Data Dashboard Access and Use

- Increase availability of actionable data for teachers, leaders, and support staff.
- Provide professional development on interpreting data, using dashboards to inform instruction, and connecting data to student growth goals.
- Encourage routine use of dashboards in team meetings, instructional planning, and progress monitoring.

EVIDENCE

1. District-Wide Data Team Effectiveness

- Attendance records showing representation across PK-12 schools and departments
- Regular meeting minutes documenting agenda, discussion, and action items

2. Analysis of Student Subgroup Data

- Reports showing disaggregated student achievement and growth data by subgroup
- Identification of performance gaps and targeted areas for intervention

3. Expanded Data Dashboard Access and Use

- Increased number of staff with access to dashboards and training materials
- Logs or analytics showing regular dashboard usage for instructional planning and monitoring

DISTRICT GOAL #3: SAFE & SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS

Refine and further implement district-wide routines, policies and systems that foster safe and supportive school environments for all students and staff.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Update Student Handbook

- Ensure student handbooks reflect updated policies, expectations, and safety procedures.
- Distribute digitally and in print; provide orientation sessions for students at each grade level.

2. Create Communication Norms

The Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex/gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

- Define clear communication protocols for staff, students, and families regarding safety and support concerns.
- Promote consistency and transparency to build trust and confidence in district processes.

3. Educate Parents and Community

- Develop and deliver informational sessions for parents and community members on various topics, including responsible technology use, discipline protocols, etc.
- Provide online access to session materials for broader reach.

4. Develop Community Norms Around Social Media

- Collaborate with students, staff, and families to define expectations for responsible social media use.
- Create visual guides, handouts, and campaigns to promote positive digital behavior.

EVIDENCE

1. Update Student Handbook

- Published and distributed updated handbooks (digital and print versions)

2. Create Communication Norms

- Written communication protocols shared with staff, students, and families
- Samples of communications sent home (emails, newsletters, memos) that follow the norms

3. Educate Parents and Community

- Agendas or handouts from parent/community information sessions

4. Develop Community Norms Around Social Media

- Documentation of collaborative sessions with students, staff, and families (agendas, attendance)
- Copies of visual guides, posters, and handouts distributed in schools/community

SUPERINTENDENT GOALS 2025-26

SUPERINTENDENT GOAL #1: INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (STUDENT LEARNING)

Develop a framework that differentiates foundational and high-leverage strategies within the 9 Best Practices and incorporate student input on strategies that promote high engagement.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Identify Foundational vs. High-Leverage Strategies for Each of the 9 Best Practices

- Categorize each of the 9 Best Practices into foundational (essential baseline) versus high-leverage (strategies that have a significant impact on student engagement and achievement).
- Provide professional development sessions to help teachers understand and implement high-leverage strategies effectively.
- Use this framework to guide observations, coaching, and professional learning plans.

2. Solicit Input from Students on Strategies that Promote High Engagement

- Create structured opportunities (e.g., focus groups, student advisory councils, surveys) for students across grade levels to share which instructional strategies engage them most deeply.
- Share feedback gathered from students with educators to inform instructional planning.

EVIDENCE

1. Identify Foundational vs. High-Leverage Strategies for Each of the 9 Best Practices

- Published framework differentiating foundational vs. high-leverage strategies
- Professional development session attendance and participation

2. Solicit Input from Students on Strategies that Promote High Engagement

- Attendance records or agendas from student focus groups or advisory council meetings
- Copies of student surveys and summary reports of results.
- Meeting notes or presentations where student feedback was shared with educators

SUPERINTENDENT GOAL #2: EDUCATOR REFLECTION (PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE)

Enhance the teacher evaluation process to promote meaningful reflection, professional growth, and collaborative dialogue between educators and evaluators during post-observation conferences.

KEY ACTIONS

1. Educator Preparation & Reflection

The Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex/gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

- Develop a pre- and post-observation reflection form for teachers to articulate their goals, strategies, and self-assessment.

- Encourage teachers to bring evidence of student engagement, learning, and outcomes to the post-observation discussion.

2. Professional Learning for Evaluators

- Provide training on effective feedback techniques, reflective questioning, and coaching approaches.

- Share strategies for fostering growth-oriented conversations rather than solely performance-focused feedback.

3. Redesign Post-Observation Conferences

- Implement structured reflection prompts aligned with district instructional priorities (e.g., 9 Best Practices).

- Allocate sufficient time in each conference for meaningful discussion and reflection.

<u>EVIDENCE</u>

1. Educator Preparation & Reflection

- Copies of pre- and post-observation reflection forms used by teachers

2. Professional Learning for Evaluators

- Agendas, materials, and attendance logs from evaluator training sessions

- Training resources on effective feedback, reflective questioning, and coaching

3. Redesign Post-Observation Conferences

- Revised conference protocols or reflection prompts aligned with district priorities (e.g., 9 Best Practices)

- Calendar of scheduled time blocks for extended conferences

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DOVER, SHERBORN, AND DOVER SHERBORN REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEES
PROTOCOLS & NORMS

Adopted January 18, 2022

For the purpose of effective governance and enhancing teamwork among members of the School Committees and between the School Committees and the administration, we, the members of the Dover, Sherborn, and Dover Sherborn Regional School Committees collectively and individually adopt the following operating protocols and norms:

- The School Committees will represent the needs and interests of all students in the Districts and will establish a vision, create policies, allocate budgets, and assure accountability to sustain continuous improvement in student achievement and well-being. We will dedicate ourselves to seeking and supporting thoughtful solutions that put students first, and that foster our districts' dedication to inclusive excellence.
- We will operate transparently and respectfully, and we will make every effort to ensure that Committee meetings are effective and efficient. We will come to each meeting prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion, having read and digested materials prior to the meeting, and ready to render action where required.
- We agree that discussion will be limited to the agenda, and time will be dedicated during each meeting to designate future agenda topics.
- We will base our decisions upon facts and data, avoid bias (as defined in Policy Manual § ACAB), vote our convictions, and uphold and support the decisions of the majority of the Committee once a decision is made.
- We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of the Superintendent to manage the day-to-day operations of the districts and to oversee the hiring, evaluation, and handling of personnel matters; it is our responsibility to evaluate the Superintendent's effectiveness in these areas and in carrying out the vision identified by the School Committees.
- We will channel requests for information, reports, and data through the Superintendent and Chair, rather than directly to staff. Where appropriate or necessary, further action or response will be coordinated between the Superintendent and Chair in a reasonably timely manner. In turn, it is our expectation that the Superintendent will ensure each member has equal access to information in a timely manner.
- We acknowledge that School Committee meetings are held in public. We will welcome community members to attend our meetings and to participate during public comment.
- We will encourage debate and different points of view, speak with care and respect, and treat administration, staff, community members, and each other with dignity. We will maintain collegiality and respect even and especially in times of disagreement.
- We will lead by example and work to build trust among and between Committee members, administration, staff, and the community.
- We will maintain the confidentiality of privileged or sensitive information and respect the Open Meeting Law.

- We recognize the importance of professional growth and development and agree to participate in experiences to further our knowledge and understanding and to advance the work of our schools.
- We commit to annual review of these protocols and norms, to honoring them, and to taking responsibility for reminding each other if we get off track.

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Elizabeth M. McCoy, Superintendent
Denton Conklin, Assistant Superintendent

Dawn Fattore, Business Administrator
Kate McCarthy, Director of Student Services

TO: Dover, Sherborn and Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committees

FROM: Elizabeth McCoy, Superintendent
Denny Conklin, Assistant Superintendent

DATE: September 5, 2025

RE: Proposed Competency Determination Policy

Under Massachusetts state law, students must satisfy the requirements of the "competency determination" (CD) in order to graduate from high school. The 2022 regulations stated:

> *The "competency determination" shall be based on the academic standards and curriculum frameworks for tenth graders in the areas of mathematics, science and technology, history and social science, foreign languages, and English, and shall represent a determination that a particular student has demonstrated mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge in these areas, as measured by the assessment instruments described in section one I [MCAS - English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science/Technology].*

With the recent passage of Question 2 in November 2024, future MCAS testing will no longer satisfy the requirements of the CD.

In May 2025, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted to amend its regulations on the Competency Determination (603 CMR 30.00):

(1) Beginning with the graduating class of 2026, a student will earn the Competency Determination where:

a. The student has shown mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge in English language arts, mathematics, and science; and

b. The student has satisfactorily completed coursework that has been certified by the student's district as showing mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the Massachusetts academic standards and curriculum frameworks in English language arts, mathematics, and science

as measured by the MCAS high school assessments administered in 2023. In this regard, the student must satisfy the following:

(1) For English language arts, the student must: (i) satisfactorily complete coursework in the equivalent of two years of high school English language arts courses.

(2) For mathematics, the student must: (i) satisfactorily complete coursework in Algebra I and Geometry courses; or (ii) satisfactorily complete coursework in Integrated Math I and Integrated Math II courses.

(3) For science, the student must: (i) satisfactorily complete coursework in one year of Biology; or (ii) satisfactorily complete coursework in one year of Physics; or (iii) satisfactorily complete coursework in one year of Chemistry; or (iv) satisfactorily complete coursework in one year of a Technology or Engineering course.

c. In the limited circumstance where a district is unable to document a student's prior coursework, a student may earn the Competency Determination by: (i) attaining a qualifying score of at least "Meeting Expectations" or "Exceeding Expectations" achievement levels on the relevant high school MCAS assessment; or (ii) meeting the standard for a substituted equivalent that the district certifies satisfies the same academic standards.

(2) Beginning with the graduating class of 2027, a student will earn the Competency Determination where:

a. The student has met the requirements in 603 CMR 30.03 (1);

b. The student has shown mastery of a common core of skills, competencies and knowledge in United States history; and

c. The student has satisfactorily completed coursework that has been certified by the student's district as showing mastery of the skills, competencies, and knowledge contained in the Massachusetts academic standards and curriculum framework in United States history. In this regard, the student must satisfactorily complete coursework in a one-year United States history course.

According to the amended regulation, districts must develop a Competency Determination Policy that details how students will meet the new requirements; the policy must be approved by the governing body of the district, posted publicly, and submitted to DESE.

Attached is a proposed Competency Determination Policy for the Dover-Sherborn Schools, drafted in conjunction with the High School Administration, High School Department Chairs, and High School Advisory Council.

We are happy to answer any questions from the Committee at tonight's meeting.

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Dover-Sherborn Competency Determination Policy

Section 1: Competency Determination Requirements

In order to earn the Competency Determination, a student must meet two criteria: **satisfactorily completing coursework** and **showing mastery** in accordance with the Dover-Sherborn grading policy.

A student s**atisfactorily completes coursework** and receives full credit by earning a passing grade in a specific course.

In order to **show mastery** of a course, a student will earn a passing grade on either the 1) final assessment for a course; or 2) a capstone or portfolio project; or 3) an equivalent measure identified by the District's Competency Determination Policy.

English Language Arts:

For English Language Arts, the student must satisfactorily complete and earn a passing grade through:

1) The equivalent of two years of high school English language arts courses. These courses include:
    a) English 1- College Prep or Honors
    b) English 2- College Prep or Honors

OR

2) Completing a Dover-Sherborn subject matter portfolio aligned with the MA DESE Curriculum Frameworks.

A student will show mastery in English Language Arts by earning a passing final course grade on 1) final assessment for a course; or 2) a capstone or portfolio project; or 3) an equivalent measure identified by the District's Competency Determination Policy.

Mathematics:

For Mathematics the student must satisfactorily complete and earn a passing grade through:

1) The equivalent of two years of Mathematics courses. These courses include:
    a) Algebra 1- Foundations, Standard or Extended*
    b) Algebra 1A AND Algebra 1B
    c) Geometry 8H*
    d) Geometry College Prep or Honors

OR

2) Completing a Dover-Sherborn subject matter portfolio.

A student will show mastery in Mathematics by earning a passing final course grade on 1) final assessment for a course; or 2) a capstone or portfolio project; or 3) an equivalent measure identified by the District's Competency Determination Policy.

*these courses may have been taken in the middle school

Science:

For Science the student must satisfactorily complete and earn a passing grade through:

1) The equivalent of one year of a high school Science course. This includes:
    a) Biology College Prep and Honors
    b) Chemistry College Prep and Honors
    c) Physics College Prep and Honors
    d) Engineering College Prep and Honors

OR

2) Completing a Dover-Sherborn subject matter portfolio aligned with the MA DESE Curriculum Frameworks.

A student will show mastery in Science by earning a passing final course grade on 1) final assessment for a course; or 2) a capstone or portfolio project; or 3) an equivalent measure identified by the District's Competency Determination Policy.

U.S. History (Beginning with the graduating class of 2027):

For U.S. History the student must satisfactorily complete and earn a passing grade through:

1) The equivalent of a one year high school U.S. History course. This includes:
    a) U.S. History College Prep, Honors, or Advanced Placement

OR

2) Completing a Dover-Sherborn subject matter portfolio aligned with the MA DESE Curriculum Frameworks.

Section 2: Additional Requirements

N/A

Section 3: Additional Considerations

Students with Disabilities:

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools must both provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education to students with disabilities and must also determine that the student has met the competency determination

and local graduation requirements prior to graduating that student. Students with disabilities who have been placed in out-of-district placements must meet the requirements of the competency determination policy of the placing school district. Discussion of the competency determination must be a part of the IEP Team's transition planning.

English Learners:

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools shall, on a case-by-case basis, determine the appropriate courses necessary for English Language Learners to both achieve language proficiency and meet the competency determination requirements.

Late-Enrolling Students:

Students who enroll in a Massachusetts public high school after their ninth-grade year may be granted a determination of competency by the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools in one or more of the following ways:

- Transcript review by District Administrator(s)
- Additional course requirements as determined by District Administrator(s).
- A qualifying MCAS score of at least meeting or exceeding expectations achievement levels on the relevant high school MCAS assessment; or by meeting the standard for a substituted equivalent that the district certifies satisfies the same academic standards.

Section 4: Appeals Process

Current students and/or parents/guardians may appeal the determination of competency in accordance with the following district procedures:

1) A written request to the District Administrator(s).
2) A District curriculum expert or experts will review coursework, transcripts, or equivalent demonstrations of competency and their alignment to the DESE MA Curriculum Frameworks in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and/or U.S. History.
3) The District Administrator(s) will issue a final decision via email.

Section 5: Diploma Request Process for Previously Enrolled Students

Those enrolled in the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools in the classes of 2003 through 2024 that did not earn a diploma may also appeal the decision through the following process:

1) A written request to the District Administrator(s).
2) A District curriculum expert or experts will review coursework, transcripts, or equivalent demonstrations of competency and their alignment to the DESE MA Curriculum Frameworks in ELA, Mathematics, Science, and/or U.S. History.
3) The District Administrator(s) will issue a final decision via email. .

Side Letter of Agreement
between the
Dover, Sherborn and Dover-Sherborn Regional
School Committees
and the
Dover-Sherborn Public Schools
Custodial Association

This Side Letter of Agreement is entered into by and between the Dover, Sherborn and Dover-Sherborn Regional School District Committees (the School Committees) and the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Custodial Association (the Association).

WHEREAS the School Committees and the Association have entered into a three-year collective bargaining agreement ("The Agreement") for the period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2026, and have negotiated pursuant to Attachment 1, Wage Schedule;

WHEREAS the School Committees and the Association jointly recognize that circumstances exist regarding staffing protocols at the elementary schools; and

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual covenants and promises and subject to the ratification of the School Committees and the Association, individually, the parties hereby agree as follows:

Amend **Attachment 1, Wage Schedule** to include the following additional wage classifications:

Elementary only stipends (Dover and Sherborn):

School day Coverage for **Head Custodian**: $25 per day

Evening Shift Supervision Stipend for School Year: $1,000 for one appointed Custodian in each elementary school (prorated as applicable): payable in equal installments the last payrolls of January and June

Duration of This Side Letter

This side letter of agreement is valid for the 2025-2026 school year only.

No Precedent

The School Committees and the Association shall consult regularly in good faith regarding the implementation of this Side Letter. For avoidance of doubt, the parties acknowledge and agree that this Side Letter shall not be cited by either party as having established any precedent during the renegotiation of the collective bargaining agreement.

_____ _____

Dover School Committee Date Association Date

_____

Sherborn School Committee Date

_____

Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee Date

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools



District Handbook

2025-2026

Translation: If you need this information translated, please copy and paste it into Google Translate. The link to Google Translate is http://translate.google.com/. You can also translate using Google Drive. Here's how. The District Website translates all documents and information.

Table of Contents

(Click on the links below to take you directly to ~~that~~ a specific section)

1) Introduction
    a) Welcome Letter
    b) District Overview

2) Academic Calendar and Important Dates
    a) District Calendar
    b) Important Dates

3) Academic Programs
    a) Curriculum and Learning
    b) Program/Department Links

4) Student Enrollment and Attendance:
    a) Enrollment Procedures
    b) Attendance and Tardy Policies
    c) Homeschooling Information

5) Behavioral Expectations
    a) Code of Conduct
    b) Bullying and Title IX Policies

6) Health and Safety
    a) Health Services
    b) Safety Measures

7) Special Education and Support Services
    a) Special Education
    b) Student Support Services

8) ~~Parent~~ Family and Community Involvement
    a) ~~Parent~~ Family Engagement
    b) Communication Guidelines
    c) Arrival/Dismissal Process
    d) Translation Services and Supports
    e) Community Resources

9) Transportation, Parking and Facility Use
    a) Transportation Services
    b) Bus Behavior Expectations
    c) Student and Family Parking

10) Policies, Legal and Administrative Information
    a) School Board Policies
    b) Non-Discrimination Policies
    c) Grievance Procedures
    d) Student Records

11) Helpful Resources and Links
    a) All Links
    b) General FAQs

1) Introduction

Back to Table of Contents

Dear Families,

Welcome to a new school year! Whether your child is joining us at the elementary, middle or high school level at Dover-Sherborn Public Schools, we're excited to partner with you in supporting your child's growth, learning, and success.

Our schools are proud to be part of communities that value strong academics, social-emotional development, and a positive, inclusive learning environment. While each school has its own unique traditions and culture, we share a common goal: to create safe, supportive, and engaging spaces where every student can thrive.

This handbook is designed to be a helpful resource for students and families. Inside, you will find important information about school policies, procedures, and daily routines, as well as guidance on how to stay connected and involved in school life. We encourage you to review it carefully and reach out with any questions along the way.

We're looking forward to a year of learning, discovery, and connection and we're so glad to have you with us on the journey.

Sincerely,

Dover-Sherborn Administration Team

Our Vision

We will distinguish ourselves through innovative teaching and learning experiences that inspire all students to pursue their individual passion for learning and excellence while we continue to be a nationally-recognized school system.

Our Mission

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools share the mission to inspire, challenge, and support all students as they discover their full potential.

Our Core Values

- Commitment to Community
- Equity and Experience
- Respect and Dignity
- Climate of Care

School Information

29 Cross Street Dover, MA 02030 **508-785-0480**	10 Pine Hill Lane Sherborn, MA 01770 **508-655-0630**	155 Farm Street Dover, MA 02030 **508-785-0635**	9 Junction Street Dover, MA 0203 **508-785-1730**
School Hours: 7:50am-2:15pm Early Release: 7:50am-11:15am		School Hours: 8:35am-3:10pm Early Release: 8:35am- 12:10pm	

School Website Links

- Pine Hill Elementary School
- Chickering Elementary School
- Dover-Sherborn Middle School
- Dover-Sherborn High School

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2) Academic Calendars and Important Dates

Back to Table of Contents

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools maintain a District Calendar to help families plan for the year ahead. This calendar includes key dates such as the first and last days of school, early release days, vacation weeks, professional development days, and districtwide events. Each school also maintains its own school-specific calendar with information tailored to its building based events, including school-based events, performances, meetings, and deadlines. We encourage families to check both calendars regularly, as they are updated throughout the year. All calendars are linked below.

The district also recognizes the importance of religious and cultural observances. Key dates for major religious holidays are noted on the district calendar to help families plan and to ensure our school community is respectful and inclusive of all traditions.

