

# SUPERINTENDENT ENTRY PLAN

## FINAL REPORT 2023



### PREPARED BY

Dr. Margaret Adams  
Superintendent of Schools

### School Committee

Michelle Ayer, Chair  
Nes Correnti, Vice Chair  
Jen Benham, Secretary  
Kerry Ni  
Tim Dempsey  
Matt Cosman  
Alyson Anderson



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# INTRODUCTION

In July 2022, I presented an entry plan to the school committee and community. The plan outlined the process that I would use over the first half of the school year to immerse myself into the Hingham Public School and the community. The process has been rewarding. The community has been so welcoming and gracious throughout my entry. The staff, school, and district leaders have been great partners as well in providing feedback and resources that have helped shape the document. I am grateful for the time of all who have supported me in the past few months.

Through my observations of classrooms, schools, events, and community gatherings, I have learned so much about the vibrancy that exists in Hingham. The purpose of an entry plan is to document my of the Hingham Public Schools and create the foundation for collective planning and decision-making. The following goals guided the development of my entry plan:

- Develop a deeper understanding of the district's strengths, opportunities for growth, and areas for further inquiry as viewed through the lens of various stakeholders.
- Strengthen confidence in the schools through a process of open, honest, and respectful communication and presence in the community.
- Develop an understanding of the core values, norms, expectations, and goals of the district and community.
- Assess the district's human, financial, capital, and instructional resources.
- Develop consensus among stakeholders for entry plan findings that support the district towards continuous improvement.

In the following report, I will outline the sources I collected and analyzed to develop this entry plan final report. I also outline five broad themes that emerged from this analysis. For each theme, I outline strengths from my analysis and opportunities for growth and further inquiry. Finally, each section concludes with some essential questions to help guide further planning for the Leadership Team to consider as we continue to address the needs identified in this entry plan.

# DATA COLLECTION:

## DOCUMENT REVIEW

The document review process included the review of the following data sources:

- MCAS Data
- Initial Fall and Winter Literacy and Math Data for Grades K-5
- School Improvement Plans
- AP/SAT/ACT data
- Survey Data
- Previous Budget Documents
- Town Annual Reports
- District Analysis Review Too (DART) reports-Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)
- Resource Allocation and District Action Reports (RADAR) reports (DESE)

In addition, during the last several months, the Leadership Team has analyzed student data, including our MCAS results from the spring of 2022 and our fall and winter assessment data. Results indicate that there has been some modest recovery from the pandemic. However, our student subgroups of students with disabilities and high needs show slower signs of recovery.





# OBSERVATIONS

Beginning in September, I have conducted countless observations of classrooms in all six schools through monthly visits. Furthermore, I participated in classrooms with principals and curriculum directors. In addition, I have attended district professional development activities, staff meetings, and administrator meetings. I have participated in several committee meetings, including the district's Technology Committee, Professional Development Committee, and Diversity and Equity Task Force. I have also attended athletic events and engaged with various community groups, including the Hingham Human Rights Commission, the Disability Commission, and the Hingham Education Foundation.

## PLANNING PROCESS

In addition, the district has begun several planning processes that have allowed me to understand deeper the district and schools' strengths and needs. Prior to my start state in July, I had the opportunity to participate in the strategic planning process, which also included surveys of various stakeholders and focus groups. I also began in September by completing the staffing audit that had been started by the previous interim superintendent. The audit allowed for a deeper understanding of current staffing across all programs.

First, a three-year technology plan development is underway, including collecting survey data, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups. Second, a two-year professional development plan that will support the implementation of the strategic plan has also included surveys of stakeholders and the evaluation of current offerings. Finally, an equity audit has engaged the district in a review of documents, surveys, equity walks of classrooms and school buildings, and focus groups on supporting the development of short and long-term goals for the district. All of these processes have provided a richness of data that has informed this entry plan.



# THEMES

From the data collection over the past few months, several themes have emerged:

1. Academic Excellence
2. Meeting the Needs of All Learners
3. Equity
4. Communication and Collaboration
5. Operational Challenges

## THEME ONE: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

### STRENGTHS

Throughout my interactions with members of the community and staff, repeatedly, the dedication of the staff, including teachers, paraeducators, maintenance staff, and leaders, was highlighted. Many people pointed to personal connections with staff and how they individually support their families or children. Many staff has dedicated their professional lives to working in Hingham and their dedication to supporting each individual student. Students also highlighted how amazing their teachers had been in helping them reach their goals. Often they would comment, “Teachers just go the extra mile for you.”

In addition, the community is deeply committed to the schools and ensuring the academic excellence of all students. Many community and civic groups are dedicated to supporting and improving the schools. These groups are also committed to supporting the schools' mission and vision.

The offerings on the secondary campuses in both middle and high schools are very rich. There is great pride in the wide variety of electives and offerings made available to the students. For example, the high school offers 53 elective courses for students, 20 Advanced Placement courses, more than 60 clubs and activities, and opportunities for domestic and international travel.

Students at the elementary level also have a wide range of specialists, including visual arts, music, digital literacy, library media, Spanish, and physical education. The curriculum allows students to develop some foundational skills in these disciplines to build upon at the secondary level.

