

Entry Findings Report Hingham Public Schools



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July 27, 2020

“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope or dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our Nation.”

John F. Kennedy

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An Open Letter to the Hingham Community

As I sit and write the final draft of this *Entry Findings Report*, I find myself working remotely from home during what is arguably the most devastating health crisis in modern history. Without question, these past few months have been among the most challenging in my career, which spans more than three decades in education. Words and phrases such as COVID-19, Zoom meetings, and Social Distancing are now forever captured into our vocabularies and history. These are days in which it is oftentimes difficult to focus on routine work amidst the crises that arise each day.

On the evening of March 12, 2020, the Hingham Public Schools were turned upside down and thrust into a global health crisis. In the days prior to the closure, concerns about the “Coronavirus” swept the world like a tidal wave, consuming everything and everyone in its path, and shutting down and crippling global economies, one town, state, and country at a time. And finally, on March 13, 2020, Hingham Public Schools leadership, teachers, staff, students, families, and members of the community became witness to an unprecedented transition to remote learning.

The initial intent of this report was to share with the Hingham community what I had learned during my first year as Superintendent of Schools. In turn, that knowledge would provide the structure for a set of strategies and actions to lead the district into the future. While the outcome of this report remains unchanged, the impact of this global pandemic, the extended closure of schools, the shift in the delivery of education and instruction, and the impact on our local, state, and global economies cannot be overlooked.

Despite the challenges we all face each day during this horrific health crisis, we must not miss the opportunity to learn from it. As such, this report now becomes the vehicle to join what I learned about the District prior to the global pandemic with what I have experienced in leading the District during it. By doing so, the path to an even stronger and more resilient set of strategies and actions for a brighter tomorrow is clearer than ever.

In closing, I want to thank the members of the Hingham School Committee, the HPS administrative and leadership teams, faculty and all the support staff for their amazing and tireless work during this time. I am honored to work beside these incredibly talented and dedicated professionals that serve the children of HPS. Though these days are clouded with uncertainty about when this terrible pandemic will end, I am certain that we will not only get through this together, but we will emerge as stronger, better, and more unified than ever before.

Respectfully,

Paul Austin Ph.D.

Part 1: Relevant Background Information

The search for a new Superintendent for the Hingham Public Schools was a thorough and thoughtful process. Only 18 Superintendents have led the Hingham Schools over approximately the past 150 years. The historical longevity of its superintendents, school administration, faculty and staff have undoubtedly played an important role in creating and maintaining Hingham as one of the top school districts in the Commonwealth. Hingham Public Schools has also received recognition by the National Blue and Green Ribbon Schools program, and Hingham High School is regularly recognized as “One of the Best High Schools in America” by the U.S. News & World Report.

To begin the search for a new superintendent, the Hingham School Committee sought the services of a professional search firm. The New England School Development Council (NESDEC) was hired, and in September and October of 2018, NESDEC began their work by conducting a “Community Needs Assessment” through focus groups and an online survey. According to the NESDEC report “*Hingham Public Schools Superintendent Candidate Profile*” dated October 2018 (appendix A), 375 people participated in the needs-assessment process. Through focus groups and the online survey, NESDEC sought community input about the qualities, characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience they desired in a new Superintendent of Schools, and their perception of the most pressing tasks and challenges ahead for the new superintendent during the first six months to a year.

In January 2019 and after several months of interviewing, the Hingham School Committee selected me to succeed long-time superintendent Dr. Dorothy Galo as superintendent of Hingham Public Schools. Since then, I have spent numerous hours in our schools and observed dozens of classrooms, held multiple community coffee events, met with community and town leaders, and I have watched our students perform on stage and compete in dozens of athletic events. Through a listen, watch and learn approach, I have developed invaluable insight regarding the strengths and challenges of our school system, and the perceptions of stakeholders about the district. The purpose of this “Report of Entry Findings” is to share what I have learned over the course of my first year, and to provide the structure and support for recommended strategies that will guide the work of the Hingham Public Schools over the next three to five years.

Entry Findings Report Process

In the days since my start in Hingham Public Schools, I have reviewed and analyzed reports and quantitative data, and met with key stakeholders to obtain input on the current state of the district. Those meetings included the following groups:

- School Administration, including Principals, Assistant Principals, and Department Directors
- Teachers and support staff representing all six schools and Central Office
- Staff from Transportation, Facilities, Technology, and Special Education
- Central Office Support Staff
- Each member of the Hingham School Committee
- Town officials, including members of the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator, the Town Clerk, members of the Board of Health, the Fire Chief and the Police Chief
- Members of the Hingham Advisory Committee (a 15-member appointed board to make recommendations to voters at Town Meeting and serves as the town's finance committee)
- The Teacher Advisory Committee, consisting of teacher and administrator representatives from each of the schools
- Several parent organizations including the PTO's, Hingham Music Parents Association (HMPA), SEPAC, Hingham Education Foundation (HEF), and the Hingham Sports Partnership (HSP)

As part of the Entry Process, I also established recurring meetings with the following advisory committees:

- Superintendent's Cabinet – weekly meetings with the Central Office Administrative Team
- Administrative Council – a monthly meeting with the Superintendent's Cabinet and the school Principals
- Leadership Team – a monthly meeting with the Administrative Council, Assistant Principals, Department Directors, and Resource Teachers
- Superintendent/Student Leadership Team – a monthly meeting at Hingham High School with student representatives
- All Town PTO Meeting – a monthly meeting that includes PTO reps, SEPAC, METCO, and the Hingham Education Foundation
- Teacher Advisory Committee – a monthly meeting consisting of teachers and administrator representatives from each of the schools

Additionally, I represent the Hingham Public Schools to the following organizations:

- The Hingham Cable Advisory Committee (Board member)
- The South Shore Educational Collaborative (Board member)
- The Hingham Public Library (Ex-Officio Trustee)
- The South Shore Superintendent's Round Table (HPS representative)
- The South Shore Superintendent's Lighthouse Group (HPS representative)

In addition, I have attended more than 30 sporting events, many music and drama productions, school assemblies and award ceremonies. I have toured and assessed facilities, studied financial documents, and considered the human capital of the district. I have worked extensively with leadership to set rigorous goals for themselves, their teachers, and their students.

This entry report also includes and incorporates observations and learning from the COVID-19 crisis, and the ensuing closure of schools that began on March 13, 2020. All of these findings of entry will be documented over the next several pages and will conclude with several recommended strategies and actions that I believe are most critical for the district to address over the next 3-5 years.

Mission Statement -- Vision Statement -- Core Values

Hingham Public Schools have previously adopted Mission and Vision Statements, and an established set of core values, which are prominently displayed across the district and are considered the foundation for the work of the District.

