September 2020

Framingham Public Schools Equity Audit - Final Report

Mass Insight Education & Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This equity audit report is the result of an effort initiated by Framingham Public Schools (FPS) to better understand the ways in which systems, structures, policies, and practices impact FPS students, staff, and families. Equity, as defined by FPS, means *promoting just and fair inclusion throughout FPS and creating the conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper and reach his or her full potential.* Through this externally-conducted equity audit, the district hopes to have a better understanding of stakeholder perspectives and opportunities for creating a more equitable system that supports the success of all FPS stakeholders. FPS partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research to conduct this equity audit to:

1. Gather information about the district's current strengths and areas for growth relative to diversity, equity, and inclusive practices and policies;
2. Prompt reflective conversations about the current status of diversity, equity, and inclusivity as compared to its desired state; and
3. Identify opportunities to improve equitable practices throughout the district by providing recommendations designed to focus attention and resources to fully support our diverse student, staff, and community.

The audit, informed by an extensive document and data review, interviews, focus groups, and surveys of students, families, community partners, school and district staff, surfaces eight priority areas and related recommendations for FPS to consider to advance equity and inclusivity district wide. The priority areas are:
- Collective responsibility and commitment of equity work throughout the district,
- Data to inform decision making,
- Talent development,
- Staff culture,
- Workforce diversity,
- Inclusive curricula and instruction,
- Special population support, and
- Family engagement and investment.

The first two priority areas and their accompanying recommendations are foundational and intentionally presented first. Efforts to address these two areas should come first as they establish necessary conditions for success for subsequent priority areas and recommendations. For equity to permeate the system, it has to become the responsibility and work of everyone in the district, and it has to be reflected in equity-focused policies, practices, and collaborative decision making. To do so, it will be essential for FPS to maintain a deliberate focus on strengthening stakeholder orientation toward equity. Equitable policies and practices, as well as informed decision making, require robust and coherent data systems to routinely identify, address, and monitor data disparities - both qualitative and quantitative.

Recent national events including the COVID-19 pandemic and racial protests have brought to light the extent of systemic inequalities and inequities in our country. While many are beyond the scope of school systems to address, educational systems are also wrought with unequal and inequitable structures, policies, and practices. FPS is poised to chart a new and more equitable course for the FPS district and its community members.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding Equity as a Journey

Framingham Public Schools (FPS) recognizes the need to better understand the extent to which its policies, practices, and behaviors are impacting students equitably. While this audit provides a current picture of equity, it is important to realize that achieving equity is an ongoing improvement journey that will require the engagement of all FPS staff, students, and community members. Our hope is that this audit will support all FPS stakeholders in building a strong foundation that enables all to see equity as part of their daily work. By embedding equity into daily practices, the district will further the education landscape and experience of all stakeholders.

Technical adjustments can create some change, but larger more systemic equity and inclusivity gaps require consistent individual and collective focus to address mindsets, behaviors, systems, and structures over time. Enacting sustainable change will require ongoing examinations of how decisions and behaviors impact the educational experiences of all FPS students, staff, families, and community.

Key Definitions to Frame Audit Findings

The FPS Office of Equity, Diversity, and Community Development (OEDCD) created a set of equity-related definitions, which are utilized by FPS to create a common language and frame. To build awareness of and reinforce FPS's previous investments in strengthening equity, the following key terms are provided here to serve as a reference when interpreting this document. For FPS's additional equity-related terminology, see the *Appendix*, page 95.

- *Diversity:* Groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference that exist in groups.

- *Equity:* Equity means promoting just and fair inclusion throughout FPS and creating the conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper and reach his or her full potential.

- *Inclusion:* A value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (group, organization, society, system, etc.), particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives.

- *Cultural Responsiveness:* A set of congruent behaviors, knowledge, will, and skills that enable just and effective work in multicultural settings. Cultural responsiveness is never fully achieved but is an

ongoing process. Cultural responsiveness can be developed by individuals, organizations, communities and beyond. Individuals develop their cultural responsiveness by building knowledge, values, skills, and will that help them to:
- ○ develop self-awareness and an understanding of one's own culture(s);
- ○ understand and appreciate other cultures;
- ○ facilitate understanding among people of different cultures;
- ○ confront inconsistencies, biases and unconscious assumptions of cultures; and,
- ○ act to ensure fairness and access and correct for the results of historic inequities.

Organizations develop their cultural responsiveness by building the knowledge, values, skills, and will of individuals, and building equitable, accessible and inclusive organizational culture, expectations, policies, structures, systems, and processes.

Other terms used within this report not provided from the OEDCD include:
- ● *Cultural Competence:* Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. Cultural competence requires that organizations:
  - ○ Have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.
  - ○ Have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities they serve.
  - ○ Incorporate the above in all aspects of policy-making, administration, practice and service delivery, systematically involve consumers, families and communities.

  Cultural competence is a developmental process that evolves over an extended period. Both individuals and organizations are at various levels of awareness, knowledge and skills along the cultural competence continuum (National Center for Cultural Competence, 2020).

- ● *Stakeholder:* a person with a connection to or vested interest in the welfare and success of FPS. For the purpose of the equity audit, Mass Insight uses this term to include all FPS staff, students, family members, school committee, and community partners.

- ● *Culturally & Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP):* these practices draw upon, infuse, and evoke students' existing schema, experiences, funds of knowledge, and perspectives to optimally facilitate learning. CLSP also intentionally seek racial and cultural equity and pluralism in order to deliberately tailor district-wide norms, policies and practices to affirm the identities of and expand opportunities for historically marginalized students. CLSP heavily relies upon the scholarship and research of its preceding models, namely culturally relevant, culturally responsive, and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Boston Public Schools, 2020)

Purpose of the Equity Audit

During the 2019-20SY, FPS partnered with Mass Insight Education & Research to conduct a district equity audit to understand ways FPS can build upon strengths and align resources to meet the needs of the diverse FPS student body, staff, and community. Specifically, the audit aims to:

1. Gather information about the district's current strengths and areas for growth relative to diversity, equity, and inclusive practices and policies;

2. Prompt reflective conversations about the current status of diversity, equity, and inclusivity as compared to its desired state; and

3. Identify opportunities to improve equitable practices throughout the district by providing recommendations designed to focus attention and resources to fully support our diverse student, staff, and community.

This equity audit is intended to inform next steps that FPS can take to create a more equitable and inclusive district for all stakeholders. It is not intended to serve as an equity-focused strategic plan, but should inform the new FPS strategic plan in terms of focusing on current inequities and direct prioritization of initiatives to address the inequities. It is not intended to give prescriptive steps to operationalize equity, as that is part of the work FPS must internally engage in as a whole to build the capacity of all stakeholders. This equity audit names the foundations FPS has in place to take these findings, internalize them, and determine collectively and applicably - as departments and positions need or require - what the next steps are to actively integrate an equity lens into the work of all FPS employees to ensure an equitable educational experience for all students.

About Mass Insight and Our Commitment to Equity

Mass Insight Education & Research is a Boston-based nonprofit serving schools and districts nationwide. Our mission is to provide leadership in closing achievement and opportunity gaps for underserved students by focusing on system transformation and student academic success. Mass Insight is a nationally recognized leader in education reform, providing academic programs, research, and strategic consulting services across the United States. Since 2009, Mass Insight has worked with schools, districts, and state education agencies in Massachusetts and across the country to redesign the systems that support chronically underperforming schools and to drive gains in student achievement.

Mass Insight believes all students should have equitable opportunities and access to a high-quality K-12 education, regardless of zip code, economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, or language. Our commitment to equity is grounded in the belief that all students can achieve when provided with high-quality education and support needed to reach and exceed common expectations. We also believe that equity and equality are fundamentally different. Achieving equity requires an intentional focus on overcoming the historical legacy of racism, discrimination, marginalization, and underinvestment that continues to disadvantage specific groups of people. Overcoming this history requires providing different, tailored, and often unequal support and resources, dismantling inequitable systems and practices, and increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) orientation at the individual level to mitigate biases and prejudice.

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology, timeline, and process utilized to gather quantitative and qualitative documents and data sources that Mass Insight examined and conducted during the equity audit. Extensive efforts were made to gather stakeholder participation, including multiple notification methods and deadline extensions.

Mass Insight's Equity Audit Framework

Mass Insight's district equity audit framework was the lens through which our data and document collection, focus groups and interviews, and surveys were designed, conducted, and analyzed. While priority areas and recommendations did not align 1:1 with framework domains, the *Recommendations & Opportunities to Support Equity* section utilizes the framework's highest performing district descriptors (see *Appendix* page 95) to identify equity-focused growth areas for FPS to consider. The district equity audit framework consists of 11 domains:

- **Vision, strategy, and culture:** Clear vision, strategy and manageable set of priorities for the district that recognize the local environment (e.g., regulations, statutes, contracts, funding, politics, governance) and district's capacity for change while promoting a district-wide culture of inclusiveness, excellence, and high expectations for all.
- **Focus on equity:** Policies, structures, systems, and resources to ensure equitable, high quality education for all students.
- **Organizational clarity and collaboration:** Clear and equitable school committee and central office structures, systems, processes, and policies that work together to advance the district towards its vision.
- **Focus on culturally and linguistically sustaining teaching and learning:** Curriculum, materials, tools and supports that help school leaders, teachers and other school staff constantly improve and refine standards-based instructional practice .
- **Student Readiness to Learn:** District policies, systems, and practices enable schools and staff to establish safe, positive, and inclusive learning environments, and proactively address student non-academic needs.
- **Talent:** Systems and processes to recruit, place, develop, and retain talented and diverse staff.
- **Stakeholder engagement and communications:** Intentional systems and processes to authentically engage and communicate with staff, family and community stakeholders.
- **Finance:** Alignment of financial resources with district, school, and student needs and priorities.
- **Data:** Data is available and informs decision-making at all levels of the district and in schools. Data is utilized regularly to identify and address inequities in the system.
- **School management:** Policies, structures, and systems that create the conditions needed for school success, maintain accountability for results, and enable effective school leaders.
- **Central services and operations:** Effective delivery of services to schools, allowing school-based educators to focus on teaching and learning.

Given the purpose, scope, and budget of the audit, Mass Insight's approach focused on system-wide understanding of equity within FPS as evidenced by stakeholder experience data, and district and student performance data and artifacts. The audit did not include classroom observations, individual school assessments, a deep review of the quality of instructional practices or curricular resources, a financial audit, or an analysis of transportation logistics. *Please note, on page 88 at the conclusion of the *Recommendations* section, additional context is provided about enrollment and the feeder choice system.

While it is common accountability practice to evaluate schools and districts quantitatively with student achievement data, our equity audit process additionally prioritizes qualitative data to understand the lived experiences of students, families, educators, and employees. This allows us to understand holistically how schools and districts interact, communicate internally and externally, and provide a learning-centered environment for students, an inclusive work environment for staff, and a welcoming and supportive environment for families and community stakeholders. We invested extensive time in gathering the voices of all FPS stakeholders - students, families, community partners, school teachers and staff, school leaders, central office leaders and staff, and school committee members - and created a safe and trusting environment that allowed us to gather a representative sample of lived FPS experiences.

The audit process gathered data from middle school and high school students in focus groups and surveys given their time in FPS. We did not include elementary school students as the majority of them have only experienced one school in FPS and because of increased logistical challenges (especially in the context of the pandemic) such as obtaining signed parent permission. Our process ensured that families and school leaders and staff of elementary school students were included in all other aspects of the audit, such as focus groups and surveys; and as the audit is focused at the district level, we do not feel that the exclusion of direct elementary student voice negatively impacted the findings.

As an external entity contracted for the purpose of this audit, we intentionally work to quickly develop rapport and trust with all focus groups and interview participants so we can as thoroughly and accurately as possible understand various stakeholders' lived experiences and perspectives. Our focus group and interview process begins with a description of our confidentiality and anonymity protections to ensure stakeholder trust so they feel as comfortable as possible sharing their personal experiences. Notes from focus groups and interviews will neither be shared with anyone in FPS or outside of Mass Insight, nor used for any other purpose than this equity audit.

Our survey process is an additional anonymous opportunity for stakeholders to share their experiences. Our surveys are designed to be anonymous - no identifying information is collected that would allow us to connect specific responses to specific FPS individuals; the exception to this is if a survey respondent included identifying information in the comments they provided in the survey. We do not typically share survey responses and comments with partner districts; however, in this case, we feel the comments - all of which we could obviously not include verbatim in this audit, but all of which contributed to the overarching themes described in the audit - are worth sharing along with this report to allow district leadership, in particular, to better understand the extent to which stakeholders view FPS as equitable. Prior to our sharing of the survey comments, we meticulously removed all identifying information from comments in an effort to maintain anonymity.
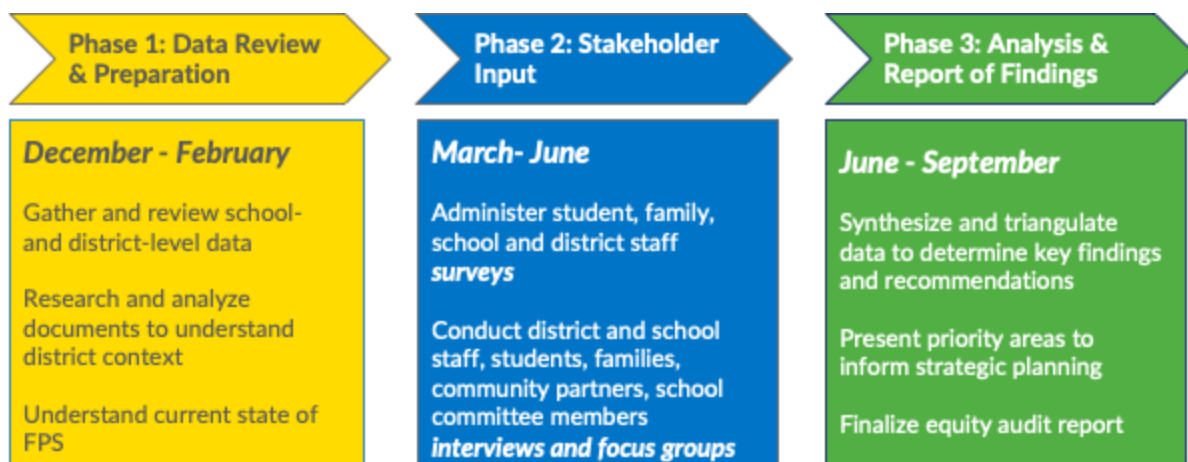
Within our equity audit framework, we utilize a data triangulation method (described in greater detail in this

section) to analyze various data sources and determine our findings and recommendations by seeking corroborating and conflicting evidence from both qualitative and quantitative data. This method results in common themes across all the data collected, which evolved through the analysis process to determine the priority areas. Recommendations then grew from the priority areas, which speak to the most pressing next steps that FPS can take to create a more equitable system.

While the audit took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, Mass Insight was able to conduct focus groups and interviews via Zoom instead of onsite. We do not feel this approach in any way adversely impacted the integrity of our process, nor was this mentioned as an issue by any participants.