The outcomes for our high school, including participation in advanced coursework and attendance at higher education institutions were high. The majority of all students are engaged with advanced coursework at the high school in at least one subject. Students at Hingham High School attend higher education at high rates. Students at Hingham High School show strong participation rates and performance on Advanced Placement exams. Continuing to provide opportunities for all students to have access to advanced coursework will be important.

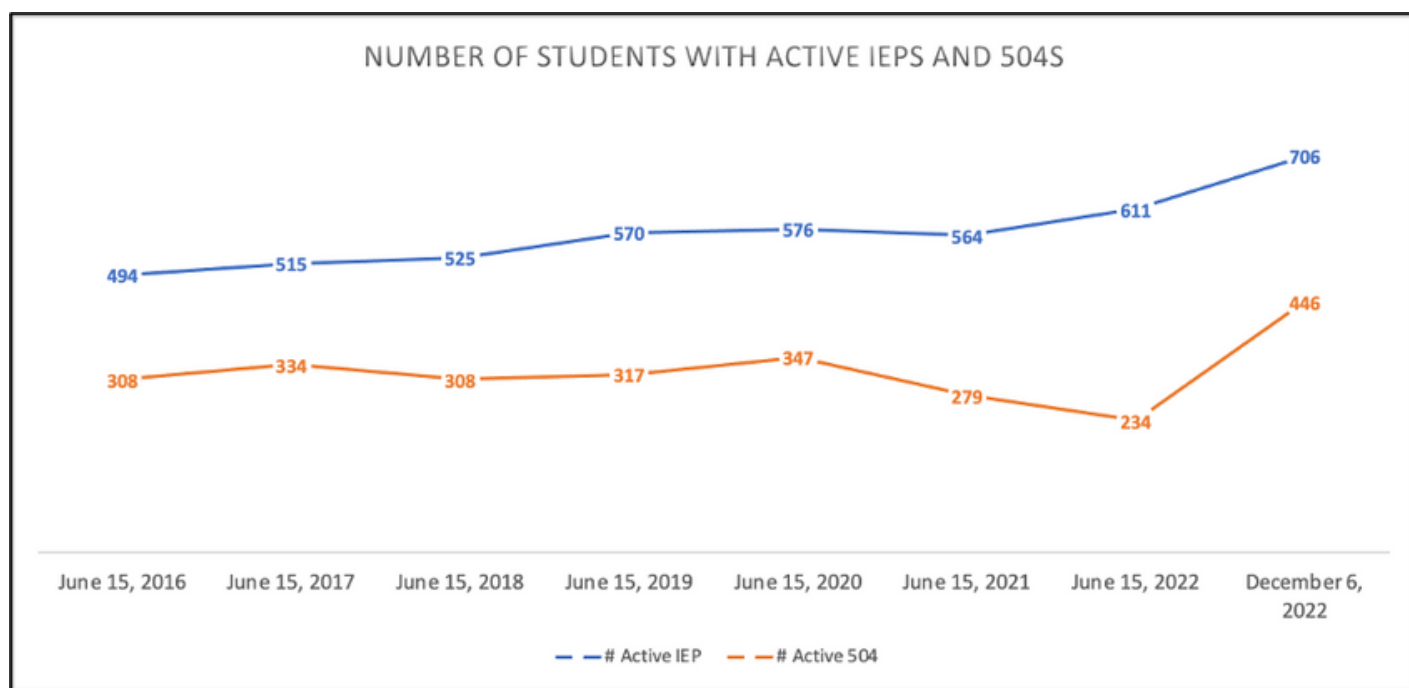
The district began developing and outlining a clear, Multi-Tiered System of Support two years ago. The district invested in additional reading and math specialists, reading and math interventionists, and school counselors. This year, several steps have been taken to continue strengthening the implementation of MTSS. In the first half of this year, we have added significant funding to support the use of data to inform instruction at each of the tiers of instruction, especially at the elementary level. Data meetings are being held across grade levels to analyze student progress and determine support for all students.

MCAS data and other formative assessment data indicate strong academic performance for students. For example, MCAS for the spring of 2022 in mathematics and English language arts shows that approximately three-fourths of all students meet or exceed expectations. As noted below, ensuring all students, including our students with disabilities and high needs, have access to rigorous and relevant instruction at the same level will be important.



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND FURTHER INQUIRY: SPECIAL EDUCATION

Number of students identified as special education and 504s are increasing, as shown in the chart below. The data indicate the continued need to strengthen our MTSS efforts and develop district programming to meet the needs of our students with disabilities.



When reviewing data for MCAS and formative student assessment, there is disproportionality for our students with disabilities and high needs in comparing their achievement to all students. For example, 39% of high-needs students and 31% of students with disabilities met or exceeded expectations in ELA in grades 3-8 on MCAS in the spring of 2022 compared to 73% of all students. In addition, 38% of high-needs students and 31% of students with disabilities met or exceeded expectations in mathematics in grades 3-8 on MCAS in the spring of 2022 compared to 67% of all students. In some cases, the subgroups of high needs and students with disabilities have not regained the ground lost due to the pandemic.