Hingham Public Schools Mission Statement

The mission of the Hingham Public Schools is to provide challenging and comprehensive educational programs in a safe and supportive environment, enabling all students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary for success as local and global citizens. In partnership with families and the community, the Hingham Public Schools strives to develop in students:

- Academic excellence, including content knowledge, communication skills, critical thinking skills, and problem-solving capability
- Habits of physical and emotional well-being, including a spirit of self-worth, resiliency, and adaptability
- Personal responsibility, integrity, and active citizenship
- Responsibility for the environment
- Skillful and responsible use of technology
- Respect for the diverse views and backgrounds of others
- Collaborative engagement as a means of both learning and problem solving
- Intellectual curiosity that motivates future learning
- Creative expression through the fine, performing, and applied arts

Hingham Public Schools Vision Statement

Hingham Public Schools will provide excellence in the educational experience in an enabling and safe environment to empowered, excited, and supported learners in partnership with engaged and collaborative parents and community partners and an enthusiastic, innovative, and well-educated faculty who strive to expand and enhance learning opportunities utilizing enabling, equitable, and sustainable finances.

Hingham Public Schools Core Values

Hingham Public Schools value:

- Respect for Self and Others
- Fulfillment of Individual Potential
- Commitment to Life-Long Learning
- Civic Responsibility
- Service to Others

Part 2: Stakeholder Perceptions of Hingham Public Schools

NESDEC Community Needs Assessment (Completed in October 2018)

The results of the *Needs Assessment* completed by NESDEC suggested that the community desired a new superintendent who demonstrated significant depth of skill and knowledge in the following areas:

- Student Focused and Future Focused Leadership
- Inclusive and Effective Communication and Collaboration
- Effective and Efficient Development and Oversight of Budget
- Facilities and Asset Management

NESDEC also identified the tasks and challenges the community perceived as focus areas during the first year for the new superintendent. The focus areas identified were:

- Build relationships
- Communicate effectively with constituents
- Delegate to ensure you have the time to engage in the specific work of the Superintendent
- Oversee the PK-12 redesign of the special education program
- Lead the efforts for a Foster School Project
- Oversee the continual improvement of our educational program
- Analyze current policy and procedures
- Ensure safety and security across the district
- Establish a Human Resources Department
- Update the website and communication tools
- Identify effective administrative practices

The Stakeholder Interview Process

As part of the “listen and learn” process, I conducted a series of in-person interviews in both individual and group settings. The interviews took place during the summer and fall of 2019, and included conversations with town officials, school committee members, administrators, teachers, support staff, program directors, Parent-Teacher Organization leaders, and students. Each participant was asked the same set of questions and their responses were documented, tabulated, and analyzed to identify common themes and trends among the respondents. All participants were asked the following 6 questions:

1. What are the strengths of the district/what do you think HPS does well?
2. What are the challenges/things that need improvement?
3. What are three priorities you think the district should focus on for the next 3-5 years?
4. What barriers do you see impacting the work of the district?
5. If you could implement one change this year, what would that change be?
6. How can the district improve communication between stakeholders?

The Interview Results

The following themes were identified through the analysis of the interview responses. A brief synopsis of respondent responses has been included for each theme.

Identified Strengths of the District

1. **HPS has a talented and dedicated teaching staff.** Hingham is able to attract and retain strong teachers, who prepare students for the future.
2. **HPS has a strong curriculum that prepares students for the future.** The curriculum is well-rounded and provides students with the resources they need to be successful.
3. **HPS has a wide variety of academic and extracurricular activities for students.** The diverse range of offerings allows students to find their path and their areas of success.

Identified Challenges of the District

1. **Improve equity and access to resources.** The district, and parents, can be very focused on those who excel – academically and athletically – and the students “in the middle” do not receive the same level of attention or acknowledgement.
2. **Improve internal and external communications.** Constant and consistent communication to all stakeholders is critical, and we need to ensure that all communication is positive and productive.
3. **Improve District consistency and collaboration.** Improved collaboration among administration, school leadership, and teachers will help to identify best practices and to ensure consistency between schools.

Identified District Priorities

1. **Ensure equity and access to resources for all children.** There is a need to ensure that there are appropriate offerings available to all HPS students, through academics, the arts, and athletics.
2. **Pay attention to social emotional needs and academic intervention and support.** The Hingham Public schools must provide teachers with the tools that they need to support students in the classrooms, and partner with parents on how to support our students.
3. **Address the District infrastructure needs.** Create a physical environment that supports student learning and pursue opportunities to “go green”.
4. **Improve Special Education services.** There is a need to take a critical look at the relationship between Special Education and Regular Education. This is also an area in which collaboration is critical.

Identified Barriers that might impact the work of the District

1. **School funding concerns.** The Hingham Public Schools, like the rest of the town, is challenged to find the right balance of funding to support our students.
2. **Understanding the community, parental demands and expectations.** Parents and administration need to be open-minded, set realistic expectations, and partner to determine what is best for our students.
3. **Time and resource management.** Stakeholders question whether we will be able to meet the needs of our teachers and students with tight budgets, increasing enrollments, and the increased needs to address the social/emotional needs of students.

Identified as Most Critical for the District

1. **Improve HPS communications.** Focus areas should include an improved website, improved top-down communications, and a consistent method for teachers to communicate with families.
2. **Improve and increase collaboration.** Continue to improve the relationships and connectedness between the schools so that we can work together as one team to overcome our challenges.
3. **Address budget issues.** Stakeholders have requested that the budget process become more transparent and that we increase Per-Pupil spending.
4. **Adjust the school schedule.** Complete a comprehensive review of the school calendar, including the start and end times of the school day.

Focusing on Communications

1. **Improve the methods of communication.** Vehicles should include an improved district website, improved use of social media, in-person meetings, community events and speaker series.
2. **Improve the way we communicate.** The way we communicate is equally as important as the vehicles that we use to communicate. Our stakeholders have asked that we model the norms for appropriate interaction and set clear expectations for positive and productive communication. They desire communication that is genuine, honest, collaborative, and timely.
3. **Be inclusive in our communications.** Communication must include all internal and external stakeholders, including administration, principals, teachers, parents, METCO families, volunteers, community members, and town officials.