Data Sources & Collection Methods

This section details the various data sources examined by Mass Insight to inform the priority areas and recommendations in the equity audit. It is worth noting that our use of the word "data" is more inclusive than quantitative student assessment results; as mentioned previously, we include both qualitative and quantitative data, and our process described in the following sections indicates the variety of data sources we examined to inform the audit.

Phase 1: Data Review & Preparation	Phase 2: Stakeholder Input	Phase 3: Analysis & Report of Findings
December - February	**March- June**	**June - September**
Gather and review school- and district-level data	Administer student, family, school and district staff *surveys*	Synthesize and triangulate data to determine key findings and recommendations
Research and analyze documents to understand district context	Conduct district and school staff, students, families, community partners, school committee members *interviews and focus groups*	Present priority areas to inform strategic planning
Understand current state of FPS		Finalize equity audit report

The graphic above visually portrays the phases and broad steps to complete this equity audit. We do want to name that the original timeline was quite different. FPS and Mass Insight both adjusted operating procedures and processes to accommodate for the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted both organizations and all FPS stakeholders beginning in March. During phase 3, there were additional rounds of feedback on initial priority areas and recommendations from Superintendent Tremblay and Joseph Corazinni, the FPS Administrative Council, and the FPS School Committee. FPS feedback focused on ensuring accuracy of the report draft and alignment with current FPS work and priorities.

Citations for quantitative data are noted with superscripts, which are referenced in the *Appendix* on page 95.

Document and Relevant District and School Performance Data Review

An extensive list of documents and data were requested from FPS to review at the start of the equity audit, which to the extent available, were provided. Additional information in the form of websites, news articles, and other publicly-available sources were also part of the document review. Superscripts denote the sources for quantitative data in the following sections, most of which came from the Massachusetts Department of Education (DESE) for accuracy, availability, and consistency purposes.

While extensive documents and data were reviewed, not all are included in the audit or were applicable to our priority areas and recommendations. For example, FPS asked us to review internally-collected COVID-19 student engagement data collected during the last six weeks of SY19-20. The data was reviewed but ultimately not included in the report as our recommendations do not address reopening plans or the success of FPS's spring response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As another example, we received past years' survey data collected by FPS; and while this data largely aligns with our recommendations, it was collected at the school level, while the survey data collected through the audit reflects a district-level equity lens and speaks directly to the Mass Insight equity audit framework.

Contained in the graphic below are *examples* of the types of data examined. Note that many documents and data sources were examined, but not all are listed here or included in our findings/recommendations. Examining a wide variety of documents and data sources supports the data triangulation methodology, as well as removes potential biases and preferences for certain sources of data over others.

Student Experience
→ Climate surveys
→ Disaggregated student data from DESE and FPS (when available)
→ School improvement plans and performance measures & processes; data meeting decks
→ Student focus groups
→ Student survey responses & comments
→ Family focus groups
→ Family survey responses & comments

Curriculum & Assessment
→ Disaggregated iReady student assessment data by school, as well as on-track to graduate indicators
→ Disaggregated Next Gen MCAS student assessment data
→ Curricular matrices and scope & sequence
→ School and district staff focus groups
→ School and district staff survey responses & comments

Policies & Operations
→ FPS website
→ Past FPS strategic plan and current draft strategic plan
→ FPS policies for special student populations, discipline, immigration
→ Notes and data from Christine Robinson, equity consultant
→ Central office service quality surveys
→ Organizational chart, FPS budget proposals, per pupil expenditure
→ Disaggregated staff data (demographics, turnover, vacancies, experience, licensure, attendance), collective bargaining agreement, salary schedule

District News
→ School Committee and subcommittee meeting minutes
→ News articles about FPS and Framingham

Efforts to Increase Focus Group and Survey Participation

Mass Insight, collaborated extensively with the OEDCD to coordinate, test, and improve a variety of outreach modes to increase representative participation in student, family, partner, and school staff focus groups and surveys. Additionally, to mitigate the language barriers for stakeholder outreach, the district's translation and

interpretation services aided in the translation of content to Portuguese and Spanish. To support the building of trust and rapport, focus group scripts and questions were also translated into Portuguese and Spanish and only conducted in the desired language. Although there were only three main languages used for communication, additional translation options were communicated to those who inquired about additional translation supports. Efforts to engage various stakeholders required extensive coordinator and support from the OEDCD and included the following:

- Students were contacted via FPS email by the Communications Office, as well as notified by school leaders and teachers about survey and focus group participation. Intentional efforts to increase participation were done during focus group conversations with partners, families, school leaders, and teachers; all were encouraged to disseminate audit information and engagement opportunities. Focus groups and surveys were offered in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

- Families were contacted via email, texts, robocalls, and encouraged by district departments and partners (e.g. Framingham Families for Racial Equity, Bilingual & SPED Parent advisory Council (PAC)s) to participate in both focus groups and surveys. Intentional efforts to increase family participation were done during focus group conversations with other families. Additionally, the district posted links to the surveys and focus group sign-ups on the FPS website. Focus groups and surveys were offered in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

- School staff were contacted via FPS email about survey and focus group participation, the superintendent bulletin, the Framingham Teachers Association, and direct outreach from the OEDCD.

The timeline for surveys, focus groups, and interviews was adjusted to account for the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the capability of in-person focus groups. Virtual focus groups began in April and ended in mid-June. Surveys were open for one month, from mid-May to mid-June. The timelines for participation in focus groups and surveys were extended two weeks, and additional focus group sessions were added.

Survey Participation

Each survey opened with questions to gather context about participants; for example, how long they have been in FPS, their grade level, the level of school at which they teach, and the age of their child(ren). All surveys also contained one identity question by which we could sort responses: "I identify with a racial/ethnic or marginalized community, including but not limited to a person of color, ethnic minority, or non-cisgender." Participants could select *yes*, *no*, or *prefer not to answer*. We were then able to disaggregate responses to understand differences in how marginalized communities' experiences in FPS compare to those of non-marginalized communities.

Student Survey

All middle and high school students received an email notification from the district alerting them to the equity audit student survey. A follow-up email was also sent from the district and from school principals to promote additional survey participation. Student surveys were open for five weeks.

There were 952 student survey responses.

91% of student survey respondents selected the English survey, 4% selected the Spanish survey, and 5% selected the Portuguese survey.

Student Survey Participants
- middle schoolers
- high schoolers

40% of participating students self-identify with marginalized communities

37%
63%
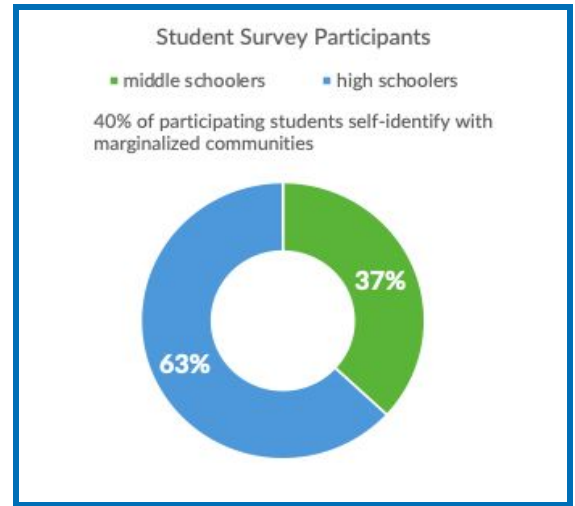
Family Survey

Families received texts and robocalls from the district alerting them to the equity audit family survey. An alert on the FPS homepage also linked to the family surveys in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. Family surveys were open for five weeks.

There were 337 family survey responses.

88% of family survey respondents selected the English survey, 8% selected the Spanish survey, and 4% selected the Portuguese survey.

Family Survey Participants

9%
25%
37%
29%

- PK
- Elementary
- Middle
- High
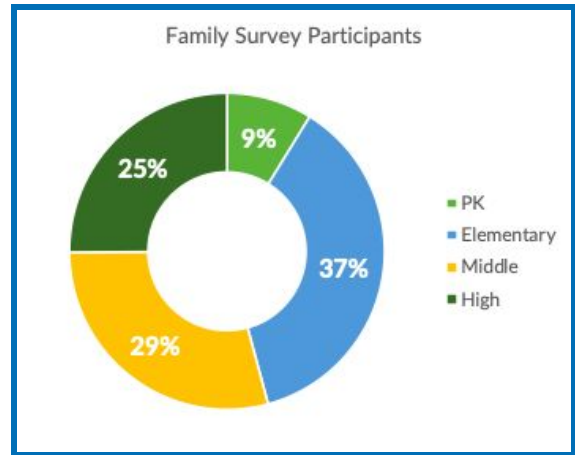
Teacher & Support Staff Survey

Teachers and support staff received an email from the district with a link to the teacher and support staff survey. Follow-up emails were also sent from the FTA president and from school principals. Teacher and support staff surveys were open for six weeks.

There were 577 teacher and school support staff survey responses.

Teacher and Staff Survey Respondents
- 0-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

21.6% of respondents self identified with marginalized communities

16%
20%
22%
42%
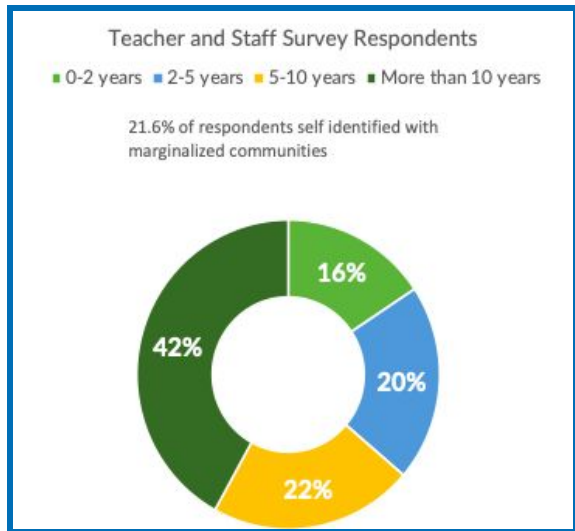
School Leader Survey

School leaders received an email from the district with a link to the school leader survey. School leader survey participants included principals and vice principals. School leader surveys were open for three weeks.

There were 25 school leader survey responses.

School Leader Survey Respondents

- 0-2 years ■ 2-5 years ■ 5-10 years ■ More than 10 years

16% of respondents self identified with marginalized communities

12%
8%
80%

Central Office Staff Survey

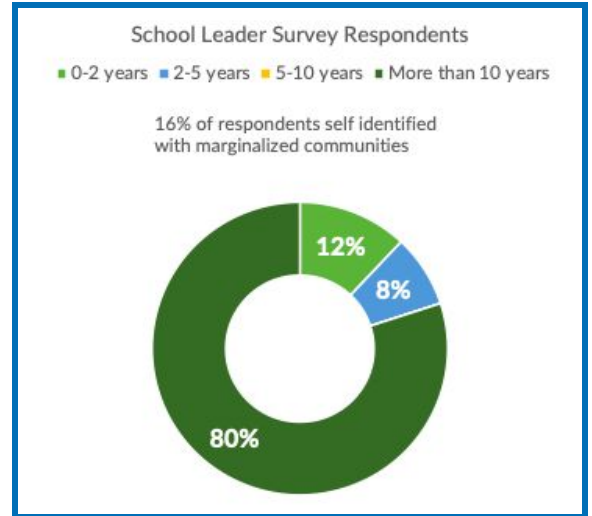Central office staff received an email from the district with a link to the central office staff survey. Central office staff surveys were open for five weeks.

There were 58 central office staff responses.

Central Office Staff Survey Respondents

- 0-2 years ■ 2-5 years ■ 5-10 years ■ More than 10 years

32% of respondents self identified with marginalized communities

20%
30%
30%
20%
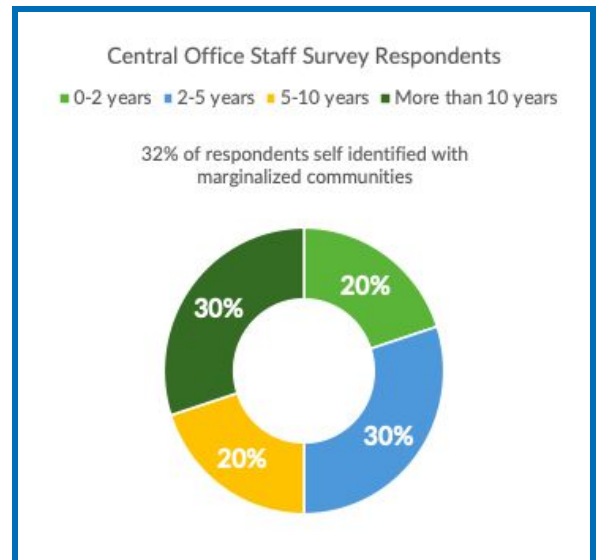
Focus Group Participation

Middle and High School Student Focus Groups
Students were contacted about focus group participation in the same email referenced above about survey participation. Student focus groups were offered over an extended four week period at various times throughout the day, including mornings, afternoons, and early evenings. The FPS Translation Office supported focus groups for Portuguese speaking students but were attended by Mass Insight staff as well.

	Focus Groups for English Speaking Students	Focus Groups for Spanish Speaking Students	Focus Groups for Portuguese Speaking Students
Number of Student Participants	14	1	0
Number of Focus Groups and Participant Slots	9 focus groups (8 slots per focus group)	8 focus groups (6 slots per focus group)	8 focus groups (5 slots per group)
Participation Rate in Focus Group Slots	19.44%	2.1%	0%

Note, to create safe spaces and protect student privacy in front of their peers, we did not ask focus group participants how they self- identify (race, ethnicity, gender, academic support classification (SWD or EL),etc.); however, we were able to discern that participants included members of the following communities: African-American/Black students, White students, Hispanic/Latino students, immigrants, students with disabilities, English learners, students who identify as LGBTQIA+, current students, former students, students who dropped out, middle schoolers, high schoolers, and students who attended the alternative high school program.

Family Focus Groups
Families were contacted about focus group participation in the same email referenced above about survey participation. Family focus groups were offered over an extended five-week period at various times throughout the day, including mornings, afternoons, evenings, and weekends. The FPS Translation Office supported focus groups for Portuguese speaking families but were facilitated by Mass Insight staff as well.

	Focus Groups for English Speaking Family Members	Focus Groups for Spanish Speaking Family Members	Focus Groups for Portuguese Speaking Family Members
Number of Family Participants	10	4	2
Number of Focus Groups and Participant Slots	10 focus groups (8 slots per focus group)	11 focus groups (8 slots per focus group)	11 focus groups (5 slots per focus group)
Participation Rate in Focus Group Slots	12.5%	4.5%	3.6%

Similar to student focus groups, to protect privacy we did not ask family members to identify racially/ethnically, by gender, or by the academic supports their child(ren) receive. We were still able to discern that participants included members from the following communities: White, Asian, Hispanic/Latino; family members of students

with disabilities and English learners; family members of students who dropped out or transferred from FPS; and family members of elementary, middle, and high school students.