In December, district leaders presented an overview of fall benchmark data. In mathematics, using fall iReady benchmark assessments, 95% of students in grades K-6 are ready to access grade-level curriculum. In contrast, 82% of students with disabilities in grades K-2 could access grade-level instruction with higher needs in the Numbers and Operations domain.



In grades 3-6, 80% of students with disabilities could access grade-level instruction with higher needs in Geometry. In the students with disabilities subgroup in mathematics, an average of 22% were below grade level across grades 1-6.

In ELA, using the fall 2022 assessment data, the disproportionality between all students and students with disabilities is also visible. Approximately 76% of all students in grades K-2 on DIBELS were at or above the benchmark compared to 52% of students with disabilities. The gap was largest in first grade, with 69% of all first graders at or above the benchmark compared to 39% of students with disabilities. Students in grades 3-5 participate in the iReady-only benchmarks. The data from the fall of 2022 indicates that 91% of all students demonstrated readiness for grade-level work compared to 71% of students with disabilities. However, it is important to note that the alignment of standards in the curriculum is present horizontally and vertically. Standards analysis does not indicate that there are standards that are not being covered.

In offering so many opportunities at the secondary level, special education students sometimes cannot access electives at middle and high school. During electives, special education students receive their core services.



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Time for professional development is a need. The district increased the number of early releases for the 2022-2023 school year, adding some professional development time. In some cases, substitutes are employed to allow teachers to meet for professional development during the school day. Challenges with procuring enough substitutes make this model difficult to maintain and the lost time for teachers with their students. Professional development in the budget has been adequately resourced to cover the contractual agreements, such as the new teacher mentoring program. Many of the initiatives in the strategic plan are based on adequate resources for professional development.

The state defines advanced coursework as students accessing Advanced Placement, dual enrollment, or International Baccalaureate courses. More students are accessing advanced coursework in the Humanities than in STEM subjects. Students with disabilities are not accessing advanced coursework. For the graduating class of 2022, only one student on an IEP completed an Advanced Placement course. Considering students with a previous IEP, more students were represented but fewer than those without ever having been on an IEP. Students who were previously students with disabilities were less likely to access mathematics AP coursework. Exploring dual enrollment may be an opportunity to also provide more students at the high school with the opportunity to experience a college-level educational experience. Offering other Advanced Placement courses, such as in psychology and economics, may also expand opportunities to more students.





# STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The focus on academic excellence may have a cost. Many students at the high school mention their workload and often discuss the stress of the courses they are enrolled in and the extracurricular activities and sports they participate in after school. Some in the community emphasize a desire for more of a focus on the whole child in addition to academic programming. A focus on the attributes of the whole child presents an opportunity to build on existing programs in technology, vocational education, and the arts that currently exist in the high school.

The cost of a strong focus on academic excellence can also be seen in concern for students' social-emotional learning needs. Students mention being stressed by the workload and pressures. Some families also express concern for their child's well-being as well.

The community has high expectations of both its students and the schools. However, the value is sometimes placed on academic excellence, defined as receiving top grades and having many high academic courses. Some parents enlist tutors for their children, college counselors, or specialized athletic training. There is an opportunity for the community to redefine academic excellence, including other important 21st Century skills, including collaboration, communication, problem-solving, and creativity. The Portrait of a Graduate is an opportunity for the community to outline what we envision for our students at the end of their schooling here in Hingham.

The Global Citizenship Program at the high school presents an opportunity for students through interdisciplinary academic study, community service, and international travel to show their competency in global awareness and understanding. This well-established program presents a model for other disciplines, including creating an Arts, STEM, and Technology Engineering Pathway.



The Arts have seen declining enrollment in grades 7-12. Many indicate that COVID may have been a contributing factor in that decline. Declines in overall enrollment may be another contributing factor. However, a better indicator of less enrollment in the arts program is the number of students enrolled in arts programs by grade. Statewide 81.1% of students in all grades are enrolled in an art class, while Hingham has 74.9% in the 2021-22 school year.

The following provides a snapshot for the 2021-22 school year for grades 7-12:

| Grade   | 7     | 8     | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Hingham | 77.3% | 65.5% | 36.6% | 21.4% | 33.6% | 44.8% |
| State   | 92.9% | 89.1% | 53.7% | 51.0% | 46.5% | 49.8% |

Adding a new Director of Fine Arts has helped to strengthen current arts programming, including increased community presence and curriculum alignment. A major focus of the department has been rebuilding enrollment through outreach efforts to the students and the community. At the high school, some report that the large enrollment of students in athletics may overshadow the opportunities for students to be involved in the arts.

Some families indicate that the transition between fifth and sixth grade can be difficult. Some families indicate that the transition is difficult for academic and social reasons. Academically, students may struggle with the amount of work they are expected to complete independently. Perhaps, students also don't have the skills to study independently. Socially students may struggle with going from a smaller elementary school to a larger middle school.





