

# 2023-2024

## ANNUAL REPORT



**NORTHSHORE  
EDUCATION  
CONSORTIUM**

Northshore Education Consortium  
112 Sohier Road, Beverly, MA 01915  
Tel: 978-232-9755 | [www.nsedu.org](http://www.nsedu.org)



“Whether they are teaching and caring for students with developmental and cognitive delays, or students working to better their lives through the gift of sobriety, Northshore Education Consortium is an institution that is impacting countless lives in an incredibly positive and inclusive way.”

- NEC Parent



**NORTHSHORE  
EDUCATION  
CONSORTIUM**

Member School Districts: Beverly, Danvers, Gloucester, Hamilton-Wenham Regional, Ipswich, Lynn, Lynnfield, Manchester-Essex Regional, Marblehead, Masconomet Regional, Nahant, North Reading, Peabody, Pentucket Regional, Reading, Rockport, Salem, Swampscott, Triton Regional, Tri-Town School Union (Boxford, Middleton, Topsfield)



4	MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
5-6	COLLABORATIVE INFORMATION
	History
	Governance and Leadership
	Member Districts / Board of Directors, 2023-2024
	Organization Chart
	Administrative Leadership Team, 2023-2024
7	Mission / Core Values & Beliefs / Vision
	Mission
	Core Values
	Guiding Beliefs
	Long-Range Vision
8	SCHOOL PROGRAMS 2023-2024
9	DEMOGRAPHICS 2023-2024
10-11	KEVIN O'GRADY SCHOOL
	Foundations Program
	Access Program
	Reach Program
	Strive Program
	Target Program
12-13	NORTHSHORE ACADEMY UPPER SCHOOL
14	NORTHSHORE ACADEMY LOWER SCHOOL
15	TOPSFIELD VOCATIONAL ACADEMY
16	NORTHSHORE RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL
17-18	TRANSITION PROGRAMS: EMBARK & SOAR
	Embark Program
	SOAR Program
19	Consultation, Contract Services & Regional Collaboration
20-21	COST EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS & SERVICES
22	PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES
	Strategic Goals
23	FINANCIAL SUMMARY FY 2024

# Message from the Executive Director

November 2024

Dear Northshore Education Consortium Members and Friends,

I am pleased to share this report highlighting the activities and accomplishments of the 2023-2024 school year.

Our core mission of providing high quality, cost-effective public programs, supports, and resources to assist member districts in meeting the needs of students who require specialized educational services is more critical, and more challenging, than ever. I am proud of the many ways in which we have mobilized to meet our goals, despite ongoing struggles with staffing shortages, behavioral acuity and the financial stress associated with a major capital project.

A significant focus this year has been overseeing the first phase of a major, multi-year, multi-million dollar capital project to upgrade the roof and HVAC systems at our 112 Sohier Road location. In addition, other capital needs, such as flooding at our Peabody site, and the need to upgrade fire panels, took a great deal of administrative attention and impacted our budget and cashflow.

It is clear that without safe, functional, and attractive buildings, state-of-the-art technology and business operations, we cannot meet our goals. So, in addition to the major projects above, we also fully implemented new accounting and purchasing systems, improved our overall emergency preparedness, and upgraded our hiring and onboarding procedures.

Having a strong infrastructure has enabled our program leaders to focus on quality programming for the 450+ students who were educated in our day schools this year. We continued to use our professional development time to focus on trauma-informed and restorative behavioral support practices, differentiating instruction for diverse learners, and ensuring that all of our schools were safe and welcoming environments where all students, families, and employees could feel seen, respected, and able to thrive.

We take great pride in the wide array of vocational, enrichment and community opportunities we provide for our students and families. With support from a variety of public and private grants, NEC students participated in a range of onsite and offsite vocational experiences, enjoyed educational outings and field trips, participated in Special Olympics and intramural sports and engaged with the arts through Express Yourself and Young Audiences. NEC families attended an array of family nights in each of our programs.

Although our biggest area of focus remains on our day schools, we also provided services for over 150 students who attended school in member districts through our Vision Services and our Connections Wraparound Program. In addition we provided training and consultation to our member districts, and ran well-attended job-alike groups for special education administrators, out of district coordinators, educational team chairpeople, and school psychologists.

I am incredibly proud of the work we have done as a team over the past year. It is a privilege to work with colleagues who care so deeply about our students, and with children, young adults, and families who demonstrate great resilience every day.

With thanks for your ongoing support,



Francine H. Rosenberg, M.Ed.  
Executive Director  
Northshore Education Consortium

# Collaborative Information

## HISTORY











Founded in 1974, the Northshore Education Consortium was one of the first regional collaboratives in Massachusetts and is one of the largest providers of intensive special education services to children and youth with emotional, behavioral, and developmental disabilities on the North Shore.

## GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Northshore Education Consortium is governed by a 20-member Board of Directors, representing the 22 districts served, (Tri-Town School Union is represented by their shared Superintendent.) All districts are represented by their Superintendent. The full board meets six or seven times per year. Each board member also serves on one of four subcommittees: Finance, Facilities, Policy, and Personnel. Each subcommittee meets as needed throughout the year.

The Administrative Leadership Team meets two or three times each month, to oversee the daily operations of the Consortium and its programs.