- District 2025-2026 School Year Calendar
- Chickering School Calendar
- Pine Hill School Calendar
- Middle School Calendar

- High School Calendar

25-26 Religious/Cultural Holiday Guidelines

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3) Academic Programs

Back to Table of Contents

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools is committed to providing all students with the highest quality education which includes rigorous coursework, high standards, and the development of essential skills for students during their time in Dover-Sherborn and beyond. Guiding our academic programming is the Dover-Sherborn Portrait of a Graduate, which focuses on students' development of the following competencies:

- Empathy: seeks to understand the perspectives and experiences of others and respect human differences.
- Communication: listens to, synthesizes and expresses thoughts and ideas in a variety of forms and contexts.
- Collaboration: works with others to accomplish a shared goal and values the contributions of each team member.
- Critical Thinking: evaluates and analyzes multiple forms of information to generate new ideas.
- Creativity: uses imagination and knowledge to design and create original products and solutions.
- Perseverance: welcomes challenges, embraces setbacks, and sees obstacles as an opportunity to grow and learn.
- Engage Citizenship: uses knowledge and skills to engage with both the local and global communities.

In order to help students obtain the Portrait of a Graduate competencies, the District has developed 9 Best Practices that we believe create meaningful and relevant learning experiences for all students.

Curriculum information for the district is available on the district website and can be accessed through the following links:

- Elementary Teaching and Learning
- Middle School Teaching and Learning
- High School Teaching and Learning
- High School Program of Studies

Consistent with Massachusetts regulations, 603 CMR 26.05(1), the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools, through its curricula and materials, encourages respect for the human and civil rights of all individuals, regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation. In

accordance with district guidelines, families may request information from the building principal on available accommodations related to curriculum content.

Grade Reports

Report Cards are issued at the end of each semester, with an Interim Report issued in the middle of each semester. These reports will be accessible via the parent/guardian portal. To access the login page of the portal, please go to the school home page and click on “Aspen Family Portal Login” located under “Quick Links”.

Title 1 Support

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools receives federal Title I funding to support student learning. Title I provides additional resources to low income students to help ensure that all children are able to meet challenging academic standards. Families are important partners in this work and each year, the District offers informational meetings and/or individual appointments with families who are interested in learning more about Title I supports and services.

- Elementary Title I Handbook
- Secondary Title I Handbook

Departments/Programs

Additional information, including department/program-specific resources, can be found through the links listed below:

- Athletics
- Athletics Handbook
- Clubs and Organizations (Middle School) (Link Coming Soon)
- 2025 Club and Activities at DSHS
- Food Services
- Guidance
- Health Services
- Homeschooling
- METCO
- Multilingual Learners
- Special Education
- Technology

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4) Enrollment and Attendance Policies

Back to Table of Contents

The following section outlines key policies that guide the operations and expectations of our school community. We encourage families to review this section carefully to ensure a clear understanding of the standards that support student success.

Enrolling Students in Dover-Public Public Schools

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools welcome resident students and are committed to providing a high-quality, inclusive education for all. To enroll, families must provide proof of residency within the towns of Dover or Sherborn, along with required student records such as a birth certificate, health/immunization documentation, and prior academic records.

Enrollment is open to all students in grades PreK–12, consistent with district policy and Massachusetts state law. Student placement is determined by school administration, based on grade level, educational needs, and available programs. Families are encouraged to stay informed and engaged from the start, as strong home–school partnerships help ensure each student is placed in the setting that best supports their success.

Enrollment paperwork for each building can be found at the links below:

- Chickering (Dover) New Student Registration
- Pine Hill (Sherborn) New Student Registration
- Dover-Sherborn Middle School New Student Registration
- Dover-Sherborn High School New Student Registration

Attendance Policies

The legal standard interprets “reasonable absences” as no more than seven full school days, or fourteen half-days, within a six-month period (see MGL Chapter 76, Section 2). A minimum of one hundred and eighty days of student school attendance is called for each year. ~~We may provide accommodations~~ Accommodations may be made for reasons related to health, religion, emergencies, disabilities and special education.

Parents/guardians and school administrators have an obligation to be sure that students are in attendance each day. The school will be monitoring attendance and sending out letters when students’ unexcused absences/tardies are of concern. If a student under the age of 16 is absent (unexcused) for 8 or more days, school officials may file a CRA (Child Requiring Assistance) petition which could result in a hearing before a Juvenile Court Judge.

Vacations during school time should be avoided and are not considered excused absences. For absences due to non-school related events (including family vacations), the student/family possesses the sole responsibility to obtain the information needed to maintain appropriate performance in school. Teachers have no obligation to prepare material that the student will miss during their absence prior to the student’s departure.

An Excused Absence/Tardy includes:

- Documented illness or injury or medical visit
- Bereavement/family funeral
- Major religious observations
- Extraordinary family circumstances (excused at the discretion of the principal)

An Unexcused Absence/Tardy is any absence or tardy that is not covered by the aforementioned definition of "Excused Absence/Tardy." Examples of an unexcused absence may include, but may not be limited to:

- Repetitive or chronic absence or tardiness due to illness or injury not documented by a doctor or other medical professional
- Cutting class (suspendable offense)
- Truancy
- Family vacations
- Undocumented absences
- Non-emergency family situations

Attendance Supports

If a student is experiencing attendance difficulties due to chronic illness, mental health struggles, or financial hardship, the school can partner with families to provide support such as:

- Flexible scheduling or partial days when medically necessary
- Home or hospital tutoring for students who cannot attend school for health reasons
- Access to counseling services and school adjustment counselors
- Collaboration with outside providers (doctors, therapists, social workers) to support attendance plans
- Assistance connecting with community resources for housing, food, or financial needs
- Transportation support when lack of reliable transportation is a barrier
- Individualized attendance plans developed with families and staff
- Special education or Section 504 accommodations when a disability impacts attendance

Make-Up Work

For absences due to non-school related events (including family vacations) the student possesses the sole responsibility to obtain the information needed to maintain appropriate performance in school. Teachers have no obligation to prepare material that the student will miss during their absence prior to the student's departure. Students are encouraged to follow Google classroom or contact a peer to keep abreast of what is happening in each class.

- School Attendance (Chapter 76 General Law)
- Applicable Laws Regarding Attendance
- Absenteeism Graphic

Region Athletics/Extracurricular Attendance Requirements

It is important to note that when a student is absent due to an unexcused absence ~~injury or illness~~, they ~~he/she~~ will not be allowed to practice or represent Dover-Sherborn in a school sponsored activity (i.e. sports events, drama/musical productions, dances, math meets, etc.) as a participant or spectator on that day. To be considered present, for participation/spectator purposes, a student must arrive by 9:30 am (the start of period 2) and stay until the close of the school day. Students needing to arrive after 9:30 am can request administrative approval and/or will need supportive documentation (medical note, etc.) before participating or being a spectator in a school sponsored activity that day.

If a student ~~has been~~ is absent on a Friday, due to an unexcused absence ~~illness~~, they ~~he/she~~ cannot represent Dover-Sherborn on Saturday or Sunday without the written permission of a doctor and/or school administration. If a student reports after 9:30am or is out on a Friday and they do not have supportive documentation they must obtain administrative approval in order to participate in extracurricular activities.

Students Enrolled in Non-School Programs by Parent/Guardian Choice

Students attending events or enrolling in programs (i.e. ski school, theater, equestrian event) that take them from school for two weeks or more will be required to withdraw from the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools. Students who are returning to the District within the same school year are advised to follow the curriculum to the best of their ability ~~by following curriculum roadmaps and teachers' websites~~. Students will not have access to curricula and academic materials, such as Google Classroom, for the duration of this alternative setting. If the student will have formal classes and instruction, the student will enroll there. If the student is going to be accessing a less formal academic program, a Home School plan needs to be filed with the District. The following steps are recommended:

- Upon completion of the program the student must re-enroll via our enrollment process. Any transcripts or proof of classwork must be provided.
- A re-entry meeting with the students counselor must be scheduled prior to starting back.
- Students will not be able to access Google Classroom, Gmail or receive work to complete while away.
- Dover-Sherborn will not be responsible for providing books, curriculum maps, scope and sequences or units of study to the student or school.
- Any level placement recommendations needed for the following school year will be determined in June before leaving for the summer.

Grades for students whose parents/guardians elect an alternative, approved program will not be integrated with the grades from Dover-Sherborn High School and will be listed separately on the student's high school transcript. Additionally, a Dover-Sherborn grade point average will not include grades for courses taken in these elected programs outside of Dover-Sherborn High School.

<u>McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act</u>

The McKinney-Vento Act ensures that students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence have the same rights and access to a free, appropriate public education as their peers. This includes the right to enroll immediately in school, remain in their school of origin if it is in the student's best interest, and receive transportation and support services. If you believe your family may qualify, please contact the school office or our district's Homeless Education Liaison (the Director of Student Services) for assistance.

Homeschooling

Families may choose homeschooling as an alternative to traditional public education. Each homeschool plan must be submitted for review, and parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the assistant superintendent for guidance and approval. The District provides resources and support to ensure compliance with Massachusetts state laws, which require local district approval of homeschool plans. While public school curricular and extracurricular offerings are robust, families who opt for homeschooling must develop and follow an approved independent instructional plan.

- Homeschooling Information

Withdrawal from Dover-Sherborn High School

Pursuant to M.G.L. ch. 76, §1, students who are of mandatory school age must attend school. When students who are not of mandatory school age withdraw from school, parents/guardians must authorize any student withdrawal by signing a completed "Withdrawal Form" and meeting with the building principal or designee prior to the withdrawal.

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5) Behavioral Expectations/Code of Conduct

Back to Table of Contents

Our behavioral expectations and code of conduct are grounded in the belief that every student deserves to learn in a safe, respectful, and caring environment. These expectations are designed to promote equity by applying expectations fairly and consistently across all students. We encourage responsible behavior, personal growth, and academic excellence while recognizing each student's unique needs and experiences. By upholding respect and dignity for all, we help build a school community where students feel seen, supported, and valued. Together, we create a climate of care that fosters both individual success and collective well-being. The Code of Conduct outlines the behavioral expectations for all students Pre-K through Grade 12 in Dover-Sherborn Public Schools.

Technology Policies

In today's rapidly changing world, where students have increased access to digital tools and online information, it is essential to prioritize safe and respectful technology use. Our Responsible Use Policies are designed to guide students in making thoughtful choices, protect their privacy, and

promote a secure and supportive digital learning environment. These expectations help ensure that technology is used in ways that enhance learning while maintaining safety, respect, and integrity. Policy Information for the district is available on the district website and can be accessed through the following links:

- Responsible Use Policy - Grades K-5
- Responsible Use Policy - Grades 6-12

Elementary Personal Device Expectations:

All personal electronic devices, for example, cell phones, or smart watches, are not to be used at school during the regular school day. If your child brings a device to school, it must be turned off and placed in their backpack for the duration of the school day. Students who require devices for health, accessibility, or communication purposes may be granted an exception to this policy.

Middle School Personal Device Expectations

- Dover-Sherborn Middle School Personal Technology Policy

High School Personal Device Expectations

- Dover-Sherborn High School Personal Device Expectations

Elementary Lunch & Recess Rules

- Follow Adult Directions: Listen carefully and follow directions from all staff. Show respect at all times.
- Use Kind Words and Actions: Speak kindly to others. No teasing, bullying, or excluding others.
- Be Safe Outside: Use playground equipment correctly and safely. Stay in designated play areas.
- Keep Hands and Feet to Yourself: No pushing, rough play, or physical contact.
- Share and Take Turns: Be fair and include everyone who wants to play.
- Report Problems: If someone is hurt or there's a problem, tell an adult right away.
- Dress for the Weather: Come prepared for outdoor play—bring coats, boots, hats, as needed.
- Line Up Quickly and Quietly: When the signal is given, stop playing and walk to your line calmly.
- Eat Respectfully: Use good table manners. Stay seated while eating and raise your hand if you need help.
- Take Care of Your Space: Clean up after yourself. Throw away trash and recycle when possible.

Consequences will be determined based on the nature, severity, and frequency of the behavior. While some incidents may result in a reminder or reflection, others—especially those that involve unsafe or disrespectful behavior—may lead to more serious disciplinary action. School administration will use discretion and professional judgment when determining appropriate responses to behavior incidents. Possible consequences may include:

- Loss of recess time or play privileges
- Reflection sheet or written apology
- Recess or lunch support plan

- Parent/guardian contact
- Recess alternative - temporary or long-term
- Additional support or reteaching

Bullying

Bullying and harassment violations are serious offenses that go against the values of respect, dignity, and care that our school community is built upon. These actions create harm and undermine the inclusive, supportive environment we strive to maintain for every student. When such behaviors occur, we follow deeper, well-defined processes to ensure a thorough investigation, appropriate response, and protections for those impacted. Our goal is not only to address the behavior but also to repair harm, restore safety, and uphold the rights of all individuals. The definitions, forms, processes and frequently asked questions can be found below:

- Bullying Policy and Reporting
- Bullying FAQ

Title IX

Title IX is a federal law that ensures all students have equal access to school programs, activities, and athletics, regardless of sex. It also protects students from sexual harassment, assault, and gender-based discrimination.

If you or your child ever have a concern related to Title IX, please contact the school principal or the District's Title IX Coordinator. The Coordinator makes sure concerns are taken seriously, investigated fairly, and that students are supported.

District Title IX Coordinator:
Kate McCarthy
Director or Student Services
508-785-0036
mccarthyk@doversherborn.org

- Title IX Policies, Grievance Procedures and Forms

Civil Rights Grievance Procedures (forthcoming)

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6) Health and Safety
Back to Table of Contents

Health Office

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools are committed to fostering a healthy and safe learning environment for all students. Our Health Services team, led by compassionate and skilled school

nurses, provides comprehensive care, administers first aid, manages chronic conditions, and promotes student wellness. The link below outlines essential procedures for illness, injury, medication administration, and maintaining overall student health:

- Health Services

Food Celebrations

To comply with the expectations outlined in Massachusetts General Law c 111 223 "An Act Relative to School Nutrition," foster student safety, and promote equitable student experiences in all classes, no food is allowed in classrooms other than students' individual snacks and lunches. Please review the following expectations around food and celebrations:

- No food in classrooms except for each student's own snack and lunch.
- No food or snacks may be brought in for birthdays or classroom celebrations.
- Non-food items (books, games, trinkets) are encouraged for celebrations.
- Teachers will share birthday recognition guidelines at Fall Back-to-School Night and in their first newsletter.

Student Safety and Emergency Procedure Planning

The safety and well-being of every student, faculty member, and staff member is the highest priority at Dover-Sherborn Public Schools. We are committed to providing a secure and supportive learning environment where all individuals feel safe and can thrive. This section outlines our comprehensive approach to student safety and our established procedures for various emergencies.

At Dover-Sherborn Public Schools, safety is an ongoing commitment woven into our daily operations and long-term planning. We believe in:

- Proactive Planning: Continuously assessing potential risks and developing detailed plans to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies.
- Collaboration: Working closely with local law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, and community partners to ensure coordinated and effective responses.
- Training and Drills: Regularly conducting drills and training exercises for students and staff to ensure familiarity and proficiency with emergency procedures.
- Communication: Maintaining open and timely communication with students, families, and staff before, during, and after an emergency.
- Continuous Improvement: Regularly reviewing and updating our safety protocols based on best practices, feedback, and evolving circumstances.

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7) Special Education and Student Services

Back to Table of Contents

At Dover-Sherborn Public Schools, we are committed to fostering an educational environment that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the unique needs of every learner. Our mission is to ensure that

all students, including those with disabilities, are supported in achieving their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally. Grounded in the core values of respect, collaboration, and high expectations, we believe that inclusive practices enrich the entire school community. We strive to provide individualized support in the least restrictive environment, enabling students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible.

School Special Education Pages

- Pine Hill Special Education Staff
- Chickering Special Education Staff
- Middle School Special Education Staff
- High School Special Education Staff
- Special Education Department

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8) ~~Parent and~~ Family Engagement

Back to Table of Contents

We believe strong home-school communication is essential to student success and a positive school experience. We value connecting with families in the way that feels most comfortable to them, whether that is by phone, email, written notes, or other agreed-upon methods. During the school day, staff may have limited availability to talk directly, as their priority is attending to students' needs. However, all messages will be returned as soon as possible, and families are encouraged to reach out at any time.

Translation

If you need documents translated or would like to request a translator for a meeting, please contact your student's assistant principal. Information sent out via Parentsquare is automatically translated based on the language the parent/guardian specified in Aspen. The District website includes a dropdown menu at the top to select your preferred language (Translation Services - Dover Sherborn District). Alternatively, families may utilize online platforms like Google Translate if they wish to translate something independently.

ParentSquare

Our primary communication tool is ParentSquare, a secure platform used for sharing important announcements, school updates, and classroom information. We encourage all families to download the app and enable notifications to stay informed and engaged. Please find further information regarding ParentSquare below:

- Parent Square FAQ

Productive, respectful communication between home and school plays a vital role in promoting student learning, growth, and well-being. As partners in education, families and educators share the responsibility of fostering clear, consistent, and compassionate communication.

These guidelines reflect Dover-Sherborn's core values - Commitment to Community, Equity & Excellence, Respect & Dignity, and a Climate of Care - and aim to ensure that every interaction is respectful, productive, and student-centered. **At all times, each party is committed to acting in the best interest of the student(s).**

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR EMAIL AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Email and other digital tools are powerful resources for clear and timely communication. This guidance applies to all members of the Dover-Sherborn community—**students, families, and staff**—and is designed to support respectful, effective interactions. At the core, all electronic communication should:

- Be respectful, honest, and foster productive dialogue
- Embody the district's values of care and collaboration
- Support our strategic goals of building a welcoming and safe environment
- Uphold the same level of civility and professionalism expected in person

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR EMAIL AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Please remember that emails are not private and fall under Public Records Law—they can be requested and shared publicly. When composing or sending emails:

- Follow standard rules of grammar, spelling, and punctuation
- Avoid using ALL CAPS, which can be interpreted as shouting
- Be mindful that messages can be forwarded without your knowledge or consent
- Use "reply all" sparingly
- Limit use of CC (carbon copy) unless necessary; avoid using it to escalate or apply pressure
- Use BCC (blind carbon copy) when emailing large groups to protect privacy
- To minimize miscommunication, keep messages concise, clear, and professional—ideally no more than 100 words.
- Avoid using email to address topics that are emotional, sensitive, or potentially divisive. In those cases, it's better to request a meeting or phone call.
- If a conversation begins to feel tense or emotionally charged, shift the dialogue to a phone or in-person conversation instead of continuing over email.
- Urgent matters—those that involve the safety of students or staff—should be addressed by calling the school directly. If it is before/after school hours, contact the appropriate emergency service.
- For time-sensitive matters such as student dismissals, please call the school office to ensure your message is delivered promptly. Staff members are focused on students during the school day and may not check email immediately.
- For non-urgent matters, allow 1-2 school days for a reply, not including weekends.

- Students in grades 6–12 should use their **@doversherborn.org** email address when writing to teachers and send messages to the staff's school email address.
- School email accounts should not be used for unrelated activities such as political advocacy, advertising, or personal fundraising.
- Since educators do not receive school-issued mobile phones, texting should not be used as a communication method between ~~caregivers~~ parents/guardians/caregivers, students and staff—unless specifically arranged and approved by a supervisor.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR MEETINGS AND PHONE CONVERSATIONS

Whether held in person or over the phone, meetings are opportunities to build trust, solve problems, and strengthen the partnership between families and educators.