School Staff Focus Groups

FTA representatives, teachers, and school staff were notified of focus group participation in an email from the district office and an email from the Framingham Teachers Association (FTA) president, and focus groups were offered over a three week period at various times throughout the day. Vice principals and principals were notified of focus group participation in emails from the district office.

Note, some teacher and school staff focus groups were offered times specifically for elementary, middle, or high school staff to attend, while others were open for any school level staff to attend. Vice principal and principal focus groups were all offered by the school level, with the exception that the high school and preschool principal sessions were combined.

	Focus Groups for FTA Representatives	Focus Groups for Teachers and School Staff	Focus Groups for Vice Principals	Focus Groups for Principals
Number of Participants	7	19	14	13
Participant Descriptions	FTA representatives from elementary, middle, and high school levels	Representatives from elementary, middle, and high school levels	Representatives from elementary, middle, and high school levels	Representatives from preschool, elementary, middle, and high school levels
Number of Focus Groups and Participant Slots	2 focus groups	19 focus groups (8 slots per focus group)	3 focus groups (one group for each school level)	3 focus groups (one group for each school level)
Participation Rate in Focus Group Slots	NA	12.5%	82.4%	92.8%

Partner & Family Advocates Focus Groups

One community partner focus group was offered, and **12 community partners participated**, with two additional private follow-up conversations at the partners' request.

Two community advocacy focus groups were offered, and **two family advocacy partners participated**.

School Committee Member Focus Groups

Focus groups of no more than two participants at a time were conducted with all FPS School Committee members, and all school committee members participated.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with the following district and city leaders:

- Superintendent Tremblay
- Assistant Superintendent and Assistant Director of Human Resources
- Assistant Superintendents of Elementary & Secondary Education
- Assistant Superintendent of Equity, Diversity & Community Development
- Curriculum Coordinator of English Learners (ELs) & Bilingual Programs
- Director of Community Resource Development
- Director and Assistant Director of Bilingual Education
- Director of Building Learning Opportunities for Children's Kindergarten Success (B.L.O.C.K.S) Preschool
- Director of the Parent Information Center
- Directors of Early Childhood Education and the Early Childhood Alliance
- Directors of Technology and Data Project Manager
- Director and Assistant Director of Special Education
- Director of Finance & Operations
- Director and Assistant Director of Health & Wellness
- District Behavior Coordinator
- District Therapeutic Coach
- District Crisis/Behavior Specialist
- District Student Support Specialist
- FTA President Mulroney
- Mayor Spicer

Data Analysis

During and after the data collection process, Mass Insight synthesizes data to surface themes including commonalities and discrepancies between data sources to test developing hypotheses. Data sources include survey responses, focus group and interview comments, and documents, in addition to extensive quantitative data, some of which are presented in the following section, *FPS by the Numbers*. This approach allows us to organize findings and determine emerging themes that form the foundation of our priority area.

At the completion of data collection, we cross-synthesize or triangulate data sources for each priority area, again noting common themes that emerge in the findings that also inform recommendations. The triangulation process also includes comparing the findings and proposed recommendations against our highest-performing district descriptor in our equity framework; thus removing potential biases from the process as we prioritize recommendations aligned to research-supported best practices of equitable and inclusive school systems.

Once priority areas and recommendations are identified, the report is written to not only clearly convey our findings, priority areas, and recommendations, but also to identify next steps that the district can take to utilize the report to increase equity, access, and inclusiveness for all stakeholders.
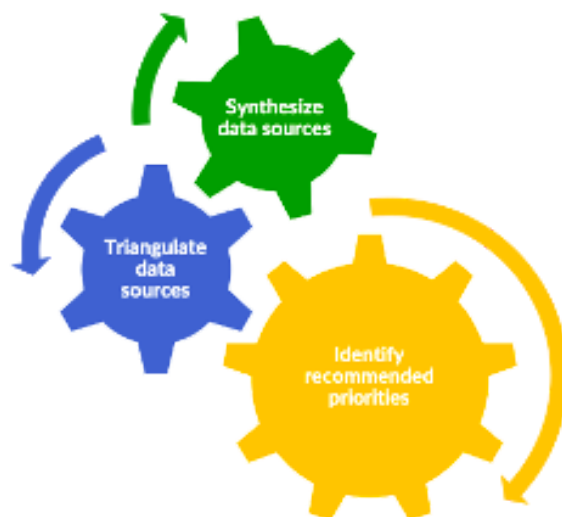
FPS BY THE NUMBERS

This section provides an overview of some key data indicators about the current state of FPS at the district level. Sections described below include FPS Student Population, School Choice and Programs, and FPS Student Persistence to Graduation.

9,088 Students Enrolled[1]
Student enrollment since 2014 has increased by 808 students or 9.7%

14 Schools[3]
1 preschool
9 elementary schools (K-5)
3 middle schools (6-8)
1 high school (9-12)

Student/Teacher Ratio[4] 12.7:1
696.5 FTE
1,306 employees

9-Member School Committee[3]
2-year terms
Mayor is ex-officio member

District Accountability Status[1]:
Substantial Progress Toward Targets
District not requiring assistance or intervention

FY20 Proposed District Budget[4]: $139,096,821
4.57% increase from FY19

FPS Student Population

SY19-20 District Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity
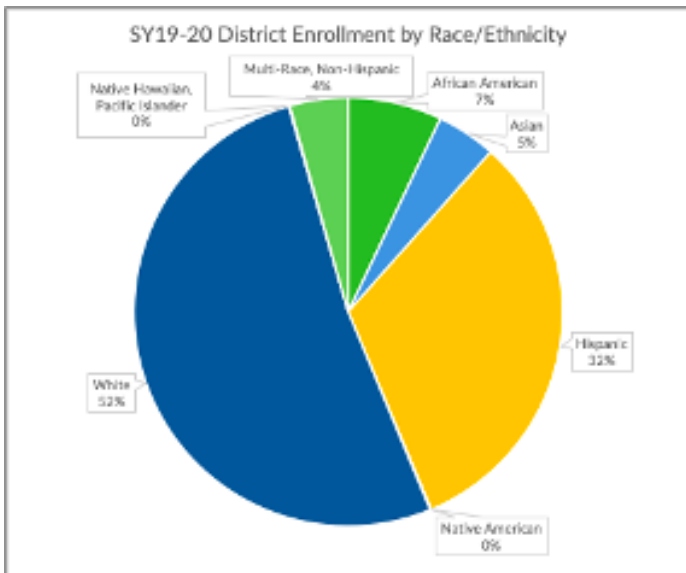
FPS has a racially and ethnically diverse student population[1].

FPS had a greater proportion of Hispanic students in SY19-20 than the state average - 32.1% compared to 21.6% - as well as multi-race, non-Hispanic students - 4.4% compared to 3.9%.

FPS had a comparable population of economically disadvantaged students in SY19-20 as compared to the state. It has a slightly higher percentage of students with disabilities (SWDs) than the state percentage - 21.8% compared to 18.4%.

FPS had 25.1% ELs in SY19-20, over double that of the state average of 10.8%. Students who have a first language other English was significantly higher than the state percentage as well - 47.2% compared to 23.0%. And subsequently, FPS had a higher high needs population of 61.2% compared to the state's percentage of 48.7%.

SY19-20 Percent of Selected Populations
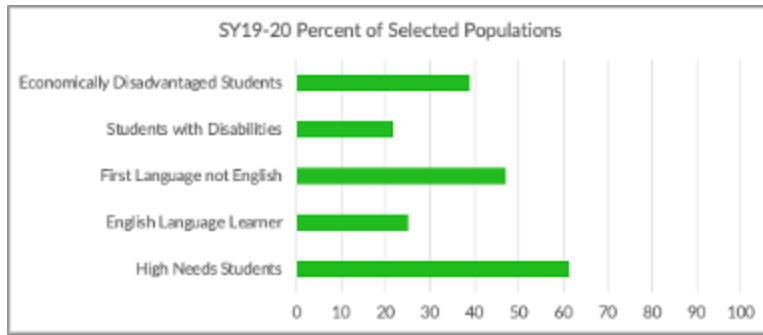
FPS staff demographics do not yet reflect student demographics[1].

SY19-20 Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity
- African American: 7.1%
- Asian: 4.5%
- Hispanic: 32.1%
- Native American: 0.1%
- White: 51.8%
- Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander: 0.1%
- Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic: 4.4%

SY19-20 Staff Race/Ethnicity
- African American: 2.2%
- Asian: 1.5%
- Hispanic: 12.0%
- Native American: 0%
- White: 84.1%
- Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander: 0.1%
- Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic: 0.1%
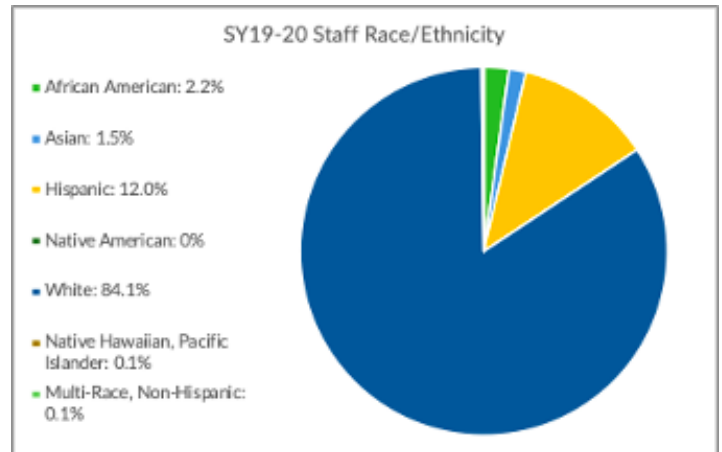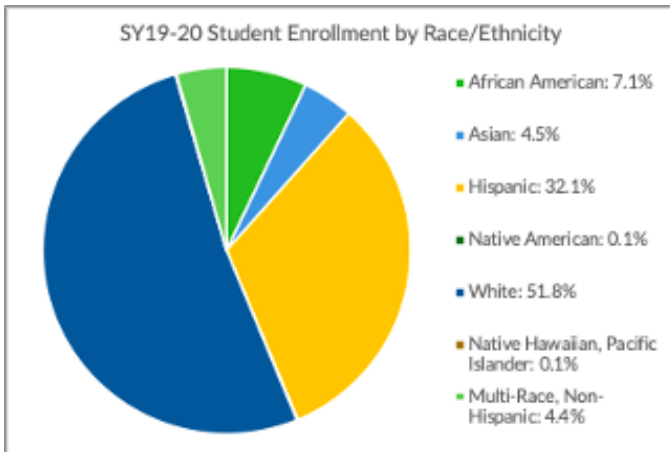
Although the district has seen an increase in the percentage of non-white educators, it is struggling to make significant shifts in having a staff representative of FPS students. Over the last three years, the percentage of white staff has remained consistent with just a slight decrease from 2018-2019.

Data on the linguistic diversity of staff and students was not available.

The five-year enrollment trend[1] indicates that Hispanic student enrollment is continuing to increase.

Enrollment trends over the last five years show an increase of more than 6% for Hispanic students and a decrease of more than 6% for white students. Asian students show a slight decrease (1.1%) while African American/Black students, Native American students, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Island students, and Multi-race non-Hispanic students enrollment was relatively stable.

Student Enrollment Trend by Race/Ethnicity SY16-20
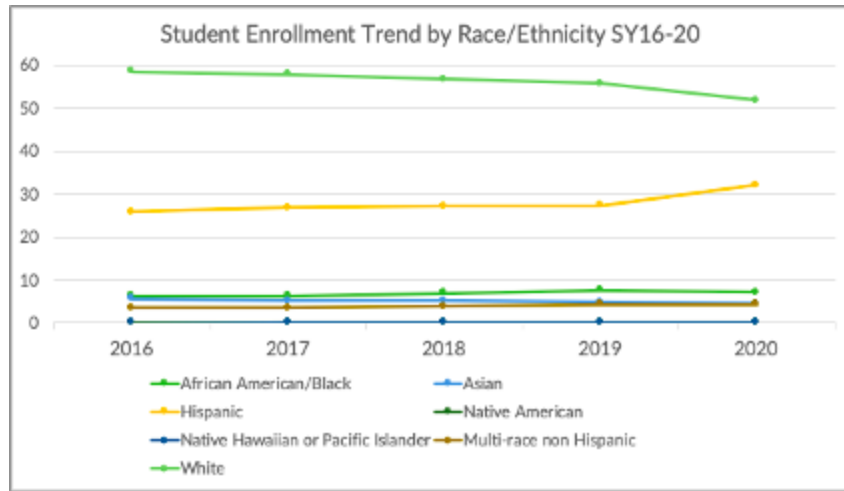
The enrollment trend[1] also indicates most special student populations are also increasing.

Change in Special Student Populations from 2016-2020
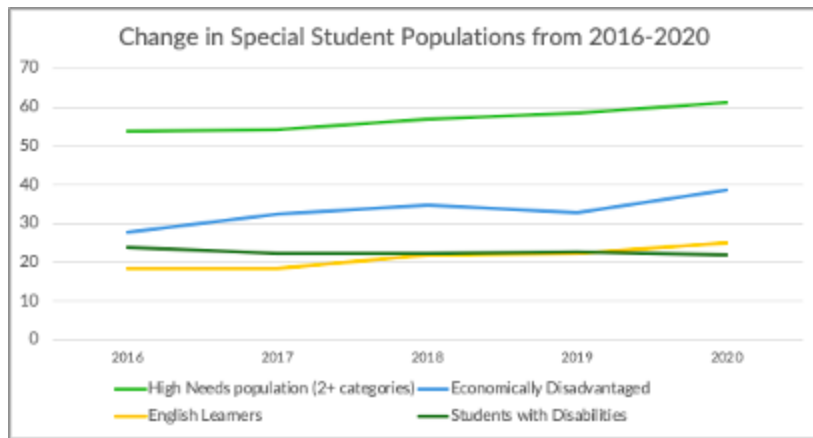
Over the last five years, the student population in FPS has changed. Notably, **ELs have increased by 6.5%** and account for 25.1% of the student population (roughly 2,281 students); **the number of economically disadvantaged students has increased by 10.9%** and accounts for 38.8% of the student population (roughly 3526 students), and **the number of SWDs has decreased by 2%** and accounts for 21.8% of the student population (roughly 1981 students). These changes indicate an **overall increase of 7.4% of students classified as high needs within FPS.**

The growing population in FPS has also increased the number of dual identified students: students classified as both ELs and SWDs. In SY19-20, 463 students were dual identified.

The enrollment data in the above graphs is limited and not a fully encompassing picture of the diversity of FPS, which according to FPS's definition of diversity includes "race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more." However, we recognize

that it is both burdensome for a district to manage and requires a great deal of trust for a district to ask these personal identifiers of its employees, students, and families. So while the two very limited enrollment descriptors - race and ethnicity - of the student population only recognize a few aspects of diversity, it is what is utilized by the state. We also want to recognize that FPS has attempted to create additional racially/ethnically diverse descriptors that are used internally that go further to recognize stakeholders' rich and mixed cultural backgrounds. For example, students are categorized in documents as having multiple racial identifiers such as White/Hispanic, Hispanic/Asian/White, and White/Black which impacts data analysis data. While recognizing its limitations and for comparison purposes to state data, which was the source of the majority of our data, we compiled FPS's descriptors to that of the state's.