PART III: Curriculum --Assessment -- Special Programs – Behavior and Retention

Curriculum and Instruction -- Student Data

Hingham Public Schools offers a comprehensive, robust, and challenging curriculum to its 4,300 students in grades Pre-K-12. Delivered by an exceptional and experienced teaching staff, we strive to ensure that every student is provided with opportunities and coursework that enable them to grow, find success, and achieve their maximum potential. Hingham students are provided with a well-rounded education that includes multiple levels of academic rigor for the core areas, world languages, arts and humanities. These offerings are available to all students from early elementary through high school. A substantial number of students have historically participated in Advanced Placement (AP) courses. On average since 2013, nearly half (45.6% average) of the senior students were enrolled in at least one AP course at Hingham High School. In comparison and for the same years, an average of 34.9% of juniors and 6.2% of sophomores were enrolled in AP courses at Hingham High School. AP courses are not available for Freshman, and Sophomores have only one course to choose from (World History). Although the high number of students enrolled in AP courses should be celebrated, concerns were raised by survey respondents in regard to equity of access to AP courses. A review of available 2018-19 data indicated that the number of female students enrolled in AP courses was substantially higher than the number of male students. By gender, 61.51% of AP students were female and 38.49% were male. By race, 92.06% of AP students were white; 3.57% Asian; 3.17% Hispanic; and 1.19% Multi-Racial, Non-Hispanic. By select populations, 3.9% of AP students were considered economically disadvantaged (10 out of 252 students) and only 0.4% of AP students were listed as students with disabilities (1 out of 252 total AP students).

Number and Percentage of Students Enrolled in AP Program												
Year	Grades 12/11/10			Grade 12			Grade 11			Grade 10		
	Enrollment	# in AP	% in AP	Enrollment	# in AP	% in AP	Enrollment	# in AP	% in AP	Enrollment	# in AP	% in AP
2019	909	255	28.1%	279	131	47%	313	106	33.8%	317	18	5.7%
2018	924	266	28.8%	326	153	47%	284	89	31.3%	314	24	7.6%
2017	909	261	28.7%	296	126	42.6%	329	121	36.8%	284	14	4.9%
2016	904	254	28.1%	275	136	49.5%	296	106	35.8%	333	12	3.6%
2015	863	227	26.3%	281	120	42.7%	278	89	32%	304	18	5.9%
2014	822	238	29.0%	250	113	45.2%	288	104	36.1%	284	21	7.4%
2013	829	248	29.9%	278	125	45%	262	100	38.2%	289	23	8%

Source: Participation Data – HPS Counseling Dept. *CEEBS report typically uses % of **graduates** for grade 12 data which may differ from the number of **students** enrolled in grade 12. This report uses the number of **students** enrolled in grade 12 in each given year.

Advanced Placement Tests, Participation and Performance (2018-2019)						
	Number of Test Takers	% of Total Test Takers	Number of Tests Taken	% of Tests Taken	% of Tests with Score 1-2	% of Tests with Score 3-5
All Students	252	100%	467	100%	5.8%	94.2%
By Select Population						
Economically disadvantaged	10	3.97%	15	3.21%	6.7%	93.3%
Students w/disabilities	1	0.4%	NA	NA	NA	NA
High needs	11	4.37%	16	3.43%	6.3%	93.8%
By Gender						
Female	155	61.51%	288	61.67%	5.6%	94.4%
Male	97	38.49%	179	38.33%	6.10%	93.9%
By Race/Ethnicity						
Asian	9	3.57%	13	2.7%	7.7%	92.3%
Hispanic/Latino	8	3.17%	11	2.4%	0	100%
Multi-race, Non-Hispanic	3	1.19%	4	0.9%	NA	NA
White	232	92.06%	439	94%	5.9%	94.10%

Source - Participation: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/adv_placement/ap_part_dist.aspx?orgcode=01310000&orgtypecode=5&

Source - Performance: http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/adv_placement/ap_perf_dist.aspx?orgcode=01310000&orgtypecode=5&

For the past five years, an average of 91.68% of Hingham graduates each year continue their education by enrolling in a 4-year college. This was a positive trend in comparison to the previous five-year period (2010-2015), in which 87.89%, or 3.9% fewer graduates enrolled in 4-year programs. According to the data, the reason for the increase in 4-year college enrollments since 2015 is that more students are choosing 4-year schools over Jr. Colleges or prep schools. Since 2010, an average of 2.4% of Hingham graduates each year moved directly to the workforce. Over the past 10 years, an average of approximately one-quarter of 1% of graduates join the armed forces (0.27%) each year. Over the past 10 years, an average of 1.5% of graduates chose a gap year or some other program after graduation each year. Finally, since 2010, an average of less than 1% of all graduates each year (.95%) were undecided about their future upon graduation.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Four Year College	89.0%	86.44%	88.01%	87.73%	88.28%	92.5%	91.5%	92.5%	90.7%	91.2%
Jr / Specialized College	4.0%	5.51%	5.62%	4.46%	5.44%	1.43%	4.0%	3.1%	3.7%	2.6%
Prep School	1%	2.96%	.75%	1.86%	2.51%	.36%	.4%	.68%	0%	1.1%
Total Continuing Education	93%	94.91%	94.38%	94.05%	96.23%	94.29%	95.9%	96.3%	94.4%	94.9%
Employment	1%	2.96%	.75%	3.34%	2.09%	3.93%	3%	.68%	3.7%	2.9%
Military	0	.42%	0	0	.42%	.71%	0	.68%	0	.4%
Gap year/ Other program	6	1.69%	2.25%	.74%	.42%	.71%	.7%	.68%	1.6%	.4%
Undecided	0	0	2.62%	1.86%	.84%	.36%	.3%	1.7%	.3%	1.5%

Source: HHS Class of 2019 – A Profile of College Testing and Placement

District and Student Assessment Data:

Historically, Hingham Public School students and schools have performed well above average on accountability measures as compared to other students and schools across the state. Accountability measures take into account student achievement, growth, engagement, attendance, and graduation rates. According to published DESE data for 2019:

- Hingham High School, with an Accountability rating of 80% (Meeting or Exceeding Targets) was in the 98th Percentile, meaning that Hingham High School outperformed 98% of all high schools across the state of Massachusetts.
- Hingham Middle School, with an Accountability rating of 61% (Substantial Progress towards targets), was in the 85th percentile, meaning that Hingham Middle School outperformed 85% of all middle schools in the Commonwealth.
- Hingham Elementary Schools had an average Accountability rating of 91.75% (each school Meeting or Exceeding Targets). The average Percentile was 96.25%, meaning that Hingham Elementary Schools outperformed 96.25% of all elementary schools across the Commonwealth. Additionally, student assessment results earned Foster Elementary School the DESE distinction of “2019 School of Recognition” for both High Achievement and High Growth.

2019 HPS Accountability Results		
School	Progress Towards Targets	Accountability Percentile
Hingham High School	80% - Meeting or Exceeding Targets	98 th
Hingham Middle School	61% - Substantial Progress Toward Targets	85 th
East Elementary School	92% - Meeting or Exceeding Targets	94 th
Foster Elementary School*	91% - Meeting or Exceeding Targets	99 th
Plymouth River Elementary School	91% - Meeting or Exceeding Targets	93 rd
South Elementary School	93% - Meeting or Exceeding Targets	99 th
* 2019 School of Recognition – High Achievement and High Growth		

Source: Report of District Accountability and Student Performance on the 2019 Next Generation Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS 2.0). Presented to Hingham School Committee November 18, 2019 – Dr. James M. LaBillois (slides 4-5)

In review of 2019 MCAS performance results published by the DESE, Hingham students far outperformed the average of all Grades 3-8 students in Massachusetts.