All conversations should:

- Promote open, respectful, and solution-focused dialogue
- Reflect mutual commitment to student growth, equity, and shared responsibility
- Foster a welcoming environment where all voices are heard and valued
- Maintain the professionalism, empathy, and dignity expected of all Dover-Sherborn community members

In cases where conversations become emotionally charged, participants may request a pause or reschedule the meeting for a later time. Everyone benefits when communication remains grounded in mutual respect and the shared goal of supporting student success.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS AND PHONE CONVERSATIONS

- **Prepare in advance:** If possible, come to meetings with a clear understanding of the purpose and key points you wish to discuss. If necessary, request an agenda ahead of time.
- **Respect time and scheduling:** Arrive on time for meetings and allow for others' schedules by ending promptly. If you need to reschedule, provide advance notice. Please note that administrators/educators are engaged with students and other responsibilities before/during/after the school day and are not available for drop-in visitors.
- **Practice active listening:** Allow all participants to share their perspective without interruption.
- **Maintain a respectful tone:** Speak calmly and respectfully, even when discussing difficult topics. Avoid sarcasm, blame, or accusatory language.
- **Focus on shared goals:** Keep the student's best interests at the center of the conversation. Collaborate on finding constructive solutions.
- **Seek clarification:** If something is unclear or concerning, ask questions respectfully rather than assuming intent.
- **Maintain privacy:** Do not record conversations or take photographs during meetings unless all parties have given explicit permission.
- **Follow up when needed:** After a meeting, summarize key decisions or next steps in writing to avoid misunderstandings and to keep everyone on the same page.

- **Use appropriate channels:** For urgent issues involving the safety of students or staff, contact the school office directly. Avoid approaching educators during arrival, dismissal, or class transition times. If it is before/after school hours, contact the appropriate emergency service.

DOVER-SHERBORN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INSPIRE ● CHALLENGE ● SUPPORT

Contacting Dover-Sherborn Public Schools

To ensure effective communication, please reference this chart to direct your questions or concerns. Start with the person most directly involved; if you need more help, we'll guide you to the next level of support.



Class-Based Communication

Connect directly with you student's teacher to discuss...

- Questions about student academic progress
- Questions about student social emotional growth and well-being
- Questions about homework or other assignments



School-Based Communication

Connect directly with a building administrator to discuss....

- School discipline or safety matters
- Questions about programs and staffing
- Questions or concerns about school policies
- Questions or concerns classroom teachers cannot address



District-Based Communication

Connect directly with Central Office administrators to discuss...

- Issues related to: district policy, curriculum and assessment, student services, employment opportunities, human resources, business or facilities, food services and transportation

District Communication Channels	Website	ParentSquare	Technology Support
	www.doversherborn.org Find calendars, School Committee information, curriculum updates, important links and more	Classroom newsletters, school newsletters, staff directory, District announcements (emergencies & snow days)	familysupport@doversherborn.org

Family Member Volunteers

There will be a variety of volunteer opportunities for parents/guardians/caregivers to support classroom activities, school events, and community-building efforts. These opportunities will be shared at the beginning of the school year and throughout the year as needs arise. The guidelines for any volunteer are outlined below:

- All volunteers must have successfully completed a Criminal Records background check (CORI)
- All volunteers must sign-in at the main office and obtain the appropriate colored "Visitor" ~~sticker~~ badge for that day
- Volunteers are requested to keep all information regarding the students and staff in the school confidential
- Volunteers should use the adult bathrooms while at school. Please ask school personnel where the nearest adult bathroom is located

Please bring up any questions or concerns you have about volunteer issues with the faculty or staff with whom you are working. If a question or concern still exists, please feel free to contact the principal.

Field Trip Information

Throughout the school year students may participate in field trips that enhance the curriculum. Classroom teachers will communicate with families in regard to the details and purpose of the field trip. A release form for local field trips along with a medical form will be sent home for families to complete and return to the classroom teacher. Should the cost of a field trip pose a financial hardship, please contact the principal who will make arrangements to cover costs.

Fundraising Information

Fundraising activities or requests for contributions must have prior approval of the principal. This policy applies to all classrooms, organizations, and groups within the community. At the principal's discretion, a financial report may be required.

Gifts ~~for~~ from Students and Families

Parents/guardians/caregivers and students wishing to express their appreciation to individual faculty and staff members may do so through a donation to the school library or the classroom. Small hand-made gifts, cards, or notes from the student are also appropriate. ~~Teachers~~ Staff members may not accept a gift from an individual ~~parent~~ family valued at more than $50.00. Room parents/guardians/caregivers may organize group gifts for faculty and staff during the holiday season and at the end of the school year.

School Events

We look forward to welcoming families into our buildings for back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences. These events provide valuable opportunities to connect with teachers, learn more about your child's learning experience, and build strong partnerships between home and school. Additional building based activities and performances are offered and will be detailed in the school websites and school calendar. We're grateful for your partnership and look forward to working together to support your child's growth and success.

Use of Pictures

Special events are frequently covered by the local press, including the taking of photographs of children. Parents/guardians will not be notified each time this occurs. Parents/guardians who wish their child to be excluded from publicity photos should indicate so on the student verification form.

Family Resources

The following links provide quick access to important family resources:

- Challenge Success
- High School Important Forms
- Interface Counseling Referral Service
- Mental Health Emergency service
- MySchoolBucks
- ParentSquare
- Translation Services - Dover Sherborn District

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9) Transportation, Parking and Facility Use

Back to Table of Contents

Transportation

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools provide school bus transportation at no cost to all students. Our goal is to ensure safe and reliable transportation each day. Families who have questions about bus routes or transportation concerns may contact Tracey DeFlaminio at 508-785-0036 or by email at deflaminiot@doversherborn.org.

Dover-Sherborn Bus Behavioral Expectations:

The bus is an extension of the school day; all school rules are applicable to a student's time on the bus. Below are examples of behavioral expectations while riding the bus:

- Follow the Driver's Directions: The bus driver is in charge. Listen carefully and always show respect.

- Stay Seated: Stay in your seat while the bus is moving. Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before standing up.
- Keep the Aisle Clear: Keep backpacks, instruments, and other belongings out of the aisle. Large items must fit on your lap or between your legs.
- Use Kind Words and Actions: Be respectful to everyone. No bullying, teasing, pushing, or rough play.
- Use a Quiet Voice: No yelling or loud noises.
- No Food or Drinks: For everyone's safety—especially those with allergies—no eating, drinking, candy, or gum is allowed on the bus. Keep everything packed away.
- Hands and Objects Inside: Keep hands, arms, and all items inside the bus at all times. Do not open windows or doors without the driver's permission. The emergency exit is only for emergencies.
- Find a Seat Quickly: Two or three students per seat. No saving seats. Seats may be assigned at any time.
- Keep the Bus Clean: Take care of the bus and throw trash away properly.

Consequences will be determined based on the nature, severity, and frequency of the behavior. While some incidents may result in a warning and parent/guardian communication, others—especially those that compromise safety—may lead to immediate disciplinary action, including loss of bus privileges. School administration will use discretion and professional judgment when determining appropriate responses to behavior incidents. Possible consequences may include:

- Assigned seat
- Reflection sheet or written apology
- Bus behavior support plan
- Parent/guardian contact
- Temporary or permanent suspension of bus privileges
- High School Student Parking Rules and Regulations

Facility Use

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools welcome the responsible use of school facilities by community groups and organizations, when such use does not interfere with school operations or student programming. Any interested individual that would like to use the facilities after school hours should contact the main office administrative assistants to begin the process.

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10) Policies and Legal Information

Back to Table of Contents

The School Committee is responsible for establishing policies that guide the operation of the school district. These policies serve as the governing framework for decision-making and ensure consistency, equity, and legal compliance across all schools. All policies are made publicly available, and transparency in the process helps ensure that the school district's operations align with its mission, values, and community expectations.

Additional information, including full policy language and updates, can be found through the links listed below:

- Policy Manual - Dover Sherborn District
- Non-Discrimination Policy (Section AC)
- School Committee - Dover Sherborn District (policy subcommittee information)

Student Records

Student records are maintained in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). These laws protect the confidentiality of student information and give parents/guardians (and students age 14 and older or in 9th grade and above) certain rights, including:

- The right to inspect and review student records.
- The right to request corrections if information is inaccurate or misleading.
- The right to consent (in most cases) before information is shared outside the school.
- The right to file a complaint if you believe your rights under these laws have been violated.

Temporary records (such as test results and evaluations) are kept for at least five years after a student leaves the district. Permanent records (basic information such as name, address, courses, grades, and attendance) are kept for at least sixty years. If you would like to review your child's records or have questions, please contact the school office.

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11) Links and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Back to Table of Contents

All Links

School Website Links

- Pine Hill Elementary School
- Chickering Elementary School
- Dover-Sherborn Middle School
- Dover-Sherborn High School

Calendars

- District 2025-2026 School Year Calendar
- Chickering School Calendar
- Pine Hill School Calendar
- Middle School Calendar
- High School Calendar
- 25-26 Religious/Cultural Holiday Guidelines

Teaching and Learning

- Elementary Teaching and Learning
- Middle School Teaching and Learning
- High School Teaching and Learning
- High School Program of Studies

Departments

- Athletics
- Athletics Handbook
- 2025 Club and Activities at DSHS
- Food Services
- Guidance
- Health Services
- Homeschooling
- METCO
- Multilingual Learners
- Special Education
- Technology

Title I Handbooks

- Elem Title I Handbook 23-24
- DSMS & DSHS Title 1 Handbook 23-24

Enrollment Links

- Chickering (Dover) New Student Registration
- Pine Hill (Sherborn) New Student Registration
- Dover-Sherborn Middle School New Student Registration
- Dover-Sherborn High School New Student Registration

Attendance Regulations

- School Attendance (Chapter 76 General Law)
- Applicable Laws Regarding Attendance
- Absenteeism Graphic

Code of Conduct and Policies

- *Code of Conduct - Handbook*
- Responsible Use Policy - Grades K-5
- Responsible Use Policy - Grades 6-12
- Dover-Sherborn Middle School Personal Technology Policy
- DSHS Cell Phone_Communication Device Guidelines .docx (1).pdf
- High School Student Parking Rules and Regulations
- Policy Manual - Dover Sherborn District
- Non-Discrimination Policy (Section AC)
- School Committee - Dover Sherborn District

Family Resources

- Challenge Success
- High School Important Forms

- Interface Counseling Referral Service
- Mental Health Emergency service
- MySchoolBucks
- ParentSquare
- Translation Services - Dover Sherborn District

Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ section is designed to provide helpful answers to common questions about our school district, programs, policies, and procedures. We recognize that new questions and situations arise over time, so this is a living document that will be updated regularly as new topics emerge. Our goal is to offer clear, accessible information to support students, families, and staff.

- FAQ's Dover-Sherborn Handbook

DISTRICT WIDE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and respectful learning environment for all students from kindergarten through grade 12. The Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for student behavior in classrooms, on school grounds, on buses, at school-sponsored events, and in all digital spaces connected to school life.

The Code of Conduct is administered within the guidelines set forth by the state and federal laws and regulations with regard to due process for students. The Handbook is distributed at the beginning of every year to every student. It is the expectation of the administration and the school system that parent(s)/guardian(s) and students will read the Handbook. Students and parents/guardians are responsible for raising any questions that they may have regarding this Handbook and its provisions with the school administration. Even if the student does not sign the acknowledgement form included with the distribution of this Handbook, such presumption is made.

A student's behavior off campus or anywhere in a student's digital footprint can have a serious negative impact on other students or members of the school community during the school day and at extracurricular activities. As such, if a student engages in conduct outside of school that causes a substantial disruption to the school environment, such conduct may be considered a basis for discipline.

Students are expected to be courteous, reasonable and responsible. Students will respect all staff, other students, and school property. Inappropriate attitudes and behavior will be dealt with in a manner that will encourage change. A system of warnings and procedures is built into the overall approach to changing behavior in Dover-Sherborn Public Schools.

As always, discipline cases are handled individually, respecting the rights, developmental needs and dignity of the student while taking into account the needs and best interest of the entire school community. To respect the confidentiality of all of our students and families, we are not at liberty to discuss the disciplinary actions taken regarding students other than your own.

The district recognizes that students with disabilities may need accommodations or modifications, and any school rule, policy, or expectation can be adjusted as needed to ensure equal access and support.

Progressive Discipline

Whenever possible and practical, administrators consider an appropriate alternative to suspension before the student is disciplined. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, culturally responsive behavior supports, restorative practices/justice, and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

Access to Educational Programming

Any student who is suspended from school will be given the opportunity to make up schoolwork as needed to make academic progress. Students are therefore encouraged to maintain contact with their

classroom teacher via email to keep on track with classwork. In addition and where appropriate, the student's school counselor may contact the student during the out of school suspension to provide social emotional support. Upon completion of the suspension, the student's assistant principal/school counselor will work with the student, family, and teachers to reintegrate the student back into the school community in a positive way.

Any student who is excluded from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days will have an opportunity to receive education services in order to make academic progress through the school-wide education service plan.

Except in the case of the felony charges and statutory offenses, students may not be suspended more than 90 days in a school year.

Discipline and Due Process

Our goal is always to support positive behavior and resolve issues in ways that help students learn from mistakes. When discipline is necessary, the school follows Massachusetts laws, which outline student rights and steps for different levels of consequences. The statutory due process requirements for such consequences are detailed in Appendix A.

<u>Classroom and School-Based Consequences</u>
Teachers and administrators may use warnings, loss of privileges, detentions, or restorative practices. These consequences may require a formal hearing but families will be notified if patterns of behavior emerge.

<u>Alternatives to Suspension</u>
Prior to issuing exclusionary discipline, such as suspension, the principal or their designee shall consider the use of alternatives. The principal, head of school, superintendent, or person acting as a decision-maker at a student meeting or hearing, when deciding the consequences for the student:

- shall consider ways to re-engage the student in the learning process; and
- shall not suspend the student until alternative remedies have been employed and their use and results documented, following and in direct response to a specific incident or incidents, unless:
    - specific reasons are documented as to why such alternative remedies are unsuitable or counter-productive, or
    - in cases where the student's continued presence in school would pose a specific, documentable concern about the infliction of serious bodily injury or other serious harm upon another person while in school.

Alternative Remedies may include, but shall not be limited to: (1) mediation, (2) conflict resolution, (3) restorative justice, and (4) collaborative problem solving.

This rule shall not apply to disciplinary offenses under MGL Ch. 71, Section 37H and Section 37H1/2 or emergency removals.

In-School Suspension

In-school suspension is defined as the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year. The principal shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident.

Short-Term Suspension (10 days or fewer)

Before a suspension, the principal will hold a meeting with the student and parent/guardian. Families will receive written notice describing the charges, evidence, and proposed consequences. The student and parent/guardian have the right to share information before a decision is made. The principal will provide a written decision, and the parent/guardian may appeal to the superintendent.

Long-Term Suspension (more than 10 days, up to 90 school days)

The principal will hold a formal hearing, with advance written notice of the charges and rights. Students have the right to be represented by a parent/guardian or other adult, to present evidence, and to question witnesses. After the hearing, the principal will issue a written decision. Families may appeal the decision to the superintendent, whose ruling is final.

Emergency Removal

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school and, in the principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption.

Suspension or Expulsion Related to a Felony Charge or Delinquency Complaint

Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the principal if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The principal may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Expulsion for Statutory Offenses (permanent removal from school)

By law, expulsion may only occur in limited circumstances (weapons, drugs, assault on staff, or felony charges/convictions). Expulsions require a formal hearing with due process protections. Families have the right to appeal an expulsion to the superintendent (for felony cases) or to the school committee (for 37H cases).

Appeal Process

Appeals must be requested in writing within five calendar days of the decision. The superintendent or school committee will schedule a hearing promptly and issue a written decision. We encourage

families to reach out to the school office with questions about discipline procedures, rights, or supports available for students.

Violation of Another's Civil Rights

Students have the right to be free from discrimination, including verbal or physical attacks based on race, national origin, religion, sex, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation or homelessness. Any student who violates another student's rights to be free from discrimination will be subject to disciplinary sanctions which will vary, depending upon the seriousness of the offense, from detention up to and including expulsion. Particularly serious violations will also be referred to the police.

Inappropriate Social Contact

School grounds are not an appropriate environment for certain types of physical contact even when consensual. Such behavior will result in referral for appropriate discipline up to and including long-term suspension depending upon the circumstances.

Physical Assault

One-sided attack: possible long-term suspension.

Assault with a weapon: possible long-term suspension. Additionally, the student will be subject to possible long-term suspension or expulsion by the principal for possession of a "dangerous weapon" pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, sec. 37H.

In the case of a physical assault, the Dover Police Department may be contacted, and if the case involves possession or use of a dangerous weapon, a weapons report will be filed pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71, sec. 37L. A physical assault on school personnel will result in a possible suspension with the possibility of expulsion by the principal pursuant to M.G.L. c. 71,sec. 37H.

Fighting

First offense: a possible three (3) to five (5) day suspension (administrative decision). Police may be notified.

S*ubsequent offenses:* a possible five (5) to ten (10) day suspension (administrative decision). Police may be notified of all occasions of fighting, and charges may be brought for disturbance of a public assembly and disorderly conduct. The School Committee will be notified. Any student involved in a fight who fails to cease or desist at the request or intervention by a staff member may be suspended for five (5) to ten (10) days (administrative decision). Any student who strikes or causes bodily harm or injury to a staff member who is attempting to intervene will be considered to have physically assaulted the staff member and will be subject to expulsion by the Principal under c.71, sec. 37H.

Provoking a Fight

Any student who, by word or action, is determined to have provoked or instigated a fight may receive a possible 1-5 day suspension.

Alcohol and Other Drug Policy

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools strive to provide a healthy, safe and supportive school environment for all students, staff and visitors. Since under Massachusetts's law it is illegal for any individual under the age of 21 to use or possess alcoholic beverages and, regardless of age, to use or possess an illicit drug, acceptance of illegal and unhealthy activity is prohibited.

The Dover and Sherborn Police Departments will be notified in all cases of actual possession, sale and distribution of alcohol or other drugs. The principal will turn over all drugs or contraband to the police before the close of the school day.

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will continue to provide, without penalties, assistance to students who are voluntarily seeking alcohol and other drug treatment or advice and will continue to protect the due process rights of all students.

Sanctions for Violations of the Alcohol and Other Drug Policy:
Pursuant to Section 37H of chapter 71 of the Massachusetts General Laws, any student who is found on school premises or at school sponsored or school-related events, including athletic games, in possession of a controlled substance as defined in Dover-Sherborn Regional Schools follow the guidelines as outlined in M.G.L. c.94C. Massachusetts Chapter 94C, known as the Controlled Substances Act, is the state law that regulates the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, and use of controlled substances within Massachusetts. It classifies drugs into five schedules (highly addictive substances, marijuana, prescription drugs, alcohol, etc) based on their potential for abuse and accepted medical use, mirroring the federal system. The law establishes penalties for unlawful possession, trafficking, and distribution, with enhanced consequences for offenses involving minors, schools, or large quantities. It also governs prescriptions, record-keeping by pharmacies and healthcare providers, and allows for certain exceptions, such as medical use under specific regulations. The act aims to balance public safety with legitimate medical and scientific needs.

Depending on the offense committed, students are subjected to school-based disciplinary action that can range from a removal from school programs, to a multi-day suspension, and in some offenses expulsion from school.

Other Offenses

Investigation Process

Interviews and Searches
Under Dover Sherborn School Committee policy, school administrators have the authority, as deemed necessary, to interview students regarding matters that are relevant to the school environment. In addition, school administrators may search students and their personal belongings on school property when the administrator has a reasonable basis for believing that the search will produce evidence that

the student has violated a school rule or a state or federal law. Lockers, desks, and similar areas assigned to students remain the property of the school and are therefore subject to inspection by the school administration at any time.

Video Camera Use
Video cameras may be in use in some public areas of school property, such as hallways, the gymnasium, cafeteria and exterior locations of the school building. Appropriate disciplinary action may be taken for misconduct that is recorded or observed from that security system.

Protocols related to camera use are:

- Live monitoring may be utilized at any time, particularly during any emergency protocol or situation.
- In cases of serious incidents, such as violence, theft, or vandalism, the principal (or designee), school resource officer, or superintendent (or designee) may view the electronic file captured by the web-based camera system.
- A notice that video surveillance may take place on school property will be posted at the main entrance. The principal also has the option of posting such notices at other locations in the building, at their discretion.