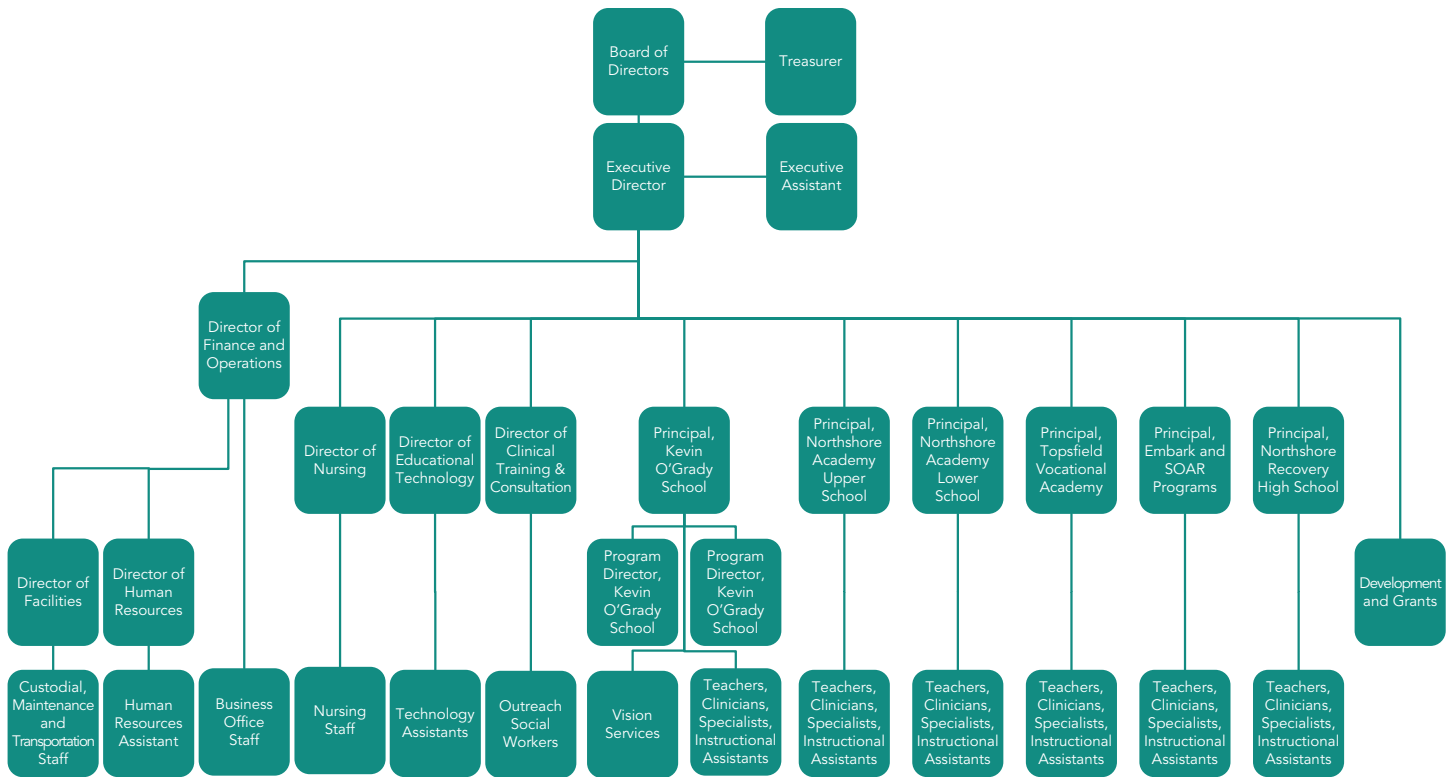
## MEMBER DISTRICTS / BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2023-2024

-  Beverly Public Schools - **Dr. Suzanne Charochak**
-  Danvers Public Schools - **Mr. Dan Bower**
-  Gloucester Public Schools - **Mr. Ben Lummis**
-  Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District - **Mr. Eric Tracy**
-  Ipswich Public Schools - **Dr. Brian Blake**
-  Lynn Public Schools - **Dr. Evonne Alvarez**
-  Lynnfield Public Schools - **Mr. Tom Geary (interim)**
-  Manchester-Essex Regional School District - **Ms. Pamela Beaudoin**
-  Marblehead Public Schools - **Dr. Theresa McGuinness (interim)**
-  Masconomet Regional School District - **Dr. Michael Harvey**
-  Nahant Public Schools - **Mr. Anthony Pierantozzi**
-  North Reading Public Schools - **Dr. Patrick Daly**
-  Peabody Public Schools - **Dr. Joshua Vadala**
-  Pentucket Regional School District - **Dr. Justin Bartholomew**
-  Reading Public Schools - **Dr. Thomas Milaschewski**
-  Rockport Public Schools - **Dr. Mark Branco**
-  Salem Public Schools - **Dr. Stephen Zrike**
-  Swampscott Public Schools - **Ms. Pamela Angelakis**
-  Triton Regional School District - **Mr. Brian Forget**
-  Tri-Town School Union - **Dr. Scott Morrison**



# Collaborative Information

## ORGANIZATION CHART



### ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM, 2023-2024

**Francine Rosenberg**, Executive Director

**Larry Fleming**, Director of Finance and Operations

**Rebecca Rein**, Director of Nursing

**Eric Aldrich**, Director of Educational Technology

**Windi Bowditch**, Director of Clinical Training and Consultation

**Martha Krol**, Principal/Director, Kevin O'Grady School

**David Mercier**, Principal/Director, Northshore Academy Upper School

**Tracy Farraher**, Principal/Director, Northshore Academy Lower School

**Lynsey Page**, Principal/Director, Topsfield Vocational Academy

**Ellen Heald**, Principal/Director, Embark & SOAR Programs

**Michelle Lipinski**, Principal/Director, Northshore Recovery High School

**Monique Bourgault**, Director of Facilities

**Nancy Celli**, Director of Human Resources



# Mission / Core Values & Beliefs / Vision

## MISSION

The mission of the Northshore Education Consortium is to support member districts by offering high quality, cost-effective school programs, consultation, professional development, support services and resources to ensure that districts can provide successful learning experiences for all students, including those with complex or low-incidence special needs.

## CORE VALUES

1. Individualized, Strength-Based Education
2. Compassion and Respect
3. Teamwork and Collaboration
4. Excellence and Lifelong Learning

## GUIDING BELIEFS

1. Communities need a broad continuum of options for children with disabilities and other risk factors.
2. All children deserve an education that allows them to achieve their full human potential, whether that means preparation for college or career, or maximum independent functioning and quality of life.
3. All children deserve an education that is individualized, strength-based, and has high expectations for achievement.
4. People with disabilities and their families deserve to be treated with compassion and respect.
5. Best outcomes are achieved through multi-disciplinary teamwork and collaboration between families, educators, and community partners.
6. Every member of the community, regardless of age, role, or ability should be engaged in a continuous learning process with a commitment to the highest level of excellence.
7. All of our work must be rooted in a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.



## LONG-RANGE VISION

Our vision is to provide a continuum of services for our region, to ensure the best possible outcomes for all students, particularly those with risk factors or disabilities. We will strive to do this by providing outstanding educational programs, but also by becoming the “go to” resource in the region for individuals looking for consultation, training, information or guidance around helping children with special needs.

