

Happy New Year!

SCESC approved our 2026-2027 Tuition and Program rates. Please look for rates in your district office so that SCESC can support your district in budget preparation.

1. Although rates have increased - SCESC has remained competitive. Our rates increased 3% across our programs for the 2026-2027 school year in comparison to other ESC's and APSSD's.
2. SCESC is willing to work with individual districts in support of student programming for Project Search. Project Search is at Newton Hospital under Atlantic Health. Currently DVR is offering financial assistance to interns enrolled for this school year and anticipating next school year with up to \$15,000 in tuition support. SCESC will refund the districts of those interns.

Our goal includes maintaining a program that is vibrant, well organized, financially able to support itself and dynamic for our interns. Reach out to John O'Hara johara@sussexesc.org if you have several students you are considering for this program.

3. Teacher Observations/Evaluations- SCESC will work with your district to support your administrators in completing the tasks. Our staff includes consultants that are veteran administrators with a wealth of knowledge in all certificated areas but primarily focus on related service staff and special education staff.
4. Preschool Expansion Programming: Sussex County ESC has worked with 8 districts to hire Preschool Instructional Coaches and Preschool Intervention and Referral Specialists. SCESC can utilize these staff members to support your districts with the roles of these essential staff members in your preschool programs.
5. Special Education Programming- this is the heart of what we do. Our dynamic program at Northern Hills Academy is "the best kept secret in Sussex County." What we do with our students is phenomenal! Instruction specializes in the students' needs. Programming is offered 1:1 and in small groups.

BOARD OF DIRECTOR's and FULL REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

Next Sussex County ESC Board of Director's MEETING - February 2nd at 7pm at
Northern Hills Academy (10 Gail Ct, Sparta, NJ 07871)

REMINDER March 2nd is our BUDGET meeting.

This is a FULL REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY MEETING
7pm Northern Hills Academy.

The last two months have been increasingly busy with preparing for the new year and all the required timeframes that go with that. The Superintendent completed evaluations of staff, nurses and the mid-year reviews of all custodians, administrative assistants and administrators. State reports have been completed for all required information. Corrective Action Plan on Attendance has been reviewed and information for 2025-2026 HIB/Restraint and Seclusion have been filed. Currently the Administrative Office is working on the Civil Rights Data Collection Report.

The superintendent met with the NJDOE- Early Childhood Educator staff to ensure that the Preschool Program initiative is implemented with fidelity and taking into consideration all compliance requirements. They were impressed with our program, our training of the Preschool Instructional Coaches and the efficiencies we have been able to put in place for our participating school districts. We have been reviewing our programming with the itinerant districts to ensure they are happy with the services we are providing.

The Administrative Team met to review the proposed rates for the 2026-2027 school year after an analysis was completed of other ESC's and competitive special needs schools. Marketing materials have been updated to reflect changes to programs and/or provide clarity to current programs. A letter about the cost saving efforts of utilizing Sussex County ESC in comparison to private special education schools/agencies will be shared with the rate sheet to all districts.

The budget process has begun. Staff are working on building their wish list items and each committee (technology, curriculum, professional development, safety) as well as each department will submit their proposals to be reviewed.

Northern Hills Academy

During the winter months, students at Northern Hills Academy have been actively engaged in various enriching activities. December was a particularly enjoyable month, highlighted by events such as Grinch Day, Flurries of Fun, and several spirited themed days. Students participated in a range of activities including baking, creating ornaments, and engaging in winter-themed gross motor activities, along with numerous projects.

A key event in December was our Breakfast with Santa, held on Saturday, December 13th. Many staff members generously volunteered their time to prepare breakfast items such as eggs, sausage, and pancakes for students and their families. Students also enjoyed holiday-themed crafts and activities and had the opportunity to take memorable photos with Santa. The hallways were beautifully decorated with festive decorations, creating a warm and joyful atmosphere throughout the day, which was filled with laughter and joy.

In addition to our weekly food bags, the Sparta Food Pantry generously provided holiday meals to many of our families. The Weekend Backpack program also provided generous donations of food and hygiene products. We concluded December with a visit from Schoolcraft, which offered complimentary school photographs for our students. Ronetco Shoprite once again partnered with our students to provide each family with a \$25.00 gift card.

The students and staff came back refreshed and rejuvenated in January looking forward to a fresh start to the school year. January is a month where everyone resets. Staff work on resetting behaviors and expectations for students.

The students have set up a coffee cart and are exploring the opportunities of setting up a business. They have ordered all the supplies to make coffee. They spent several weeks in December ordering supplies, receiving the supplies, counting the supplies and stocking our shelves. The students have been exploring sanitary concerns about serving coffee. They wear aprons and gloves. They are learning about the safety of the equipment and how to make the coffee. Before January, the students served 2 free days of coffee to staff. What a treat as they were training.

Now in January, students are working with the staff on ordering the coffee cart selections and collecting the money. Students have set up times to meet with the business office to turn in the money collected and how to continue the business. They are working on a name, uniforms and keeping our business afloat.

We have a scheduled inservice day with Attorney Marc Zitomer to review policy and procedures around new proposed policy and regulations. In addition, the inservice day will include opportunities for staff to collaborate with paraprofessionals on changes to student programs, academic support and behavioral data collection.

Project Search

The interns have all completed their first rotation at the hospital and their mentors have filled out their 10 week evaluations and all have done a great job! The 2nd Employment Planning Meetings have also been completed. Counselors and parents are very impressed with what the program is doing for their child so far.