Considerations

Consequences are not automatic and administrators use their discretion in determining what consequences are appropriate given the violation and circumstances surrounding the violation. The infractions and consequences are intended to give both students and parent/~~caregiver/~~guardian a clear understanding of administration's expectations for conduct and consequences that will be considered in making discipline decisions. In addition whenever possible and appropriate a restorative approach will also be applied.

Below is a list of potential behaviors and resulting consequences. Consequences will escalate if behavior is repeated. Please note that this is only a **partial list**. Any behavior that is dangerous or harmful to our school community will be addressed as such.

Types of Infractions

Minor Infractions
For minor infractions students are generally required to meet with a teacher or administrator which may lead to a restorative practice response or result in detention, loss of privileges and/or parent/~~caregiver~~ guardian notification. Restorative practices or detentions may occur during lunch, after school, afternoon of early release days, or other agreed-upon times at the discretion of the administration.

Minor infractions may include the following:

- Discipline referrals from faculty or staff
- Violations and/or disregard of the school policies
- Behavior in the corridors, cafeteria, bus and common areas, which does not adhere to

the established expectations for conduct
- Tardiness/Truancy/Cutting of class
- Violation of the electronic devices expectations ~~for~~ of the school
- Bringing inappropriate non-school-related items to school
- Knowingly making false claims
- Profanity/inappropriate language
- *Dress Code violations*

Major Infractions

Infractions of the nature described in the following examples will result in disciplinary action which could include short-term or long-term suspensions (up to 90 days). Should any of the aforementioned infractions rise to a higher degree, they may be identified as a major infraction.The administration will determine the consequences for major infractions of the Code of Discipline.

Major infractions may include the following:

- Repeated minor infractions or habitual disregard of school policies
- Behavior that is dangerous to self or others, destructive to property, or disruptive to the learning environment.
- Destruction or defacement of school property (ie: Vandalism)
- Unsafe physical behavior/ aggression
- Disorderly conduct/ disruptive behavior to the learning environment
- Assault (includes not only harmful or offensive touching of another person, but also the immediate threat of such touching)
- Threats or intimidation to any student or school department personnel
- Safety Threats/ false alarms
- Fire setting/ arson
- Possession of a dangerous weapon
- Possession, use, or being under the influence of alcohol or other drugs (See also, M.G.L. ch. 71, §37H at page 38)
- Theft
- Violations of the District's Policy Prohibiting Hazing
- Violations of the District's Policy Prohibiting Bullying, including cyber bullying, and/or retaliation
- Use of slurs, hate speech, or derogatory language referencing gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability
- Harassment of other students and staff because of their gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability

<u>Consequences</u>

Depending on the offense committed, students are subjected to school-based disciplinary action that can range from a removal from school programs to a multi-day suspension. In some offenses, this may result in expulsion from school.

In the event that a parent/guardian cannot be contacted to pick up a student or in the event that a parent/guardian refuses to pick up a student if requested to do so, the administration will notify the police department.

Key Protections for Students with IEPs or 504 Plans

Manifestation Determination Review (MDR)
If a student with an IEP or 504 Plan is suspended or removed from school for more than 10 school days in a school year, the school must hold a Manifestation Determination Review meeting. The team will determine whether the behavior was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability, or if the behavior resulted from the school's failure to follow the IEP.

Continuation of Services
Even if a student with a disability is suspended or expelled, schools must continue to provide educational services that allow the student to make progress in the general curriculum and toward IEP goals.

Change in Placement
If a disciplinary removal lasts more than 10 consecutive days, or a series of removals constitutes a pattern, it may be considered a change in placement, requiring full procedural safeguards and team input.

Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES)
In cases involving weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury, schools may place a student in an alternative setting for up to 45 school days, even if the behavior is determined to be related to the disability. The team determines the IAES.

Discipline and Students Not Yet Found Eligible
If a student hasn't yet been found eligible for special education but the school had knowledge that the student might have a disability, similar protections may apply. This includes situations where parents have made a written referral, requested an evaluation, or expressed concerns to staff. If the district had no reason to consider the student disabled, and the parent requests an evaluation subsequent to the disciplinary action, the district must have procedures consistent with federal requirements to conduct an expedited evaluation to determine eligibility. If the student is found eligible, then they receive~~s~~ all procedural protections subsequent to the finding of eligibility.

Educational Services Plan

Ability to Make Progress
Any student who is serving an in-school suspension, short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion shall have the opportunity to earn credits, as applicable, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the classroom or school. The principal shall inform the student and parent of this opportunity in writing when such suspension or expulsion is imposed.

Removal from School
Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and to make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide education service plan.

Notice of Education Services for Students in Long-Term Suspension and Expulsion; Enrollment Reporting
The principal shall notify the parent and student of the opportunity to receive education services at the time the student is expelled or placed on long-term suspension. Notice shall be provided in English and in the primary language spoken in the student's home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall include a list of the specific education services that are available to the student and contact information for a school district staff member who can provide more detailed information.

<u>The school's educational service plan options are:</u>

A. Online course enrollment; or
B. Tutoring with coursework provided by the student's classes; or
C. A combination of both A and B.

Please contact the building principal in order to learn more about the available options and arrange for educational services. The student's attendance in educational services and academic progress will be tracked by the district during the period of removal.

If the student is eligible for special education, please contact the Special Education Department or the special education administrator listed on the student's IEP in order to arrange for the provision of any special education services the student's IEP Team has determined the student requires in order to make educational progress during the disciplinary removal.

Appendix A.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED SUSPENSION

Except in the case of an emergency removal or disciplinary offense defined under M.G.L. c. 71, §§37H or 37H½ or an in-school suspension, the school shall provide the student and parent/guardian with written and oral notice of the proposed out of school suspension, an opportunity to be heard at hearing, and the opportunity to participate at the hearing.

Notice shall set forth in plain language:

1. the disciplinary offense;
2. the basis for the charge;
3. the potential consequences, including the potential length of the student's suspension;
4. the opportunity for the student to have a hearing with the principal concerning the proposed suspension, including the opportunity to dispute the charges and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, and for the parent/guardian to attend the hearing;
5. the date, time, and location of the hearing;
6. the right of the student and student's parent/guardian to interpreter services at the hearing if needed to participate;

The principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent/guardian orally of the opportunity to attend the hearing. In order to conduct a hearing without the parent/guardian present, the principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent/guardian. Reasonable effort is presumed if the principal sent written notice and documented at least two attempts to contact the parent/guardian in the manner specified by the parent/guardian for emergency situations.

All written communications regarding notice of proposed suspension shall be either by hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

SHORT-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND PRINCIPAL DETERMINATION

A short-term suspension is the removal of the student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for ten (10) consecutive days or less. Out-of-school short-term suspensions which do not cumulatively over the course of the school year exceed ten (10) days of suspension shall be conducted in accordance with this section.

<u>Principals Hearing</u>

The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts.

A parent/guardian present at the hearing shall have the opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances.

Based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, the principal will make a determination whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequence. The principal will provide notification in writing of their determination in the form of an update to the student and parent/guardian, and provide reasons for the determination.

If the student is suspended, the principal shall inform the parent/guardian of the type and duration of the suspension, and shall provide an opportunity for the student to make up assignments and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal.

If the student is in grades pre-k through 3, the principal shall send their determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, before the short-term suspension takes effect. All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the address provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate.

LONG-TERM SUSPENSIONS: HEARING AND PRINCIPAL DETERMINATION

A long-term suspension is the removal of a student from the school premises and regular classroom activities for more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or for more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple disciplinary offenses in any school year. The purpose of the hearing with the principal is to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student has committed the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information. The student shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the principal will consider in determining whether alternatives to suspension such as loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and/or probation are appropriate.

Additionally, the student shall have the following additional rights:

1. In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not;
2. the right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's and or parent's/guardian's expense;
3. the right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; and;
4. the right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district;
5. the right to request that the hearing be recorded by the principal. All participants shall be informed that the hearing is being recorded by audio. A copy of the audio recording will be provided to the student or parent/guardian upon request.

Based on the evidence submitted at the hearing the principal shall make a determination as to whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating

circumstances and alternatives to suspension (the use of evidence-based strategies and programs, such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive interventions and supports) what remedy or consequence will be imposed. If the principal decides to impose a long-term suspension, the written determination shall:

1. Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing;
2. Set out key facts and conclusions reached by the principal;
3. Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to School;
4. Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive a specific list of education services to make academic progress during removal, and the contact information of a school member who can provide more detailed information.
5. Inform the student of the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent or their designee (only if a long-term suspension has been imposed) within five (5) calendar days, which may be extended by parent/guardian request in writing an additional seven (7) calendar days.

The long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the superintendent decides to reverse the principal's determination on appeal. If the student is in grades pre-k through grade 3, the principal shall send their determination to the superintendent and explain the reasons prior to imposing an out-of-school suspension, whether short-term or long-term, before the suspension takes effect.

All written communications regarding the hearing and principal determination shall be either hand delivery or delivered by first-class mail, certified mail, or email to the provided by the parent/guardian for school communications (or other method agreed to by the principal and parent/guardian) in English, and in the primary language in the home if other than English, or by other means of communication where appropriate.

Appeal of Long-Term Suspension

A student who is placed on a long-term suspension shall have the right to appeal the principal's decision to the superintendent if properly and timely filed. A good faith effort shall be made to include the parent/guardian at the hearing. The appeal shall be held within three (3) school days of the appeal, unless the student or parent/guardian requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, which the superintendent shall grant. The student and parent/guardian shall have the same rights afforded at the long-term suspension principal hearing. Within five (5) calendar days of the hearing the superintendent shall issue their written decision which meets the criteria required of the principal's determination. If the superintendent determines the student committed the disciplinary offense, the superintendent may impose the same or a lesser consequence than that of the principal. The superintendent's decision shall be final.

Emergency Removal

A student may be temporarily removed prior to notice and hearing when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school and, in the principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption. The temporary removal shall not

exceed two (2) school days, following the day of the emergency removal. During the emergency removal the principal shall make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and student's parent/guardian of the emergency removal and the reason for the emergency removal. The principal may not remove a student from school on an emergency basis for a disciplinary offense until adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation. The principal shall also provide the due process requirements of written notice for suspensions and provide for a hearing which meets the due process requirements of a long-term suspension within the two (2) school day time period, unless an extension of time for the hearing is otherwise agreed to by the principal, student, and parent/guardian.

A decision shall be rendered orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day. The decision shall meet all of the due process requirements of a principal's determination in a long-term suspension.

In-School Suspension

In-school suspension is defined as the removal of a student from regular classroom activities, but not the school premises, for not more than ten (10) consecutive school days, or no more than ten (10) school days cumulatively for multiple infractions over the course of the school year. An in school suspension may be used as an alternative to short-term suspension.

A principal may impose an in-school suspension as defined above according to the following procedures:

The principal shall inform the student of the disciplinary offense charged and the basis for the charge, and provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident. If the principal determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the principal shall inform the student of the length of the student's in-school suspension, which shall not exceed ten (10) days, cumulatively or consecutively, in a school year. On the same day as the in-school suspension decision, the principal shall make reasonable efforts to notify the parent orally of the disciplinary offense, the reasons for concluding that the student committed the infraction, and the length of the in-school suspension. The principal shall also invite the parent to a meeting to discuss the student's academic performance and behavior, strategies for student engagement, and possible responses to the behavior. Such a meeting shall be scheduled on the day of the suspension if possible, and if not, as soon thereafter as possible. If the principal is unable to reach the parent after making and documenting at least two (2) attempts to do so, such attempts shall constitute reasonable efforts for purposes of orally informing the parent/guardian of the in-school suspension.

The principal shall send written notice to the student and parent/guardian about the in-school suspension, including the reason and the length of the in-school suspension, and inviting the parent to a meeting with the principal for the purpose set forth above, if such meeting has not already occurred. The principal shall deliver such notice on the day of the suspension by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or by other method of delivery agreed to by the principal and the parent/guardian.

Suspension or Expulsion for Disciplinary Offenses under MGL Ch. 71, Sections 37H & 37H1/2

The due process notification and hearing requirements in the preceding sections do not apply to the following disciplinary offenses:

Possession of a dangerous weapon, Possession of a controlled substance, or Assault of staff, MGL Ch. 71, Section 37H

A student may be subject to expulsion if found in possession of a dangerous weapon, possession of a controlled substance, or the student assaults a member of educational staff, and the principal determines the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The principal shall notify the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) in writing of the opportunity for a hearing, and the right to have representation at the hearing, along with the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. After said hearing, a principal may, in their discretion, decide to levy a suspension rather than expulsion.

A student expelled for such an infraction shall have the right to appeal the decision to the superintendent. The expelled student shall have ten (10) days from the date of the expulsion in which to notify the superintendent of their appeal. The student has the right to counsel at the hearing before the superintendent. The subject matter of the appeal shall not be limited solely to a factual determination of whether the student was guilty of the alleged offense.

Felony complaint or issuance of felony delinquency complaint, MGL Ch. 71, Section 37H ½

Upon the issuance of a criminal complaint charging a student with a felony, or the issuance of a felony delinquency complaint against a student, the principal may suspend a student for a period of time determined appropriate by the principal if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school. The principal shall notify the student in writing of the charges, the reasons for the suspension (prior to such suspension taking effect), and the right to appeal. The principal will also provide the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) the process for appealing the suspension to the superintendent. The request for appeal must be made in writing within five (5) calendar days. The hearing shall be held within three (3) days of the request. The suspension shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing before the superintendent.

At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and the right to counsel. The superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

Felony conviction or adjudication/admission in court of guilt for a felony or felony

Guilt or Delinquency, MGL Ch. 71, Section 37 H ½

The principal may expel a student convicted of a felony, or has an adjudication or admission of guilt regarding a felony, if the principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

The student shall receive written notification of the charges and reasons for the proposed expulsion. The student shall also receive written notification of his right to appeal the decision to the superintendent, as well as the appeal process. The expulsion shall remain in effect prior to any appeal hearing conducted by the superintendent.

The student shall notify the superintendent in writing of their request for an appeal of the decision no later than five (5) calendar days following the date of the expulsion. The superintendent hearing shall be held with the student and parent(s)/guardian(s) within three (3) calendar days of the expulsion. At the hearing, the student shall have the right to present oral and written testimony, and shall have the right to counsel. The superintendent has the authority to overturn or alter the decision of the principal. The superintendent shall render a decision on the appeal within five (5) calendar days of the hearing.

Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

DRAFT

Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee
Dover School Committee
Sherborn School Committee
Union #50 Superintendency Committee
Meeting Minutes June 10, 2025

Present:

Dover School Committee
Goli Sepehr
Jessie Hole
Kate Cook
Kevin Bielke

Sherborn School Committee
Rebecca Hammond
Megha Kadiyala
Nathaniel Jackson
Katie Manzolini
Bill Alfano

Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee
Angie Johnson
Jeff Cassidy
Toa Ashk
Mary Lowder
Lindsay Lie

1. **Call to order –** The meeting was called to order at 6:48 PM in the DSMS Library.
2. **Union #50 Reorganization**

Kate Cook made a motion to nominate Becca Hammond as Chair of the Union #50 Committee. Megha Kadiyala seconded.
Vote in favor: Becca Hammond, Megha Kadiyala, Nathaniel Jackson, Goli Sepehr, and Kate Cook.

Megha Kadiyala made a motion to nominate Goli Sepehr as Vice-Chair of the Union #50 Committee. Kate Cook seconded.
Vote in favor: Becca Hammond, Megha Kadiyala, Nathaniel Jackson, Goli Sepehr, and Kate Cook.

3. **Community Comments -** none
4. **Superintendent Comments -**
   - Superintendent McCoy spoke about recent and upcoming events in the district including graduation, recognition ceremonies, and summer projects for the Administration.
5. **Discussion Items**
   - Homework & Holiday Task Force Update - Denny Conklin spoke about the pilot of the Homework & Holiday guidelines and the positive feedback that was received in review of the past school year. The Administration will continue to work to enforce the guidelines.
6. **Action Items**
   - Approval to invite Dover Selectman and Sherborn Select Board to designate a member to serve on the School Committee Negotiating Team.

Jeff Cassidy made a motion to invite the Dover Selectman and the Sherborn Select Board to designate a member to serve on the School Committee Negotiating Team. Mary Lowder seconded.

Vote in favor: Angie Johnson, Toa Ashk, Jeff Cassidy, Mary Lowder, and Lindsay Nie
Megha Kadiyala made a motion to invite the Sherborn Select Board to designate a member to serve on the School Committee Negotiating Team. Bill Alfano seconded.
Vote in favor: Becca Hammond, Nathanial Jackson, Bill Alfano, Kate Manzolini, and Megha Kadiyala
Kate Cook made a motion to invite the Dover Selectman to designate a member to serve on the School Committee Negotiating Team. Kevin Bilky seconded.
Vote in favor: Goli Sepehr, Kevin Bilky, Jessie Hole, and Kate Cook.

7. **Consent Agenda**
   - Appoint Elizabeth McCoy to TEC and ACCEPT Board of Directors
   - Approval of minutes - April 29, 2025 minutes

There were motions to approve the Consent Agenda.
RSC: motion by Jeff Cassidy, second by Mary Lowder.
Vote in favor: Angie Johnson, Toa Ashk, Jeff Cassidy, Mary Lowder, and Lindsay Nie
SSC: motion by Megha Kadiyala, second by Nathanial Jackson
Vote in favor: Becca Hammond, Nathanial Jackson, Bill Alfano, Kate Manzolini, and Megha Kadiyala
DSC: motion by Kate Cook, second by Jessie Hole
Vote in favor: Goli Sepehr, Kevin Bilky, Jessie Hole, and Kate Cook.

8. **Informational Items**
   - Draft School Committee 2025-26 Meeting Schedule
   - Class of 2025 Matriculation Report
9. **Adjourn at 7:50 pm to Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining, not to return to Open Session.**

Respectfully submitted, Amy Davis

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools

Special Education Manual
2025-2026

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public. We do not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness. (CR 18A)
Special Education Policies, Practices and Programming Manual

This guide is designed to provide families, educators, and community members with clear and comprehensive information about the special education services available across our district.

At Dover-Sherborn, we are committed to fostering an educational environment that is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the unique needs of every learner. Our mission is to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, are supported in achieving their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally.

Grounded in the core values of respect, collaboration, and high expectations, we believe that inclusive practices enrich the entire school community. We strive to provide individualized support in the least restrictive environment, enabling students with disabilities to participate meaningfully in the general education setting to the greatest extent possible.

We deeply value the partnership between schools and families. Parents and guardians are essential members of the educational team, and we are committed to open communication, shared decision-making, and mutual respect. Together, we aim to create pathways of success for all students, celebrating their strengths and addressing their needs with care, creativity, and expertise.

Student Services/Special Education - Dover Sherborn District

Kate McCarthy: Director of Student Services	mccarthyk@doversherborn.org
Jennifer Johnson: Preschool and Out of District Coordinator	johnsonj@doversherborn.org
Keri Romano Campbell: Student Services Administrative Assistant	campbellk@doversherborn.org
Laura Driscoll: Chickering Special Education Coordinator:	driscolll@doversherborn.org
Jennifer Truslow: Pine Hill Special Education Coordinator:	truslowj@doversherborn.org
Jennifer Meek: Middle School Special Education Coordinator:	meekj@doversherborn.org
Tory Sulser: High School Special Education Coordinator:	sulsert@doversherborn.org

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Pine Hill Special Education Staff - Dover Sherborn District

Chickering Special Education Staff - Dover Sherborn District

Middle School Special Education Staff - Dover Sherborn District

High School Special Education Staff - Dover Sherborn District

Statement of Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of the Dover-Sherborn School Department to guarantee equal opportunity to all qualified applicants and employees with respect to appointment, promotion, training, compensation, and general working conditions, without regard to age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, gender identity, homeless status or sexual orientation. This applies to all special education programs including vocational opportunities.