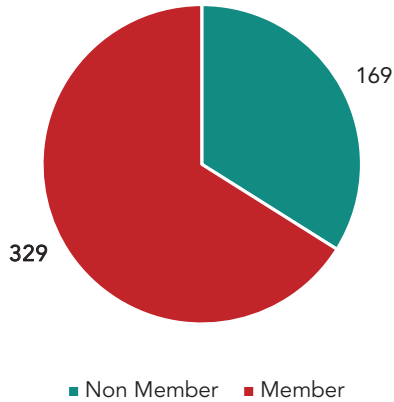
We will achieve this vision by continuously developing the following:

1. High quality, specialized programs for children with complex special needs, addictions, or other unique challenges. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. Assuring that our programs utilize the latest evidence-based and culturally proficient practices.
  - b. Assuring that high standards are set for all students, regardless of disability, and that we are continuously measuring our success in meeting those standards.
  - c. Assuring that we have access to current technology, adaptive equipment, and other resources necessary for preparing our students for college, career, citizenship, and maximum independent functioning.
  - d. Providing opportunities for students to experience a rich array of opportunities beyond the core curriculum, including arts, fitness and wellness, community trips and activities, service learning, internships and supported work opportunities.
  - e. Maintaining strong connections to community organizations that provide medical and mental health services.
  - f. Providing supports and services for the families of our students
2. State-of-the-art professional development opportunities for our own staff and those from our districts, enabling them to stay up-to-date on best practices for complex youngsters.
3. Consultation, home, and school-based services that respond to the needs of our districts.
4. Partnerships with other schools and collaboratives, colleges, state and community agencies to advocate for and promote the interests of children and young adults with complex needs and their families.

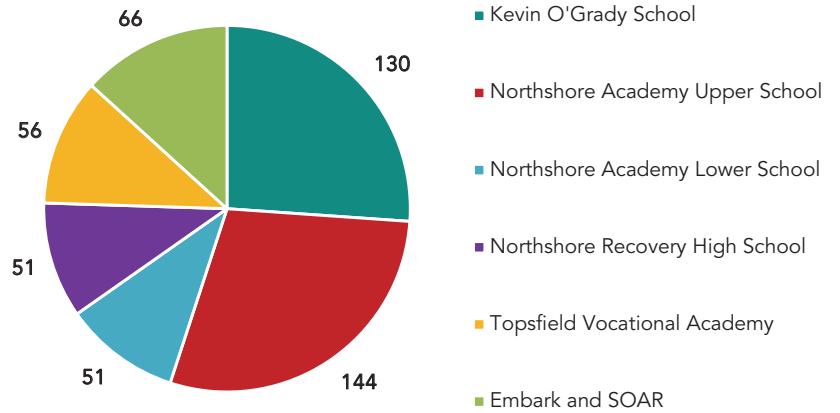
# School Programs 2023-2024

During the 2023-2024 school year, Northshore Education Consortium's approved day schools served 498 students from 20 member and 46 non-member districts.

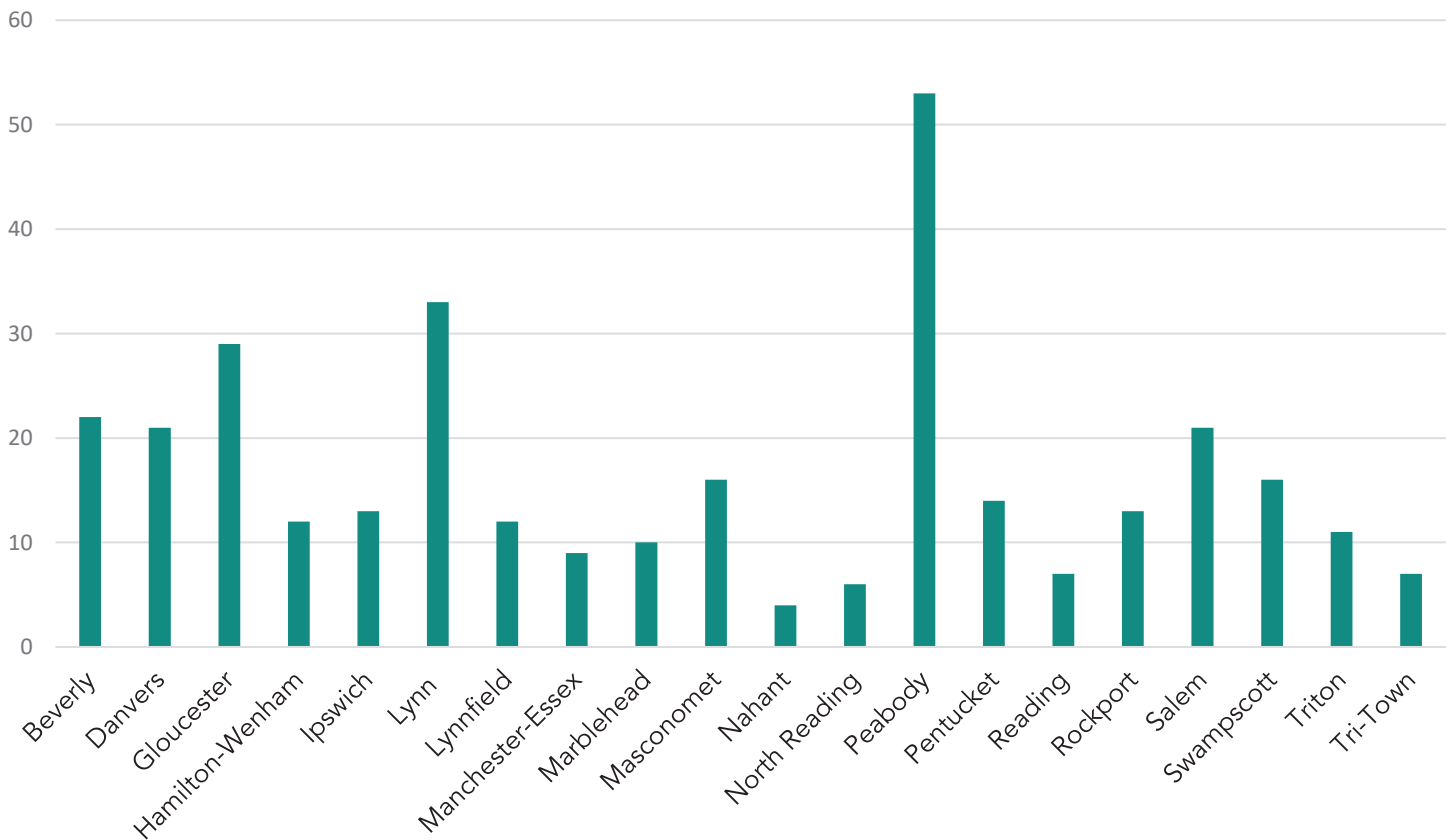
### STUDENTS FROM MEMBER & NON-MEMBER DISTRICTS