# CURRICULUM

Due to the pandemic, much of the work on curriculum development was paused. An important priority to the community is an update on the reading program. The current elementary reading program has a copyright of 2014 and is not listed on the approved list of reading programs that align with current principles of reading research. The district is piloting two programs and has allocated funding for the purchase. In addition, the math elementary curriculum has been in use for many years. Piloting and implementing a new elementary math program is needed as well.

The district is currently undergoing a planning process resulting in a Technology Plan. The needs assessment includes surveys of students, staff, and families. In addition, individual interviews and focus groups are being completed. Some initial conclusions indicate strength: during the pandemic, the district provided increased access to various instructional technology. In middle and high school, students actively use technology to access their learning in various ways. An analysis of the current technology tools indicates that some have minimal current usage, and those resources may be deployed for other purposes. Staff indicated a need for further professional development that allows for the integration of technology and new tools. Students and staff indicate that, at times, wireless access is not always reliable. Opportunities also exist in engaging families in more broadly understanding the technology their students use at school.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OUR WORK

- How do we ensure all students are exposed to rigorous and relevant teaching and learning?
- How do we create a culture that emphasizes both the academic and the whole child?
- How do we create a culture that honors the skills embedded in creativity, problem-solving, civic engagement, collaboration, and communications beyond academics?



## THEME TWO: MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

### STRENGTHS

As noted above, the Hingham Public Schools provides a rich academic program focused on developing core content and concepts across the disciplines. Many families and students report being proud of the programming available and how they have benefited. Many educators are also proud of being part of a rigorous academic program. As noted above, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities at the secondary level are rich offerings for student growth.

A strength of the Hingham Public Schools is our staff. HPS employs staff with a wide range of expertise and skill. Students and families report that many educators go out of their way to support students in extraordinary ways.

The district has committed to implementing a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) over the past two years. Previously, several committees and groups had worked to develop a vision for MTSS. The plan has included allocating additional staff to support the implementation of tiering of instruction on literacy, math, and social-emotional learning at the elementary and middle schools.

At each elementary school, two reading specialists and one math specialist support the core of the academic MTSS. For the 2022-23 school year, each elementary school's MTSS was supported by two reading and two math interventionists. A district writing specialist is in their second year and provides direct instruction and coaching on the district's writing program, Empowering Writers. The addition of the interventionists in FY 22 has also supported a consistent model for MTSS implementation at the elementary level.

This year, each elementary school instituted consistent data meetings to review the assessment information with teachers and support tiering of instruction for interventions and also small groups in classrooms. The consistent elementary building schedule has helped the further tiering of instruction. The elementary schools began the year consistently implementing Toolbox as the core Tier I social-emotional learning curriculum.

At the middle school, the schedule provides tier II supports in literacy and math both within the classroom and as a scheduled period through math and reading labs. In January, the middle school implemented for the first time data meetings to review student benchmark assessments. Continuing to use the data to inform interventions and create structures for implementing and monitoring the effectiveness of interventions is essential. This year, the middle school reinstituted the implementation of Second Step as their core Tier I social-emotional learning curriculum. At both the high school and middle school, after-school help from teachers is also available.

At the high school, some Tier II supports include a Directed Study class to support struggling students and a transition room that provides support for returning from hospitalizations, concussions, and other mental health needs.

A school psychologist, school adjustment counselor, and guidance counselor support each elementary school.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND FURTHER INQUIRY

Document review and reports from staff indicate a need to continue documenting and updating the curriculum. The curriculum must also document how the district plans to support high expectations and engaging learning environments for all students. Making these documents easily accessible to the community will support understanding of the district's efforts to provide for the inclusion of all learners.



Students' social-emotional learning needs are increasing. A desire exists to support students in balancing their academics with their social-emotional and overall well-being. As noted above, recent efforts to strengthen Tier I supports have begun, including consistently implementing Toolbox across all elementary schools and Second Step at the middle school. Developing a Portrait of a Graduate focused on skills such as problem-solving, creativity, communication, civic engagement, and collaboration can support broadening the community's definition of success.

In addition, other disciplines beyond the core disciplines of ELA, math, science, world language, and history present a richness of other skills and learning habits that can develop lifelong passions for our students. Raising the awareness of the community of the richness offered in many of the electives at the secondary level can help support our students in developing other interests.

A review of formative and summative data indicates the need to better support students with special needs and high needs. As noted earlier, MCAS data indicates that disproportionality exists among our students with special needs and high needs compared to all students.

Some Tier II structures exist at the secondary level. For example, middle and high school transition rooms support students with school avoidance or medical concerns to transition back to school. A semester-based course focused on executive functioning and study skills exists at the high school. However, clear structures for Tier II and III supports for academics, and social-emotional learning are not yet clearly articulated. Some families indicate a need for greater emphasis on executive organization and study skills, especially as students transition into middle school. The high school is participating in a DESE-sponsored institute, the S3 Academy, focused on developing academic and social-emotional supports and MTSS. The planning and professional development will strengthen MTSS at the secondary level.

The District Curriculum Accommodation Plan has not been revised in several years. The document outlines structures and systems. It does not reflect tier I practices that are universally available to all students. Revisions have begun in the second half of the year that will continue into the next school year. A new DCAP built in conjunction with staff can support strengthening the supports and scaffolds available to all students.