In English Language Arts (ELA), 83% of all Hingham students in grades K-8 met or exceeded state standards, compared to an average of 52% of all students across the state. In Math, 74% of Hingham students in grades K-8 met or exceeded state standards, compared to 49% of all K-8 students in Massachusetts.

For students in grade 10, 89% of Hingham students met or exceeded state standards for ELA in comparison to 61% for the all grade 10 students across the state. In Math, 83% of Hingham students met or exceeded standards compared to 59% of all 10th graders across the state, and in Science, 94% of Hingham 10th graders met or exceeded Science standards compared to 74% statewide.

Hingham students with *high needs* and *students with disabilities*, also outperformed their peers across the state. High needs is defined as “an unduplicated count of all students in a school or district belonging to at least one of the following individual subgroups: students with disabilities, English language learners (ELL) and former ELL students, or economically disadvantaged.” Students with disabilities are all students in a school or district with a disability, as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

MCAS Results – Meeting/Exceeding Expectations 2019			
All Students*			
Grade	Subject	Hingham	State
All Grades K-8	ELA	83%	52%
	Math	74%	49%
Grade 10	ELA	89%	61%
	Math	83%	59%
	Science	94%	74%

MCAS Results – Meeting/Exceeding Expectations 2019					
Grade	Subject	High Needs		Students with Disabilities	
		Hingham	State	Hingham	State
All Grades 3-8	ELA	48%	33%	37%	16%
	Math	41%	29%	30%	15%
Grade 10	ELA	53%	36%	39%	22%
	Math	34%	33%	21%	19%
	Science	70%	52%	65%	39%

Source: Hingham Public Schools – MCAS Assessment & Accountability Results Spring 2019. November 18, 2019 – Dr. James M. LaBillois (slide 8, 31, 47)

On the College Boards, Hingham High School students in the Class of 2019 achieved SAT scores considerably above the state and national averages. In Reading & Writing, Hingham students achieved an average score of 601, which was 42 points higher than the state average and 70 points above the national average. In mathematics, Hingham students achieve an average score of 600, which was 39 points above the state average and 72 points higher than the national average.

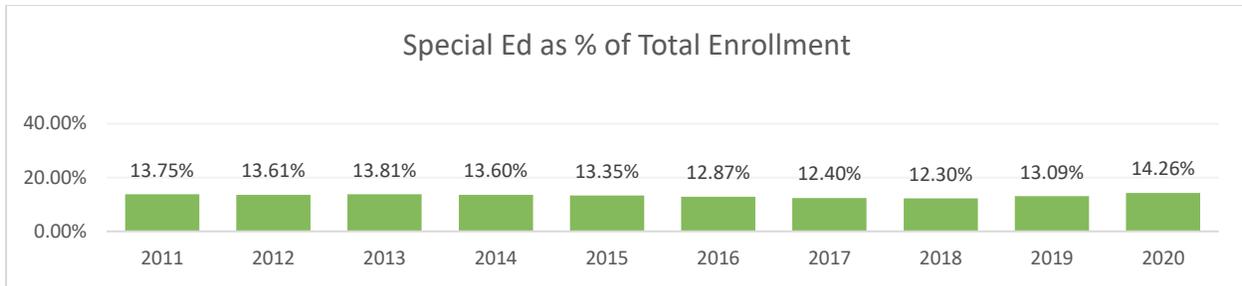
Hingham High School Class of 2019 SAT Scores Local, State, and National Comparisons			
	Hingham	Mass	National
Reading & Writing	601	559	531
Mathematics	600	561	528
Combined 1600	1200	1120	1059

Source: Hingham High School Class of 2019 A Profile of Testing and Placement

Special Programs and Services

Special Education

Hingham Public Schools has a comprehensive special education program that serves more than 600 children. While my entry findings highlighted recent positive changes to the special education program, the program itself was identified by interview respondents as a priority for the district in the future. More specifically, respondents said that there is a need for improved communication and collaboration between general and special education teachers to identify best practices, achieve consistency between schools, and to ensure that the needs of all students are met. In order to respond to these needs, an investment in the development of specialized programs and the hiring of additional faculty to address growing caseloads and student needs might be necessary. Additionally, concerns were voiced by administrators, teachers, and parents regarding the need for additional special education administration in the schools. Hingham has one Director of Student Services, but based on the large size of the district, state law requires that she focus solely on the administration of special education. Because of this, services such as counseling, ADA Section 504, nursing, and psychology, which generally fall under the student services umbrella, must be managed by other district administrators. Hingham has one Assistant Administrator of Student Services, who is responsible for the management of students placed “out-of-district” in order to meet their individual educational needs. The overall student identification rate for special education in 2020 is 14.26%, which is considerably higher than those identified in the previous 10 years, but below the state average. The reason for this increase is not readily known, but could be due, at least in part, to the fact that academic intervention services are inconsistent across the four elementary schools, and mainly address reading. However, increased math interventions have been added over the past few years. There are no formal academic intervention services at the secondary level, apart from reading labs that are reserved for the delivery of specialized reading supports to students with IEP’s (Individualized Education Plans). Without appropriate interventions in place, more children are identified for special education services.

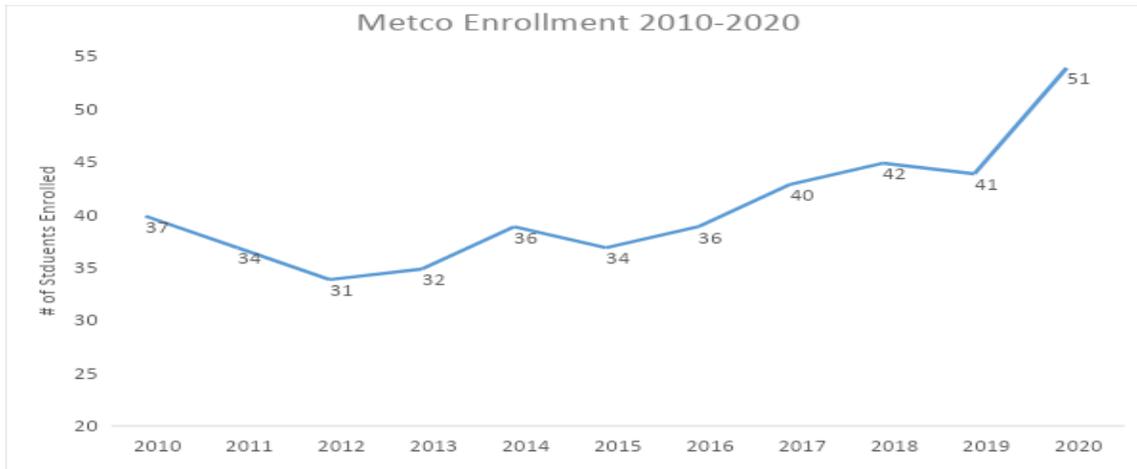


Source of Breakdown of Spec Ed Enrollment based on 10/1/2019 SIMS data

Approximately 18% of the students who attend Hingham Public Schools are identified as students with “*High Needs*” according to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. A student is considered “high needs” if he or she is designated as low income or economically disadvantaged, an English Language Learner (ELL), a former ELL student, or a student with a disability. Students with disabilities represent about 14% of the total population of students and approximately 5.5% of our students are socioeconomically disadvantaged. 1.7% of our student body comes from families where English is not the first spoken language in their homes. There is a disproportionality of students identified for special education services, with approximately 10% of students identified being students of color. This representative number is substantially higher than the overall number of students of color in the student body. This means that if you are a student of color in Hingham, you have a substantially higher chance for being identified as a student with a disability.