### STUDENTS BY PROGRAM



### STUDENTS SERVED BY MEMBER DISTRICTS

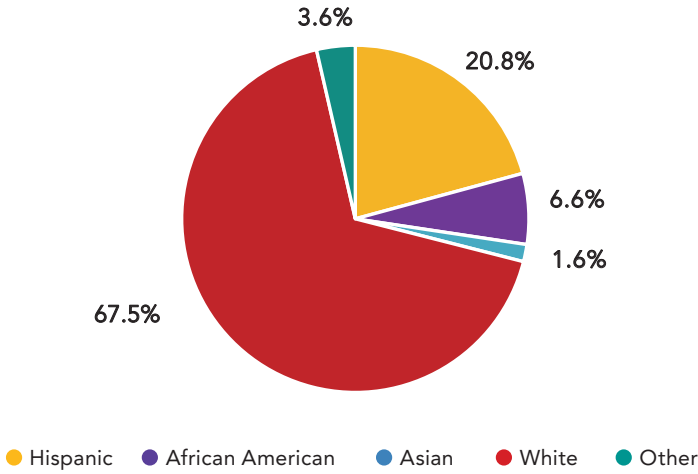




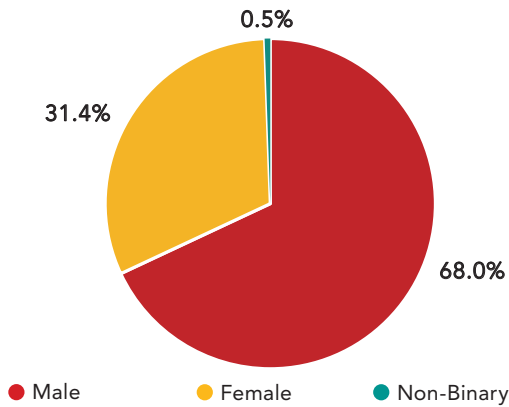
# Demographics 2023-2024

The following information is based on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education School and District Profile Data.

## RACE & ETHNICITY



## GENDER



## ADDITIONAL DATA

High Needs	98.9%
First Language not English	7.9%
English Learner	1.6%
Low-Income	65.3%



“I just feel so confident and safe dropping him off every day. You can feel the love flowing out the front door.”

- NEC Parent



# Kevin O'Grady School

112 SOHIER ROAD | BEVERLY, MA

The **Kevin O'Grady School (KOG)** serves students ages 3-22 with significant developmental disabilities including:

- Intellectual impairments
- Autism
- Multiple disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Complex medical needs
- Sensory impairments
- Visual impairments

The staff of the Kevin O'Grady School believes that team collaboration is essential to maximize each student's level of independence, development of functional life skills, and academic achievement. Various services and therapies are integrated within the classroom setting, offering a more intensive model of support and intervention. The school focuses on developing academic and life skills to maximize students' educational potential and increase opportunities for meaningful participation in home and community activities.

During the 2023-2024 school year, KOG served 130 students from 34 districts.

MCAS-Alt portfolios were submitted for all eligible students in grades 3-10.

## APPROACH

At the Kevin O'Grady School, each student's program focuses on developing these core skills:

- Communication (including augmentative and assistive technology)
- Functional academics
- Activities of daily living
- Social and leisure skills
- Pre-vocational and vocational skills
- Movement and functional mobility
- Adaptive behavioral skills

## SPECIALIZED SERVICES

- Vision, orientation and mobility and deafblind services
- Support groups and workshops for families
- Augmentative and assistive technology assessments
- Adaptive equipment and wheelchair clinic

## PROGRAMS

### Foundations Program

The Foundations Preschool/Kindergarten classroom provides intensive services for children ages 3-6 with special needs. The program follows the Massachusetts Department of Education Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences. Within an integrated classroom with peer models, students acquire the communication, social/emotional, and self-help skills they need to successfully transition back to schools within their community or other specialized programs. All services are provided within the classroom to assure comprehensive integration and carryover of learning objectives. In addition to their bright, cheerful classroom, children enjoy playing on the school's beautiful, accessible playground for young students. A glider, swings, climbing structure and sensory stations provide outside fun for children of all abilities.

### Access Program

The Access Program provides intensive services for students ages 6-22 with multiple impairments, including students with complex medical needs. Students actively engage in daily routines, activities, and experiences that provide optimal levels of stimulation required to explore their environment and increase quality of life. For some students, complex medical issues require frequent care from qualified personnel. Nursing services and therapies are integrated into the classroom with the emphasis on teaming with classroom staff to meet the objectives of each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Families are provided with support to complete the guardianship process and transition planning becomes an important focus of the IEP. Behavioral interventions are developed as a team and coordinated by Board Certified Behavior Analysts.



## Reach Program

Reach provides intensive services for children ages 6-13 on the Autism Spectrum or who have developmental or intellectual impairments. Students acquire the academic, communication, social/emotional and self-help skills they need to reach their full potential. Teachers use research-based teaching methodologies. The emphasis is on learning through systematic instruction, including structured teaching and applied behavior analysis. Adaptations, including sensory diets, augmentative communication systems, adaptive equipment, and environmental supports, enable students to engage actively in learning. Behavioral interventions are developed as a team and coordinated by Board Certified Behavior Analysts.



## Strive Program

Strive classrooms provide intensive services for students with intellectual and multiple impairments, including students with autism and complex medical needs, 7-22 years of age. Students acquire the ability to access the curriculum through varied targeted developmental communication and/or motor skills. Adaptations include: sensory diets, augmentative communication systems, adaptive equipment, and environmental supports that enable students to actively engage in learning. Families are provided with support to complete the guardianship process and transition planning becomes an important focus of the IEP. Behavioral interventions are developed as a team and coordinated by Board Certified Behavior Analysts.



## Target Program

Target provides intensive services for adolescents and young adults ages 11-22 who are on the Autism Spectrum or have intellectual impairments. Students focus on the academic, communication, social/emotional, self-help, pre-vocational, vocational, and life skills needed for them to become active members of the community. Students begin by practicing skills within our structured, in-house vocational centers including: Training Center, Recycle, Supply & Delivery, Clerical, and Prime Products. Job skills include: recycling paper, cans and bottles, stocking shelves, making items to sell, and preparing mailings. They also work on developing independence and responsibility by participating in community outings and vocational internships. Students undergo a comprehensive vocational assessment to identify their skills, strengths, and vocational interests. Families are provided with support to complete the guardianship process and transition planning becomes an important focus of the IEP. Behavioral interventions are developed as a team and coordinated by Board Certified Behavior Analysts.