East and Plymouth River Schools are participating in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Inclusive Practices Academy. The Academy supports schoolwide instructional practices based upon Universal Design for Learning principles, an instructional framework that supports optimization of student learning based on research on how students learn. These best practices and professional development can be shared districtwide and build a framework for designing our classrooms and instruction to be universally accessible.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OUR WORK

- How can we better leverage scheduling, programming, and staff to support all students in accessing equitable, high-quality, grade-level academic and social-emotional learning?
- What systems and structures can support MTSS at the secondary level?
- How do we continue to strengthen professional development to support all staff to meet the needs of all learners?



## THEME THREE: EQUITY

In response to the pandemic, schools were required to quickly redesign the educational landscape to respond to the different models of hybrid, remote, and distanced learning. As a result, educators used different materials, resources, and instructional practices in response to the repeated different models and changes occurring in response to the pandemic. Now, post-pandemic, healing from this trauma and strengthening our goals around providing equity and inclusion for all in our community is important.

In 2020-21, a district team participated in the Harvard Graduate School of Education Reimagining Integration for Diverse and Equitable Schools (RIDES) program to conduct an equity audit focused on a systematic improvement cycle. The audit focused on the following areas:

- Do all students at the secondary level have access to upper-level and advanced courses?
- Do all students have access to out-of-school opportunities, extra help, MTSS, and social-emotional learning supports?
- Do the students have access to a rigorous and unbiased Section 504 and special education process?
- What is needed to respect and recognize the diversity that exists within the school community?

In August 2021, a report was presented to the school committee on the audit results.

That report indicates that most students are engaged in an advanced course in at least one subject. The majority of students on 504s and students previously identified as students with disabilities accessed advanced coursework in at least one subject. African American students' engagement with advanced coursework in one subject lagged behind Asian and white students. Students accessed more advanced coursework in the Humanities versus Mathematics.

In August 2021, it was reported that no comprehensive intervention system was in place in either reading, writing, or math. While the elementary had some interventions in place in FY21, the secondary level did not. There were inconsistencies in the data used in the decision-making for tiered instruction. MCAS results indicated an achievement gap for students with disabilities and high-needs students compared to all students.

MTSS, at this time, was reported to still be in its infancy. Clear systems and structures were not yet in place for tiering of instruction. Data to make informed decisions for tiering of instruction was not well articulated yet.

A series of “Courageous Conversations” was facilitated by members of the District Equity and Inclusion Team during the 2020-21 school year. The key themes of these conversations included a need to develop further the sense of belonging of all in the community. There was a need to continue to develop stronger relationships with community organizations. A perception arose from those interviewed that when issues relative to bias arose, they were not dealt with. In these cases, the district and schools may not have prioritized equity at all levels and also supported those victimized by bias. These findings led to the establishment of the goal to implement restorative practices training as a theoretical foundation to resolve issues of bias within the school community.

## STRENGTHS

An Equity and Inclusion Working Group was established in 2019 and was charged with conducting a more comprehensive equity audit to include district’s operations, programs, and services. The team has members representing each school, including school and district leaders. A school committee member has also been part of the group. In the fall of 2022, a community representative and parent were added.

All schools have developed building-based Equity and Inclusion Teams to manage site-specific development of equity goals. The teams are meeting regularly and developing school-based projects that further equity and inclusion in their building. Coordinating efforts among the school-based teams with goals aligned across the district will be important.





During the first half of 2022, all staff has participated in training through the Massachusetts Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students. The training set a district-wide expectation for the continued needed conversation around providing for equity and inclusion, specifically for our LGBTQ+ students, staff, and families.

Several community groups actively lead the conversation around equity and inclusion, including partnering with the schools in these efforts. The Hingham Unity Council was started in 2019 by community members to further a vision of equity and diversity in the town by working together as a community. The Hingham Pride Project was started to increase the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community in Hingham and to support local programming for LGBTQ+ youth. A Human Rights Commission is in its first year of existence and is committed to furthering townwide an equity vision. These are all great partnerships for the schools to nurture in furthering the schools' vision for equity and inclusion.

Hingham Public Schools has been a proud member of METCO (Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity) since 1967. The METCO program works to eliminate racial imbalance through the busing of children from Boston, MA, and Springfield, MA, to suburban public schools in the 38 communities where the program operates. There is great interest in strengthening the program, including the connections between Hingham and METCO students and families. The new METCO Director has created new partnerships that include speakers and artists through various grants. These efforts have allowed school and district leaders to strengthen relationships with METCO students and families.

As described above, MTSS structures have been strengthened each year. Beginning with FY22, added staff allows for academic and social-emotional supports for students. More consistent data allow for informed decision-making to support tiered instruction.





## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND FURTHER INQUIRY

Some stakeholders report the need to continue to promote healing through the district after a few tumultuous years with COVID. Changes in leadership at the Central Office have also made it difficult to sustain the momentum of equity efforts. Many report that there are stops and starts to the equity work.