School Choice and Programs

Families in FPS have enrollment choices for their child's elementary school, a program designed in the late 1990s to address racially imbalanced schools. The program ran successfully until the early 2000s when state funding was eliminated. Since that time, school choice has been more about the programmatic options available at schools, which has caused racial disproportionality and a complicated feeder system.

Students attending an out-of neighborhood elementary school are provided busing to their school of attendance. As the map indicates, the majority of schools in FPS are north of route 9, which results in long bus rides for many students and complicated transportation scenarios. Audit participants share that a common perception is that schools south of route 9 are of lower quality than those north of route 9. The same areas also reflect community disparities in both ethnic/racial diversity and socioeconomic status.
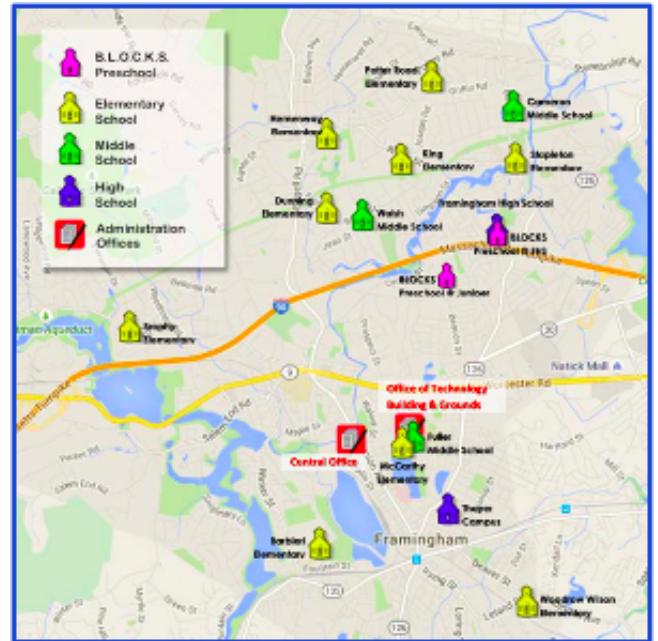
FPS schools offer some program choices, and schools are organized into support tiers based on academic performance levels[1,5]. Tiers are an FPS designation that determines the extent of support from OTL. Tier II schools have pre-turnaround action plans, and Tier III schools have collective turnaround action plans.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">

PRE-K & ELEMENTARY

Tier 1
- BLOCKS Preschool
- Dunning Elementary
- Hemenway Elementary
- King Elementary
- Stapleton Elementary (Title 1)
- Potter Road Elementary **

Tier II
- Barbieri Elementary (Title 1) *

Tier III
- Wilson Elementary (Title 1) **
- Brophy Elementary (Title 1) *
- McCarthy Elementary (Title 1)

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MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Tier 1
- Cameron Middle
- Walsh Middle *

Tier II
- Fuller Middle (Title 1): Targeted support designation

HIGH SCHOOL

Framingham High*
   Thayer Campus (Alternative Education Site)

Note: * indicates a dual language Spanish program and ** indicates a dual language Portuguese program.

School populations of ELs and SWDs vary depending on the special programs offered at each school. Shaded squares indicate schools with greater than 20% EL or SWD populations.

School (SY19-20)	ELs	SWDs	Special Programs
Barbieri ES	25.1%	19.0%	DD, II, Multi, Dual Language Spanish
Brophy ES	45.5%	16.0%	Dual Language Spanish
Dunning ES	19.5%	22.0%	ASD
Hemenway ES	18.5%	19.8%	DD
King ES	18.1%	14.6%	ASD
McCarthy ES	28.8%	28.2%	LD
Potter Road ES	32.6%	10.0%	Dual Language Portuguese
Stapleton ES	19.4%	28.4%	ED
Wilson ES	66.7%	9.4%	Dual Language Portuguese
Cameron MS	11.2	26.6%	ED, LD, Multi
Fuller MS	42.1%	24.8%	II, ASD
Walsh MS	5.9%	25.0%	LD
Framingham HS	15.7%	18.0%	II, ASD, ED

Key: Developmental Delay (DD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Multiple Disabilities (Multi), Intellectually Impaired (II), Learning/Language Disability (LD), Emotional Disability (ED)

Most schools with higher EL and SWD populations have special programs to meet students' learning and language development needs. All schools offer inclusion, resource setting, and related special education supports, in addition to any special programs listed.

EL programs support an increasing number of students in FPS[2]. In SY19-20, FPS had 2,283 ELs, an increase of 307 students from the previous school year. The table below shows the spread of ELs throughout the different grade level bands in FPS, and the graph displays the race/ethnicity of ELs in SY19-20.

Grade Level	% of ELs in FPS in SY19-20
PreK	0%
K-1	27%
2-5	40%
6-8	16%
9-12	16%

Race/Ethnicity of EL Student Population in SY19-20

- African American/Black
- Asian
- Hispanic/Latino
- White
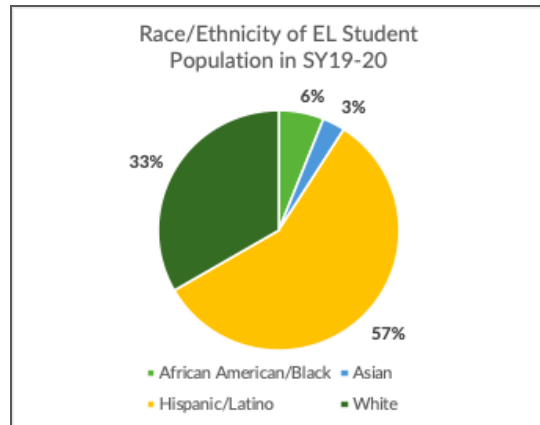
Within the EL population, 19% are also identified as SWDs, and 61% are economically disadvantaged.

EL's language acquisition progress is measured bi-annually using the ACCESS test across four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. **District-wide ACCESS results[2] demonstrate that over the past four years roughly the same percentage of students have been recognized as making progress.** ACCESS progress, or the successful meeting of a student's target, is based on expected cohort growth for students who have been in the US for a similar period of time and who achieved a similar ACCESS score the previous year.

School Year	% of FPS Students Who Made Progress on ACCESS
2016	53%
2017	54%
2018	55%
2019	49%

Grade-level or grade-band ACCESS data was not provided by FPS.

FPS Student Persistence to Graduation

Over the past five years, FPS schools have seen an increase in chronic absenteeism[1].
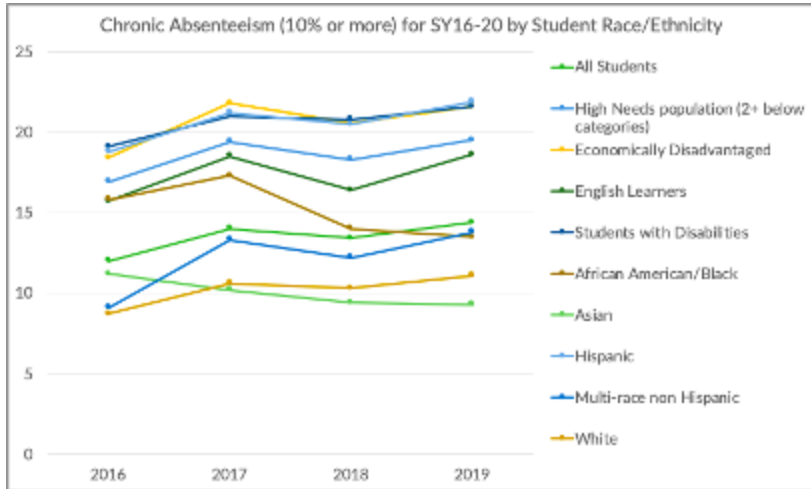
The chronic absenteeism rate for MA in SY 2018-19 was 12.9%, compared to FPS's chronic absenteeism rate of 14.4%. Chronic absenteeism in FPS is higher than the state averages for all student subgroups except for Asian, African American/Black, and White students.

Student attendance in FPS averages 94.4% overall, which is comparable to the state's average attendance rate of 94.6%. No student subgroups' average attendance varies more than 2% lower than the district average.

FPS dropout rates[1] are nearly double that of the state average, especially for marginalized students.

3.3% of FPS students dropped out in SY18-19, as compared to 1.8% in MA. In FPS, student subgroups with rates higher than the district average were high needs (6.0%), economically disadvantaged (6.2%), ELs (3.7%), SWDs (4.0%), Hispanic or Latino students (6.7%), and males (4.2%).

Data indicates that the majority of dropouts occur during 10th and 11th grades, with high needs students, economically disadvantaged, and Hispanic or Latino students making up the greatest percentage of student dropouts across grade levels.

Number of Student Dropouts SY16-19
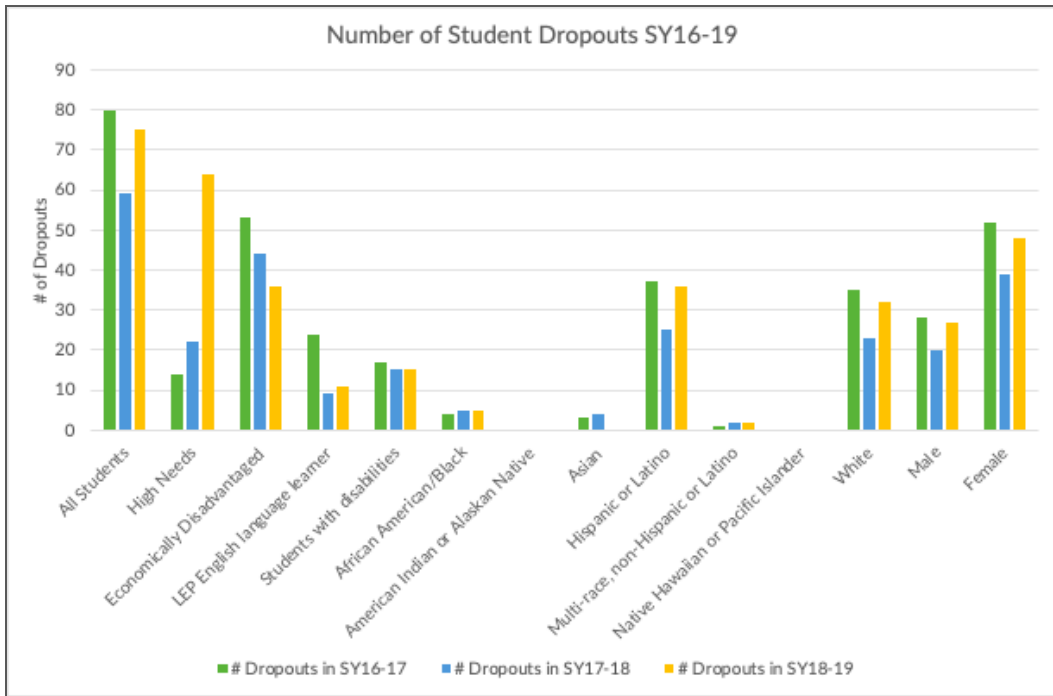
District discipline rates[1] are steady over the past three years, yet disparities exist among student subgroups, particularly for SWDs.

3 Year District Trend of District Discipline Rates

3-Year Trend of High School Discipline Rates

3-Year Trend of Middle School Discipline Rates
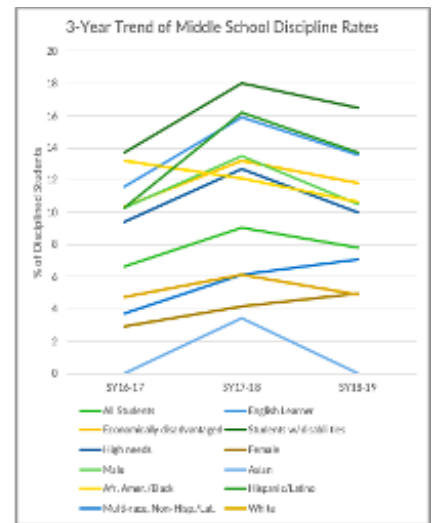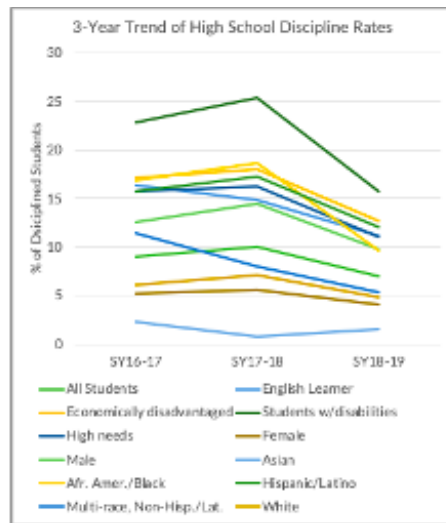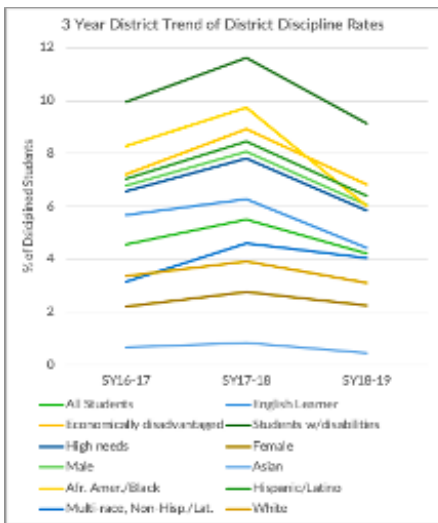
The discipline rate for students with disabilities was 5% higher than the district, high school, and middle school averages for the last three years. High school average rates for economically disadvantaged students, Hispanic/Latino students, and middle school average rates for ELs and Hispanic/Latino students were also higher

Four-year graduation rates[1], as with dropout rates, demonstrate significant disproportionality for many marginalized student subgroup populations. FPS graduation rates were steady over the last five years, averaging about 5% lower than the average graduation rate in MA. Asian students, white students, and females consistently graduate at a higher rate than all other student subgroups and the district average.