# Northshore Academy Upper School

126 SOHIER ROAD | BEVERLY, MA

Located in Beverly, **Northshore Academy Upper School (NSAU)** serves students in grades 7-12 who struggle with a variety of social, emotional, and psychological challenges. Students may also have learning disabilities, be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum disorders or be dealing with several of these challenges simultaneously. NSAU served 144 students from 40 districts during the 2023-2024 school year. Fifteen students participated in work opportunities to learn job skills within the school and three students participated in dual enrollment classes through North Shore Community College. Nine students graduated. Four of these students went on to college, one entered the workforce, one took a gap year, and two continued to receive special education or other additional services. At NSAU, social/emotional learning is fully integrated into the students' day with a multi-tiered system of support enabling them to focus on academic progress while also enhancing the core social/emotional competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.

NSAU's programs and services have been designed to help students enhance their academic and social skills to prepare them for return to their school district, college, and/or job placement. This is accomplished through assigning each student to a multi-disciplinary team of professionals which includes an academic advisor, clinician, and behavior specialists. This team and the students' parents/guardians work together to meet the individual student's needs using innovative educational programming. Core academics take place during the first half of the day along with skill focus strands and vocational opportunities through its Media, Art, Cosmetology, and Culinary programs. Various social/emotional enrichment opportunities are provided in the afternoon in the form of Outdoor Adventure classes, Health and Wellness classes, Leadership groups, and student-interest clubs. All students have an Individual Educational Plan and are referred through the Special Education Department of the student's sending school district.

## ACADEMICS

- An integrated curriculum, which includes multi-sensory learning, art, drama, and music education, project-based learning, and opportunities for physical and recreational development, including a dynamic outdoor adventure program
- Small classroom size, which provides a more intensive and focused learning environment for students
- Enhanced computer and technology programming exposing students to a broader educational experience
- Academic testing to accurately assess the educational strengths and needs of each student
- Vocational programming and work study opportunities presenting college and/or employment options to students



## CLINICAL SERVICES

- Psychosocial assessment to accurately determine social, emotional, and behavioral interventions needed to support student success in the classroom
- Case management coordinating school-based services and/or facilitating referrals to outside agencies for substance abuse treatment, psychiatric assessment, and individual and/or family therapy
- Family supports and communication
- School-based counseling
- Psycho-Social Educational Groups (i.e., life skills, anger management, transition to young adulthood, teen health, social skills, college and career preparation, social thinking curriculum-based groups, etc.)
- Art/expressive therapy
- Speech and language, occupational therapy, or physical therapy if needed
- Positive Behavior Interventions Systems



# Northshore Academy Upper School

## STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

- Social skill development specific to classroom and community interaction (anger management, decision making, critical thinking)
- Crisis management
- Positive Behavior Intervention plans and emotional support targeted at keeping the student in their classroom
- Restorative practices to create a positive culture, develop personal insight, improve social dynamics

## TRANSITION PLANNING AND COLLEGE PREPARATION SERVICES

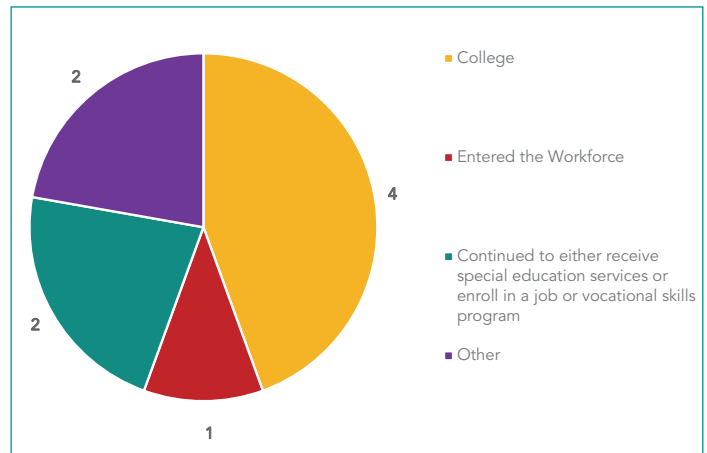
- Career awareness and exploration activities (job shadows, class sessions, and workshops)
- Career center workshop
- College planning and preparation throughout the year
- Internships
- Classes on employment and career development skills
- Numerous college and trade school tours and information sessions
- Transition Planning Night for parents to provide information about college exploration, career preparation, digital portfolio use, the IEP process and transition planning, and how to use community resources and supports to prepare students for life after high school
- Close collaboration with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
- Onsite PSAT and SAT
- Dual enrollment

## ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

- Intramural basketball and soccer teams
- Saturday and school vacation hiking trips
- Drivers Education provided on site in collaboration with Triad Driving Academy
- After-school “LAN” parties (Local Area Network) which give students an opportunity to come together and develop social skills while engaging in a variety of gaming activities
- Electives, including digital media and technology, culinary arts, fine arts, cosmetology, music, drama, and rock climbing



## POST-GRADUATION PLANS



*NSAU served 144 students from 40 districts during the 2023-2024 school year. Nine students graduated. Four of these students went on to college, one entered the workforce, one took a gap year, and two continued to receive special education or other additional services.*

# Northshore Academy Lower School

83 PINE STREET | PEABODY, MA

The **Northshore Academy Lower School (NSAL)** is located in West Peabody and serves students in grades K-6 who struggle with a variety of social, emotional, and psychological challenges. Students may also have learning disabilities, be diagnosed with Autism Spectrum disorders, or be dealing with several of these challenges simultaneously. NSAL served 51 students from 26 districts during the 2023-2024 school year.

NSAL features small self-contained classrooms with a great deal of individual support. Clinical and behavioral support staff work closely with each classroom team, creating a closely connected multi-disciplinary team working with each student and their family.

In recent years, Northshore Academy Lower School has worked to embrace a Trauma-Informed approach. Five staff members have completed a certificate program in trauma & learning through Lesley University. All staff have completed Level 1 training through MGH's THINK:KIDS program, and five program leaders received intensive coaching on the implementation of their Collaborative Problem Solving approach. We are proud that these efforts have resulted in a decreased need for time-out or physical intervention.

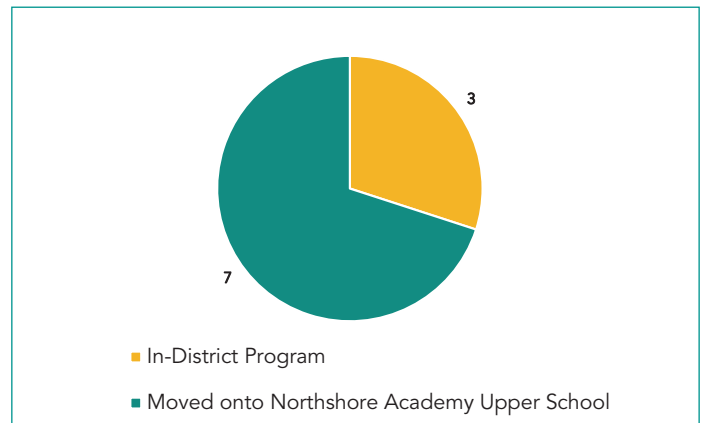
NSAL has filled a need for districts to provide comprehensive, short-term assessments for young children in crisis. These students receive a comprehensive multi-disciplinary assessment and the district receives concrete recommendations on what the child will need to make educational progress and/or return to a less restrictive placement.