Some stakeholders also report the need to continue to build trust among all students, staff, and families, including those in our LGBTQ+ community and our communities of color. In some cases, those in historically marginalized groups feel like they do not belong in our school community. Some report that they have been impacted by bias and microaggressions that have occurred. Providing a safe, brave space for all in our community is important foundational equity work.

There have been some efforts to provide professional development on topics related to equity. For example, on some past early release dates, topics regarding equity would have been offered as a choice for staff. However, there is a need for all staff to develop their understanding of bias and inquiry in the classroom and in schools. Time for sustained professional development is needed.

A perception exists that when issues relative to bias arise, they are not dealt with and instead are “swept under the rug.” Sometimes these relate to past incidents that did not have clear resolutions or communication had been unclear. Investigating further whether the root cause is whether the incidents were not addressed or that communication about resolutions was not shared. A need for systematic ways to address incidents of bias within our schools is needed. Expanding the training begun on restorative practices can provide a means for resolving conflicts and building stronger relationships.

The district is engaging in an equity audit, which had been identified as part of the Strategic Plan. The audit began this fall with an audit of our policies, programs, and systems. In January, school and district leaders participated in equity walks to collect school and classroom data. The audit will continue with student, family, and staff surveys. Additional focus groups to help gather information will also be conducted. A report is expected to be presented to the school committee by the end of the 2022-23 school year. The report will outline the next steps for the district to support furthering our equity and inclusion goals.

Each of the schools has a Diversity and Equity Team that has been meeting more frequently this year than last year. The school-based teams are working on different goals dependent on their buildings. Consistent follow-up on common goals for each of the teams will help support the teams with resources from the district.

Identifying a common ongoing tool to measure school climate and culture from all stakeholders will help the district continue to assess its progress toward its equity and inclusion goals. In Addition, smaller focus groups among the stakeholders can also support the district in understanding and responding to the needs of various groups in the community.

The Strategic Plan outlined specifically the objective of supporting the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. Creating specific strategies over the next several years will be important to help the district reach this goal. Common processes and structures that address barriers to recruitment and retention should be considered.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OUR WORK

- How do we ensure all our students and families have a strong sense of belonging in our school community? How do we ensure our communities of color and LGBTQ+ youth and families feel a sense of belonging that honors and are inclusive of their experiences?
- How do we ensure our students develop the skills to live in a diverse world and to build strong communities that value equity and inclusion?
- How do we provide opportunities for our students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, to learn about our diverse world, and to engage in their larger community to bring about change?



## THEME FOUR: COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

This theme focuses on the broader theme of needed two-way communication for all stakeholders that can help foster a culture of collaboration. Collaboration includes opportunities for those in the community to engage with schools. However, also noted below are opportunities to strengthen communication and collaboration with staff in our schools.

### STRENGTHS

In the fall of 2022, the district presented a Communication Plan that outlined goals for the 2022-23 school year. The communication plan aligns with goals from the Strategic Plan to develop a district-wide communication community engagement plan. The goals outlined included the following:

- Goal One: Develop clear, consistent messages that are delivered in line with the district's strategic plan.
- Goal Two: Improve internal communication.
- Goal Three: Engage community stakeholder groups through a variety of methods.
- Goal Four: Improve community awareness of the Hingham Public Schools.

Many of these goals are well underway. The Communication Plan has presented a framework to strengthen many of the district's needs.

Recent efforts to support further communication with the community via consistent formats and regular outreach are appreciated by many in the community. The increased presence in social media and local news outlets has presented a positive view of schools. A recent survey of families indicated 86% use the principals' weekly emails as the main source of communication.

The district hired a Media and Communications Specialist last year. The role has grown over the past year to include supporting staff in varied communication, increased engagement on social media platforms, and allowed for consistent and professional district communication. The specialist has also worked individually with staff to build effective communication. The website is being updated consistently with up-to-date communication and resources.



The community strongly supports education and wants the schools to be successful. The vote for the new elementary school building this fall indicates the community's support for the town and the schools. The dialogue about the new elementary school building project highlighted the high civic engagement that exists in the community, and all were interested in making the best decisions for the students, families, and staff.

Many vibrant community organizations exist in Hingham. All are interested in partnering with the schools. For example, most athletic teams at the high school are supported through booster organizations that provide additional resources to enhance the student's experiences with the teams. The Hingham Sports Partnership is a strong organization that has supported various larger projects in support of athletic programming. Hingham Arts Alliance and Hingham Music Partnership are working closely with the art staff to promote and strengthen arts programming. The Hingham Education Foundation is interested in supporting the district's initiatives through funding and continued collaboration. Each school is also supported by well-organized Parent Teacher Organizations that raise funding to enrich the schools. For example, elementary PTOs support additional enrichments through speakers, presentations, and performances that enhance the core curriculum.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND FURTHER INQUIRY**

Some in the community have expressed the harm and hurt that occurred during the pandemic. Discussions on masking, COVID testing, and different modes of instruction created differentiating opinions and a level of distrust. Healing from this harm to repair relationships is still important to many.