Table of Contents

1) Confidentiality
2) Child Find
3) Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
4) Early Intervention
5) Kindergarten Screening
6) Dyslexia Screening
7) District Curriculum Accommodation Plan
8) MTSS
9) 504 Plan
10) Initial Special Education Eligibility Referral
11) Assessment and Evaluation
12) Team Meeting Information
13) Team Considerations
    - Extended Evaluation
    - Determine Eligibility
    - Parent Evaluation Satisfaction
    - Develop the IEP
    - MCAS Accommodations
    - Assistive Technology
    - Extended School Year
    - Bullying
    - Transportation
    - Transition Planning
    - Age of Majority
    - 688 Referral
    - Graduation
    - Least Restrictive Environment
    - Equal Opportunity
    - Special Education Placement
14) Finding of No Eligibility
15) Annual Team Meeting
16) Three Year Re-Evaluation
17) IEP Amendment
18) Progress Reports
19) Summary of Performance
20) Post Secondary
    - Programming Until Age 22
    - Guardianship Process
21) Parent Rights/Opportunity for Participation
    - Independent Educational Evaluation
    - Outside Evaluations (not publicly funded)
    - Access to Student Records
    - Advocate/Attorney Involvement
22) Special Education Parent Advisory Council
23) Student Discipline (IAES)
24) Continuum of Services
25) Alternative Placements (Vocational, Medical, OOD, Homeschool)

** Codes are used throughout the document to note state Civil Rights (CR #) or Special Education (SE #) regulations.*

1. Confidentiality (CR 26A)

Each staff member working with students is expected to maintain a high level of confidentiality regarding information received from reviewing a students' records, attending Team meetings or discussing a student's strengths and weaknesses with teaching staff. Parents/guardians entrust Dover-Sherborn staff with personal information about their child, their family history, and their fears and hopes for their child's future. We are expected to respect this privileged information and guard it carefully. Confidentiality extends to all staff, professional and non-professional, and must be maintained both in and out of school settings.

2. Child Find (SE 15)

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools Special Education Office maintains an up-to-date census of all private and parochial schools that enroll students living within the Town of Dover-Sherborn. Students enrolled in private school at private expense or who are home-schooled have all rights for Special Education and/or related services as students enrolled within the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools. Letters are sent annually to all private and parochial schools to both request student enrollment information and to provide information regarding referral procedures, as well as the types of services available to students with disabilities. Additionally, parents/guardians of students who are home-schooled are notified annually to provide information regarding referral procedures and the types of services available to students with disabilities.

Parents/guardians of school age children, who are concerned about their child's development, may contact the office of the school for the grade their child attends or would attend or the Special Education Office at (508) 785-0036, to request a screening or an evaluation as early as two and one-half years old. This includes children attending private school at parent expense. All children are screened the first month of their Kindergarten year. Local physicians, daycare providers, and preschools in Dover and Sherborn are encouraged to assist the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools in finding eligible students. Additionally, the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will place Student Find/Child Find information on the Student Services page of the school district's website.

3. Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) (SE 24)

The IEP should be considered a primary tool for supporting a student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum, identifying the supports and services necessary to mitigate the impact of their disability allowing the student to access a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). As defined by federal regulation, the general education curriculum is the curriculum used with non-disabled children. FAPE allows a child to make effective progress. An IEP provides FAPE if it is reasonably calculated, developed in a Team process that is in compliance with federal and state standards, and provides the student with meaningful, measurable educational benefit. All students, regardless of the nature or severity of the disability or their educational setting, must have access to, and progress in, the general curriculum.

Within Massachusetts, the general education curriculum is defined as the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in the following areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, History and Social

Sciences and Science and Technology. Other curriculum areas can and should be discussed if the student's disability affects progress in those areas.

General educators play a critical role in the Team process as the experts on the general education curriculum and classroom environment. Their participation in the Team process is required under state and Federal laws and regulations.

4. Early Intervention (SE 17)

Referrals for screening and evaluations by the Preschool Team are received from parents/guardians either independently or with the support of Early Intervention Staff, community preschool programs, pediatricians, and/or community human services programs. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will place Student Find/ Child Find information on the Special Education Page of the school district's website.

When a screening is requested, an initial meeting/screening is scheduled with the parent in order to collect further developmental information. parents/guardians receive a package of material describing the screening and referral process at the screening appointment. At that time, parents/guardians are asked to complete questionnaires regarding their child's development. Additional observations, medical information, early intervention provider and caregiver interviews may also be scheduled. The Early Childhood Coordinator reviews all pertinent information and a determination is made regarding the need for evaluation.

IEP Team transition

Parents/guardians of a child transitioning from early childhood (ages 3-5) to school-age can request an invitation to the initial IEP meeting be sent to representatives of the school district to assist with a smooth transition of services.

The Preschool Team, including an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist, and a preschool teacher, determines with the parent what the evaluation will include. After appropriate notification to the parent and receipt of parental consent, an initial evaluation is conducted. Assessments of young children are both formal and informal. Dover-Sherborn Public Schools evaluates children as young as two years nine months old. The evaluation Team makes every attempt to ensure that if the child is found eligible, special education services begin promptly at three years of age.

The evaluation of a two, three, or four year old should include assessments in all areas related to suspected disability and an observation of the child in a natural environment by an educator qualified in observing and interpreting early childhood development. For children who are receiving service in Early Intervention, assessments from their service providers may be considered by the Team. However, the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools reserves the right to conduct their own evaluation in the determination of eligibility for school-based services.

Tests and other evaluation material for young children must be selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis. These must be provided in the child's native language or other mode of communication unless it is clearly not feasible to do so. Materials and procedures used to assess a child with limited English proficiency must be selected and administered to ensure that they measure the extent to which a child has a disability and needs special education and not the child's English language.

A variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child, including information provided by the parent and information related to enabling the child to participate in appropriate activities. Tests and other assessment tools must include those tailored to assess the specific area of alleged educational need. Tests must also be selected to ensure that if a test is administered to a child with impaired sensory, manual or speaking skills, the test must accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement level rather than reflect the impairment. No single measure may be used to determine eligibility.

5. Kindergarten Screening

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools shall conduct screening for all children who are of age to enter kindergarten. Such screening shall be designed to review a child's development and to assist in identification of those children who should be referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services. Parents/Guardians who have chosen not to send their children to kindergarten or send their children to private kindergartens may also have their children screened at this time.

The Screening Team may include a psychologist, a kindergarten educator and a speech therapist. The screening tool currently by both Dover and Sherborn is the Early Screening Inventory. The Kindergarten Language Screening Test Second Edition, and the WIDA English Language Learner Screener (if home language survey indicates English is not primary language).

The staff gathers all screening results and reports them to the kindergarten staff, building administration and Administrator of Special Education. Within two weeks of the screening, Screening Teams meet with Kindergarten Teachers to go over the screening results. At that meeting, students who may require further evaluation are identified and referred, if appropriate. More often, some children are determined to be developmentally appropriate while others may show slight delays in development on the screening instruments and will be rescreened mid-year to see if there are any concerns at that time. Parents/Guardians are notified of the results of the screening and may request a meeting with school staff to answer questions or concerns. Parents/Guardians of children in need of further evaluation are notified of such need and provided with information on the evaluation process and consent to evaluate forms.

6. Dyslexia Screening

At The Public Schools of Dover-Sherborn, we are committed to supporting the growth and success of every young reader. One important way we monitor reading development is through the use of a universal early literacy screening assessment. This brief assessment helps us understand

each student's early reading skills and identify those who may benefit from additional support. It is not used to diagnose a disability, but rather to guide instruction and early intervention efforts.

In alignment with Massachusetts regulation 603 CMR 28.03(1)(f), all students in grades K–3 are screened at least twice per year. Dover-Sherborn uses the DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which is an approved early literacy screening tool by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The assessment is administered individually by a trained teacher or staff member and typically takes about 10 minutes.

The DIBELS assessment looks at key skills that help predict future reading success, including:

- Alphabetic Knowledge – understanding letters, sounds, and letter patterns
- Phonemic Awareness – recognizing and working with individual sounds in spoken words
- Word and Passage Reading – reading words accurately and fluently
- Reading Comprehension – understanding and making meaning of what is read
- Rapid Automatized Naming – quickly naming familiar items such as letters or objects

After each screening window, school teams, including classroom teachers, reading specialists, special educators, the literacy coordinator, and the principal, meet to review results and determine next steps. If a student would benefit from additional reading support, a plan will be created and shared with the family. Our goal is to provide timely and targeted support to ensure that all students build a strong foundation in reading.

Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines (DESE)

Specific Learning Disability: Dyslexia (DESE)

7. District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP)

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools is committed to supporting the success of all students through high-quality instruction, thoughtful differentiation, and a responsive learning environment. One of the tools we use to ensure that every student's academic and social-emotional needs are addressed is the Dover-Sherborn District Curriculum Accommodation Plan

The DCAP outlines the strategies, supports, and resources available within general education to help meet the diverse needs of students—*before* considering special education services. It is designed to guide teachers and school teams in making instructional adjustments, providing behavioral supports, and using data-informed interventions to help students access the curriculum and achieve success.

8. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Dover-Sherborn Public Schools is dedicated to meeting the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students through a proactive and data-informed approach known as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

MTSS is a framework that promotes early identification and support for students who may be struggling, ensuring that every learner receives the appropriate level of instruction and intervention. MTSS is not a special education program but rather a general education process that supports all students and helps identify those who may need more intensive or individualized assistance.

The MTSS model is structured in three tiers:

- Tier 1: Universal Supports

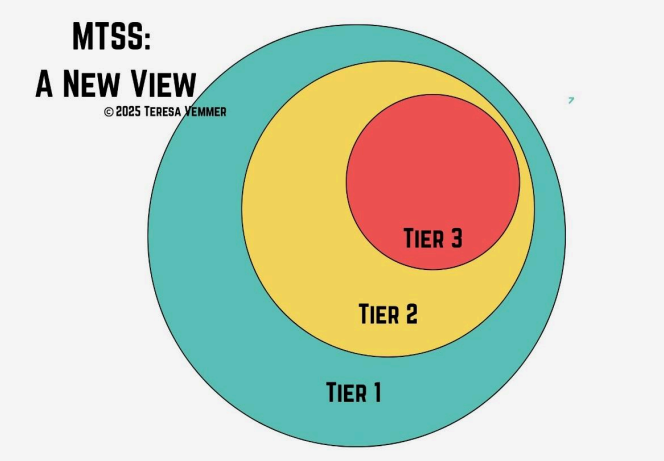
High-quality, evidence-based instruction and practices provided to all students in the general education classroom. This includes differentiation, positive behavior supports, and universal screening to monitor student progress.

- Tier 2: Targeted Supports

For students who need more support than Tier 1 provides, targeted interventions are delivered in small groups. These interventions are designed to address specific areas of need, such as reading, math, behavior, or executive functioning.

- Tier 3: Intensive Supports

Students who continue to experience difficulties despite Tier 2 interventions may receive individualized, intensive support. These interventions are more frequent, closely monitored, and tailored to the student's unique needs.



MTSS is grounded in collaboration among educators, specialists, and families. It helps ensure that interventions are timely, data-driven, and effective. When students do not make expected progress through MTSS interventions, a referral for a special education evaluation may be considered. By using MTSS, Dover-Sherborn aims to provide equitable access to learning, reduce academic gaps, and support the whole child, academically, behaviorally, and emotionally.

Each school building has a Student Success Team (SST) that serves as a collaborative problem-solving and coordination structure to support student achievement. The SST meets to review individual student progress and identify strategies, interventions, or resources that can help address academic, behavioral, or social-emotional needs. The team focuses on one student at a time, allowing for an in-depth discussion and tailored approach to maximize each student's potential for success.

9. 504 Plan

A 504 Plan is a formal plan developed in public schools to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to education. It is based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal civil rights law that protects individuals from discrimination due to a disability. A student may be eligible for a 504 Plan if they have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as learning, concentrating, or walking. The plan outlines specific accommodations, supports, or services that help the student access the general education curriculum. Unlike an IEP, a 504 Plan does not require specialized instruction but provides access through accommodations within the general education setting. In Massachusetts public schools, 504 Plans are developed collaboratively by a school-based team, often including parents, and reviewed at least annually.

Pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits discrimination in publicly funded activities the Dover Sherborn Public Schools has a duty to identify, refer, evaluate, and if eligible, provide access to public education to students with impairments in its jurisdiction. 504 Coordinator Information is below:

Kate McCarthy: Director of Student Services - District 504 Coordinator	mccarthyk@doversherborn.org
Jim Carnes: Assistant Principal - Chickering 504 Coordinator	carnesj@doversherborn.org
Jen Ryan: Assistant Principal - Pine Hill 504 Coordinator	ryanj@doversherborn.org
Jenn Santosucoco: Assistant Principal - Middle School 504 Coordinator	santosuossoj@doversherborn.org
Tim O'Mara: Assistant Principal - High School 504 Coordinator	omarat@doversherborn.org

For additional information about the rights or parents of eligible children, or for answers to any questions you might have about identification, evaluation and placement into Section 504 programs, please contact your school's school counselor.

10. Initial Special Education Eligibility Referral

Special Education Referral (SE 9, 9A)

Once the Student Success Team (SST) has determined that all general education interventions have been exhausted and that the student is still experiencing difficulty in academic, behavioral or social-emotional areas, a Referral for an Initial Special Education Evaluation may be submitted to the Principal or Special Education Building Coordinator. The SST referral should include all relevant information about pre-referral activities. Include documentation of parent involvement in the determination to refer the student, interventions that have been attempted and their effectiveness.

A student may be referred for an evaluation by a parent, a caregiver, a physician, Student Success Team or other party. The following procedures are required by 603 CMR 28.04 regarding referral:

a) When a student is referred for an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education, the school district shall send written notice to the child's parent/guardian within five days of the receipt of the referral. Referrals may be in writing or given orally. In any case,

document the referral and send written notice. Written notice should be given in the primary language of the parent/guardian.

b) The notice required by 603 CMR 28.04 shall meet all of the content requirements set forth in MGL c. 71B, Sec 3 and in federal law and shall seek the consent of the parent for the evaluation to occur, and provide the parent with the opportunity to express any concerns or provide information on the student's skills or abilities.

c) The school Team should provide the student's parent/guardian with the opportunity to consult with the Administrator of Special Education or her designee to discuss the reasons for the referral, content of the proposed evaluation, and evaluation tools proposed.

Parent Request for an Initial Evaluation (SE 9)

When a student is referred for an evaluation by their parent, this request is sent immediately to the school's Special Education Coordinator for action. The school district is responsible to respond to the parent's request within 5 school days. The Special Education Coordinator or her designee will, with input from the student's teachers and other professionals, determine what assessments will be recommended and seek consent of the parent for an evaluation as well as provide the parent the opportunity to express any concerns, provide information on the student's skills or abilities and/or meet to discuss the evaluation.

The Special Education Coordinator will manage the distribution of notification and assessment in each building. Notification of the referral is sent home with consent for the parent to sign. When the signed consent is received, all evaluators are notified by the Special Education Coordinator of the receipt of the consent and the timeline. The Special Education Coordinator logs receipt of the consent to evaluate and the timeline for the evaluation to be completed is established: thirty days from receipt of the parental consent. The IEP Team meeting must be completed within forty-five days. A copy of the completed evaluation report must be presented to the parent/guardian two calendar days before the Team meeting.

Informed Consent for an Initial Evaluation (SE 25)

Within five days of the receipt of the referral request, parents/guardians of a student referred for an initial evaluation will receive notice of the School Department's intent to evaluate their child from the assigned Liaison. A Parent's Rights Brochure will accompany the notice and consent form. A parent may waive any of the specific assessments requested by the Team. The Liaison assigned should have a waiver form completed and signed if this is the case. Upon receipt of the parent's/guardians signed consent to evaluate their child, the Liaison will notify the evaluator(s), set the timeline and set a date for the Team meeting. No assessments may begin until parental/guardian consent is received.

11. Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and Evaluation (SE 1)

State and federal law require evaluation of all areas related to the suspected disability. The evaluation should be comprehensive and child driven. No single procedure should be used as the sole criterion for determining eligibility. The Student Success Team or Special Education Team with input from the parent determines the questions (see form in Appendix) to be answered by the evaluation. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools uses a variety of assessment techniques and instruments to guarantee that the Team will have an understanding of the student's suspected disability and its effect on the child's ability to make progress in school. Evaluation may include formal and informal assessments. Under some circumstances, a Team may request that the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools contract with an outside agency or evaluator to assist in an evaluation. In most cases, however, the school-based Team completes the assessments.

The intent of a Team approach in evaluation is to ensure that a comprehensive picture of how a student functions within a school environment will emerge. No individual assessment or assessor may determine eligibility for special education services.

Timeline Considerations for End of Year Evaluations

"If consent is received within 30 to 45 school working days before the end of the school year, the school district shall ensure that a Team meeting is scheduled so as to allow for the provision of a proposed IEP or written notice of the finding that the student is not eligible no later than 14 days after the end of the school year." 603 C.M.R. 28.05(1).

For example, if the school year ends on June 13 (with no snow days) 45 school days prior to June 13 brings us to April 4. Thirty school days prior to June 13 brings us to May 23. Thus, we have three time frames to consider:

1. Consent provided prior to April 4: the school district will be expected to complete the evaluation, Team meeting, IEP and send IEP to parents before the end of the school year on June 13.
2. Consent provided after May 23: the school district will not be required to complete the evaluation prior to the end of the school year, because there are fewer than 30 school days remaining.
3. Consent provided between April 4 and May 23: the school district will be required to complete the evaluation prior to the of the school year. If the 45 day rule would go beyond June 13, then the school district will be required to convene the Team meeting, write the IEP, and send the IEP to parents no later than 14 calendar days following the end of the school year, June 27.

The Components of an Evaluation (SE 1)

The following assessments are required as a part of an evaluation:

1) An assessment in all areas related to the suspected disability.

2) An Educational Assessment which includes:
    a) History of student's progress in general education curriculum.

b) At least one teacher's assessment in the area of curriculum conducted by a teacher with current knowledge regarding the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (Educational Assessment Form A)
c) An assessment of the student's attention skills, participation behaviors, communication skills, memory, and social relations with groups, peers, and adults (Educational Assessment Form B)

3) Optional Assessments: The Administrator of Special Education or the Special Education Team may recommend or the parent may request an assessment in one or more of the following areas:
   a) A comprehensive Health Assessment by a physician that identifies medical problems or constraints that may affect the student's education. The School Nurse may add additional relevant information from the student's health records.
   b) A Psychological Assessment
   c) A Home Assessment that includes the student's developmental history and other pertinent family information.

Each person conducting an evaluation shall summarize *in writing* the following:

1. The procedures employed
2. The results
3. Their diagnostic impressions
4. Their determination of student's needs and specific services
5. Recommendations to meet those needs.

These summaries/evaluation reports shall be made available upon request to the parent, at least two days before the Team meeting.

Please refer to the Department of Elementary and Secondary's General Guide on Referral, Evaluation, and Eligibility Determination for more information.

When a Team Suspects a Learning Disability (SE 3)

When a Team suspects a learning disability, a cognitive evaluation by the Psychologist should be part of the evaluation. Assessments in academic achievement in suspected disability such as Reading, Math and Written Language should be included. All previously recorded SST interventions and standardized tests should be reviewed. Processing assessments should be given to help determine relative strengths and weaknesses in differing modalities. Someone other than the child's teacher must observe the student. A Team Report must be included as part of the evaluation. There are specific criteria used to determine the existence of a learning disability:

Data reflecting research-based interventions should be part of the evaluation procedures along with additional testing in the suspected area of need.:

1) The achievement is determined not to be commensurate with the age and ability of the student.

2) A severe discrepancy exists between intellectual ability and achievement in one or more areas may be considered:
    a) oral expression
    b) written expression
    c) basic reading skill and reading comprehension
    d) mathematics calculation and reasoning
3) The severe discrepancy is not resulting from visual hearing or motor impairment, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.
4) ALL SLD forms required by DESE must be completed

Evidence of and discussions of these criteria are documented in the Team Report.