Many students who attend Northshore Academy Lower School, whether for a short- or a longer-term placement, are able to return to a less restrictive environment.

During the 2023-2024 school year, 10 students “graduated” from NSAL; either because they were ready to return to a less restrictive environment or because they completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Three of these students returned to an in-district setting, while seven moved onto Northshore Academy Upper School.



## SCHOOL PLACEMENT POST GRADUATION



*During the 2023-2024 school year, 10 students “graduated” from NSAL; either because they were ready to return to a less restrictive environment or because they completed 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Three of these students returned to an in-district setting, while seven moved onto Northshore Academy Upper School.*

# Topsfield Vocational Academy

248 BOSTON STREET | TOPSFIELD, MA

**Topsfield Vocational Academy (TVA)** is located in Topsfield and serves students in grades 9-12 with a range of learning, social-emotional, and behavioral health challenges.

During the 2023-2024 school year Topsfield, Vocational Academy educated 56 students from 31 districts. Nine students graduated in 2024 and all of them have an interest in working in the community. One student continued to our SOAR program, two students were offered full time jobs at their vocational placements. Two students were accepted to and plan to attend college. One of those students received a significant scholarship and the Honor's Award. Two students are currently applying to college after graduation.

In addition to academic and clinical programming, TVA features onsite vocational shops in the areas of culinary arts, print design, and carpentry. Students also participate in independent offsite jobs, as well as supervised, small group offsite vocational opportunities.

TVA offers a wide variety of community-based vocational internships. TVA maintains a partnership with the Essex Shipbuilding Museum, giving students the opportunity to

participate in building boats and learning about the maritime history of the region.

TVA supports diverse learners. We educate the whole child and teach them, not only the academic content they need to graduate from high school, but also the life skills, training, and global perspective they need to be successful in a changing world.

Last year we integrated community-based trips into our curriculum to expose our students to a variety of environments and to build capacity with social expectations. In addition to fun community-based trips, students also give back to the community through a variety of community service opportunities and service learning projects.

TVA embraces connections and we have started planning events with our families and local community members. We started a Spring Festival last year that celebrates the diverse cultures of our community and brings people together for food and celebration. We are hoping to continue this tradition and more.

TVA provides a unique learning environment with supportive staff where students are able to build confidence and capacity.



# Northshore Recovery High School

112 SOHIER ROAD | BEVERLY, MA

**Northshore Recovery High School (NRHS)**, located in Beverly, is designed to meet the complex needs of high school students who struggle with substance use and co-occurring mental health/academic needs. Since we are aware that this journey is not linear, especially for young people who struggle with substances, we continue to work with students who are still working towards their individual recovery goals. We will continue to provide a harm reduction approach to working with students and their families.

**Unlike other NEC programs, students can be referred to NRHS by schools, parents, courts/state agencies, mental health providers, and other youth-serving agencies.**

Funded by the State Department of Education and local school districts, NRHS provides students a trauma-informed high school environment with specialized clinical and intervention support needed by students who are struggling with issues related to substance use, trauma, mental health, and learning challenges.

During the 2023-2024 school year, NRHS served 51 students from 20 communities. Eleven students graduated in June 2024. Most of them are gainfully employed and working towards developing strategies to continue to address their substance use and stabilization needs.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

- NRHS' competency-based curriculum aligns with Massachusetts Frameworks, MCAS testing protocols, and course requirements of the districts we serve.
- While not a special education placement, staff at NRHS are able to meet the needs of students with IEPs who require accommodations and/or specially designed instruction.
- Students are eligible for graduation from their sending school district. The NRHS Guidance Director is responsible for coordinating requirements and credits needed for graduation with sending districts.
- Guidance staff work closely with districts, treatment providers, and other residential placements to provide an accurate transcript for enrolled students.
- NRHS provides wrap around case management for students who have complex histories with court, the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, and other community adolescent and adult serving agencies.
- Recovery Counselors and Social Workers develop wraparound recovery plans for all students. The plan includes academics, substance use, stabilization supports, transitional services, employment, and mental health needs.
- Staff works closely with parents/guardians and collaborating partners to provide clinical and behavioral support and find ways to support our students and their families.
- All students participate in clinical groups and drug testing as part of the program.
- NRHS Counselors will be available for onsite support and referral recommendation and facilitation as needed.





# Transition Programs

SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY | 121 LORING AVENUE | SALEM, MA

NEC's **Transition Programs (SOAR & Embark)** prepare young adults ages 18-22 with moderate learning, psychiatric or intellectual disabilities for successful independence and employment, and in some cases, continuing education.

Nineteen students graduated from Embark and SOAR in 2024. Fourteen received diplomas, and four received certificates of completion. Nine of these students went on to paid employment and college. Three students went on to supported employment. Five went on to adult day programs, although four of these students also had paid employment with varying levels of support. All students completed travel training and learned to use public transportation, and one received their driver's license. Nine of the students completed certificates in CPR, First Aid, Serve Safe, or OSHA. At the time of graduation, 17 students were receiving ongoing support from DDS and MRC, two from DCF.

## Embark Program

The **Embark Program** is located at the Enterprise Center at Salem State University and is geared toward students with learning delays and intellectual disabilities. Students use the college campus resources (such as the library, bookstore, wellness center, and food court) to enhance their academic, vocational, and physical education. In 2023-2024, Embark served 29 students.

### PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The Embark experience has two major components: independent life and occupational development. The components are integrated and together contribute to the successful transition of each student from home and school to independent life.

#### Independent Life

The Independent Life component focuses on foundation skills:

- Using resources within the community
- Public transportation training
- Consumer skills
- Social skill training and application
- Leisure options
- Oral and written communication; computer literacy
- Current events and issues
- Health issues and other issues pertaining to adult sexuality
- Occupational Development

#### Occupational Development

The Occupational Development component includes foundation skills, vocational/career preparation and placement, occupational assessment and advisement; internship opportunities. Students must attend Embark for a minimum of two years, up to a maximum of four years. The program sequence is individualized and includes the following:

- Vocational assessment
- Internship and/or job placement
- Residential living preparation
- Transition-related issues
- Maintaining employment



# Transition Programs

## SOAR Program

**SOAR** is a specially designed transition program for students ages 18-22 with Autism Spectrum disorders, anxiety disorders and related diagnoses. The goal of the program is to assist students in transitioning to college and the world of work and to support students in becoming confident contributing members of society.