Program Director John O'Hara was able to contact a Project Search graduate and a current intern and had them attend the SCESC Board meeting. The graduate talked about how PS was instrumental in her getting employed in the Radiology department for Atlantic Health and the current intern talked about his internship in Materials and how much he loves it.

Food Services has asked us to do a few different projects for them and were very pleased with the outcome. They were so pleased that they put together a lunch for all the interns and instructors to say thank you. Our Project Search classroom was chosen again to be the designated room for the hospital's annual holiday luncheon. The hospital utilizes our room as the dessert room. They offer patients, staff and visitors a free lunch with desserts. Very kind of them to offer this!

Our program continues to expand with locations wanting to participate within the hospital. We have 2 new internships! Cardiac Rehab has opened their department to us 5 days a week and Patient Volunteer Services has also opened their department to us. The Volunteer Services is going to be a great experience for our interns to develop their communication skills. The interns will be showing patients where to go in the hospital and offering patients books to read from the rolling book cart.

Marketing efforts are being put into high gear for the 2026-2027 intern selection process. The marketing department for Atlantic Health made a new Project Search poster with updated pictures to hang in the hospital. The Project Search instructor and hospital staff continue to post pictures of the interns contributing to the hospital during their internship.

Before the holiday break each department had a little celebration to thank their interns. The hospital is GREAT to us! We had a successful tour in December for a potential adult intern, and another planned for January for a potential student intern. We are all set to offer virtual and in-person presentations to inform districts and parents about Project Search services.

Finally, the interns have all started in their 2nd internship departments and all are learning new tasks and building on what was learned in their previous internship.

Non-Public/Itinerant Programs

Public itinerant continues to expand services and offerings. Some of the requests that SCESC has been unable to help with include speech therapists and BCBA's. These are currently areas that we are exploring for the next budget year. Some other ESC's have shared program expansion opportunities that include Service Dog Services that have gained popularity and are cost effective. Our team of administrators continue to explore additional opportunities under itinerant

Non-Public State meetings have begun again in earnest as a bill is awaiting the Governor's signature to change the structure of billing for services under Non-Public. The superintendent has been essential in meeting with the NJDOE -Office of Non-Public programs and Non-Public Directors across the state to support this change in funding process. The change that is anticipated has no initial funding set up for services to be provided, the funding that will be set up will be on a per service basis rather than a per student allotment and the reimbursement to public school districts will be in a different structure. However, the NJDOE has not shared information with public school districts, has not met to review any of the process changes and has yet to be signed by the Governor for an implementation date of July 1.

Preschool Programming

Each Preschool Instructional Coach (PIC) from SCESC covers 20 classroom programs for instructional coaches and 3 preschool intervention specialist positions in 7 school districts. Both PIC's are working on their schedules and ensuring they are meeting the timelines in each district. The Superintendent has met with them and followed up with administrators in the assigned locations so that schedules can be reshaped for the remainder of the year. Training in curricular support for Creative Curriculum Gold, Teaching Strategies, TPOT and the ECERS have begun.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

I hope everyone had a great holiday season and happy new year. In the business office we have been working with the auditors and have recently concluded the testing part. We received our draft audit report, and I am happy to report that we did not receive any findings or recommendations. That gives me confidence in the direction we are heading as we prepare for budget season. We are now working on closing out the calendar year and all that it entails. We will be working on sending out the appropriate tax documents to our employees. In the upcoming months the business office will be very busy with preparing the budget for the next school year. We will work closely with our vendors as well as the County Office to ensure that the process goes smoothly.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Sussex County Educational Services Commission is a public agency that seeks to create partnerships with public and nonpublic schools and local communities. The Sussex County ESC develops and provides meaningful programs for young people with unique challenges and their families. Our goals are designed to shape our students into productive independent adults. Sussex County ESC provides opportunities for the professionals in our communities to stay current with their educational practices while supporting districts with both cost-effective programs and a wide array of services.

Sussex County ESC Board of Directors

Thank you to the following Board of Director's Members and all BOE members for our representative districts.

District	Board of Director Member	As a reminder, Board of Director's members are asked to attend SCESC monthly meetings. Representative Assembly members are required to attend 2 BOE meetings a year- Budget meeting in March and Reorganization meeting in June. If your district Board of Education representative cannot attend the meeting, an alternate or the Superintendent can attend. Please let Anthony DeFelice know if your district changes your representative to SCESC and/or you have a change in person for a specific meeting. All new SCESC Board members are invited to a New BOE Member Orientation to be scheduled with Superintendent Andrea Romano. How to reach us Andrea Romano, Superintendent, 973-579-6980 x102 Anthony DeFelice, Business Administrator 973-579-6980 x123
ANDOVER	ROBERT KOROSKI	
BYRAM	LAUREN PEDERSEN	
FRANKLIN	KATHLEEN CLOHESSEY	
GREEN	MARIE BILIK	
HAMBURG	ROBERT JONES	
KITTATINNY	DEBRA COOK	
LAFAYETTE	SUZANNE ROSS	
NEWTON	JOANIE FAYE	
OGDENSBURG	BRENDAN DONEGAN	
SPARTA	ROQUE MARTINEZ	
STANHOPE	AVERY BADOLATO	
SUSSEX/WANTAGE	TAYLOR DELY	
VERNON	STEPHANIE VECHARELLO	
WALLKILL VALLEY	BRIAN SILIPENA	
WARREN HILLS	LISA MARSHALL	