FPS 4-year Graduation Rates for SY2015-2019
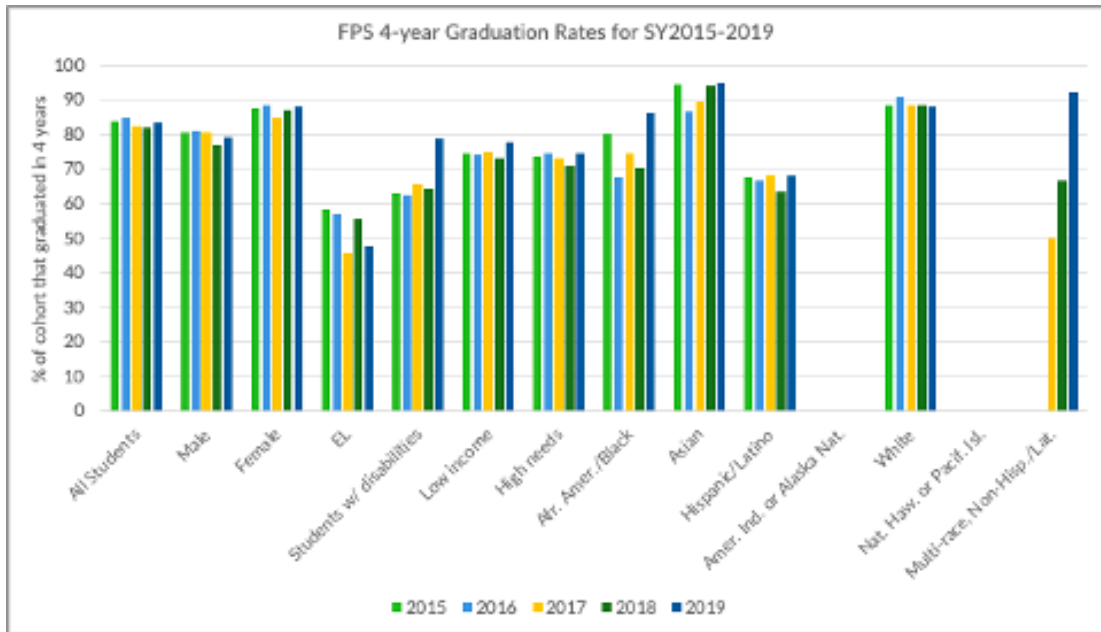
Noticeably, ELs graduate at a rate 30% less than the district average; SWDs at a rate 16% less than the district average; Hispanic/Latino students at a rate 16% less than the district average; and multi-race non-Hispanic/Latino students at a rate 23% less than the district average.

Five-year graduation rates[1] also demonstrate disproportionality for many marginalized student subgroup populations, yet smaller gaps than four-year graduation rates. FPS five-year graduation rates were steady over the last five years, averaging about 5% lower than the statewide average. Asian students, white students, and females consistently graduate at a higher rate than all other student subgroups and the district average.

Five-year ELs graduate at a rate 18% less than the district average, which is 12% higher than four-year graduating ELs. Five-year SWDs graduate at a rate 12% less than the district average, which is 4% higher than four-year graduating SWDs.

FPS 5-year Graduation Rates for SY2015-19
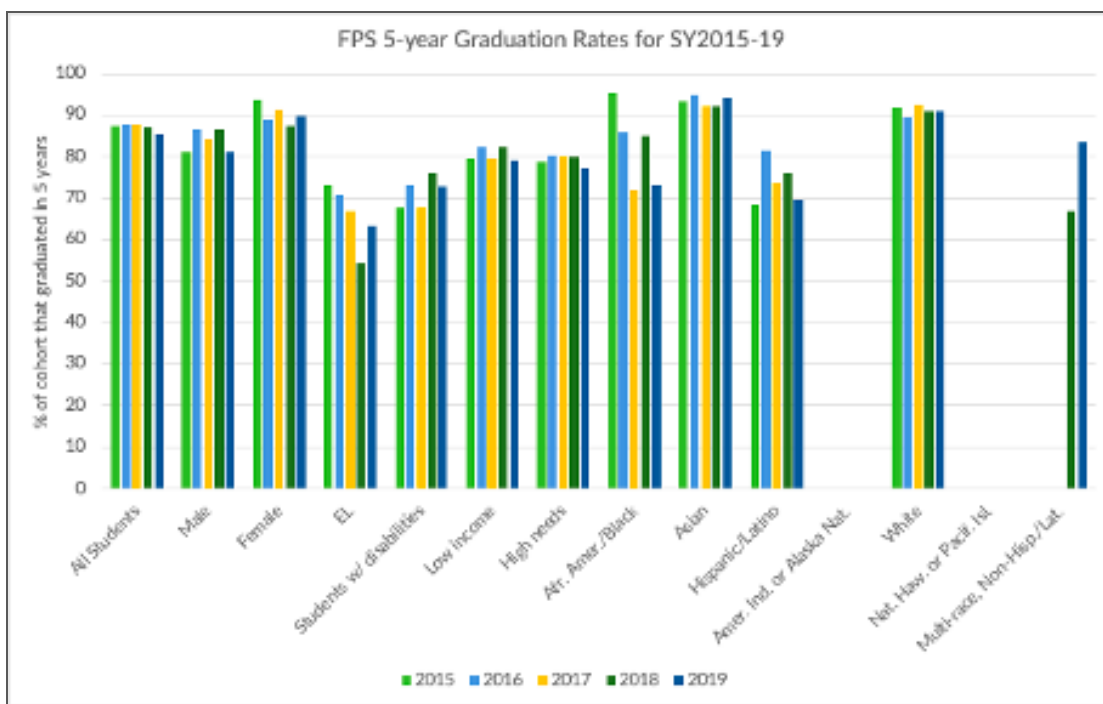
Student Academic Access and Achievement

This section provides an overview of student enrollment in high school advanced academic courses and MCAS achievement trends in 10th, 8th, 5th, and 3rd grades. We selected these particular grade levels because 3rd and 10th grade MCAS assessments are the first and last assessments given to students during their K-12 educational experiences for state accountability purposes, and 5th and 8th grades represent critical transition times at the ends of elementary and middle school.

Research indicates 3rd grade reading success is a predictive variable affecting high school completion (Hanover Research, 2014). As such, working backwards from high school graduation data to 3rd grade reading success in particular, theoretically demonstrates discrepancies throughout students' time in FPS. As the following section indicates quantitatively with MCAS results, English language learners and students with disabilities score lower (fewer exceed or meet expectations) as compared with all other student subgroups, a trend that continues through middle and high school and that is also reflected in FPS graduation rates.

Enrollment in advanced academic courses[2] indicates disproportionality for most marginalized student populations.

There are 507 students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses; of those, 0.4% are ELs. There are 939 students enrolled in honors courses; of those, 0.3% are ELs. Note, due to the FPS student racial designations,

students with multiple racial/ethnic identification were marked as multiracial.
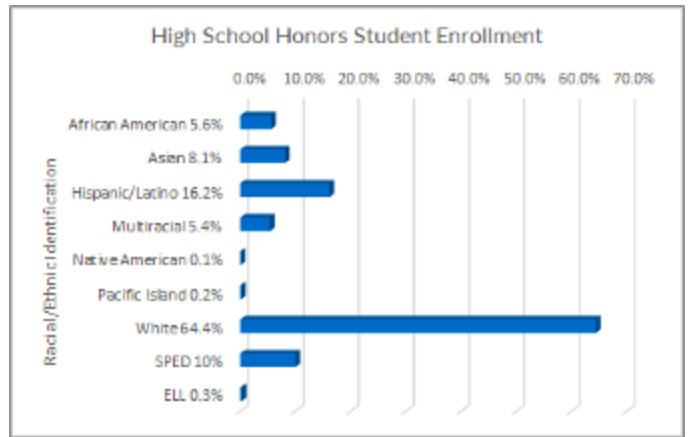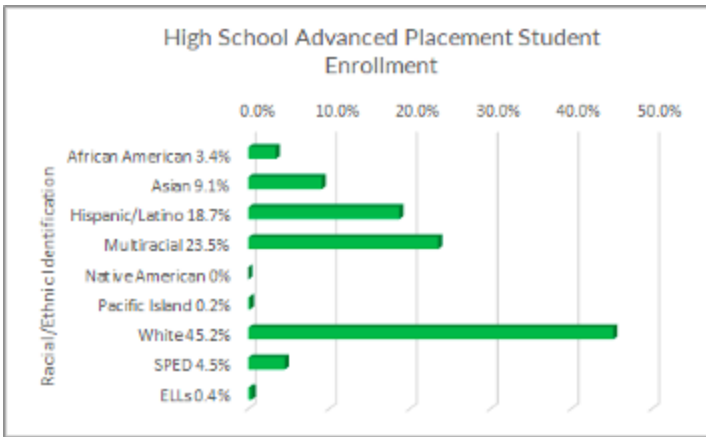
10th grade MCAS results[1] indicate many student subgroups perform lower than other student subgroups and FPS and state averages, especially ELs, SWDs, and homeless students.
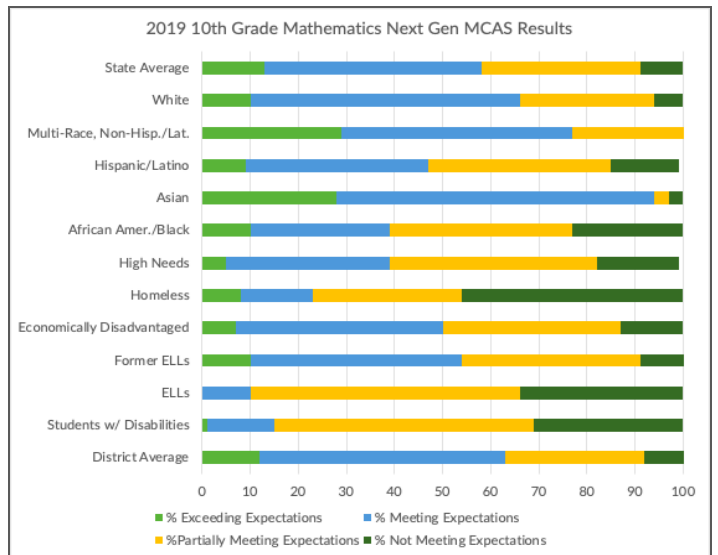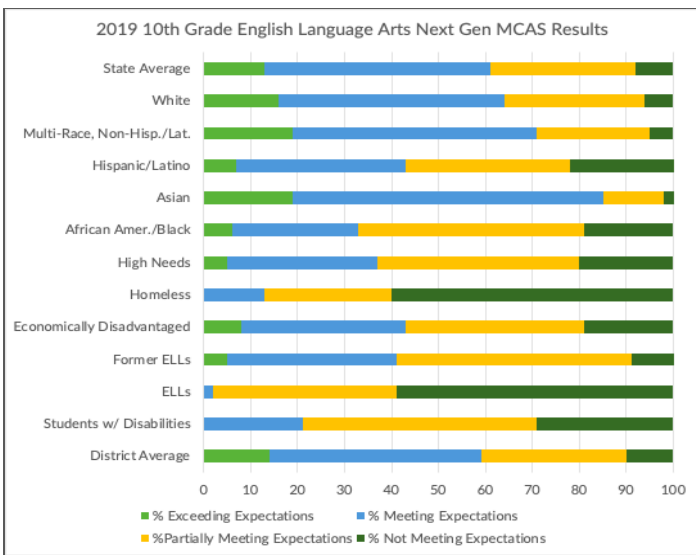
8th grade MCAS results[1] also indicate many student subgroups perform lower than other student subgroups and FPS and state averages, especially ELs, SWDs, and homeless students.

2019 8th Grade English Language Arts Next Gen MCAS Results

2019 8th Grade Mathematics Next Gen MCAS Results

5th grade MCAS results[1] indicate many student subgroups perform lower than other student subgroups and FPS and state averages, especially ELs, SWDs, and homeless students.

2019 5th Grade English Language Arts Next Gen MCAS Results
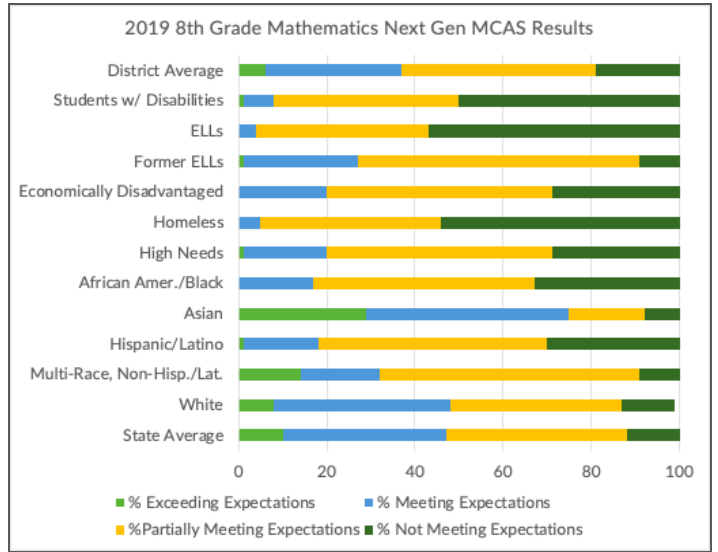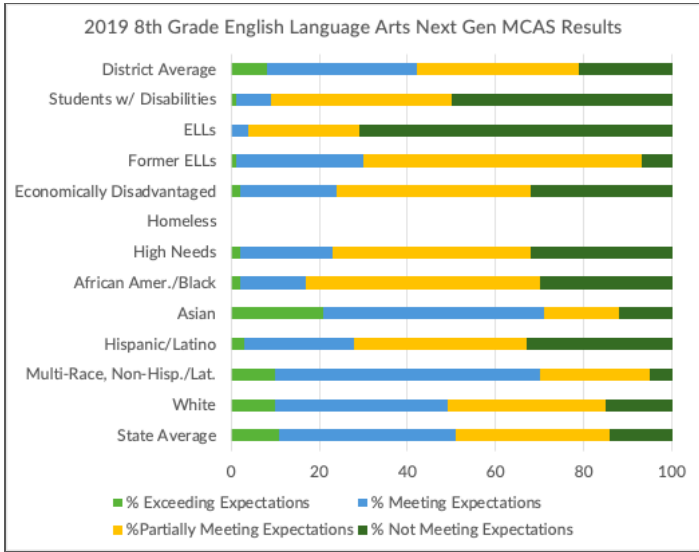
2019 5th Grade Mathematics Next Gen MCAS Results
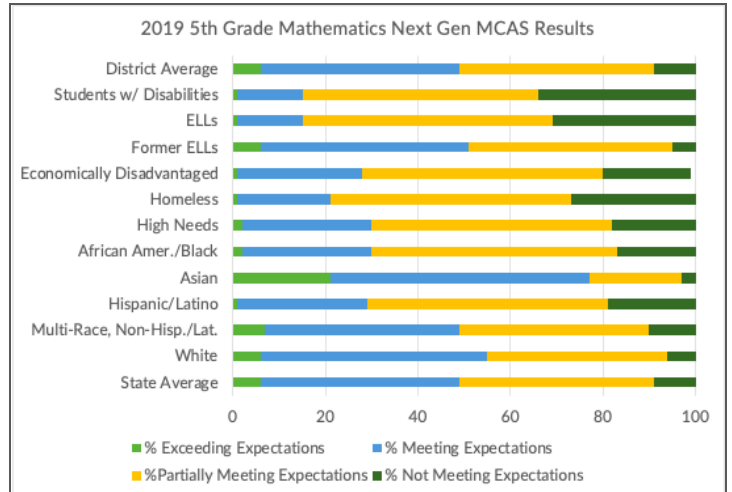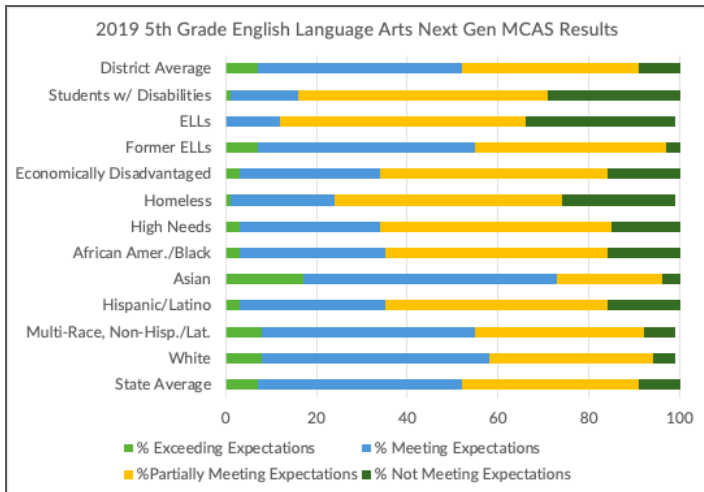
3rd grade MCAS results[1] indicate many student subgroups perform lower than other student subgroups and FPS and state averages, especially ELs and SWDs.
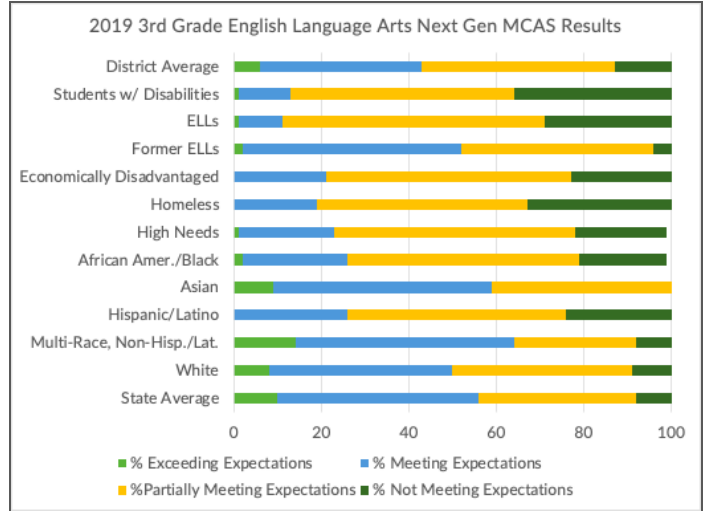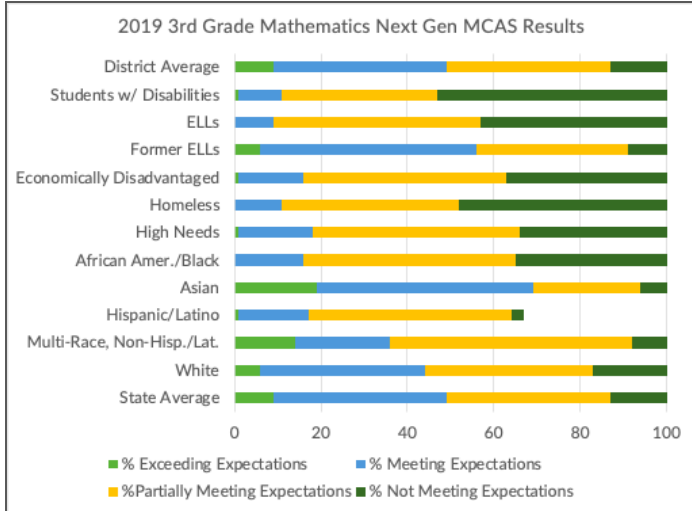
Data trends indicate that ELs and SWDs, beginning in 3rd grade and continuing through 10th grade, perform lower than other student subgroups on the English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics MCAS. While other subgroups also perform lower than the district average, it is not as consistent or as low as ELs and SWDs.