The SOAR program is located at the Enterprise Center at Salem State University. Students will experience the benefits of campus life while learning life and career skills such as travel training, organization, study skills, and social functioning. The program is geared toward students motivated to prepare for the next level of independence on a college campus or in the work force. During the 2023-2024 school year, 37 students attended the program.

### PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- Self advocacy curriculum (self-awareness, self-disclosure)
- Time management
- Physical education (self-calming, self-regulation, yoga, wellness activities)
- Study skills (test preparation)
- Class etiquette
- Executive functioning supports/skills training
- Negotiating
- Weekly community trips
- Transportation options (travel training, rideshare options)
- Leisure activities
- Social skills
- Vocational training through paid and unpaid community based internships
- Use of a variety of technology options



# Consultation, Contract Services & Regional Collaboration

During the 2023-2024 school year, Northshore Education Consortium provided vision, orientation, and mobility services to 81 students from 20 districts, and mental health consultation or wraparound services to 57 students from 13 districts.

## CONNECTIONS WRAPAROUND PROGRAM

The Connections Wraparound Program now has three full time licensed clinicians providing outreach and support to high risk students in our member districts. Grant funding enabled us to continue to increase our capacity to new districts. Connections served 57 students from 13 districts, provided wraparound support to students from the regional PASS program, and provided training and consultation to participating districts and community members on topics such as professional boundaries, mental health, community resources, trauma and substance use.

## DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY TRAINING AND CONSULTATION

In August of 2023, grant funding further enabled us to host a large free conference on youth and substance use and provide subsequent substance use training in the fall for our district schools and community partners at no cost. In addition, we provided in-district clinical supervision to three member districts, as well as behavioral/programmatic consultation to several other districts. We continued to provide grant-subsidized Youth Mental Health First Aid training.

## REGIONAL JOB-ALIKE GROUPS

Northshore Education Consortium continues to host the expanded job-alike groups for Special Education Administrators, team chairpeople, and school psychologists, providing much-needed collegial support.

We have over 100 people in the email groups for Team Chairs and Out of District Coordinators, and an average of 33 attendees at each meeting, representing 12 districts.

Our School Psychologist Group has 70 members, with an average of 25 attending each meeting. We provide these groups free of cost to our members.

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION

We are pleased to collaborate with the YMCA of the North Shore and Children's Friend and Family Services/JRI to run the very successful Positive Alternatives to Student Support Program, providing alternatives to long-term suspension for youth experiencing behavioral health challenges.

We also had the privilege of partnering with the Justice Resource Institute and the Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth as part of a grant funded initiative to provide training in the area of youth substance use.

In addition, we are proud that several members of our leadership team have presented at the Youth at Risk Conference and through Massachusetts Partnerships for Youth.

## NORTHSHORE EDUCATION CONSORTIUM FAMILY CENTER

The Northshore Education Consortium Family Center runs several parent support groups and maintains a comprehensive resource library filled with books, pamphlets, and other materials on a wide range of disabilities and special education, mental health, and substance abuse issues. These resources are available for parents and professionals throughout the region.

"It has been such a pleasure working with your team and I appreciate everything you have done for my district's students. I appreciate always feeling so welcome at NEC."

- Special Education Team Chairperson



# Cost Effectiveness of Programs & Services

Northshore Education Consortium's approved day programs are both cost effective based on a clear financial analysis of rates, but also enable districts to save on transportation costs by keeping students closer to home, and they are able to provide a higher quality service to students by pooling specialized expertise within one central location.

The simplest way to discuss the cost effectiveness of NEC-approved public day programs is to compare them to private special education placements that serve similar populations. (See chart on page 21.)

Based on an analysis of private schools serving similar populations, member districts can save over \$300 per day (over \$50,000 per year, not including transportation costs) by sending a student to an NEC program. NEC tuition rates include all therapy and nursing services.

## **COST EFFECTIVENESS OF NORTSHORE RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL**

It is difficult to articulate the cost-effectiveness of Northshore Recovery High School based on financial analysis. There are only five Recovery High Schools in Massachusetts, and there are not a lot of similar programs or schools to compare them to. By providing a regionalized Recovery High School, we are able to offer highly specialized services to a targeted group of high risk teenagers and enable these students to receive the needed supports to earn their diplomas. Most districts would be unable to provide these services within districts, as the cohort of students who need the services would be too small.

Districts were charged tuition of \$83 to \$133 per day depending on special education needs and member status.

The full cost of providing clinical and recovery services is subsidized by a Massachusetts Department of Public Health grant for after school, summer, and vacation programming.

Many of the students, prior to enrollment at Northshore Recovery High School, were utilizing extensive mental health services within their public schools or were enrolled in public or private day or residential schools with tuitions ranging from \$260 (Northshore Academy Upper School) to over \$700 per day.

## **COST EFFECTIVENESS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

We continue to provide a range of job-alike groups for special education and clinical staff from our member districts at no cost. Over 150 professionals participate in these groups. We have been successful in seeking philanthropic grants to offset the cost of most of our training and consultation services. In FY24 we charged member districts \$150 per hour for professional consultation whereas, when we have needed to hire consultants to work with our staff, we have paid upwards of \$250 per hour.

## **SUBSIDIZING THROUGH PHILANTHROPY AND GRANTS**

Given our desire to keep tuition rates affordable and to provide the highest quality programs and services for our students, we have expanded our capacity to seek private philanthropic dollars to supplement and enhance what we are able to provide without increasing tuition rates. During the 2023-2024 school year, Friends of Northshore Education Consortium raised approximately \$400,000 through grants and private donations. This enabled us to provide low-cost training, purchase new technology and communication devices, as well as to support a wide range of extracurricular and enrichment activities. The Friends of Northshore Education Consortium is an established 501(c)(3) non-profit that exists for the sole purpose of supporting NEC programs through fundraising efforts including events, grant proposals and major gift donations (EIN# 61-1479553). In addition to philanthropic grants, several DESE and DPH grants have helped us to expand what we are able to offer to students in terms of academic and SEL programming.