Special Educator Assessment (SE 2)

The Special Educator may perform formal and informal assessments as well as an observation. The Special Educator's assessment usually includes achievement testing in Math, Reading, and/or Written Language. This depends on the curriculum area identified by the teacher as particularly difficult for this student. An observation of learning behaviors or social skills is considered and completed. In addition, the special educator will need to utilize various assessments to determine the student's learning style. The evaluating Team will determine how the assessments will be conducted. The Speech and Language Therapist, the Psychologist, the Reading Specialist as well as the Special Educator, may all contribute to the understanding of the student's ability to process information.

Educational History

The evaluation Team will assign a member to review the chronology of the student's school experience in Dover-Sherborn and elsewhere, and document this information on the Educational History Assessment Form.

Educational Assessment

At least one of the student's general education teachers *must* complete an evaluation of the student. However, all teachers of a student who has been referred for an evaluation should be encouraged to complete an Educational Assessment.

Related Services Assessments

Related services are developmental, corrective and other supportive services that are required to assist a child with a disability in school. Some related services are defined by Massachusetts as special education. This is determined based on the unique and individual needs of the child. The following is a listing of such services:

Speech and Language

A Speech and Language Therapist administers an assessment focusing on language development, specifically, articulation, phonological disorders, specific language impairment and fluency. The therapist may also determine current performance in areas related to the general education curriculum: listening, speaking, reading and writing, as well as pragmatics.

Occupational Therapy

An Occupational Therapy Assessment is administered by a Licensed Occupational Therapist. Formal and informal testing procedures address the student's performance in a general education classroom. Performance components, which are assessed, include sensory processing, upper extremity coordination and perceptual and visual motor skills.

Physical Therapy

The Physical Therapy Assessment is administered by a licensed Physical Therapist. This assessment includes a classroom observation as well as independently administered testing procedures. These procedures may assess one or more of the following: range of motion, muscle strength, muscle tone, reflex integration, posture, endurance, gait, functional skills and gross motor skills. The evaluation determines if the student can safely navigate the school environment and participate in all elements of the school program.

Health Assessment

When a Health Assessment is included as part of a Team evaluation, the School Nurse is responsible for following up with the student's family. The School Nurse should determine if it is appropriate to receive a release to communicate directly with the physician or other health care providers.

Behavior Assessment

A behavioral assessment is a process that identifies a specific or target behavior that interferes with a student's education. The assessment attempts to designate the particular behavior, identify the factors that support the behavior, and determine the purpose of the behavior.

12. Team Meeting Information

Special Education Team Meetings are a critical part of the special education process and serve as the foundation for planning and reviewing services and supports for eligible students. These meetings bring together educators, specialists, and families to discuss a student's strengths, needs, and progress.

Parental participation is essential to the success of these meetings. As the expert on your child, your input helps ensure that the team has a complete understanding of your child's needs and can make informed decisions in their best interest. Collaboration between school staff and families fosters trust, transparency, and shared responsibility.

Team Chair Responsibilities

The Special Education Coordinator/Team Chair has the authority to commit the town's resources. At the Team Meeting, the Team Chairperson should make the following very clear:

"The Team Chairperson has the authority to commit the resources of the town, however, there may be resources of which I am not aware. If we come to a point where I feel there needs to be someone on the Team more familiar with community, town, regional or state-wide resources, we will adjourn and reconvene the Team which shall include the Administrator of Special Education or other such expert."

The Team Chairperson is identified on the consent form. It may be the Contact Person, the Psychologist, the Coordinator of Special Education, the Principal, a School Counselor or the Liaison. The Contact Person is the Primary Service Deliverer. Most importantly, these two roles, Chairperson and Contact Person, must be identified before and/or after the meeting and the parent must know who they are.

IEP Team Meeting Attendance and Participation: (SE 8)

Mandatory Members of the IEP team:

a) The parents/guardians of a child with a disability;
b) Not less than one general education teacher (if the child is, or may be, participating in the general education environment);
c) Not less than one special education teacher, or when appropriate, not less than one special education provider;
d) A representative of the local educational agency (LEA) who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of children with disabilities; is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; and is knowledgeable about the availability of resources of the LEA;
e) An individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results, who may be a member of the team described above;
f) Other individuals, at the discretion of the parent or the agency, who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and
g) Whenever appropriate, the child with a disability.

Excusal: A member of the IEP Team can be excused from attending an IEP meeting, in whole or in part, if:

a) The parent of a child with a disability and the LEA agree, due to the fact that the member's area of the curriculum or related services is not being modified or discussed. The parent's agreement must be in writing.
b) The member submits, in writing to the parents/guardians and the team, his or her input into the development of the IEP prior to the meeting.

How to Excuse: A member of the IEP team may be excused from attending an IEP meeting, in whole or in part, if:

a) The parent of a child with a disability and the LEA agree, due to the fact that the member's area of the curriculum or related services is not being modified or discussed.
b) The parent consents in writing, and the agency also; and
c) The member submits, in writing to the parents/guardians and the team, his or her input into the development of the IEP prior to the meeting.

Alternative means of meeting participation

When conducting IEP team meetings and placement meetings pursuant to Sections 614, 615(e), and 615(f)(1)(B), and carrying out administrative matters under Section 615 (such as scheduling, exchange of witness lists and RTIus conferences), the parent of a child with a disability and the LEA may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls. [614(f)]

Agenda

The agenda for the Team meeting should reflect the interests of all participants in an effort to reach consensus around:

a) The focus of special education services
b) Types of strategies that will foster effective progress
c) Collaborative effort
d) Relationship between proposed goals and the core curriculum
e) Delivery of special education services

13. Team Considerations

When developing an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the Special Education Team must consider a variety of important factors to support the student's success. These include the student's strengths, parent concerns, results of evaluations, academic and functional needs, and how the disability affects progress in the general curriculum. The team also considers needs related to communication, behavior, assistive technology, and English language proficiency, if applicable.

<u>Extended Evaluation</u>

An extended evaluation should be used when the evaluation information is inconclusive. When the evaluation information is inconclusive, the Team is unable to determine if there is a disability, the nature of the disability or is unsure what services should be provided. When theTeam has determined eligibility and some necessary objectives and services, then the Team should write a partial IEP while the Extended Evaluation is occurring. The evaluation may not extend beyond eight school weeks. An extended Evaluation may <u>not</u> be used for the following purposes:

- To extend an evaluation beyond the timeline.
- To deny programs or services to a student

- To constitute a temporary placement.
- To establish eligibility.

Determining Eligibility (SE 9A)

When the Team reaches the eligibility decision-making phase of the evaluation process, it must consider all of the assessment data, all observations of the student throughout the school environment, the family's input, the teacher's observations, information regarding the curriculum in the student 's particular grade, and information regarding specific areas of disability. Close examination of the student's school history/record, systematic observation of the student in the classroom and throughout the school environment, and the input of Team members with expertise in the area of suspected disability and general education teachers should assist the Team in determining if the student has a disability.

Concurrently, the Team must review the definition of "to progress effectively in General education" to determine whether there is a causal relationship between the disability and the student's ability to progress effectively. If the disability is shown to be inhibiting the student's ability progress effectively in General education and the student requires *specially designed instruction* in order to access the general education curriculum, the student is eligible for special education.

In some instances, the Team will have clear evidence of a disability, well-documented data and a history of diagnosis. In others, the disability may not be as clear or there may be elements of two or more disabilities present. It is the responsibility of the Team to make a good faith effort to determine the category of disability. It is recognized that this is not always easy and may, in fact, be altered at some other date. The disabilities and characteristics are as follows:

Autism

A developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction. The term shall have the meaning given it in federal law at 34 CFR 300.8.

Federal Definition:

(i) Autism means a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences. The term does not apply if a child's educational performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance, as defined in paragraph (b)(4) of this section.
(ii) A child who manifests the characteristics of "autism" after age 3 could be diagnosed as having "autism" if the criteria in paragraph (c)(1)(i) of this section are satisfied.

- Autism and PDD

Autism Specific Considerations

State law requires IEP Teams to consider and address the following areas for all students who have a disability on the autism spectrum:

- the verbal and nonverbal communication needs of the child;
- the need to develop social interaction skills and proficiencies;
- the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment or teasing;
- the needs resulting from the child's unusual responses to sensory experiences;
- the needs resulting from resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines;
- the needs resulting from engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements;

the need for any positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports to address any behavioral difficulties resulting from autism spectrum disorder; and other needs resulting from the child's disability that impact progress in the general curriculum, including social and emotional development.

Communication Impairment

The capacity to use expressive and/or receptive language is significantly limited, impaired, or delayed and is exhibited by difficulties in one or more of the following areas: speech, such as articulation and/or voice; conveying, understanding, or using spoken, written, or symbolic language. The term may include a student with impaired articulation, stuttering, language impairment, or voice impairment if such impairment adversely affects the student's educational performance.

- Speech and Language

Developmental Delay

The learning capacity of a young child (3–9 years old) is significantly limited, impaired, or delayed and is exhibited by difficulties in one or more of the following areas: receptive and/or expressive language; cognitive abilities; physical functioning; social, emotional, or adaptive functioning; and/or self-help skills.

- Developmental Delay

Emotional Impairment

As defined under federal law at 34 CFR §300.7, the student exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects educational performance: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors; an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. The determination of disability shall not be made solely because the student's behavior violates the school's discipline code, because the student is involved with a state court or social service agency, or because the student is socially maladjusted, unless the Team determines that the student has a serious emotional disturbance.

- Emotional/ Mental Health Disabilities

Health Impairment

A chronic or acute health problem such that the physiological capacity to function is significantly limited or impaired and results in one or more of the following: limited strength, vitality or alertness including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli resulting in limited alertness with respect to the educational environment. The term shall include health impairments due to asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit with hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, and sickle cell anemia, if such health impairment adversely affects a student's educational performance.

- Assistive Technology
- Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Intellectual Impairment

The permanent capacity for performing cognitive tasks, functions, or problem solving is significantly limited or impaired and is exhibited by more than one of the following: a slower rate of learning; disorganized patterns of learning; difficulty with adaptive behavior; and/or difficulty understanding abstract concepts. Such term shall include students with intellectual disability.

- Global Special Education and Disabilities Sites

Neurological Impairment

The capacity of the nervous system is limited or impaired with difficulties exhibited in one or more of the following areas: the use of memory, the control and use of cognitive functioning, sensory and motor skills, speech, language, organizational skills, information processing, affect, social skills, or basic life functions. The term includes students who have received a traumatic brain injury.

- Assistive Technology

Physical Impairment

The physical capacity to move, coordinate actions, or perform physical activities is significantly limited, impaired, or delayed and is exhibited by difficulties in one or more of the following areas: physical and motor tasks; independent movement; performing basic life functions. The term shall include severe orthopedic impairments or impairments caused by congenital anomaly, cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures if such impairment adversely affects a student's educational performance.

- Assistive Technology

Sensory Impairment

The term shall include the following:

1) Hearing — The capacity to hear, with amplification, is limited, impaired, or absent and results in one or more of the following: reduced performance in hearing acuity tasks; difficulty with oral communication; and/or difficulty in understanding auditorily-presented

information in the education environment. The term includes students who are deaf and students who are hard-of-hearing.

2) Vision — The capacity to see, after correction, is limited, impaired, or absent and results in one or more of the following: reduced performance in visual acuity tasks; difficulty with written communication; and/or difficulty with understanding information presented visually in the education environment. The term includes students who are blind and students with limited vision.
3) Deaf-Blind — Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes severe communication and other developmental and educational needs.

- Blind and Visually Impaired
- Deaf and Hearing Impaired
- Assistive Technology

Specific Learning Disability

The term shall have the meaning given in federal law at 34 C.F.R. §§300.7 and 300.541.

Federal Definition:

(i) General. The term means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia.
(ii) Disorders not included. The term does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage

- Learning Disability
- Dyslexia

<u>Parent Evaluation Satisfaction</u>

At every initial and re-evaluation eligibility meeting, teams ask parents: “Are you satisfied with the school’s evaluations?” This question invites parents to express their views on whether the district-provided assessments accurately reflect their child’s needs or if additional evaluations are warranted. It ensures parent voices are heard and helps guide decisions on whether further evaluation or information is necessary for an informed eligibility determination.

<u>IEP Development (SE 18A)</u>

Once a child is found eligible for special education, the team works together to create an Individualized Education Program (IEP) using the results from evaluations and the student’s current classroom performance. This helps guide the development of goals and objectives that are tailored to the student’s unique needs. After the IEP is created, parents must be given two copies of the plan as soon as possible.

The services recommended in the IEP should be based on what the individual student needs—not on what's already available in the school. Every section of the IEP should be thoughtfully reviewed by the team, and nothing should be skipped or assumed.

Services and supports outlined in the IEP are meant to help the student:

- Make progress toward their IEP goals
- Participate in and make progress in the general education curriculum
- Join in extracurricular and nonacademic activities
- Learn and grow alongside their peers whenever possible

These services should support the student's growth and independence. They may be provided directly to the student or may be designed to support parents or school staff in helping the student succeed. For example, training or resources for families or teachers can be included if they help the student reach their goals.

The IEP isn't a daily lesson plan, but it should clearly explain the student's current strengths and challenges, and outline meaningful goals to guide their learning over the course of the year.

- New IEP Forms

MCAS Accommodations and Participation (SE 5)

All students registered in the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools are required to participate in MCAS
testing as well as other district and federal required testing. This includes students identified with special educational needs. There are no exemptions or waivers. For students with individual education plans, the special education Team will determine how the child will take the MCAS, the accommodations that may be necessary to take the MCAS or in very few cases whether an alternate assessment is necessary. All decisions will be recorded on the student IEP in the proper places. Standard and non-standard accommodations may be used as they relate to the instruction the child receives in the general education classroom and so noted on the student IEP. Prior to the administration of the MCAS, the Team Chairperson/Liaison shall notify the school administration of the accommodations needed for students. The Administrator shall insure that the accommodations are provided. All scores shall be reported to parents/guardians in the same manner as for other students.

For students attending Out of District placements at collaborative, private or other placements at public expense, the student shall take the MCAS at the placement under the requirements identified on the IEP. The Out of District placement shall indicate that the child's district is the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools in an effort to ensure that the scores are reported to the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools District. All scores shall be reported to the parents/guardians in the same manner as other students.

Upon receipt of MCAS scores and data, the special education staff shall analyze student strengths and weaknesses in relation to the student's access to the general curriculum, special education needs and future IEP goals and objectives for inclusion in the IEP. Additionally, special

education students in need of assistance in passing the MCAS will be referred to and encouraged to attend district MCAS after school, summer and school day support programs. All data analysis will be recorded on the district MCAS analysis form, filled in the student special education file and used as a guide to develop specific skill improvement goals in the IEP.

The Superintendent of the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will file an MCAS performance appeal for the student's parent or guardian or the student, if 18 or over, requests it, provided the student meets the eligibility requirements for such an appeal. The Superintendent will obtain the consent of the parent or guardian or the student, if 18 or over, for any MCAS performance appeal filed on behalf of a student with a disability. Included in the performance appeal will be, to the extent possible, the required evidence of the student's knowledge and skills in the subject at issue.

Assistive Technology (SE 35)

Assessment, Identification and Training for Students with Disabilities

The IEP team, which includes the student's family and student if applicable, must consider the assistive technology needs of all students with disabilities. Many students with disabilities have difficulties with reading, writing, and math. Some children have problems with vision, hearing, listening and/or communicating. Others have physical, mobility, and motor problems. Assistive technology helps children use their strengths to compensate or "work around" weaknesses caused by the disability. Assistive technology includes "devices" and "services." The IEP team makes decisions about assistive technology devices and services based on a student's unique needs so that they can be more confident and independent. The law requires schools to use assistive technology devices and services to maximize accessibility for children with disabilities.

When a team is considering whether specific technology will be required in order to assist a student with access to the general education curriculum or participate more fully in the school day, the team may request an assistive technology evaluation. In most cases, members of the student's Evaluation team will collaborate on this evaluation. This evaluation may include input from the Special Educator, a General Educator, the Speech and Language Pathologist, the Occupational Therapist, or the Physical Therapist.

Occasionally, the evaluation team may feel that there is more technological expertise required for the evaluation than they have immediately available to them. In that case, a request is made to the Administrator of Special Education for an Assistive Technology Evaluation to be contracted. The Administrator of Special Education will assist the Evaluation team in making the determination as to the evaluator or agency to complete such an evaluation. An assistive technology evaluation may include a functional evaluation of the student in school or at home. The evaluation will be considered in the development of the IEP.

In instances when Assistive technology devices and/or services are determined as required, the IEP Team must further determine and document which settings (classroom, home, or other) in which the student needs access to those devices and services in order to assure provision of F.A.P.E.

Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of a child with a disability.

Assistive Technology service is any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Such term includes:

a. the evaluation
b. purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices
c. selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing
d. coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices
e. training or technical assistance for such child, or the family of such child
f. training or technical assistance for professionals

Assistive Technology Training

The Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn will provide assistive technology training for the teachers, employers, service providers, the child, and family when identified. The student's teachers may need training so they know how to use a device. The student and the family may need assistive technology services so they can learn to use a device. Additional service providers or individuals substantially involved in the life of the student may also require training in the identified technology. Assistive technology services, including training, may be written in the student's IEP.

- Assistive Technology

Extended School Year

Extended school year programs are described under State and federal special education Requirements. All children "regress"–– lose progress, forget, revert to previous behavior— to some extent between school years. It must be determined whether a child's regression would likely be substantial, and whether the child would require a greater than usual time to "recoup" – to get back to the level the child had achieved before a break in service.

At least once annually the child's Team must consider the need for an extended school year program and record its determination in the IEP. The child's Team should not put off a determination to offer ESY programming until the end of a break in service (i.e., summer vacation). The Team must consider the need for such services prior to the beginning of the break in service by anticipating whether substantial regression and problems with re-coupment will occur in the absence of ESY services.

ESY programs may include special education and/or related services and must be specifies on the IEP. Since ESY services are proposed in order to avoid substantial regression, the portion of the child's IEP for ESY services may differ somewhat from the portion of the IEP that governs the provision of services for the regular school year. The U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, has indicated:

Extended School Year DESE Q and A

Bullying (SE 18A)

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Whenever the IEP Team evaluation indicates that a student's disability affects social skills development, or when the student's disability makes him or her vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing, the IEP must address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (G.L. c. 71B, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.) For students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (G.L. c. 71B, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.)

Because the IEP serves as a vehicle for improving the educational experience and achievements of a student with disabilities, the IEP Team uses a variety of information sources, including evaluations, assessment information, and its discussions of the student's present level of educational performance and social acumen, to inform the development of the IEP. The IEP Team's discussion focuses comprehensively on the student's educational needs and on the student's overall involvement in the school, including participation in the general curriculum and in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities. In this process, the IEP Team considers the student's disability and the impact of the disability on the student's interaction and communication with others.

- For all three groups of students with disabilities named in the bullying prevention and intervention law, the IEP Team must consider how the student's disability affects his/her learning the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. Many students will receive support in developing appropriate skills and proficiencies through general instruction. In such cases, the Team should include in the IEP any supports the student needs to learn the needed skills through the existing curriculum. As appropriate, the Team should include in the IEP needed accommodations to the general education program, or goals and objectives and special education services related to student's learning the necessary skills.
- Because of the nature of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), progress in positive social skill development is already a likely focus within the IEP of every student with ASD. Social skills instruction should be at the student's skill level and appropriate for his/her age. The focus of the IEP in relation to the bullying intervention and prevention law will be to aid the student in accessing social and emotional learning to handle more effectively challenges in his/her academic, social, and communication realms.
- IEP Teams should consider ways that the age-appropriate instruction on bullying prevention and intervention incorporated into the school's general curriculum already assists a student with a disability in these areas and should reflect this discussion in the IEP. As noted earlier, the IEP should address those skills and proficiencies that the Team has determined the student would be unlikely to learn solely within the general curricular program, or any supports the student needs to make learning possible in the general curricular program.