PRIORITY AREAS

This section presents eight priority areas, themes that emerged through the data triangulation and analysis process that represent our recommended highest-leverage areas for FPS to consider on the district's equity journey.

For each Priority Area, two descriptions are provided:
- *Foundational Strengths to Build Upon* describe strengths and the work FPS has already started or established, upon which the next steps and recommendations can be built and expanded; and
- *Findings* present what FPS stakeholders shared and what was reflected in data.

Priority Area 1: District-wide Shared Commitment and Ownership of Equity Work

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

Through the audit, we learned of several examples of how FPS is beginning to establish a district-wide commitment to equity. For example, this commitment is evidenced in the invested time, resources, and staff support for this equity audit. Additionally, audit participants from all stakeholder groups convey the belief that equity should be prioritized and recognize the need for an equity audit to better understand the extent to which equitable and inclusive practices are supporting students, staff, and families.

The district has made investments to intentionally address issues of equity, most importantly, the creation of the Office of Equity, Diversity & Community Development (OEDCD). The OEDCD strives to "ensure that the Framingham Public Schools is an educational and working environment unimpeded by bias or discrimination, where individuals of all backgrounds and experiences are welcomed, included, encouraged, and can succeed and flourish."[3] The OEDCD has already adopted some practices to begin living its mission, including establishing an anonymous online equity reporting system, through which staff, students, and families can report experienced or witnessed incidents involving issues of racism, bias, inclusion, or sexual misconduct. Assessments and incident resolution support is handled by the OEDCD and other central office departments.

Findings

The Need to Re-define Roles of Equity and the OEDCD
Stakeholders' awareness and perceptions of the district's commitment to equity in FPS and the role of the OEDCD vary widely:

- 💬 *"I do not believe that FPS, as a district, places equity as a priority. While I am aware that there is an Office of Equity, it's work is not visible in our schools."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"It is unclear what the role of the Office of Equity is."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"I do not know the mechanisms to report inequities."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"Not sure what the Office of Equity does."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"I was not even aware that there was a department of equity or a focus on it at all."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"Equity should be on EVERY agenda. We rarely talk about it at dept/team meetings."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"Teachers don't know how to redirect and get everyone to lead these conversations [about race and sexual orientation]."* - FPS student

Survey responses further indicate:

> 69% of central office staff agree/somewhat agree, 76% of school leadership agree/somewhat agree, and 57% of school staff agree/somewhat agree that "The purpose, role, and responsibilities of the Office of Equity are clear."
>
> Only 40% of school staff respondents agree/somewhat agree that "I am aware of the process to report equity-related issues and concerns and when/how to use it."

Survey and perception data point to a need for the district to clarify and communicate often its level of commitment to ensuring and advancing equity throughout the district, as well as a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the OEDCD.

Lack of Shared Ownership for All Students' Success and Prioritization of Equity

While participating stakeholders strongly support the need to focus on equity, there is a lack of shared ownership - a belief that everyone sees equity as their responsibility - and direction for doing so within FPS. As the survey response below indicates, a substantial proportion of staff questions whether all students are being prepared for future success, indicating an acknowledgment of inequitable educational experiences:

> 67% of central office respondents, 84% of school leader respondents, and 58% of staff respondents agree or somewhat agree that "The district is preparing all students for success in their chosen colleges and/or careers." 33.5% of all respondents somewhat disagree or disagree.

School-level survey responses additionally indicate:

> 24% of school leaders agree and 72% somewhat agree, while 38% of school staff agree and 36% somewhat agree that "All staff at my school believe that all students can succeed."

This indicates around a third of school-level staff survey respondents do not believe FPS is preparing all students for life beyond graduation from FPS, nor do all staff believe that all students can succeed. Survey and focus group comments reiterate this concern about an equitable school system for all students:

💬 *"There are not consistent and equal opportunities for all students to succeed, nor are we adequately preparing all students for the future."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"I learned by my experiences that it depends of your race and what school you go to Framingham."* - FPS family member

💬 *"Everyone can learn! We need to stop the inequality in Framingham and make a change."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"If equity is a top priority, why is there not greater supports for that department?"* - FPS central office staff

💬 *"Engage in difficult discussions for self-growth, and don't have Joseph Corazzini be the only person in Central Office to turn to when talking about equity and culture. It should be part of every department."* - FPS school staff

As perception data indicates, there is a need for *all* members of FPS to better understand their individual role in supporting and ensuring all students' success, as well as a demonstration from the district that equity is a priority within FPS. Not everyone sees equity as their responsibility in FPS yet.

Priority Area 2: Data to Inform Decision Making

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

Robust data systems are key to examining disaggregated student data at every level of a school district to identify and address inequities. FPS has made some recent investments to enhance staff data use, particularly with the hire of the Director of Technology, who is currently developing data dashboards to integrate the various data information systems used in the district and ensure that data is accessible for staff to utilize. The district has also invested in the iReady assessment to use as a district diagnostic tool.

Current data practices exist for different levels of the district, with the senior leadership team monitoring school performance on a cyclical basis, principals and principal supervisors engaging in ongoing data conversations to monitor school improvement progress, and teachers utilizing data at the classroom level. All district and school staff have access to a lot of data.

Findings

Student Subgroups with Disproportionate Outcomes
The diversity of FPS' student population has shifted in recent years. As data indicates, the district has larger proportions of Hispanic/Latino students and Multi-race/Non-Hispanic students as compared to the state average, with Hispanic/Latino student enrollment increasing more than 6% in the last five years. FPS also has a slightly higher percentage of students with disabilities (SWDs) and over double the percentage of students whose first language is not English, resulting in a higher proportion of high needs students than the state average and an increase of 7.4% of high needs students in the last five years.

To support the changing needs of FPS students, the Multilingual and Special Education departments have expanded special programs to accommodate students' learning and language needs. However, data indicates

disproportionate outcomes especially for SWDs and English learners (ELs) in several key indicators of student success:

- The district discipline rates in SY18-19 were:
    - 4.96% higher for **SWDs** than the district average,
    - 4.19% higher than the high school average for **ELs** and 5.79% higher for **SWDs** than the district's high school average, and
    - 5.76% higher than the middle school average for **ELs** and 8.7% higher for **SWDs** than the district's middle school average.
- The SY18-19 district dropout rates were 6% higher for **high needs** students, 6.2% higher for **economically disadvantaged** students, 3.7% higher for **ELs**, 4% higher for **SWDs**, 6.7% higher for **Hispanic/Latino** students, and 4.2% higher for **males**.
- Graduation rates indicate:
    - **ELs** graduate at a rate of 30% lower than the district average in 4 years and 18% lower than the district average in 5 years, indicating a 12% increase in the graduation rate for ELs with an additional year. EL graduation rates have decreased over the past 5 years.
    - **SWDs** graduate at a rate 16% lower than the district average in 4 years and 12% lower than the district average in 5 years, indicating a 4% increase in the graduation rate for SWDs with an additional year. SWD graduation rates have increased over the past 5 years.
    - **Hispanic/Latino** students graduate at a rate 16% lower than the district average in 4 years and 9.5% lower than the district average in 5 years, indicating a 6.5% increase in the graduation rate for Hispanic/Latino students with an additional year. Hispanic/Latino student graduation rates have remained relatively steady over the past 5 years.
    - **Multirace Non-Hispanic/Latino** students graduate at a rate of 23% lower than the district average in 4 years and 23.7% lower than the district average in 5 years, indicating no change in the graduation rate for Multirace Non-Hispanic/Latino students with an additional year. Multirace Non-Hispanic/Latino student graduation rates have increased over the past 5 years.
- High school academic data indicators show:
    - High school honors enrollment was 58.8% lower for **African American/Black** students, 56.3% lower for **Asian** students, 48.2% lower for **Hispanic/Latino** students, 59% lower for **Multiracial Non-Hispanic** students, 54.4% lower for **SWDs**, and 64.1% lower for **ELs,** as compared to White students.
    - AP enrollment for students was 41.8% lower for **African American/Black** students, 36.1% lower for **Asian** students, 26.5% lower for **Hispanic/Latino** students, 21.7% lower for **Multiracial Non-Hispanic** students, 40.7% lower for **SWDs**, and 44.8% lower for **ELs,** as compared to White students.
    - On the 10th grade SY18-19 English Language Arts MCAS, 21% of **SWDs**, 2% of **ELs**, and 13% of **homeless** students met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 59%.
    - On the 10th grade SY18-19 Mathematics MCAS, 15% of **SWDs** and 10% of **ELs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 63%.
- Middle school academic indicators show:
    - On the 8th grade SY18-19 English Language Arts MCAS, 17% of **African American/Black** students, 4% of **ELs**, and 9% of **SWDs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 42%.

- On the 8th grade SY18-19 Mathematics MCAS, 18% of **Hispanic/Latino** students, 18% of **African American/Black** students, 20% of **high needs** students, 5% of **homeless students**, 4% of **ELs**, and 8% of **SWDs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 37%.
- Elementary school academic indicators show:
  - On the 5th grade SY18-19 English Language Arts MCAS, 12% of **ELs** and 16% of **SWDs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 52%.
  - On the 5th grade SY18-19 Mathematics MCAS, 15% of **ELs** and 15% of **SWDs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 49%.
  - On the 3rd grade SY18-29 English Language Arts MCAS, 19% of **homeless** students, 11% of **ELs**, and 13% of **SWDs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 43%.
  - On the 3rd grade SY18-29 Mathematics MCAS, 17% of **Hispanic/Latino** students, 16% of **African American/Black** students, 18% of **high needs** students, 11% of **homeless** students, 16% of **economically disadvantaged** students, 9% of **ELs**, and 11% of **SWDs** met or exceeded state expectations, as compared to the district average of 49%.
- ACCESS assessment indicators show an average of **52.8% of ELs** district wide in the past 4 years demonstrated annual learning progress.

This lengthy summarization of key indicators of student success points to some of the most obvious district-level disparities among student subgroup populations. As the bolded characterizations indicate, ELs and SWDs are consistently performing at rates significantly lower than their peers beginning in elementary school and continuing until graduation.

Inconsistent Data Practices and Access to Disaggregated Data
Survey respondents indicate there are current data practices in place at the district and school levels:

> 69% of central office staff, 88% of school leaders, and 75% of school staff agree or somewhat agree that "district data systems are used by school and district staff to inform decisions."

However, the staff at the central office and school levels express frustration with fully analyzing data to understand disproportionality and student and school needs, and Mass Insight experienced barriers to accessing the necessary data in consistent disaggregated formats for reporting purposes in the equity audit. Themes from focus group and survey comments include the need for more collaboration time, disaggregated student data, and increased focus on students with the greatest needs. Focus group and survey comments also reveal themes around needing more time for quality data analysis, and a need for qualitative/experiential data to inform decisions about student supports:

- 💬 *"This is a strength; however, I think we can focus more on the vulnerable population in connection with data."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"Data is not used consistently across schools or departments."* - FPS central office staff

💬 *"Although data is collected by subgroups for DESE compliance, this does not translate to the ongoing use of it to inform new and creative interventions/programs"* - FPS school staff

💬 *"Just because student data is collected doesn't necessarily evoke collaboration with teachers and/or does it evoke change."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"Data can only do so much. There are many other factors that go into how a student does in school."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"Stop valuing computer data over real experiences!"* - FPS school staff

The Director of Technology is currently designing and developing data dashboards that allow staff to access data in an organized and disaggregated form. This is a tremendous undertaking considering the varied platforms in use, different assessments given at different grades and grade bands, and the non-standardized student and staff descriptors/reporting mechanisms between DESE and FPS, particularly racial/ethnicity subgroups. Yet for data to inform decision making with an explicit equity lens, all-district data (quantitative and qualitative) must be accessible and available in a consistently disaggregated and sortable format to ensure analysis and resulting decisions are made with an equity lens that is both inclusive of all available data and focused on prioritizing those students and schools with the greatest needs. Survey respondents reaffirm this need:

> 100% of school leaders and 85% of school staff agree or somewhat agree that "my school regularly monitors the performance and progress of all students."
>
> 37% of central office staff agree and 42% somewhat agree that "the district office has adequate data to make informed decisions."
>
> 45% of central office staff and 40% of school leaders agree that "data is routinely used to address inequities in the district," while another 32% and 36% somewhat agree, respectively.

