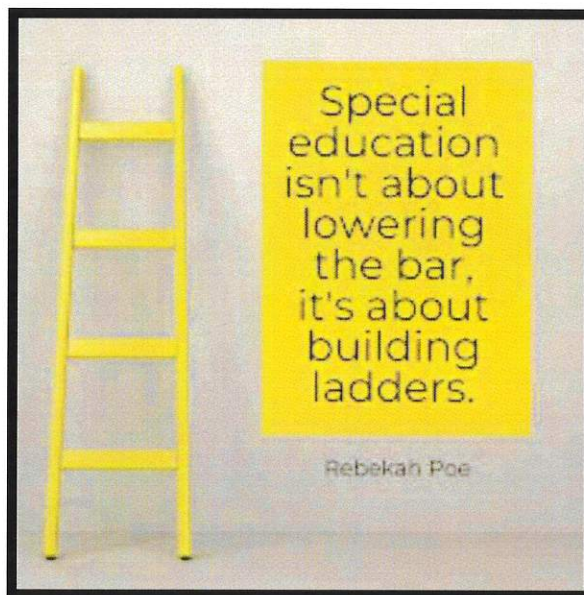


DEPARTMENT BUDGET REPORT

Special Education and Student Services

"A goal without a plan is just a wish" - Antoine de Saint-Exupery



Geoffrey A. Tomlinson, Special Education Director

11.18.25

Connection to the Strategic Plan

Focus Area 1: Enhancing the Overall Student Experience

“Make certain that every student experiences a high-quality education, fostered by nurturing, equitable, inclusive, and innovative school environment”

In order to create equitable and inclusive classroom instruction, the Lyme School is focused on differentiating instruction for students. A Multi-Tiered Student Support Systems (MTSS) Committee has been developed to review current literature, analyze curriculum, and offer instructional support to teaching staff as best-practices for differentiation are implemented. This Committee meets monthly and includes classroom teachers, interventionists, special educators, the Academic Director and the Director of Student Services. For FY 27, this work will require a modest investment in literature (\$1500), and hiring of substitutes so teachers can participate in Instructional Rounds (observation of colleagues as they implement differentiation into their practice- \$1000).

Personalized Learning Opportunities- As a continuum of services, the Lyme School utilizes a Response to Intervention (RTI) model of initial support. This approach involves recommendations from Student Support Teams (PK-12th grade), parent permission for observations/screenings, discussion and implementation of interventions over a set time period (usually 6-9 weeks based on need), and then analysis of work data to determine next steps (return to mainstream programming, a final round of RTI if recommended, or moving forward with a formal special education referral). This progression of service delivery is aligned with district policy IHBA and allows for the personalization of interventions to be delivered in the most inclusive environments. Lyme students have benefitted from this approach as evidenced by district/state testing results and the decrease in overall special education population across the district.

Related Services- The district also offers contracted services for Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language, Counseling and Behavior Support to students PK-8th grade. Students can access these services in an RTI model for up to two 6-9 week windows, and/or as outlined in student IEP's.

Impact of Investments

Student performance results (district/state test results, SST data) indicate a focus on MTSS and RTI have helped students improve skills across the curriculum while reducing the need for formal special education referrals. These savings, and moving to a zero-based budgeting approach have led to a decrease in the overall special education expenditures over the previous five years as seen below:

| FY 23 | FY 24 | FY 25 | FY 26 | FY 27 (Budgeted) |
|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| \$1,467,936.35 | \$983,774.63 | \$1,097,592.25 | \$994,598.13 | \$937,450.50 |

DETAIL

| 9-12 Special Education | FY 26 | FY 27 | Notes |
|---|--------------|-----------|--|
| Costs associated with delivering services identified in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students in grades 9-12 | \$87,000 | \$37,750 | These costs vary due to individual students' needs |
| PreK-8 Special Education | FY 26 | FY 27 | Notes |
| Costs associated with delivering services identified in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and RTI for students in grades PreK-8 | \$740,598.13 | \$716,200 | These costs vary due to individual students' needs |
| Related Services | FY 26 | FY 27 | Notes |
| Related Services PreK-8: OT, Speech & Language, Counseling, and | \$167,500 | \$210,500 | These costs vary due to individual students' needs |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|--|---|
| Behavioral Support | | | Behavioral Support (BCBA) moved to its own line, was previously integrated to Speech Services line item |
|--------------------|--|--|---|

ANTICIPATED IMPACT OF NEW INVESTMENTS

1. District focus on MTSS and intervention have decreased the need for special education referrals and increased the amount of time students are learning in mainstream classroom settings
2. Enhancing differentiation strategies will support more targeted instruction in the classroom setting for students who need either enrichment or modifications to the curriculum.