- IEP Teams should consider whether modifications or services are needed for students with all types and severities of disabilities to be involved and progress in the school's or district's bullying prevention and intervention program that is incorporated into the school's or district's general curriculum. Also, Teams should ensure that students can participate fully in all procedures related to the reporting and investigation of bullying incidents. The district must ensure that the IEP Team includes a member of the school's staff who is knowledgeable about the school's bullying prevention and intervention general education curriculum when those issues are discussed at a Team meeting.
- Incorporated within the Team meeting process and the Team's discussion of a student's skills and proficiencies to respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing may also be education for families about the district's bullying prevention and intervention plan, the general education curriculum the school is using to instruct all students about bullying prevention and intervention, and the reporting mechanisms that are in place within the school.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention, Autism Spectrum Disorder Considerations

For students identified with a disability on the autism spectrum, the IEP Team must consider and specifically address the skills and proficiencies needed to avoid and respond to bullying, harassment, or teasing. (G.L. c. 71B, §3, as amended by Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2010.)

- Self-Awareness: accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths/abilities, and maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.
- Self-Management: regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting personal and academic goals and then monitoring one's progress toward achieving them; and expressing emotions constructively.
- Social Awareness: taking the perspective of and empathizing with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; identifying and following societal standards of conduct; and recognizing and using family, school, and community resources.
- Relationship Skills: establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; and seeking help when needed.
- Responsible Decision-making: making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate standards of conduct, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; and contributing to the well-being of one's school and community.
- Dover-Sherborn Bullying Prevention and Intervention Information

Transportation

Under Massachusetts and federal law, students with disabilities are entitled to transportation services when it is necessary for them to access a free appropriate public education (FAPE). If a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team determines that the student requires specialized transportation, those services must be provided at no cost to the family. According to

603 CMR 28.05(5)(b), when transportation is required by a student's IEP, the district is responsible for arranging and funding appropriate transportation services.

Eligibility for Transportation:

Transportation is considered a related service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). If a student's disability impacts their ability to safely or successfully get to and from school using regular transportation, the IEP team may determine that special transportation is necessary. The need for specialized transportation is decided by the IEP team and must be documented in the IEP. This may include:

- Door-to-door service
- A monitor or aide on the vehicle
- Accommodations such as a harness, wheelchair access, or a specific drop-off procedure
- Transportation to out-of-district placements or special programs

Transportation for Extended School Year (ESY) and Other Services:

If transportation is required for a student to participate in Extended School Year (ESY) services or other school-sponsored programming included in the IEP, it must be provided.

Transition Planning (SE 6, 7)

The transition process for a student with a disability officially begins at age 14 and is not merely a plan for transition. Parents/guardians should request that the student's IEP, when *appropriate,* include a Statement of inter-agency responsibilities and any needed linkages since this language is no longer in the statute.

Linkages to Post School Options – provide transition services by age 14 or earlier and update Annually By age 14, the IEPs of all students must include a post-secondary school vision Statement as well as identify the transition services necessary to support that vision. IDEA defines transition services as "a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-orientated process, that promotes movement from school to post-school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities shall be based upon the individual student's preferences and Interests, and shall include instruction, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives and, when appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation." *The transition services must be stated on the IEP.* The DESE Transition Planning Form is required for all students over the age of 13. This is a mandated form, districts must use this form to document that transition planning has occurred. Transition plans must be completed for every secondary student in need of special education and are added to the special education file with annual review and updating.

Age of Majority

In Massachusetts, regardless of the severity of their disability, students are considered adults and competent to make their own decisions at age 18 (Age of Majority). Unless there is a court appointed guardian or the student has chosen to share decision making with his or her parent, the school district must seek the consent of the student to continue the special education program. Students at age 18 have the right to make their own educational and medical decisions and must sign all consent forms. Parents/Guardians and students must be notified about the transfer of parental rights to the student at least 1 year before the student turns 18 years of age. Please document the status of each student on the IEP as well as on the district Age of Majority form, collecting the required signatures. For students who have been assigned a legal guardian, please add a copy of the court document to the student's file.

Supported decision-making (SDM) is an alternative to guardianship that allows an individual to make decisions about his or her own life with a team of chosen supporters. SDM enhances people's lives and maximizes their independence. (Supported/Shared Decision Making)

688 Referral

A Chapter 688 referral is a formal process that helps students with significant disabilities prepare for adult services after high school. It is intended for students who will need ongoing support from adult service agencies, such as the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), or the Department of Mental Health (DMH). The referral must be made by the school district at least two years before the student is expected to graduate or turn 22, whichever comes first. Families play an important role in the referral process and are encouraged to participate in discussions and planning for their child's transition. The referral does not guarantee services but helps state agencies plan for and coordinate appropriate adult services. More information can be found in the Massachusetts Chapter 688 law and on the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website.

Interagency Collaboration

The adult service system is complex and understanding it is essential for effective transition planning. When students with disabilities graduate from school or turn 22 years of age, they move from an entitlement to a non-entitlement system. While in school, students receive services and supports mandated by federal and State law. As adults, while they may be eligible for service from adult service agencies, these services are not an entitlement, which means they are subject to the availability and funding of services. Consequently, it is essential that educators, parents/guardians and students understand the adult service system years before adult services need to be accessed.

Adult Services

For students with severe disabilities, a Chapter 688 referral should be made to ensure that students who will require ongoing supports and services from one or more public agencies are part of the eligibility process for receiving services and supports as adults. For other students who require fewer supports and services and may not meet the eligibility requirements for Chapter 688, a general referral for services can be made to adult service agencies. Once agencies are identified,

representatives should be invited to Team meetings in an effort to plan and develop adult service plans.

Assignment of an Educational Advocate

In accordance with special education regulations, the school committee is responsible for notifying the State Division of Special Education in writing when parents/guardians' whereabouts are unknown or if the child is in the custody of a State agency and parents/guardians do not have educational decision-making rights. Using the State's "Educational Advocate Referral Notice" Form , a request can be made for assignment of an educational advocate. Once assignment is received, the educational advocate should be invited to all Team meetings for the student.

- Bureau of Transitional Planning

Graduation

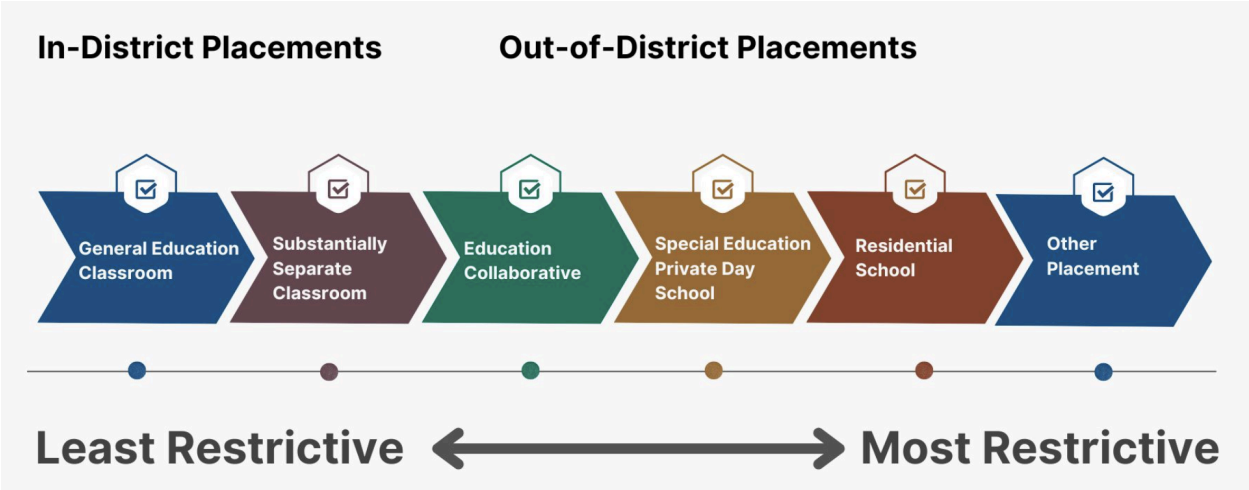
Graduation from school is considered a change in placement. Local school and State officials (NOT courts, hearing officers or Teams) set the academic standards for award of a general high school diploma. In the Public Schools of Dover-Sherborn, meeting locally established graduation requirements and passing the required Statewide assessment (MCAS) constitutes graduation.

In regard to graduation, the district is required to provide prior notice of graduation 34CMR 300.20 (a)(3). Such notice must include:

(1) A description of the action proposed or refused by the agency;
(2) An explanation of why the agency proposes or refuses to take the action;
(3) A description of any other options that the agency considered and the reasons why those options were rejected;
(4) A description of each evaluation procedure, test, record or report the agency used as a basis for the proposed or refused action;
(5) A description of any other factors that are relevant to the agency's proposal or Refusal;
(6) A Statement that the parents/guardians of a child with a disability have protection under the procedural safeguards and if this notice is not an initial referral for evaluation; The means by which a copy of safeguards can be obtained;
(7) Sources for parents/guardians to contact to obtain assistance in understanding the provision of this part.

Least Restrictive Environment

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities have the right to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). LRE is not a specific place, but a principle that ensures every student receives an education that meets their individual needs while promoting inclusion. A student should only be placed in a more restrictive setting (such as a separate classroom or special school) if their needs cannot be met satisfactorily in a general education classroom with appropriate support and services.



** From Federation for Students with Special Needs*

Equal Opportunity (SE48)

In the Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn, all students receiving special education, regardless of placement, have an equal opportunity to participate in and, if appropriate, receive credit for the vocational, supportive, or remedial services that may be available as part of the general education program as well as the non-academic and extracurricular programs of the school.

Programs, services, and activities include, but are not limited to:

- Art and music;
- Work study and employment opportunities;
- Internship opportunities;
- Career counseling;
- Job shadowing opportunities;
- Counseling services available at all levels in the district;
- Health services;
- Transportation;
- Recess and physical education, including adapted physical education
- Athletics and recreational activities;
- School-sponsored groups or clubs;
- Meals

Through the IEP team process, the Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn assures that all students are able to participate in, and if applicable, receive credit for, all vocational, supportive, and remedial courses and services that are available to non-disabled peers as part of the general education curriculum and overall life of the school. IEP teams determine if services or supports (such as transportation or staffing) are needed for an individual student with a disability to access any educational or nonacademic activities. Additional opportunities afforded to all students on IEPs to support their transition to postsecondary environments include:

- Work experience opportunities

As determined by the IEP Team, the district has arranged and provided adult support to special education students to participate in school sponsored after school activities such as:

- Participation on and off the stage of plays and musicals
- Participation on varsity sports teams
- Participation in afterschool clubs

Special Education Placement (SE 18B)

If any member of a Team has questions regarding what the most appropriate placement for a student may be, or how certain services may be delivered in the least restrictive setting, they should be in touch with the Administrator of Special Education. The Administrator of Special Education is available to attend any meeting where the Team feels it will be discussing resources beyond those, which are readily available in their school building. Parents/Guardians should be informed that the Administrator of Special Education will be attending the Team meeting. All IEPs are to be developed before the determination of placement.

If questions arise regarding placements outside the school district or if the parent introduces issues that the Chairperson did not anticipate and is unprepared to respond, the Team Chairperson may do either of the following:

- Take a brief recess and call the Administrator of Special Education. In most cases, the Administrator of Special Education will either be able to provide immediate assistance or come to the meeting.
- End the meeting and reconvene later, remaining within the proscribed timelines, at a meeting that includes the Administrator of Special Education.
- End the meeting. The Team may determine that a Placement Meeting is required Following the meeting to develop the IEP. In any case, where a second meeting needs to occur, this must occur within the forty-five-day timeline.

14. Finding of No Eligibility

During an initial evaluation or re-evaluation meeting, the Team may determine that a student is not eligible for special education services. The Team must make a finding of no eligibility:

- If the student does not have a disability;
- If the student does have a disability but is making effective educational progress without the need of supportive services;
- If the student shows a lack of educational progress but it is not due to a disability; or
- If the student does not require specially designed instruction.

If the student has a disability and that disability substantially impacts a life function, the student may be eligible for a 504 Accommodation Plan.

Steps After No Finding

Parents/Guardians must be informed by the Team Chairperson in writing of the finding of no eligibility for special education using a Notice form. For a three year re-evaluation no finding, they will receive an N1 form and for an initial eligibility no-finding, they will receive an N2 form. All 6 questions must be completed and parents/guardians have the right to appeal any eligibility determination to the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA), including a finding of no eligibility. Parents/Guardians may contact the BSEA directly or request the district's assistance with this process. This information is included in the Procedural Rights Brochure, which must be sent to parents at least once per school year.

If it is the determination of the Team that the student does not qualify for special education services under Section 28 or that a student is no longer in need of services under Section 28, the Team must make a finding of "No Eligibility". It is the Team Chairperson's responsibility to:

- Complete the Eligibility Sheet.
- Complete Notice of Finding to the parents/guardians (Initial Evaluation: Refusal to Act (N2); Reevaluation: Proposal to Act (N1), answer all questions completely). This notice should include a summary of assessments, rationale for the decision, and a listing of any accommodations needed to ensure that the student continues to make effective progress. These accommodations may be made with or without a 504-accommodation plan.
- File copies of ED1 and N1, N2, N3 in the student file with back-up documentation.

15. Annual Team Meeting

Each year, annually, the IEP must be reviewed and updated to reflect the growth the student has made and new goals need to be developed as well. Input from general educators, special educators, parents/guardians and related service providers needs to be included. Input from the student is required if the student is over 14 years old.

16. Three Year Re-Evaluation

<u>Informed Consent for a Three-Year Reevaluation (SE 12)</u>

It is the responsibility of the Team Chairperson/Special Education Coordinator to generate the notice to reevaluate and send the parental consent form to a parent at least 60 days before the Individual Education Plan of a student will expire. If the Team decides that no additional assessments are needed to determine if the student is eligible for special education; the Team may recommend to the parent:

a) That all assessments given at the initial evaluation be repeated
b) That no further assessments are needed at this time and the reasons for this; and
c) That the parent has a right to request a full evaluation or a specific assessment.

A parent may waive any of the specific assessments requested in an evaluation. If this is the case, complete the waiver form and secure the proper signature(s). Documentation of multiple

efforts to contact a parent in order to gain their consent must be maintained in the child's special education file. In the event that consent is not received, contact the Administrator of Special Education to determine the next step(s). The re-authorized IDEA 2004 only requires that a Parent's Rights Brochure be given to a parent once a year.

Assessment Components of the Three-Year Reevaluation (SE 12)

Students should be assessed in their area of need. If a Team has additional questions or concerns about a child, other assessments may be included. When a three-year evaluation will determine eligibility, all components of the initial evaluation should be repeated with age appropriate instruments.

When a student enters at three or four years old, a full evaluation should be administered. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will consider outside Assessments, but must complete a district evaluation as well. This evaluation will be repeated in three years or sooner using age appropriate instruments.

When a Team evaluation determines that a child younger than 9 years old is developmentally delayed, the Team must reevaluate him/her by his/her ninth birthday to determine eligibility category. Developmentally delayed is a disability category appropriate for children only up to nine years of age. You will need a Psychological Evaluation to change the disability category.

17. IEP Amendment

If the Team determines that minor changes to the IEP are required an amendment must be developed. An amendment may be used to change the service delivery model when a student changes schools if this is appropriate. An amendment may not be used to change the placement of the program.

In making changes to a child's IEP after the annual IEP meeting for a school year, the parent of a child with a disability and the LEA may agree not to convene an IEP meeting for the purposes of making such changes, and instead may develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP.

Changes to the IEP may be made either by the entire IEP team or, as provided in Section, by amending, rather than redrafting the entire IEP. The parent shall be provided with a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated.

18. Progress Reports (SE 13)

IEP progress reports: The progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals must be reported, but there is no longer a reference to "the extent to which the progress is sufficient to attain the goal by the end of the year." This information seems especially important to parents/guardians and teachers if there is a shared commitment to help all children learn to high

standards set for all. Parents/Guardians may see progress all year only to realize in June that the progress was not sufficient to meet the goal.

Progress reports are sent home as often as general education report cards. It is the liaisons responsibility to send home progress reports of all service deliverers. It is the responsibility of service deliverers to give the progress reports to the liaisons in a timely fashion. Progress reports are to contain a narrative Statement of the student's meaningful progress toward meeting the Stated goal. A Statement about the student's ability to meet the goal within the Stated IEP period must be included. *If a child will not meet the goal, a Team meeting must be called and the Team should consider adjustments to the IEP to assist the child in making meaningful progress.* Complete, well-written progress reports assist students, parents/guardians and staff in the determination of effective progress. Copies of progress reports should be maintained in the student's special education files.

Defining Effective Progress

In accordance with Mass. Dept. of Education Eligibility Guidelines for Special Education, it is important that the Team understand what the disability is and how it manifests itself in a student's school performance. "To progress effectively in general education" is the standard by which the Team is expected to judge whether or not a disability is affecting the student's educational performance. DESE defines "progressing effectively" in general terms, recognizing that student development and growth encompasses many knowledge and skill areas. Generally, "progressing effectively" is to make documented growth in the acquisition of knowledge and skills, including social/emotional development, within general education according to chronological age and the individual educational potential of the child (For the purpose of this
definition, general education includes early childhood, preschool, academic, non-academic, and vocational programs and activities).

The Team members must use all assessment data, their knowledge of the child and the school's curriculum to determine whether or not the identical handicap will be an impairment to the student's performance.

Measuring Effective Progress

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools has a wide assortment of assessment criteria that may be used to determine whether a child is making effective progress or not. No one single measure should be used to make this determination. The following list identifies the most common means available to measure effective progress:

- Portfolio assessments
- Quarterly grades
- Psycho-educational assessments
- Initial and reevaluation data
- Daily/weekly student logs
- Homework completion
- Baseline data collection
- Progress reports
- Pre-and post-academic testing
- Ongoing written observations
- Observations by staff
- Feedback from students

- Feedback from parents/guardians
- Disciplinary assessments
- Development checklists
- Student journals

19. Summary of Performance

The Summary of Performance must be completed during the final year of a student's high school education. The timing of completion of the SOP may vary depending on the student's postsecondary goals. The Summary of Performance is most useful when linked with the IEP process and the student has the opportunity to actively participate in the development of this document. If a student is transitioning to higher education, the SOP, with additional documentation, may be necessary as the student applies to a college or university. Likewise, this information may be necessary as a student applies for services from State agencies such as vocational rehabilitation. In some instances, it may be most appropriate to wait until the spring of a student's final year to provide an agency or employer the most updated information on the performance of the student.

20. Post Secondary

Programming Until Age 22

In Massachusetts, students who receive special education services are entitled to keep getting support until they either earn a regular high school diploma or turn 22, whichever comes first. These services help students build the academic, social, and life skills they need to be successful after high school.

Guardianship

Guardianship is a legal process that gives the guardian permission to take care of and make decisions for an incapacitated adult. An incapacitated person is someone with a clinically diagnosed condition that keeps them from being able to make or communicate decisions about their physical health, safety, or care. The person asking to be named guardian is called the petitioner, and the person believed to be incapacitated is called the respondent. (Guardianship Process)

21. Opportunity for Parent/Guardian Participation (SE 26)

Parents/Guardians should be the focal point of arranging the Team meeting, so try hard to work it into the parent's schedule. If your school conducts a special day for Team meetings, let parents/guardians know with as much advance notice as possible. Once you have made the phone contact, always follow it up with a written notice using the approved Massachusetts State Meeting Notice Form and Parent's Rights Brochure. If the parent/guardian cannot attend, other methods should be used to ensure parent participation, including phone calls, correspondence, and home visits. A detailed record of all such attempts must be maintained. Along with each completed IEP mailed to the parent/guardian, a summary of their rights that includes a specific date identifying the day when the parent/guardian must have responded by, either accepting or rejecting the IEP will also be sent. If you are having problems getting parents/guardians to return a signed or rejected IEP, notify the Special Education Office for assistance.

Parents/Guardians are also kept informed by the normal grading process, IEP progress reports, and direct contact with the teaching staff/liaison, or specialist servicing the child. Parent/Guardian concerns are noted on the IEP and the parents/guardians participate in the formation of the Vision Statement.

Every effort must be made to involve our parents/guardians in the process, to encourage their participation, with the goal to ensure they understand what is happening in the education of their child.