Focus group and survey comments also indicate that the data dashboards are critical to inform hiring practices and student access to advanced academic coursework, as well as to better understand trends and the success of supports to address attendance, discipline, and dropouts.

Priority Area 3: Talent Development

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

A conscious focus on the development of people contributes to employee satisfaction, sense of belonging, accountability, and understanding of DEI practices and their impact on district culture. As a district, Framingham has invested time collaborating with the FTA to provide four structured professional development (PD) opportunities for all district educators. These are spread throughout the year, with the first taking place in August prior to the start of the school year. Many of the district's educators regard the workshops held by the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) as helpful and essential for their development as educators. The district is also providing department heads with PD to support the feedback and post-evaluation process. The sessions around the evaluation system are intended to ensure there are conversations taking place between teachers and their evaluators and that feedback is shared in a consistent way. New educators receive the standard district offered PD options, as well as in-school structured support time. At the start of their time in FPS, new teachers are paired with a trained mentor teacher who is responsible for providing mentorship and content-based support throughout their first year.

The district is also looking to systematize support for staff and focus on their cultural competency. As a first step, the district has made efforts to expand school leader development, staff management, and equity-focused practices. School leaders share that these sessions are supportive of collaborative conversations and interactions, which otherwise would not be possible. The goal of the school leader training is to create a more culturally competent school environment that enables school staff to successfully meet the needs of their students and develop a lens for culturally and linguistically sustaining practices.

Findings

Support of New Educators

Staff across the district expressed concerns over the incoherent new teacher support and mentoring. Educators of color particularly pointed to limited interactions with assigned mentors during their first few years in the district. Focus group participants shared feelings of isolation in their development process and commented that it lacked sufficient support for both their content area and school setting. Some of the interviewed school leaders also expressed concerns over their overall development and coaching of first year staff. Although they welcomed the opportunity to learn from others during their scheduled meetings and district-wide professional development, they expressed a desire for more one-on-one support. Additionally, the formalized induction and mentoring process is inclusive of teachers, but not yet implemented for school leaders. Staff shared that:

> 💬 *"Culturally responsive practices need to be part of an ongoing conversation, not just a PD day. Teachers need to be given space/time to reflect on the cultures existing in their classroom/schools."* - FPS school staff

> 💬 *"There is minimal to no support in place for new teachers. Additionally, there is no clear guidance or direction from administration, and administrators are generally not available to respond to questions unless they need to fulfill observation requirements."* - FPS school staff

> 💬 *"Having better, more reliable principals would be more encouraging for families and offer stability to the*

💬 *students." - FPS school staff*
💬 *"When POC are hired, they aren't supported the way they should be. In order to retain staff, the district needs to be more thoughtful about the support and welcome. This also goes into the microaggressions experienced by POC." - FPS school staff*
💬 *"There is minimal to no support in place for new teachers." - FPS school staff*

Access to DEI Professional Learning

Similar to mentoring, professional learning opportunities are not clearly aligned and connected with the subject matter and broader student support areas needed by staff. Staff share that the limited access to professional learning impedes them from evolving as educators and does not allow them to engage with staff from other buildings.

There is a desire for professional learning that focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Staff discussed the limited number of DEI-related PD opportunities, as well as it not currently being a requirement for all staff. It was mentioned that training should extend beyond school leaders and central office staff since both instructional and non-instructional staff have frequent interaction with students, families, and district partners. Currently, the ODECD is solely sponsoring and holding sessions to support district staff's cultural competency.

Staff Performance and Professional Learning

Many staff report that evaluations are done for compliance purposes and are not yet structured to effectively create a culture of feedback and accountability. Educators, administrators, and staff could not indicate how they have been or could be evaluated to support an inclusive equity-based learning environment. There is also no evidence of paraprofessional or support staff evaluations. Data and survey respondents indicate areas for additional professional learning:

> Of all FPS instructional staff, 79.4% were evaluated in the 2017-18SY, including 83.7% of teachers and 36.8% of administrators[1].
>
> School leader survey responses indicate 20% agree, 40% somewhat agree, 16% somewhat disagree, and 24% disagree with the statement, "The district has a support structure that develops school leaders."
>
> School staff survey respondents indicate that 75% agree or somewhat agree that "Teachers are supported in their practice to improve and refine their standards-based instructional practice."

There is no evidence to suggest how evaluation data is used to retain high-performing staff or identify potential school leadership roles.

Priority Area 4: Staff Culture

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

Framingham, as a city and a district, benefits from a culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse population. The city's rich history as a gateway community and hub for higher education has served as a highlight for current and prospective residents. FPS community members shared a deep desire to further root themselves in the city and ensure the systematic growth of educational opportunities. Although the city has ample non-traditional options for K-12 education, families and students point to the district's strength as a diverse entity with regards to race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and cognitive styles.

Given the evolving demographics of the FPS student body, the district has acknowledged the need to create more inclusive spaces (e.g. affinity groups) for staff at all levels. The creation and implementation of affinity spaces are intended to increase staff collaboration and a sense of belonging. For the staff of color, in particular, these spaces will serve as a networking opportunity and a way to mitigate the gap in school and office representation. Although plans have yet to be implemented, educators and administrators made mention of their excitement for this opportunity. In addition to the district's initial planning to build inclusive spaces for educators, the district has piloted DEI-focused professional learning sessions for school leaders. As part of this initiative, school leaders deepen their understanding of culturally-inclusive leadership practices. Most raved about the collaborative nature of the sessions and the chance to learn how to better support their building.

The steps that the district has taken to address the gaps in communication, trust, morale, community, and retention of talent will enable it to be successful in the implementation of inclusive practices. The current superintendent's tenure has positively changed community perceptions of senior leadership. And individual schools have been successful in creating supportive and inclusive cultures for their staff.

Findings

It is evident from survey comments that Framingham residents value the diversity of their community; over 25% of family comments on the survey mentioned diversity is a district strength. However, many stakeholder comments allude to a disconnect between appreciating a diverse community and embodying an inclusive culture of that diversity, which extends beyond the presence of various races and ethnicities. As one central office staff member commented, "FPS loves to be diverse when it's convenient; but when it's real and decisions have to be made, we want to be White. [There's a] Concern about retribution and divides between families."

Culture Among School Staff and Central Office
Trust among school and central office staff is described as fragile and inconsistent. Both central office and school staff shared that there are deep roots of mistrust and broken communication, and many consider the high leadership turnover and lack of staff input in the decision making process as factors contributing to a lack of collaborative culture.

School staff shared:

💬 *"Central Office does not seem to trust district employees. We constantly advocate for our students and try to come up with creative and low-cost solutions and are often met with innumerable road blocks."*

💬 *"Concerns, while listened to, are often given polite "brush-offs" without opportunity for discussion or providing in-depth/sound reasoning for a decision that reflects a strong commitment to the intent of the district's mission."*

💬 *"It seems to me that everyone works so hard to do what's best for the students and families. Unfortunately, there is no transparent regular meeting, platform, or assessment and collaboration between administrators and staff to address issues."*

Staff Participation and Engagement

Organizational culture also encompasses the psychological, emotional, physical safety of all stakeholders - staff, leadership, students, families, and the community - to engage as active participants. Many of the instructional staff feel that their voice is not sought or valued, and when their input is gathered, it is ignored. A lack of trust between the central office and school staff was mentioned many times, also contributing to a lack of safety and feeling of inclusivity for all staff members.

> According to survey results, 18% of central office staff agree with the statement "There is mutual trust between school-level employees and the central office;" and 28% of school leaders agree and 17% of school staff agree. 37% of central office staff somewhat agree, as do 36% of school leaders and 32% of the school staff.

These concerns were shared as reasons for low focus group participation, and with many who did participate, they sought clarification of Mass Insight's confidentiality and anonymity protections. It was important for the families and instructional staff members partaking in the audit activities to feel safe and able to freely share information about their experiences in the district as many shared a fear of retaliation.

💬 *"I do not feel comfortable nor at liberty to share my concerns freely with central office. I want to keep my job."*- FPS school staff

💬 *"There is distrust between central admins and faculty. It is not clear if all have students in mind."*- FPS central office staff

💬 *"Distrust between Ts and admin and admin and CO."* - FPS central office staff

💬 *"These teachers are scared and that's why we are seeing low engagement from parents and teachers."* FPS partner

💬 *"In previous years, some schools would make announcements of the Assistant Sup. "the eagle has landed". There was a lot of fear, culture of fear and people losing their jobs. The previous Sup would share information widely without regard."* - FPS central office staff

According to interviewed and surveyed staff, stakeholders perceive a top-down approach to gathering input. The staff do not yet see their ideas represented in school or district-wide initiatives. This is felt particularly strongly in schools serving students from marginalized backgrounds and low socioeconomic statuses. A bright

spot is the district's acknowledgment that there are barriers to break regarding staff engagement and communication, and the district is focusing on the retention of leaders to help alleviate this issue.

Priority Area 5: Workforce Diversity

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

There are efforts by the Human Resources (HR) department in recent years to increase the quality and diversity of the educator candidate pool. To support this effort, the district has placed an emphasis on the collection of data (e.g. projections of ELs, retirees, newcomers, varying programmatic support staff at schools) to forecast hiring needs and resource allocations. Many of the specialized programs require multiple licenses and experience, to which the district has responded by expanding its outreach to regional higher education institutions, such as Framingham State University, to support the development of educators. There is an interest from diverse support staff to further their education and training to become teachers, and many are pursuing training and educational programs to teach FPS students.

To meet the needs and support of the linguistic and academic growth of EL and dual-language program students, the district has established partnerships with the Brazilian and Spanish governments. There are considerations to develop an internal educator pipeline, but none have been formalized. School and district leaders share a desire to expand the search for more candidates from Central and South American countries but mention visa issues and DESE restrictions as barriers in their recruitment efforts. The district is not able to provide visas to educators from alternative Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries. While the overall number of staff of color is relatively low, some individual schools have been successful in recruiting and hiring more diverse teams. To do so, they have personally conducted outreach and taken on recruitment as a part of their leadership role.

Currently the hiring process for FPS is centralized in the application and onboarding stages, while the interviews and final hiring decisions live at the school level. Once applicants apply, their candidacy is reviewed and submitted for screening to HR. To remove access barriers for candidates of color, FPS requires that minority candidates, as mentioned by the district, who submit an application be interviewed. Note, minority candidates are not defined on the FPS HR website. Additionally, as part of the selection process, all applicants are asked an equity and diversity question in the interview process.

Findings

Investment in the Diversification of the Workforce
Although the district has identified the recruitment and hiring of a diverse workforce as a priority, educator and applicant pool demographics do not yet reflect the linguistic, cultural, and ethnic student diversity. Staff shared that recruitment has been challenging because neighboring districts are able to provide more financial and relocation incentives. When addressing the hire of culturally and ethnically diverse staff, the district is limited

by DESE regulations on international partnership and visas. The set partnerships with the Brazilian and Spanish government prohibit the district from forming alternative visa agreements with other countries. These factors impact student access to a culturally and linguistically representative district staff.

> According to survey results, 38% of PK/ES school leaders agree/somewhat agree that they "…can select from several quality and diverse candidates for each vacancy," and 33% of MS, and 60% of HS also agree/somewhat agree. 100% of school leaders who self-identify as coming from marginalized backgrounds somewhat disagree/disagree.
>
> According to survey results, 54% of PK/elementary leaders and 67% of middle school leaders somewhat disagree/disagree that "recruitment and placement decisions prioritize the lowest-performing schools." 100% of marginalized school leaders somewhat disagree/disagree.

The recruitment of educators, leaders, and staff at FPS has been impacted by changes over the years. Constant shifts in leadership and organizational models have impacted the implementation and prioritization of hiring practices that focus on diversifying the pool of candidates and district hires. Families also note the lack of representation from diverse backgrounds.

Families shared:
- 💬 *"I wish the teachers were more diverse. There need to be more Black and Latino and Portuguese teachers."*
- 💬 *"Diversity goes beyond the language. It is the representation of all our varied identities and differences, collectively and as individuals. We need to continue to build an environment of respect, dignity and inclusion."*
- 💬 *"We love the FPS community, the families, the diversity, and the kids. We have become increasingly worried though, because our kids feel like they do not belong."*
- 💬 *"Diversity of teaching staff, infusing cultural competence and relevance into the curriculum, building bridges to be welcoming for families attending non-neighborhood schools, and response time from some central office departments."*
- 💬 *"[There is] not enough diversity in the staff. Most teachers are white females."*
- 💬 *"Having better, more reliable principals would be more encouraging for families and offer stability to the students."*

School Level Hiring

School staff also notice the lack of representation of new hires from diverse backgrounds. They point to hiring practices and school staff engagement in the hiring process as potential areas of improvement to recruit and hire a more diverse staff. Evidence from surveys and focus groups suggests that there needs to be more clarity, guidance, and communication from HR around the practices and procedures schools should follow to ensure an equitable hiring process for the selection candidates, particularly for diverse candidates. Although there has been an effort to create in-school selection committees, training and implementation have not been monitored. Staff share that those reviewing applications do not reflect the student population and note discrepancies in the placement of candidates based on experience and vacancies.

School staff shared:

- 💬 *"I would like to see more BIPOC teachers, principals, leadership positions, etc. Our staff should look like our students, and right now it definitely does not."*
- 💬 *"The district seems intentional about retaining non- diverse staff as evidenced by recruiting white European educators versus the Caribbean and/or central/south American educators that more reflect our student population."*
- 💬 *"I think my school needs to do a better job about hiring people of color who look and come from backgrounds that match our students. There is very little diversity in our staff. Hiring more staff members of color could make such a positive impact for our students and staff."*
- 💬 *"If the district is serious about hiring diverse staff, then the district leadership needs to support the school leadership taking on this work."*
- 💬 *"[There needs to be] Some specific hiring practices. [We] Need to know who you're looking for and the skills they need to have. Not just a pulse."*
- 💬 *"The hiring committee continues to be the same race and they select the same race to continue working and not changing the system. The district talks about wanting diversity, but it's not doing the legwork to move that forward."*

Due to low principal participation in recruitment efforts, the department has relied heavily on virtual and electronic outreach, a method that does not support the cultivation and tracking of prospective candidates. Consideration to expand educator, school leader, and central office participation at in-person events has been stalled by the pandemic but will be resuming in the coming academic year. There is an opportunity to learn from successful school leaders who have recruited more diverse staff members for their specialized programs.