Hingham METCO Program

Hingham Public Schools have long supported the METCO program and were one of the first districts to participate in the state-sponsored program more than 50 years ago. This program is a valued part of Hingham Public Schools as reported by administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Over the course of the past 10 years, the Hingham METCO program has added more than a dozen new students overall, with a 2019-2020 enrollment of 51 students in all grades K-12. Of the 51 Boston METCO students who attend Hingham Public Schools, 26 students (51%) attend one of our elementary schools, 16 students (31%) attend Hingham Middle School, and 9 students (18%) attend Hingham High School. For 2020-2021 and beyond, Hingham Public Schools hopes to increase enrollment by 10 new METCO students each year, which will begin primarily at the elementary level. The METCO program is fully funded by the state of Massachusetts, and that funding includes a Hingham program administrator and student transportation.



Source: Enrollment Records 10/1 report for each year

Behavior and Retention

Data from DESE indicated that in 2018-19, only 43 students or 1% of the total student body received formal discipline for major behavioral infractions. By gender, 28 male students accounted for 65.12% of all disciplinary actions, while females (15) accounted for just 34.88%. By race, 83.72% of the 43 behavioral offenses were committed by white students, which resulted in an overall discipline rate of 0.93% or fewer than 1 out of every 100 white students. Based upon total representative enrollment, the number of African American students who received discipline was more than 5 times greater than white students, with a discipline rate of 5.48 students out of every 100 African American Students. Hispanic students had a discipline rate of 1.4 students out of every 100 Hispanic students. Asian, Native American, and Multi-Race/Non-Hispanic students all received discipline of less than 1 per 100 students.

In 2018-19, Hingham Public Schools retained 11 students. According to the DESE, 63.64% of the students retained were males and 36.36% were females. By race, 6.10% of all African American students were retained, which accounted for 27.27% of the total retentions in the district. In contrast, 0.80% of Hispanic students were retained and 0.20% of all white students. This data suggests that in 2018-19, African American students in Hingham were retained at a rate of 30 times higher when compared to white students.

Source:

Discipline Data:<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/ssdr/default.aspx?orgcode=01310000&orgtypecode=5&=01310000&Retention Data:>
<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=01310000&orgtypecode=5&leftNavId=16818&>

Part IV: The State of Hingham Public Schools: July 2019 – May 2020

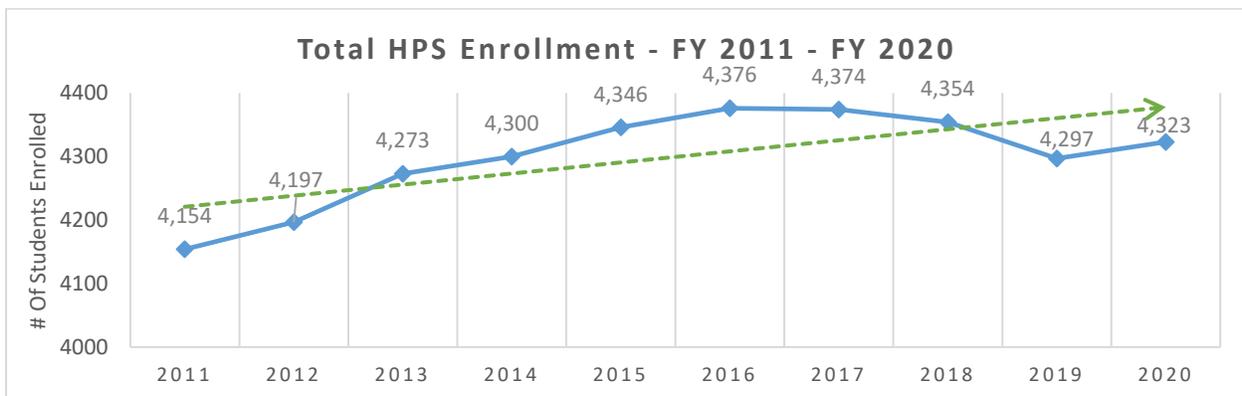
Facilities and Enrollment

The Hingham Public School district is located approximately 20 miles south of Boston, on the beautiful South Shore of Massachusetts. With its ease of access to the City of Boston and an outstanding school system, the town of Hingham is an appealing community to many young families. Hingham Public Schools is comprised of six buildings:

- East Elementary (PK-5)
- Foster Elementary (K-5)
- Plymouth River Elementary (K-5)
- South Elementary (PK-5)
- Hingham Middle School (6-8)
- Hingham High School (9-12)

The town of Hingham is trending toward a growth in student population. According to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), at the end of the 2018-19 school year, Hingham had 4,297 students enrolled (PK-12). For 2019-20, that number grew slightly to 4,323 and will likely continue to grow in the future. By gender, there are slightly more males in Hingham Public Schools than females, with male students comprising 51.37% of the total student enrollment. By race, 90.10% of Hingham students are white, 3.10% are Hispanic, 2.90% Multi-Racial/Non-Hispanic, 2.60% Asian, and 1.20% African American.

According to a projected enrollment study completed by the New England School Development Council (NESDEC) in 2018, “analysis of demographic information and enrollment data indicates that K-12 enrollments are likely to continue the present pace of growth, supported by additional residential construction.” This growth in the student population appears to coincide with growth of the overall population in the town of Hingham. According to the 2016 U.S. Census, Hingham had a population estimated at 22,762 people. By 2025, the projected population of Hingham will be 25,626, and by 2030, the population is projected to be 26,880. This information suggests that in just a 15-year period, the population of Hingham will grow by 4,188 people or 18.1%.