Request for a Reevaluation or an Independent Evaluation (SE 11)

Parents/Guardians may obtain an independent educational evaluation of their child by appropriate professionals at their own expense at any time. In addition, federal and state law provides parents/guardians with a procedure for obtaining public funding of an IEE if they disagree with the school district's evaluation. This IEE is to be conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the responsible school district.

Any request for a reevaluation outside the reevaluation cycle, or an independent evaluation, should be directed to the Administrator of Special Education for determination of next steps. Any request for an Independent Evaluation must be acted upon within 5 days. Therefore, it is extremely important that you notify the Administrator of Special Education of such requests immediately. Requests can come in writing or verbally. In either case, action must be taken. The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools will follow the guidelines for income eligibility for all IEE requests. Information will be sent to parents/guardians upon request of an evaluation.

All IEE requests will be limited to the evaluations performed by the Team. Requests for other evaluations such as neuropsychological, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law C. 71B, s.3 and the regulations implementing that law, 603 CMR 28.04(5), parents/guardians are entitled to receive a publicly funded IEE under the following circumstances:

- The requested evaluation must be in an area that was assessed by the school district, and the request must be within sixteen (16) months from the date of that evaluation with which the parent disagrees. Parents/Guardians may opt to have less than all the assessments already done, if they are satisfied with some of the assessments already completed. Should parents/guardians wish to request an independent evaluation that includes assessments not already done by the district, the District is not automatically required to pay for these assessments.
- A qualified person who is registered, certified, licensed or otherwise approved by the Commonwealth to conduct these assessments must conduct the evaluation. Documentation regarding these qualifications will be requested of the evaluator and required by the district. Additionally, the evaluator must abide by the rates set by the state agency responsible for setting such rates. These rates can be found at 114.3 CMR 30.00

When a parent has requested an IEE at the district's expense, they must provide in writing:

- What evaluation(s) they are dissatisfied with
- A list of the specific evaluations that are being requested
- The name, address, and telephone number of the agency or individual chosen to complete the evaluation
- The application for financial contribution from the school district
- A completed Release of Information form, if the parent wants the district to forward a copy of the student's relevant educational records to the evaluator

In order to determine whether or not a family is eligible for public funding for an IEE, the family's financial state must be determined. If the child is eligible for free or reduced lunch, the district must fund the evaluation in full. If the family is not eligible, the district is required to fund the evaluation on a sliding fee scale, according to the family income.

The district uses a standard letter, outlining the requirements for requesting an IEE. Included with this letter should be a copy of:

- Free or Reduced price lunch form
- An evaluation consent form recommending a school-based evaluation (if applicable).

If the family is either not eligible for public funding or refuses to provide the information to the district, or requests a publicly funded independent evaluation in an area not yet assessed by the district, a response must be provided to the parent within five school days whether or not the district will fund the evaluation, and should the district decide to not fund the evaluation, the district must proceed directly to the BSEA. Any requests by a parent for a publicly funded independent evaluation must be given to the Administrator of Special Education's office immediately.

Once the independent evaluation for a child already on an IEP is received, the Team must reconvene within ten school days to consider the results and make any necessary changes to the IEP. If a parent presents an independent private evaluation for a child prior to the initiation of an initial evaluation by the district, the District will convene a meeting to review the report and develop a proposal for evaluation. This will begin the initial referral and evaluation process. The outside evaluation will be considered by the Team along with the District's evaluation.

<u>Outside Evaluations (not publicly funded)</u>

Parents have the right to seek an outside (independent) evaluation at their own expense if they have concerns about their child's needs or progress. While families are encouraged to share the results with the school, the district is not required to accept or follow the recommendations. In most cases, the school will conduct its own evaluations in the same areas to determine eligibility and services. These school-based evaluations are used to guide decisions made by the Special Education Team.

<u>Access to Records</u>

A log of access will be maintained at the Administrative Office. It will contain all the information required from the student records regulations. If you maintain separate records; be sure to maintain logs for each record. Staff that have direct contact with the child (teachers, counselors, etc.) need not sign this log to review or otherwise use the files.

The student record consists of the child's transcript and temporary record and includes, among other things, record of the student's special education eligibility or program. There are several rights relating to the student's record. parents/guardians, and under certain circumstances, the child has a right to inspect and review any and all records relating to the student which are collected, maintained, or used by the school district. If the child's record includes information regarding another child, the parents/guardians have a right to inspect or review only the information relating to their child. The school district will only limit parents/guardians' access to the student records if the school district has received legal documentation that limits a parent's authority in this regard (for example, a divorce or custody decree that limits a parent's access to information about his/her child). All the rights associated with the student records are contained in Massachusetts State Regulations and Laws.

Fees for Copies of Records

Fees charged for reproducing records must be reasonable. In any case, do not exceed the cost of reproduction and be sure to follow any other guidelines mentioned in the Parent's Rights Brochure. However, parents/guardians are not charged a fee for copies if to do so would effectively prevent the parents/guardians from exercising their right to inspect and review the records.

The Student's Right of Access

Students 14 years old or in the ninth grade have all the rights that parents/guardians have under the Student Record Regulations. If a student is from 14 through 17 years old or has entered ninth grade, both the student and their parents/guardians, acting alone or together, may exercise these rights. Once the student turns 18, the rights accorded parents/guardians under Student Record Regulations, become those of the student. However, parents/guardians may continue to exercise those rights unless the student makes a written request to the Principal or Superintendent to prevent them from doing so. Should the child make such a request, parents/guardians will not retain the right to review his/her records.

Parent/Guardian Review of the Student Record

If the parents/guardians ask to review the student record, the school must allow them access without any unnecessary delay and, in any event, no later than two school days after their request, unless parents/guardians have agreed to a longer period of time. parents/guardians' right to inspect or review the student's record include the right to do so before any meeting regarding an IEP or due process hearing relating to the identification, evaluation or program placement of their child. Parent's right to inspect and review student records include the right to:

A) Obtain copies of any information included in the record upon request.

B) Meet with qualified school personnel to have the student's record interpreted.

C) Have a representative inspect, review and interpret their student's record upon receipt of a written request.

Changing Information in the Student Record

Parents/guardians have the right to add information, comments or data to the student record. Parents/guardians may request that their child's record be amended. This request should always be in writing to the School Principal, identifying the item or items specifically. If the request is to change information inserted by a TEAM meeting, the request cannot be honored until either the IEP is accepted OR the appeals process is exhausted (if the IEP is rejected). The School Principal shall meet with the parent or student (if 18 years old) and ascertain the need for amending the record. Then, within one school week after receiving this in writing, the Principal shall inform the parent in writing of the action taken, or if the request is turned down, the reasons for not honoring the request. Be sure to send a copy of all correspondence to the Administrator of Special Education. Should the request be denied, the parent or student has a right to appeal to the Superintendent of Schools. The Superintendent will render a written decision to the parent or student.

Consent to Release Information

Except for non-personally identifiable information, no information shall be released from a Student's record to a third party unless agreed to in writing by the parent/guardian or student over 18 years old. Under no circumstances shall special education information be released unless parent/guardian/student approves. Courts and such agencies as DCF should normally provide a release of information form signed by a parent before information is released to them. A written Consent Form should always be used to gain permission to release information on a student. Unless the Principal has been provided a copy of a court order denying parental access to information, both parents/guardians have a right to access information on their child. Unless parents/guardians make the school aware that information must be sent to two addresses (in cases of divorce, etc.), the school shall only be obligated to send information to the addresses listed on student records. A school district may not release information from education records to participating agencies without parental consent.

Destruction of Information

Special Education records will follow the student through the grades. There is no need for teachers to keep records on students after the student moves to the next grade or teacher. Once the student graduates from high school or turns age twenty-two, the student's file will be maintained for seven years UNLESS the child's program is federally funded and undergoing an audit, in which case the child's file (especially the IEP) will be maintained until the audit is ended, and all appeals have been satisfied. The entire audit process should be resolved before these student files are destroyed. No Special Education student files should be destroyed before the seven year period.

The District issues public notice of intent to destroy the files of all students on a yearly basis, after retention for two years. Parents/guardians are given the opportunity to retain their child's file at this time. The Administrative Office will publicize its intent to destroy records held for seven years. The Guidance Office at the high school keeps non-special education records such as the student's school transcript for sixty years. However, a permanent record of a student's name, address, and phone number, his or her grades, attendance record, classes attended, grade level completed, and year completed may be maintained without time limitation.

Records for children in parochial/private/other schools shall not be the responsibility of the school Principal, the Central Office, or any other school official, unless there has been some special arrangement for placement of that child at that school. Each case shall be worked out separately. Normally, the schools maintain all students' records at the agricultural schools and vocational-technical schools.

Advocate/Attorney Involvement

Parents and Guardians have the right to involve an educational advocate or attorney in any part of the special education process. This includes attending meetings, reviewing documents, helping you understand your rights, and supporting your child's needs.

You may choose to invite an advocate or attorney to:

- IEP meetings
- Eligibility or reevaluation discussions
- Mediation or dispute resolution sessions
- Hearings or appeals

Schools are required to work collaboratively with any individuals you invite to support your child's educational planning. If you plan to bring an advocate or attorney to a meeting, it's helpful to let the school know in advance so appropriate arrangements can be made.

22. Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

The Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) is a district-level, parent-driven group that works in partnership with school administrators to improve special education services and outcomes for students with disabilities. Open to all parents and guardians of students with IEPs or 504 Plans, SEPAC provides a forum for families to share experiences, offer input, and learn about special education processes and supports. The council helps ensure that the voices of families are heard in planning, development, and evaluation of special education programs. We encourage all interested parents and caregivers to get involved and attend meetings.

23. Student Discipline for Students with Disabilities

Massachusetts and federal laws provide important protections for students with disabilities when it comes to school discipline. These laws recognize that some behaviors may be related to a student's disability and ensure fair treatment during disciplinary actions.

Key Protections for Students with IEPs or 504 Plans:

Manifestation Determination Review (MDR):

If a student with an IEP or 504 Plan is suspended or removed from school for more than 10 school days in a school year, the school must hold a Manifestation Determination Review meeting. The team will determine whether the behavior was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability, or if the behavior resulted from the school's failure to follow the IEP.

Continuation of Services:

Even if a student with a disability is suspended or expelled, schools must continue to provide educational services that allow the student to make progress in the general curriculum and toward IEP goals.

Change in Placement:

If a disciplinary removal lasts more than 10 consecutive days, or a series of removals constitutes a pattern, it may be considered a change in placement, requiring full procedural safeguards and team input.

Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES):

In cases involving weapons, drugs, or serious bodily injury, schools may place a student in an alternative setting for up to 45 school days, even if the behavior is determined to be related to the disability. The team determines the IAES.

Discipline and Students Not Yet Found Eligible:

If a student hasn't yet been found eligible for special education but the school had knowledge that the student might have a disability, similar protections may apply. This includes situations where parents have made a written referral, requested an evaluation, or expressed concerns to staff.

For more information, you can refer to:

- DESE Discipline Laws and Regulations

24. Continuum of Services and Programs (SE 34, 56)

Services

Academic Support

The goal of Academic Support is to maximize a student's access to and success with the high school curriculum and to assist students in effectively planning for and transitioning to post-secondary opportunities. The Learning Center is available to students with a current Individual Educational Program (IEP), and who require academic support to compensate for learning differences that may otherwise preclude them from making effective progress at Dover-Sherborn High School.

This support focuses on empowering each student to become an independent learner who can successfully employ strengths and strategies that compensate for weaknesses. Academic support focuses on the goals and objectives identified in a student's Individual Education Program (IEP). Instructional time is devoted to developing effective time management and organizational skills and strategies with specific links to content area requirements. Students are encouraged to utilize technology and apply higher order critical thinking skills that relate to the high school curriculum. Students are provided with instruction to become more efficient learners who are able to independently manage their academic responsibilities.

Inclusion/In-Class Supports

Special education staff work within the general education classroom to provide support to students with a wide variety of diagnosed disabilities. The staff works to provide strategies that accommodate and support all learners. Special education and general education teachers collaborate on techniques that assist in differentiation of instruction.

Related Services (SE 49)

In addition to programmatic offerings, related services are often an integral part of assisting children with disabilities in improving skills and accessing appropriate curricular content. These services include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, behavioral assessment and social-emotional and guidance services. These staff members provide necessary interventions to students and valuable consultation to staff and parents/guardians.

<u>In-District Programming</u>

<u>Integrated Pre-School Programming at Chickering and Pine Hill Elementary School</u>—-The Dover and Sherborn Public Schools each offer Integrated Preschool Programs at their local elementary schools for children who turn 3 or 4 by September 1st. An Integrated Preschool serves all children, both typically developing as well as those with special needs. This inclusion model allows all students to thrive as they learn through multimodal differentiated instruction. The preschool programs provide young children with educational experiences that support their social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. The consistent yet flexible structure, combined with research-based learning activities, helps to prepare children for kindergarten and beyond.

<u>The Connections Program</u> is a specialized special education program within the Dover-Sherborn Public Schools, housed at Chickering Elementary School. Designed for students who have been found eligible for special education services and referred through the team process, the program provides a highly individualized and supportive learning environment. Connections students share targeted goals in the areas of adaptive skills, communication, and self-regulation. These goals are addressed through evidence-based instruction, high leverage practices, and multidisciplinary supports tailored to each student's unique strengths and needs. Instruction is primarily based in a sub-separate classroom setting, utilizing the principles of Applied Behavior

Analysis (ABA), multidisciplinary regulation interventions, and structured teaching methodologies. Students benefit from individualized or small-group instruction, with a 1:1 or 1:2 student-to-staff ratio, ensuring intensive and responsive support. Staff collaborate with general education professionals to identify and maximize opportunities for inclusion in the general education setting.

Language Based Learning Disability Programming at Middle and High School is a program that supports the learning of students with a Language-based learning disability (LBLD). LBLD is the inability of individuals with average to above average cognitive ability to learn at their level of potential and to access curriculum through traditional educational techniques due to neurologically-based challenges with the processing and expression of language. Students with a LBLD require explicit skill-based, strategy-based instruction to develop literacy and support executive function. Executive function coordinates the cognitive and psychological processes necessary for effective communication.

The G.R.I.T.(Growth, Resiliency, Integrity, Tenacity) Program at Middle and High School is based on a therapeutic learning center model, which services students with emotional disabilities, social-emotional challenges, behavioral obstacles, and academic challenges. The main structure of the support is delivered through a home-base setting to support all areas of students' functioning when students require more assistance than they can receive in a traditional model of intervention. Students receive a variety of support through a special education liaison, counselor, and educational assistant(s).

Transfer Students (SE 59)

When a student with an IEP moves to The Public Schools of Dover-Sherborn, the district must provide a *Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)*, including special education services comparable to those in the student's previous IEP, in consultation with the parents. These services must begin immediately upon enrollment, and remain in effect until a District-specific IEP is developed or adopted.

Out of District Special Education Placements

Collaborative and Private School Programs

Programs outside of the district, both collaborative and private placements, are accessed for students who require intensive support and programming. Usually these are low-incidence populations who are better served in a setting where more intensive therapies and small group interventions are available. Dover-Sherborn is a participating member of the ACCEPT and TEC Collaborative. Other collaborative and private schools are attended by Dover-Sherborn students. Students are matched to a program that best meets their individual needs within the least restrictive environment possible. Residential placements may be selected for the few students who require full-time care for behavioral, social-emotional or significant developmental issues.

Consideration of Vocational Educational Services for Students with Special Education Needs (CR 13)

According to Massachusetts Law, each school must ensure that students with disabilities have available to them “a variety of educational programs and services available to non-disabled students, including art, music, industrial arts, consumer and homemaking education and vocational education.” When considering the vocational needs of a student with special educational needs, a Team must be aware that:

- Vocational education is not exclusively the responsibility of vocational schools.
- IEPs for students with disabilities must address vocational education needs and services based solely on the needs and interests of the student.
- IEP Teams do not have the authority to make placements in vocational schools.
- Public schools must address needs related to vocational preparation or experience.
- Vocational schools must provide appropriate education and special education services.

When a student is found to be in need of vocational services, the Team Liaison should work with the School Counselor in charge of vocational services as well as Administrator of Special Education to procure the appropriate services.

Private School Schools Attending Private Schools in Dover and Sherborn

For students enrolled at private expense in private schools in the district and whose parents/guardians reside out of Dover or Sherborn, the district consults with the private schools in accordance with federal requirements. It conducts evaluations and determines eligibility in accordance with State and federal requirements. The district calculates the proportionate share of Federal Special Education entitlement funds (Fund Code 240) required to be spent on eligible private school students (including all eligible students attending private school in the district whether their parents/guardians reside in the district, in another Massachusetts district, or out of State) and documents the spending of at least this amount of federal entitlement funds (Fund Code 240) on one or more of the eligible private school students attending private school in the district whose parents/guardians reside in the district or out of State. If the district provides services to any eligible private school student from out of State, it does so using an individual services plan.

Each year, The Public Schools of Dover-Sherborn invites private school representatives to meet and discuss how services will be provided, and a service plan (instead of an IEP) will be created for eligible students. A district liaison will ensure students are tracked for services, annual reviews, and required evaluations. For questions or more information, please contact the Administrator of Special Education.

Parentally Placed Private School Students and Special Education

Students who attend private or parochial schools may still be eligible for special education services through Dover-Sherborn Public Schools. If a parent or guardian believes their child may need support, they should speak with the school principal, who will forward the request to the Special Education Team for review. The referral and evaluation process is the same as it is for students enrolled in the public schools.

If the child is found eligible, services will be offered as if they were a student in the district. A teacher or staff member from the private school will be invited to the Team meeting to provide input. Services may be delivered in different ways—such as having the student come to a district school for direct services, or through consultation with families, the student, or private school staff.

24. Alternative Educational Placements (Medical, Homeschool)

Home Hospital Information

If a student is unable to attend school for medical reasons, a doctor can request that the school provide home or hospital instruction. This service helps students keep up with their schoolwork while they are recovering at home or in the hospital. While it can't fully replace the school experience, it is meant to prevent the student from falling behind in their classes.

Home or hospital instruction is not the same as special education, unless the student already has an IEP. In most cases, it is considered a general education support to help students stay connected to learning during a medical absence. Schools and families work together to make sure the student continues to make progress while they are unable to attend school in person.

Short-term Home Hospital Tutoring

The form below is for students with a medical diagnosis that results in the student being confined to the home, hospital, or otherwise unable to attend school for medical reasons for at least 14 days, or on a recurring basis that will accumulate to at least 14 days over the course of the current school year,

- Short Term Home Hospital Physician Form

Long-term Home Hospital Tutoring

The form below is for If, in the opinion of the student's physician, an eligible student is likely to remain at home, in a hospital, or in a pediatric nursing home for medical reasons for more than 60 school days in any school year.

- Long-Term Home Hospital Physician Form

Homeschool Placement

In Massachusetts, parents have the legal right to homeschool their child, including a child with a disability. However, the provision of special education services for homeschooled students is not guaranteed in the same way it is for students enrolled in public schools. The following process and information pertains to students with disabilities pursuing Homeschooling:

Homeschooling Approval:

Parents must submit a homeschool education plan to their local school district for approval. This plan should include the proposed curriculum, instructional materials, and methods for assessing progress. Approval is required annually.

Special Education Rights Change:

Once a child is withdrawn from public school and homeschooled, they are no longer entitled to receive the full set of IDEA protections or special education services through an IEP. This includes:

- No requirement for the district to develop or implement an IEP.
- No right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) through the district.

Limited Services May Be Offered:

Under Massachusetts law, local school districts may choose to provide limited special education services to homeschooled students through an Individual Services Plan (ISP), but this is not required. The availability and type of services vary by district and may depend on federal funding.

Child Find Obligation Still Applies:

Even for homeschooled children, school districts are still responsible under Child Find (federal and state law) to identify and evaluate children who may have disabilities. Parents may still request evaluations through the district.

Re-Enrolling in Public School:

If a homeschooled student re-enrolls in the public school system, the IEP team must reconvene to determine eligibility and appropriate services. An updated evaluation may be needed.