DANVERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Specialized Programs

A guide to the district's specialized education programs

Danvers Public Schools offers specialized education programs designed to provide students with unique educational needs access to individualized instruction, meaningful access to the school community, and support for the students' overall academic, social, behavioral, and functional development. Each program is designed to support the strengths and needs of the individual learner while providing them access to a programmatic model that ensures continuity throughout their academic career.

A collaborative process

Program participation is determined through the IEP process. Families, educators, specialists, and other members of the student's team work together to understand the student's needs, identify appropriate supports, monitor progress, and plan for the student's continued growth.

Specialized Programs At-A-Glance:

EMBARK	STRIDE	RISE	SOAR
Autism, Intellectual, and Multiple Disabilities *Pre-K-12+*	Autism and Related Disabilities *Pre-K-12*	Social-emotional therapeutic *K-12*	Language-based *3-8*

EMBARK

Empowering Minds by Advancing Reach and Key Outcomes

Locations: Riverside Elementary (preschool), Smith Elementary (K–5), Holten Richmond Middle School (6–8), Danvers High School (9–12), and Danvers High School postgraduate

About the Program

The EMBARK Program provides individualized educational and behavioral support for students with complex developmental, behavioral, and communication needs. The program builds foundational skills for younger learners and increasingly emphasizes adaptive, daily living, vocational, and independence skills as students grow.

Who May Benefit?

- Students with complex developmental, behavioral, and communication needs.
- Students who have autism, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, or other neurological or developmental needs.
- Students who benefit from individualized instruction, structured learning opportunities, and support for communication, social interaction, adaptive functioning, and independence.

Program Model

Students learn through a combination of individualized instruction, small-group learning, and supported participation in general education and community settings. Instruction may include structured teaching, functional communication strategies, learning in natural settings, task analysis, social skills instruction, and positive behavior supports. Classrooms use visual supports, individualized work areas, sensory-friendly spaces, assistive technology, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) when appropriate.

Progress and Continuum

Student progress is monitored through ongoing assessment and data collection. The IEP team uses this information to adjust instruction and supports. When a student demonstrates increased skills and independence and is ready to participate successfully in a less restrictive setting, transition planning is developed collaboratively with the family and school team.

STRIDE

Success Through Readiness, Independence, Determination, and Excellence

Locations: Riverside Elementary (preschool), Smith Elementary (K–5), Holten Richmond Middle School (6–8), and Danvers High School (9–12)

About the Program

The STRIDE Program supports students with autism, executive functioning needs, and related disabilities who require specially designed instruction and supports to access grade-level curriculum and general education settings. The program emphasizes academic growth while also developing organization, communication, social, self-advocacy, and independence skills.

Who May Benefit?

- Students with mild to moderate disabilities who require specially designed instruction to access the curriculum.
- Students who may experience persistent needs in areas such as language, reading comprehension, written language, mathematics, executive functioning, processing efficiency, or social-pragmatic communication.
- Students who benefit from explicit instruction, individualized supports, and opportunities for meaningful participation with general education peers.

Program Model

Instruction is individualized and evidence-based, with high academic expectations. Students may receive direct instruction, differentiated instruction, small-group learning, structured peer interactions, executive functioning supports, functional communication instruction, and social skills instruction. Flexible classroom arrangements, visual supports, predictable routines, and assistive technology help students access learning and manage transitions.

Progress and Continuum

Progress is monitored regularly across academic, social, and functional areas. Supports are adjusted as students develop new skills and greater independence. When appropriate, students may gradually increase participation in general education and other inclusive settings.

RISE

Resilience, Inspiration, Support, Empowerment

Locations: Thorpe Elementary (K–5), Holten Richmond Middle School (6–8), and Danvers High School (9–12)

About the Program

The RISE Program provides individualized educational and therapeutic support for students whose academic, social-emotional, behavioral, or developmental needs significantly affect their ability to participate successfully in the general education curriculum and school community. The program combines academic instruction with support for emotional regulation, social skills, coping, self-awareness, and independence.

Who May Benefit?

- Students with significant academic, social-emotional, behavioral, or developmental needs requiring individualized specialized support.
- Students who qualify for special education under the categories of Emotional Disability and/or Other Health Impairment.
- Students who benefit from direct instruction and support in areas such as emotional regulation, coping strategies, social interaction, communication, self-advocacy, and responsible decision-making.

Program Model

RISE provides a structured, supportive learning environment with individualized plans and measurable goals. Depending on student needs, instruction and support may include academic teaching, social-emotional learning, behavior supports, communication instruction, coping strategies, and opportunities to practice skills in authentic school settings. Counseling and whole team consultation are integral components of the program.

Progress and Continuum

Students are monitored regularly across academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and functional areas. As students develop stronger self-regulation, independence, and academic skills, supports may be gradually adjusted. Transition decisions are made collaboratively by the student, family, educators, and specialists based on progress and readiness for a less restrictive setting.

SOAR

Strength, Opportunity, Achievement, Responsibility

Locations: Great Oak Elementary (3–5) and Holten Richmond Middle School (6–8)

About the Program

The SOAR Program supports students with language-based learning disabilities. Students typically present with average to above-average cognitive abilities and benefit from explicit, systematic, cumulative, and multisensory instruction in literacy and related skills.

Who May Benefit?

- Students with language-based learning disabilities, including dyslexia.
- Students who experience challenges with reading, writing, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, or verbal expression.
- Students who benefit from structured literacy instruction, language-based strategies, assistive technology, and support for organization and executive functioning.

Program Model

SOAR uses a language-based, team-teaching model across content areas. Students receive specialized reading instruction and individualized strategies for reading, writing, language processing, and organization. Instruction may use multisensory approaches, explicit teaching, systematic skill progression, scaffolded practice, and strategy-based learning. Assistive technology and flexible small-group or individual instruction may also be used.

Progress and Continuum

Instruction and supports are adjusted as students strengthen their literacy skills and become more independent. Progress is monitored through assessment, IEP review, and team collaboration. When appropriate, supports can gradually fade while students increase participation in general education settings.



Decision Making

Placement in a specialized program is individualized. Students are considered through the special education referral, evaluation, and IEP process. The team reviews relevant information about the student's strengths, needs, current performance, and educational history. Families and all team members are active participants throughout this process, and the IEP identifies the goals, services, accommodations, and supports designed for the individual student.

- ## A Focus on Progress

Across programs, student progress is monitored regularly. Teams use assessment information, observations, student work, IEP progress data, and other relevant information to understand growth and make instructional decisions. The goal is not simply to provide support, but to help each student build skills, confidence, participation, and increasing independence.

- ## Questions About a Student's Program

Families with questions about specialized programming or their child's individual educational needs are encouraged to connect with their child's school team and special education administration.