Changes in leadership at the district and school levels have made it difficult to maintain momentum. There have been some stops and starts to some initiatives. Maintaining consistent effort to complete initiatives once started is extremely important. Having long-term plans for initiatives and being systematic in prioritizing the district's needs will be important. Efforts to align the district's strategic plan to professional development, school improvement plans, and educator goals have promise in supporting further concentrated efforts even when there might be leadership changes.

Partnerships with local community groups and organizations in support of the strategic plan objectives will help strengthen concentrated effort so that all of us are working towards the same goals and will have a more significant impact.

The website is often cited as not user-friendly. During the 2021-22 school year, the district completed an overhaul of the website, including a new web hosting platform. The platform, however, is not one specifically designed for schools. Some limitations on the format and design prevent further redesigning to create a more friendly user experience. As many districts have implemented a mobile application to present easily accessible information to families, this may be a possible next step.

Aspen or X2 is the Student Information System used in the district to organize data to submission to the state that includes student and staff reporting. Aspen has other capabilities, for example, allowing families access to their child's records and annual updating of information that is not yet utilized by the district. Some efforts are underway to increase the use of Aspen as a more dynamic tool for communication and help automate processes.

As noted above, strengthening professional development as a means to support increased communication of district and strategic goals through collaboration is an area to continue to develop. Past efforts for professional development allowed for more teacher choice on topics of interest. These topics were perhaps aligned with the teacher's personal and professional goals but may not have been aligned with the district or school goals. This year, professional development focused on supporting the district's strategic plan and school improvement goals, including accelerating student learning, social-emotional learning, and equity. The elementary professional development focused on the goal of implementing tier I math instructional practices and the use of student data. At the secondary level, departments have focused on outlining their unit plans deeper.

Time for district and school professional development is limited. A handful of early releases are scheduled in the calendar. The district has relied heavily on using substitutes and releasing teachers from their classrooms to provide for professional development.

In some cases, stipends were provided to teachers. Many of the goals of the strategic plan require investments in professional development which also accounts for ensuring teachers' time.

Several state initiatives in professional development, equity, and MTSS present an opportunity for the state to engage with other districts and learn about best practices across the state. Many of these initiatives are at no cost as well. This year, the district is engaged in several opportunities, including the Cultural Responsive Leadership Academy, the Systematic Supports through Boston College and the Rennie Center, and the Inclusive Practices Academy. Disseminating the learning from these academies across the Leadership Team and staff will be important so that all in the organization can benefit from the resources and information.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OUR WORK

- What communication strategies are most effective in engaging with all stakeholder groups?
- How do we create a culture of trust and respect based on two-way communication and ongoing collaboration among all stakeholders?





## THEME FIVE: OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

### STRENGTHS

Many communities in the area continue to struggle to maintain adequate transportation services for students. In Hingham, that is not the case. The school department owns or leases a fleet of 22 buses and 18 vans. The district has purposefully planned in the past few years to increase its fleet of vans to provide a more cost-effective means for special education transportation. These efforts have allowed the district to cover 61% of its special education routes. In addition, the transportation is planning to cover additional contracted routes, including those needed for high school athletics. All of these cost-saving efforts provide for overall savings. There is interest by the district and community to engage in the use of electric vehicles to provide fuel efficiency and for climate stewardship.

The strength of our facilities department is our staff, who care deeply for the buildings and have creatively developed solutions to maintenance concerns. The maintenance department has 4.5 employees, three custodians at each elementary and seven each at the middle and high school.

A new state-of-the-art elementary school to replace Foster Elementary is set for completion in the fall of 2024. Stakeholders share excitement about this new building and how the site will enhance the district's ability to offer enhanced preschool and special education programming.

Enormous support exists in the community for the schools. There is great pride in the current educational offerings of our schools. The fall town meeting vote to approve a new elementary school is a strong indication of the support of the community to make investments in education.

The Food Services Department is financially self-sustaining. The program has been bolstered through COVID by funding that had supported the continuation of free lunch programming for students. Food Services has also sought out ways to be sustainable, including use of grow towers at the high school that allow for the growth of their own lettuce.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND FURTHER INQUIRY

As noted above, the facilities staff have worked miracles in the upkeep of the school buildings. There are significant challenges in facilities that continue to warrant our attention. Significant additional needs, including the roofs of the high school, South, and Plymouth River, will need to be replaced within the next 3-5 years. Significant preventative maintenance has been delayed over the years we would like to ensure that we can get to a point where we can care for our buildings and infrastructure. These preventative measures include maintenance of rooftop units, heating and cooling pumps, exhaust systems, plumbing, and ongoing visual inspections of equipment. While operations and equipment are functioning, most of our equipment is at the end of its life. Funding for capital projects has not been sufficient to maintain the current needs of the school buildings. Thus, school facilities staff often find themselves responding to emergency maintenance rather than on a cycle of preventative maintenance and a predictable, reliable cycle of replacement of equipment.

The FY24 budget development process has been challenging. One-time funds in FY22 and FY23 were to offset increases in the school and municipal budget. The understanding of the town municipal government was that in order to maintain these increases in services, an override would be needed in the spring of 2023 at the town meeting and at the ballot. Thus, the district has proposed two budgets for FY24, a level service with an override and a balanced/reduced service budget without an override. The balanced/reduced service budget includes significant reductions in staffing at all levels and also jeopardizes many of the advances in MTSS and programming.