*Friends of NEC's annual road race, Festivus 5K for Autism, raised over \$37,000 in 2023 to support NEC students.*



*Thanks to a Tower Foundation grant in support of our Transition Programs in Salem, students are using a variety of tech devices to design images which are transformed into products with 3D printers.*

# Cost Effectiveness of Programs & Services

## Severe Disabilities

School	Daily Rate FY 24
NEC - Kevin O'Grady School: Member	\$475
NEC - Kevin O'Grady School: Non-Member	\$588
BC Campus School	\$577
Beverly School for the Deaf: Children's Communication Center	\$583
Melmark	\$605
Nashoba Learning Group	\$609
Kennedy Day School	\$616
NE Center for Children	\$663
Hopeful Journeys	\$684
Perkins School for the Blind: Intermediate	\$1,033

## Emotional Disability (Grades K-12)

School	Daily Rate FY 24
NEC - Northshore Academy, Topsfield Vocational: Member	\$263
NEC - Northshore Academy, Topsfield Vocational: Non-Member	\$324
St. Ann's	\$374
New England Academy	\$403
Arlington School (McLean)	\$451
Walker	\$521
Community Therapeutic Day School	\$542
Dearborn Academy / School for Children	\$593
Lighthouse School	\$699
Manville / Judge Baker	\$730

## Intellectual Disability / Autism (Ages 18-22)

School	Daily Rate FY 24
NEC - Embark/SOAR: Member	\$226
NEC - Embark/SOAR: Non-Member	\$263
Riverview School	\$428

# Progress toward Achieving Purpose & Objectives

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The purpose and objectives of Northshore Education Consortium are stated in the Collaborative Agreement as:

## **PURPOSE**

The Consortium exists to provide education and related services as requested by its member districts, including, but not limited to programs and services for children with low-incidence disabilities and professional development for teachers and other related service professionals. These programs and services will also be available for non-member districts.

The collaborative Board of Directors (herein, “the Board”) has the authority to decide that the Consortium should provide services, programs, and/or assistance for its member districts in addition to those outlined in the first paragraph, consistent with applicable laws and regulations related to educational collaboratives.

## **FOCUS**

The focus of the Consortium is to provide innovative, high quality, cost-effective educational services for students with complex or low-incidence disabilities, to provide resources for member districts, and to serve as a regional center for planning and problem solving for member districts.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The overall objectives of the Consortium are:

1. To play a leading role in defining the future role of collaboratives in the Commonwealth.
2. To strengthen and expand the Consortium programs and services in a cost-effective manner that meets the needs of students and faculty in member districts and the region.
3. To develop new programs for students, particularly those with special needs, allowing them to meet the highest academic, social, and life-skill objectives in accordance with emerging evidence-based practices.
4. To provide high quality, highly relevant professional development for the employees of the Consortium & member districts. In terms of Objective 1, the Executive Director continues to be a regular participant in Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaborative (MOEC) state-wide and regional meetings, is a regional representative to the MOEC Board, and will become President of the MOEC Board next year. In addition, she convenes regular meetings of regional SPED administrators and maintains connections to the region’s universities and child-serving state agencies.

In terms of Objective 1, the Executive Director continues to be a regular participant in Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaborative (MOEC) state-wide and regional meetings, and is currently serving as President of the Board. In addition, she convenes regular meetings of regional SPED administrators and maintains connections to the region’s universities and child-serving state agencies.

Progress toward meeting Objectives 2-4 is generally assessed in an ongoing way by looking at utilization of programs and services, gathering both formal and informal data about student outcomes, and gathering both formal and informal feedback from consumers including school district personnel and parents. Information about utilization, outcomes, and cost effectiveness is contained in each of the program descriptions in earlier sections of this report.

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## Strategic Goals

We have continued to be guided by our three strategic goals:

**Goal 1: Continue to Strengthen Quality of Programs and Services**

**Goal 2: Maintain Financial and Leadership Stability for Long-Range Sustainability**

**Goal 3: Expand capacity to meet Regional Needs around Special Education and Youth at Risk and participate in larger scale efforts**

Specific accomplishments:

Goal 1: Educators attended high quality PD sessions with a focus on implementing curriculum and pedagogy that is culturally proficient, brain based, trauma informed, and differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners. We implemented Dreambox Learning to increase targeted skill development in reading, and began to work with TNTP to implement the Appleseeds early literacy curriculum.

Goal 2: A smooth transition to a new CFO took place this year. Under his leadership we continued to update structures and systems in our business office, began a major capital project and several smaller ones, and implemented a new purchasing system. In addition, we upgraded our emergency preparedness by implementing the RAVE Panic Button app. We have been successful in applying for and receiving both state and philanthropic grants to offset expenses. And, we have improved our recruitment, hiring, and onboarding procedures.

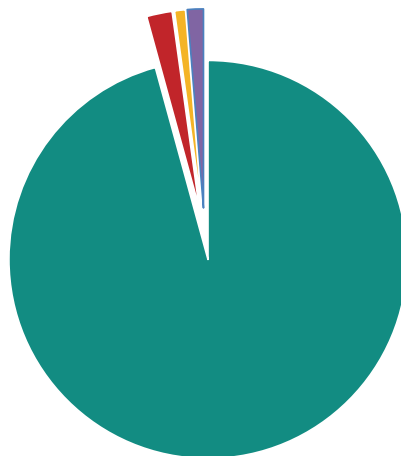
Goal 3: NEC played an important role throughout the year in supporting our region by offering well-attended job-alike groups, offering training on stress, trauma, and mental health, and providing clinical consultation and wraparound programming. Senior staff continued to be active in state-wide coalitions and committees, and to provide training and consultation to member districts as well as to the broader community. Executive Director Rosenberg served as President of MOEC, helping to coordinate statewide advocacy efforts on behalf of educational collaboratives.

# Financial Summary FY 2024

A snapshot of Northshore Education Consortium’s financial performance is included below. For more detailed information, please see the Audited Financial Statements and Uniform Financial Report.

## FY 2024 REVENUE SOURCES

Source	Dollars	Percentages
Tuition and Fee for Service	\$30,913,073	95.74%
Commonwealth of MA - Recovery High School	\$669,962	2.07%
Membership Fees and Interest	\$285,805	0.89%
Philanthropy	\$420,000	1.30%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$32,288,840</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



- Tuition and Fee for Service
- Commonwealth of MA - Recovery High School
- Membership Fees and Interest
- Philanthropy

## FY 2024 EXPENSE CATEGORIES

Program Payroll, Tax, and Benefits	\$23,884,295	80.27%
Occupancy	\$1,491,749	5.01%
Administrative Services	\$2,173,587	7.30%
Program Expense	\$968,695	3.26%
Depreciation and Amortization	\$1,237,172	4.16%
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$29,755,498</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



- Program Payroll, Tax, and Benefits
- Occupancy
- Administrative Services
- Program Expense
- Depreciation and Amortization



**NORTHSHORE  
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CONSORTIUM**

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