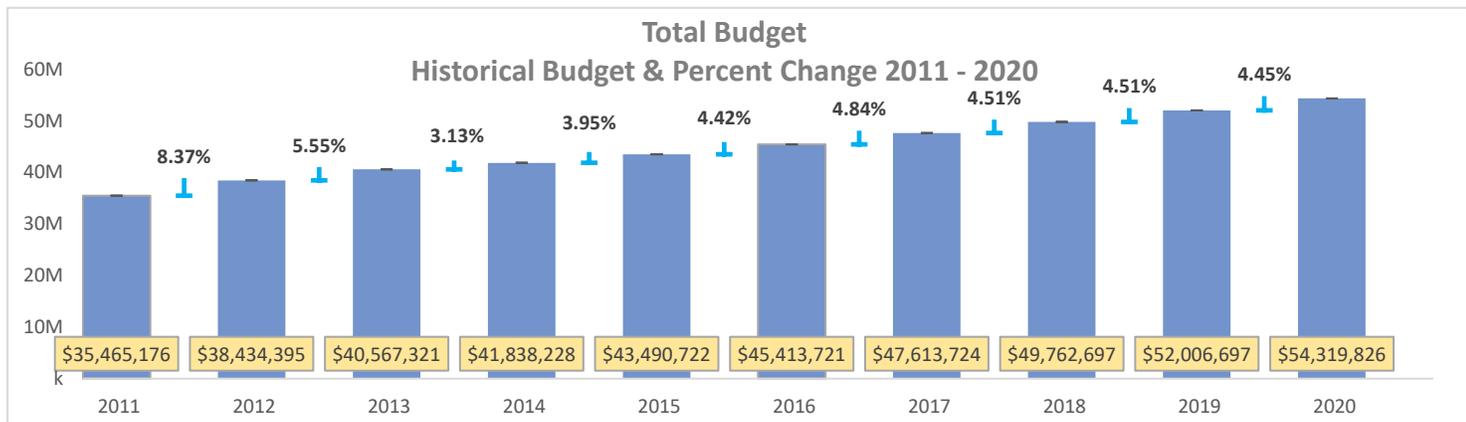
As the populations of both residents and students in the town of Hingham rise, combined with the critical need for suitable and safe educational and operational space in the district, the district must carefully and thoughtfully plan for the future, and in doing so, must consider the needs of all students.

Historical School Funding

The Approved FY '20 Hingham Public School Budget was \$54,319,826 and included several new positions, especially in special education. A review of the approved budgets for the past five years shows an average annual increase of 4.55%.

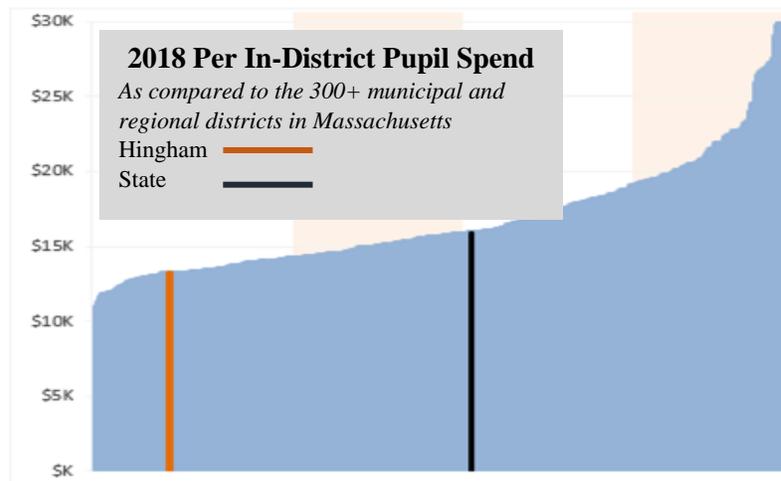
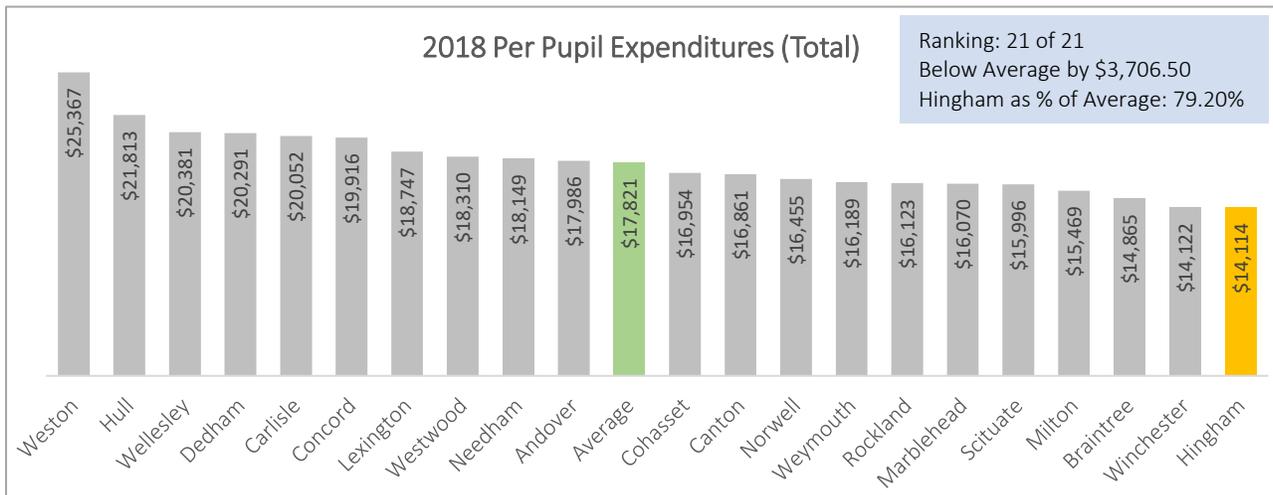
Historical Budget Data (FY '16 - FY '20)

	FY 2016	% chg	FY 2017	% chg	FY 2018	% chg	FY 2019	% chg	FY 2020	% chg
Regular Education	\$34,676,988	3.88%	\$36,063,107	4.00%	\$37,858,232	4.98%	\$39,267,938	3.72%	\$41,032,360	4.49%
Special Education	\$10,688,822	6.73%	\$11,476,094	7.37%	\$11,823,407	3.03%	\$12,612,073	6.67%	\$13,098,565	3.86%
Votech	\$47,911	-49.54%	\$74,524	55.55%	\$81,058	8.77%	\$126,685	56.29%	\$188,902	49.11%
Total	\$45,413,721	4.42%	\$47,613,724	4.84%	\$49,762,697	4.51%	\$52,006,697	4.51%	\$54,319,826	4.45%



During this entry period, I heard sharp contrast of opinions regarding the funding of our public schools. Some respondents said that the schools were adequately funded and that the leadership has managed resources very well. Others raised concerns that increases of more than 4% per year cannot be sustained. In contrast, some respondents said that the schools are underfunded, and that additional funding is needed for student intervention, special education services, and administration. Aside from public perception, data shows that per-pupil spending in Hingham is the lowest in comparison to its 20 benchmark communities and ranks near the lowest in comparison to all School Districts in the Commonwealth. In 2018, Hingham Public Schools spent \$14,112 per pupil, while the average per pupil expenditure for its benchmark communities was

\$17,820 per student. In comparison, Hingham Public Schools spends \$3,706 less per student than the average of its benchmark communities. These results should be viewed with caution, as reporting of district spending varies from community to community. For example, Hingham Public Schools does not report spending on benefits to employees or the cost for technology, as those items are contained within the town budgets and not listed under school spending. If those items were considered school expenditures, per pupil spending would increase overall.



Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/radar/>

In preparation for the FY '21 School Budget, the Hingham School Committee adopted “Guiding Principles” with a commitment to develop a budget that:

- Reflected the district mission, School Committee priorities, and community expectations for excellence and equitable access to education for all students
- Reflected known contractual obligations along with an allowance for negotiations with six operating budget Collective Bargaining Units
- Provided for continued personnel support for Central Office Administration, in particular in the human resource area
- Funded state and federal mandates and compliance with DESE and Department of Public Health regulations
- Funded the maintenance of, and capital improvement to, school buildings, fields, playgrounds and properties
- Funded projected utilities/energy costs and contracted services (such as those for transportation), preventative maintenance projects, and proactive assessment and planning for facilities/space needs
- Reflected gross costs as they are known or projected but then offset by anticipated local fees and revenues, state, and federal grants, including MA Circuit Breaker and IDEA, and revolving account allocations

For FY '21, the School Committee and School Department advocated for school funding that allowed for continued educational improvements, representing a balance between maintaining important Town services and achieving the Town’s long-term financial objectives, while also recognizing the limited sources of revenue. HPS administration presented a “status quo” budget of \$56,730,985, representing the required budget to meet the needs of students and to fulfill Federal and State mandates. At the request of the School Committee, administration also presented additional funding requests based upon district priorities. This additional funding request represented an overall funding increase of 6.15% for a total FY '21 budget of \$57,663,077.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the town Advisory Committee voted to support the HPS status quo budget of \$56,730,985, representing an overall increase of 4.44%. The HPS budget was also supported by the Board of Selectmen and would eventually be adopted by the Hingham School Committee. The pandemic and its impact on the economy remain unknown, but substantial losses in financial resources are expected. In support of the HPS FY '21 budget, the Board of Selectmen, town Advisory Committee, and the Hingham School Committee have all agreed to a financial management strategy and austerity measures to address anticipated revenue shortfalls. These measures maintain the requested budget as is but will require tight spending practices. Due to the expected financial impact of the COVID-19 crisis, the financial outlook for the schools is uncertain, and increased funding could be unlikely for the foreseeable future.

Buildings – Facilities/Grounds – Transportation

School Buildings

Hingham Public Schools has four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

East Elementary School, at 91,350 square feet, is the newest and largest elementary school in Hingham. East serves approximately 500 children in grades Pre-K – grade 5 and was opened in 2009.

South Elementary School, with 80,500 square feet, is the second largest elementary school in Hingham, serving approximately 500 students in grades K – 5. Built in 1948 and renovated in 1999, South Elementary is the oldest school in the district and has gone the longest without renovation.

The William L. Foster Elementary School was completed and opened in 1951 and was last renovated in 2000. Foster Elementary serves approximately 500 students in grades K-5. Although not as aged as South Elementary, the 73,636 square foot Foster School has been in serious disrepair for a number of years and as a result, was recently admitted into eligibility with the Massachusetts School Building Authority after submitting its third Statement of Interest in as many years. Replacing Foster Elementary has community-wide support, and the town is hopeful that a new school project will begin in 2022, with a potential school opening date as early as the fall of 2024.

Plymouth River School, better known as PRS, was opened in 1969 and has just celebrated its 50th birthday. Serving approximately 450 students, Plymouth River is the smallest of the Hingham Elementary Schools with 65,596 square feet and was last renovated in 2008. In February 2020, the district submitted a Statement of Interest (SOI) to the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) to replace building windows that are no longer energy efficient. At a possible cost of over \$3 million, funding from the MSBA would cover approximately one-third of the total cost for replacement.

Hingham Middle School is the newest of the schools in Hingham. Completed and opened in 2014, this beautiful, state-of-the-art building, houses more than 1,000 students in grades 6, 7, and 8 in its expansive and impressive 176,000 square foot frame.

Lastly, Hingham High School is the largest school in Hingham at nearly 218,000 square feet. Built in 1954 and renovated twenty years ago in 2000, Hingham High School is filled with more than 1,300 students in grades 9-12. Although the school is considered to be in good repair, this original building lacks appropriate classroom space for health and industrial arts, fitness, wellness, and inside athletic facilities are significantly outdated.

Facilities and Grounds

In addition to its six school buildings, Hingham Public Schools also has several additional buildings used by grounds and facilities, transportation, and storage. Buildings 12 and 179 in Bare Cove Park are used for storage and most recently housed the High School TRACES Alternative

Education Program. These buildings have now closed after town officials determined they were no longer safe for student programming. The closure, which occurred just prior to the Winter break in December, has caused a substantial hardship for the district. The TRACES program is an important program to the students and community, and School Administration and the School Committee are both committed to its continuance. Because Hingham High School does not have adequate space for the TRACES program, the district was forced to seek a commercial property rental, which was found in nearby Weymouth at an unexpected additional cost of \$5,000 per month. Since the town will no longer support Building 12 or 179 to be used as educational spaces, the district must choose to discontinue the TRACES Program or endure an increase of \$60,000 per year for this commercial lease in Weymouth.

The Central Administration Office is located within Hingham Town Hall, which was built in 1929 and once served as Hingham High School and Central Junior High School prior to becoming the town hall. Although well maintained, the space has simply become too small for the work of the district. The Central Office currently houses the following offices:

- Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent
- Director and Assistant Director of Student Services
- Director of Finance and Support Services
- Director of Human Resources
- Seven Administrative Assistants
- Four Accounting/Payroll employees

The Central Office space is not adequately configured for safety, confidentiality, or private workspaces.

Transportation

Although Hingham encompasses a fairly small geographical region of approximately 25 square miles, many students rely on transportation services provided by the district. According to the Director of Transportation, Hingham buses travel along 22 routes for a total of 1,500 miles each day. Hingham buses safely transport approximately 3,000 students each day and travel more than 270,000 miles each year.

Part V: Next Steps

The findings included in this entry report highlight that Hingham Public Schools have outstanding educators and the district has historically been able to attract and retain strong teachers who prepare students well for the future. HPS has a strong curriculum, which is well rounded and provides students with the resources they need to be successful in school and in life. HPS has a wide variety of academic and extracurricular activities for students, and through a diverse range of opportunities, students are able to find their individual paths to success.