The economic forecast of the town has challenges ahead that will impact the ability of the town to fund the schools appropriately.

Economic development in the area could be bolstered by a highly educated, quality workforce. There is a significant vacant and underdevelopment amount of land available. However, the town is experiencing an aging population and higher housing costs. Recent job growth is primarily in lower-wage industries. South Hingham is seen as the primary location for possible continued new growth. However, public transportation and capacity in South Hingham are limited. There is also significant regional competition for economic development.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO GUIDE OUR WORK

- How can we leverage community support and value for the schools to develop long-term plans for the school's financial, operational, and facilities needs?
- How do we fund the long-term capital needs of the schools?

## INFORMED STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Typically, the findings and conclusions from my entry activities would inform the priorities going forward in a strategic planning process. However, in my entry to Hingham, a strategic planning process was completed during the spring prior to my official start date. I participated in most of the planning process and also facilitated the final approval of the plan during the summer of my entry.

Given the parallel process of strategic planning and my entry process, I was able to compare much of my own findings and conclusions to those that emerged from the strategic planning process. There were many parallels in my own findings to those that are outlined in the strategic plan, including the vision, core values, theory of action, and strategic objectives.

In the vision, all students will embark on a lifelong journey to flourish with empathy and confidence.



In the mission, together with students, staff, families, and community, we cultivate an equitable, inclusive, innovative learning environment that empowers all students to contribute to their local and global community. In the core values, we strive for inclusivity and belonging, community well-being, lifelong learning, student-centered, personal excellence, innovative learning, and civic and global responsibility.

Below is a visual representation of the connection between the challenges identified in the entry activities and the related strategic objectives that address them.

| Strategic Objectives   | Challenges   |
|--|--|
| <p><b>Culture of Collaboration and Community:</b><br/>Create partnerships between home, school, and community through effective two-way communication to ensure an inclusive culture and a sense of belonging.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pandemic resulted in hurt and harm in the community. Healing this harm and creating a positive school climate are important.</li> <li>• Changes in school and district leadership have resulted in a struggle to maintain momentum in the district.</li> <li>• Consistent, reliable communication is a strong desire from all stakeholders.</li> <li>• The website is challenging to navigate and has design limitations.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:</b><br/>Ensure student success through aligned, high-quality PreK-12+ curriculum, innovative research-based practices, and data-informed instruction.</p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts programming is experiencing declining enrollments. Lots of opportunities for athletics may overshadow other opportunities available through the arts. However, recent efforts to elevate arts are having an impact.</li> <li>• MCAS and local formative assessment data indicate disproportionality for our students with disabilities and high-needs students.</li> <li>• Strengthening all tiers of MTSS is needed to ensure the district intervenes early to accelerate students' needs.</li> <li>• Monitor the implementation of the district's increasing special education and 504 numbers.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Healthy, Equitable, and Inclusive Communities:</b><br/>Cultivate equitable and inclusive environments that promote a sense of belonging to allow for social, emotional, physical, and academic wellness.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting the social-emotional learning needs is a central part of a student's schooling experience.</li> <li>• Broadening academic success to include creativity, collaboration, communication, and problem-solving is essential to developing the whole child.</li> <li>• Identify a school culture and climate survey to serve as a benchmark for the district's equity goals.</li> <li>• Strengthen the cultural proficiency of all staff through ongoing professional development.</li> <li>• Create dynamic and responsive district and school-based Diversity and Equity Teams.</li> </ul>                   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Capital and Finance:</b> Allocate funding to provide effective, safe, and modern facilities to enhance the student experience.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent funding for capital needs has created a backlog of facilities.</li> <li>• Constraints of proposition 2 ½ to secure funding for the schools and town services every 4-5 years.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Human Resources and Leadership:</b> Recruit, develop and empower a diverse staff to lead courageously in teaching and learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a long-term strategy to recruit and retain diverse staff.</li> <li>• Develop strong procedures and processes for the recruitment, retention, and onboarding of all staff.</li> </ul>           |

## NEXT STEPS

The district has outlined a series of next steps through the Strategic Plan, which provide a solid framework for the next two and a half years. In November, the school committee and community shared an update on the progress toward the strategic objectives. Two additional updates in February and June are planned. In the summer of 2023, the district will update and revise the strategic objectives.

Two major efforts have challenged the amount of time to dig deeper in meeting with more stakeholders. First, the town fall meeting was focused on the passage of a successful vote to approve a new elementary school building. Second, an override planned for the spring meeting has required a focus on the district budget planning.

Several reports and plans are expected in the spring of the 2022-2023 school year. These reports and plans will help further develop the objectives outlined in the strategic plan. These include a three-year technology plan, a two-year professional development plan, and an equity audit. In addition, each school will present an update on its school improvement plans in late spring and early summer.

The past few months of my entry into the Hingham Public Schools and community have provided an enormous opportunity to build the foundation for strong relationships that can further the district's mission, vision, and goals.