Although there were many positive district attributes highlighted in this report, interviews with stakeholders and DESE data suggested several priority areas for future study and analysis. These future focus priorities will serve as the catalyst for district improvement, for which I will work collaboratively with the district leadership team in the coming months to develop.

The areas identified as future focus priorities are:

- A. Ensuring equity and access to academic, arts, and athletic programs for all students.**
- B. Attending to the social/emotional and academic needs of all students through appropriate interventions and supports.**
- C. Addressing district infrastructure needs.**
- D. Improving special education programs and collaboration.**

Priorities, Strategies and Questions

A. Ensuring equity and access to academic, arts, and athletic programs for all students

In addition to stakeholder interviews, DESE data also shows that Hingham students have a long track record for outstanding academic achievement. Ninety five percent (95%) of HPS students continue their education beyond high school, a substantial and noteworthy accomplishment that also speaks to the culture of a supportive community and its outstanding teachers. Although there is a high level of participation in advanced coursework at Hingham High School, students of color and students with disabilities are sparsely represented in advanced placement courses, if at all.

Focus area for future study:

- *The district will review, evaluate, and revise where appropriate, any policies, procedures, and practices related to student equity and access to academic, arts, or athletic programming.*

Questions to guide the work on equity and access:

- Do current district policies, procedures, or practices support and encourage all students to pursue advanced coursework, programs for the arts, and athletics?

- Why are more students of color and with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) not enrolling in advanced coursework in Hingham Public Schools?
- Do children with IEPs have equitable access to advanced course work, and are they encouraged to pursue advanced course work when appropriate?
- What policies, procedures, or practices should be developed and implemented to ensure that students from all the demographic groups in Hingham have access to the most advanced course work, including but not limited to Advanced Placement courses?

B. Attending to the social emotional and academic needs of all students through appropriate interventions and support

Some of those interviewed as part of this entry finding process said that the district is too focused on students who excel – academically and athletically – and that students in the “middle” do not receive the same level of attention and acknowledgement. There were few, if any, concerns related to student behavior mentioned by respondents, and DESE shows that Hingham experiences a fairly small number of behavioral infractions each year. However, the DESE data does show students of color in Hingham are disciplined at a higher rate in comparison to other peers. And lastly, according to DESE data from 2018-19, more than 6% of African American students in Hingham were retained, which was substantially higher than any other group of students.

Focus area for future study:

- *The district will review, evaluate, and revise where appropriate, any policies, procedures, and practices related to the social/emotional and academic supports and interventions available for all students in Hingham Public Schools. This inquiry will include an analysis of disproportionality including the higher rates of discipline and retention for African American students.*

Questions to guide the work on the social/emotional/academic needs:

- What social/emotional supports and interventions are already in place for students?
- What interventions and supports are still needed to address the social/emotional and academic needs of our students?
- Should current programs and structures be altered to enhance supports and interventions for students?
- Why are students of color being disciplined and retained at higher rates in comparison to other demographic groups?
- How can the district promote and ensure that all students are acknowledged and celebrated for their individual and unique talents?

C. Addressing the infrastructure needs of the District

The HPS community identified addressing the District infrastructure and creating physical environments that support student learning as a top priority. This includes financial planning, addressing improvement to existing structures, and the possible replacement of the Foster School building. Many respondents said that they want the district to pursue and consider opportunities for environmental improvements and green energies. In addition to facilities, adequate staffing and administrative support are also of concern. Finally, Hingham Public Schools receive incredible support from the Hingham Community. However, DESE data shows that Hingham schools are funded substantially below the benchmark communities most often used for comparison.

Focus area for future study:

- *The district will review, evaluate, and revise long-range financial and facilities plans to ensure adequate funding and appropriate facilities that support the needs of our students and meet the expectations of our community.*

Questions to guide the work on district infrastructure:

- Is current HPS funding adequate to meet the needs of all students and the expectations of the Hingham community?
- Are there ways that the district could shift current funds to be more efficient and effective in meeting the needs of the students and community?
- Are there additional funds and grants that the district could identify and pursue to assist in funding education?
- Does the long-range facilities plan adequately address district priorities for the next 10 years?
- What policies, procedures, and/plans are needed to support the improvement of staffing and administrative structures in the future?

D. Improving Special Education programs and collaboration

Participants in this entry process perceived that improving special education programs and collaboration should be a priority for the district over the next 3-5 years. Although several respondents mentioned that they have seen much improvement over the last couple of years, they believe that collaboration between general and special educators is still critical and in need of improvement. More specifically, respondents said that improved collaboration between district administration, school leadership, and teachers could improve consistency of practice across the district. DESE data shows that HPS students with disabilities and high needs in grades 3-8 and grade 10, substantially outperform their state peers on all academic measures (MCAS).

Focus area for future study:

- *The district will review, evaluate, and revise as appropriate, the policies, procedures, and practices related to special education to ensure that appropriate and consistent services are available to all students in every Hingham Public School.*

Questions to guide the work on special education programming and collaboration:

- How does the district ensure that special education services are consistently delivered across all schools in Hingham?
- What strategies are currently in place to promote ongoing professional collaboration between administration, general education, and special education teachers? How can these be improved?
- What policies, procedures, and/or plans are needed to support special education programs and collaboration?

Final Thoughts

As stated in my letter to the community at the beginning of this report, it is important to consider these entry findings in concert with what we have learned during this COVID-19 crisis. With the closure of schools that has lasted for months, our students, like all the students across the world, have lost much. I believe that the challenges and areas of focus identified in this entry report have been clearly highlighted during the crisis. Although the efforts of our staff, faculty, and administrators have been extraordinary, the district has undoubtedly struggled to meet the demands and expectations of some in the community. This was due, at least in part, to personnel shortages in administration and support staff, inadequate technology resources, and a lack of preparedness for remote/alternative distance learning. Even more concerning is that the future continues to be uncertain, and distance learning could well be the norm for at least the start of the coming school year. Although budget concerns are long-standing, the loss of revenue for FY '21 and perhaps more so in FY '22, are incredibly troublesome.

Moving forward, the district needs to position itself to ensure that equity and the needs of our students, particularly those more vulnerable and in need of greater academic supports and services, remain our top priority. We must ensure that all students are encouraged to pursue academic excellence, and we must ensure that each student has access to the most challenging courses and the supports necessary to be successful in those classes. To prepare for the fall of 2020, the district needs to be prepared for the multiple challenges that COVID-19 has brought us. Increased professional development and technology resources are needed to ensure that every teacher has the knowledge and technology to deliver remote learning, and that every student has access to the technology to receive that instruction. And lastly, the district needs to ensure that if school is in session during FY '21, our facilities are safe and healthy for all students and staff.

Appendix

- A. NESDEC report - *“Hingham Public Schools Superintendent Candidate Profile”* dated October 2018