Priority Area 6: Inclusive Curricula & Instruction

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

In the last few years, the district has developed K-12 curricular scopes and sequences for all core content areas that have been externally reviewed, and ongoing internal revisions ensure alignment to state standards. The district uses iReady as a district-wide diagnostic assessment to gauge MCAS preparedness, which is one of many data sources teachers utilize to understand student preparedness and achievement. Some small efforts to increase culturally-responsive materials and instructional practices, such as a racial equity course for high school teachers at Framingham State University, have sparked an acknowledgement for this to be more widespread. The district has also made recent investments in positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS) and other socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs to support student awareness and self-monitoring of their behavior, as well as address non-academic needs to ensure students can engage academically.

Findings

Student Safety and Connection With the School

From the student perspective, comments and survey responses indicate that students generally feel safe and that they belong at school.

> In response to the statement, "I feel like I belong at my school," student survey responses indicate 47.6% agree, 38.2% somewhat agree, 9.1% somewhat disagree, and 5.1% disagree.
>
> 80.6% of student survey respondents agree or somewhat agree that "I feel safe, valued, and cared for at my school," and 12% somewhat disagree and 7.4% disagree. It should be noted that Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking students' level of agreement was higher than English-speaking students, potentially because of their smaller language support classes.

Middle and high school staff and students discussed concerns about physical student safety as an ongoing issue, particularly in common spaces. Focus group students mentioned feeling safe when with their peer groups; yet also mentioned incidents in their schools that compromised student physical safety. Student focus group participants also mentioned they all had at least one staff member who they feel comfortable going to with problems or for support.

Curricular and Instructional Inclusivity

Curriculum and instruction have been the focus of extensive alignment efforts in FPS, as schools previously each had their own and there was no consistency across the district. However, prioritizing the same curricula, materials, and assessments across all schools has resulted in equal school supports, at the expense of needed specialized programs, the inclusion of student cultures in curriculum and instructional practices, and equity.

Currently all students participate in iReady, an online diagnostic and remediation program that the district is using as a diagnostic assessment. Some staff report looking at iReady data across student subgroups and using it for student groupings, but many focus group participants doubt whether it is impacting students' learning. iReady, like the curricula, is being implemented uniformly for all students, and there is an opportunity to differentiate implementation (e.g. examine frequency, supplementary supports, etc.) for the students whose progress and grade-level skill development need the most support.

Instructional staff express a desire for the ability to select curricular materials best suited for their school, programmatic model, or student needs. For example, Portuguese dual language programs have limited access to Portuguese curricular materials and resources in Portuguese. There is a desire from instructional staff and students for more inclusive curricular materials that embrace the multiple dimensions of diversity in Framingham, including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, etc, as described in the district's definition of diversity.

💬 *"The district states that they are supportive of Dual Language programs but do not allow the programs to make modifications to curriculum according to research and best practices in dual language education."* - FPS school leader

💬 *"There are not enough materials for ELs. High-quality, authentic literature in language other than English is scarce. More flexible purchasing options would help to address this."* - FPS school staff

Staff and students additionally name that curricula is not yet inclusive of students' cultures, experiences, needs, or interests.

> While 79.7% of district office and school leadership survey respondents agree or somewhat agree that "Curricula and materials are inclusive of students' cultures, experiences, needs, and interests," over 15% of student survey comments were about the curricula not being inclusive to all races, cultures, and identities.

- 💬 *"I don't feel that women's history, non-White history, or LBGTQIA+ history is discussed enough, nor are those subjects reflected in our required literature."* - FPS student
- 💬 *"The history department teaches only about European and American history and calls it world history. There needs to be more world history in world history."* - FPS student
- 💬 *"Knowledge for other cultures needs to be set into the school curriculum."* - FPS student
- 💬 *"We need better education and support from the school for students of color. When I don't understand something, teachers get mad at me, which makes me feel stupid and sad."* - FPS student
- 💬 *"I feel very little representation within history content and books."* - FPS student

A small group of high school teachers have participated in an Framingham State University (FSU) course to examine and redesign their curricula to be more inclusive; yet this has not spread through the high school or to other schools in the district or become an instructional expectation in all classrooms. Survey comments speak to staff and family's desire for more culturally-responsive curriculum and instruction:

- 💬 *"While we are undergoing curriculum review, the process has not seemed to reflect a need for culturally inclusive materials… Our students don't see themselves in the texts we read in class."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"Professional development opportunities are offered; however, new skills, strategies, or culturally responsive protocols rarely result in everyday practice."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"What we are being asked to teach does not represent the culture of our student population."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"CRT [culturally responsive teaching] is a critical tool toward building access for all students. [There is a] Need for greater training across the district."* - FPS central office staff
- 💬 *"In my school, we are making great efforts toward culturally responsive teaching and learning, but we need to do more."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"The prescribed district curriculum is quite rigid and is not culturally responsive. Teachers are not given the time and/or flexibility to adopt culturally responsive instructional practices and to adapt curriculum to meet the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students."* -FPS school leader
- 💬 *"There is too much focus on iReady scores to the extent that it eclipses everything, including recognition of staff and student strengths and staff's ability to weave in a culturally responsive and representative curriculum."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"Teachers need training in how to include culturally responsive lessons into curriculum."* - FPS family member

There is a clear recognized need for the next step in ongoing curricular review and revisions to begin integrating more culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP) and materials into the curriculum.

SEL and Student Behavior

School staff, families, and students referenced the continued need to support students social-emotionally. Many teachers and central office staff believe academics is prioritized over social-emotional supports and other non-academic student and family needs, which they see as a growing gap impacting students' ability to fully engage in learning. With the recent COVID-19 pandemic, the district and community has increased awareness about the breadth of student and family needs and its support of them. Including but not limited to the current pandemic and racial tensions, there is an ongoing need to support students non-academically so all can focus and engage academically.

> Student survey responses indicate 44.2% of students agree that "I feel supported and capable of fully engaging in learning," 41.7% somewhat agree, 10.4% somewhat disagree, and 3.9% disagree.

Staff members mentioned having limited time to collaboratively and authentically learn about the available SEL initiatives and programs and connect the resources to support students. School- and district-level staff recognize the need to support students' SEL needs and behavior in a coordinated and positive manner so students are able to engage in learning; yet this requires all school staff having adequate training to learn and adapt the programs for their positions and interactions with students. Staff and students share:

- 💬 *"Within classrooms, mental health is not seen as important."* - FPS student
- 💬 *"There is limited socio-emotional and behavioral resources, and the students who desperately need access to them often can't or don't."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"The social-emotional needs of my students are NOT being met - we need more counselors, social workers, and school psychologists."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"We need stronger, more defined RTI."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"There is not enough support for students in counseling to deal with the trauma, mental illness, and other issues that students are facing. This disproportionately affects lower incomes students who can't afford to get help outside of school. We desperately need more school psychologists."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"We need more options for students who are struggling in their education due to social emotional issues… The number of students in the classroom increases each year along with the number of student issues."* - FPS school staff

In addition to SEL programming, district-wide PBIS has been implemented at all schools; yet staff shared that full implementation remains inconsistent at most schools. Staff mentioned a lack of student buy-in and understanding about behavior expectations. Other school staff mentioned moving toward a restorative justice approach to support student behavior that better aligns with their approach for addressing student behavior and discipline. There is an opportunity to also examine to what extent PBIS is advantaging and disadvantaging some considering discipline data disparities noted below.

> 32.4% of surveyed students agree with the statement, "My school addresses student behavior issues in a positive and fair way," and 39% somewhat agree, 17% somewhat disagree, and 11.5% disagree.

Discipline rates for the district are comparable to state averages for suspensions and incidents of violence;

however, several schools' individual discipline rates are higher. Data also indicates that the district discipline rate for SWDs is higher than the district average for the past three years. High school discipline data trends over the last three years indicate:

- The overall high school discipline rate has decreased by 2% over the last three years;
- Discipline rates for ELs, African-American/Black students, and high needs students have decreased over the past three years; and
- Discipline rates for economically disadvantaged students, SWDs, and Hispanic students have consistently been 5% higher than the high school average over the past three years.

Middle school discipline data trends over the last three years indicate:

- The overall middle school discipline rate has increased by 1% over the last three years;
- The discipline rate for African-American/Black students has decreased over the past three years; and
- Discipline rates for ELs in SY18-19, SWDs for the past three years, and Hispanic/Latino students for the past three years are 5% higher than the middle school average.

There is a developing perception in the FPS community that behavior disruptions are caused by immigrant students and SWDs, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels, as was mentioned in several stakeholder focus groups and survey comments. While discipline rates for SWDs in particular are higher than the district average, it is worth noting that special education programs support a wide range of disabilities, some of which directly impact students' ability to engage and interact in behaviorally-appropriately ways, as other students do.

Chronic Absenteeism and Dropouts

42% of central office staff agree and 34% somewhat agree, 42% of school leaders agree and 50% somewhat agree, and 34% of school staff agree and 39% somewhat agree that "School level data/information systems ensure the progress monitoring (academic, behavior, discipline, graduation, attendance) of all student subgroup populations (i.e. race/ethnicity, students with disabilities, English language learners, advance/gifted learners)."

While the district's attendance average is comparable to the state, the district's SY18-19 chronic absenteeism rate was higher than the state average. Student subgroup populations that were consistently higher than the district average include high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, ELs, Hispanic/Latino students, and SWDs. Only in SY18-19 did African American/Black students fall below the district average in the last five years. During interviews, focus groups, and survey responses, stakeholders did not describe any current initiatives underway in the district at the middle or high school levels to address this concern.

Directly related to chronic absenteeism, the dropout rate in SY18-19 was nearly double the state average, with rates higher than that for high needs students, economically disadvantaged students, ELs, SWDs, Hispanic/Latino students, and males. Seventy-five students dropped out in SY18-19, which accounts for 3.6% of high school students. While most dropouts occur in the 10th and 11th grade over the past three years, this is an

issue for all grades in high school. During interviews, focus groups, and survey responses, stakeholders did not describe any current initiatives underway in the district at the middle or high school levels to address this concern.

The recent increasing trends in chronic absenteeism and dropouts are another indicator of additional student supports needed to keep students motivated and engaged in school, and also a gap in ongoing student monitoring to ensure students are attending and invested in their education.

Priority Area 7: Special Population Support

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

The six dual language programs in FPS are highly praised by staff, students, and families. All schools offer sheltered English immersion and bilingual programs to support the district's growing number of ELs in the last five years. All schools also offer SPED programs, including resource, sub-separate, and inclusion classrooms, in addition to specialized programs. Specialized programs support students with developmental delays, autism spectrum disorder, multiple disabilities, intellectual impairments, learning/language disabilities, and emotional disabilities. Classroom teachers desire more opportunities to collaborate with special education and multilingual teachers to ensure they are supporting ELs and SWDs fully and appropriately.

Findings

Student enrollment and outcome data is not yet routinely monitored across subgroups in either the Multilingual or Special Education departments, and equal resource allocations - not equitable ones that prioritize students with special learning needs, language needs, or differentiated programs - are systemic. Focus group comments and survey responses mentioned growing prejudices in the district toward immigrants or non-native English speakers, as well as toward students with disabilities, who are characterized as disrupting behavior, with no consideration or understanding of their learning profiles or previous educational experiences.

Student Representation in Advanced Academics
Data indicates that while ELs comprise 25.1% of the FPS population, they only account for 0.4% of the students enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses and 0.3% of the students enrolled in honors courses. Likewise, African American/Black students, Hispanic/Latino students, and students with disabilities are disproportionately underrepresented in AP and honors courses, while White students, Asian students, and Multi-race Non-Hispanic students are overrepresented in AP and honors courses. MCAS data suggests that many of these same student subgroup populations fall behind their peers in academic performance beginning in 3rd grade and the trend continues through high school, even impacting graduation rates. Interviews, focus groups, and survey comments did not indicate specific ways the district is approaching this opportunity gap that exists among student subgroup populations to demonstrate academic achievement or readiness for advanced

coursework.

Many family comments in particular named that not enough emphasis or support is provided to gifted/talented students in FPS, such as:

💬 *"There needs to be more supports for special and gifted learners."* - FPS family member
💬 *"From an equity perspective, I feel like the district needs to do more for kids that are performing above grade level and need extra challenge and options for learning to stay motivated and not bored."* - FPS family member
💬 *"Provide more opportunities for upper level learners to push their learning speed."* - FPS family member
💬 *"All students should have the opportunity to take classes at their level. The options for advanced students are limited."* - FPS family member

While data beyond high school AP and honors coursework was not provided, the question remains as to how, when, and by what measures are students selected and enrolled in advanced coursework, and the extent to which this does or does not happen equitably.

About FPS English Learners and Multilingual Education

The EL population is the fastest growing in Framingham over the past five years. Increasing 6.5% to now account for a quarter of the student population - roughly 2,281 students - the increased population of ELs has impacted the scope of multilingual support needed in FPS.

The Multilingual Department not only supervises the district's various bilingual and dual language educational programs, but also oversees the Translation Office and Multilingual Family Engagement Office. The Translation Office supports interpretation services for all languages, specifically supporting translation of all district communications in Spanish and Portuguese. The office provides translation support at public district events and forums, as well as school events upon request.

> Survey responses indicate 26.6% of central office staff, school leaders, and school staff agree and 39.7% somewhat agree that "The district provides equitable, high-quality education for English language learners."
>
> Student survey responses indicate that 60.9% of students who self-identified as an EL agree that "As an English language learner, I feel fully supported to be successful at school;" 30.5% somewhat agree, 5.3% somewhat disagree, and 3.3% disagree.

Unlike SPED, there are no state-mandated student-to-teacher ratios for English language development (ELD) programs. School staff and families mentioned the need for additional ELD staff in order to ensure students are fully supported. Focus group participants also mentioned a need for greater translation support at the school level, as daily school translation needs cannot be met by current allocated Translation Office staff, which results in multilingual staff tasked with supporting their colleagues or schools in addition to their assigned role and responsibilities. Students focus group participants also mentioned that they often serve as translators between

teachers and ELs when ELD staff is not available, which they find "uncomfortable" as the school does not recognize and support EL's needs.

- 💬 *"Across the district, we have exceptional, high quality ESL teachers. However, we do not have enough. Caseloads are far too high to adequately meet all needs. Additionally, we still need to improve structure for better/more efficient planning/collaboration between general ed and ESL/SPED."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"There are not enough tutors or ESL teachers to provide equity for our ELs."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"Schools do not have enough staff to fully address the needs of ELs, especially counselors, social workers, and psychologists."* - FPS school staff
- 💬 *"There are not enough language tutors, and EL teachers provide instruction and assistance with communication for teachers with families."* - FPS school staff

As mentioned in Priority Area 6, dual language programs are not yet able to incorporate cultural components into language development because of the strict adherence to the district's scope and sequence, which does not allow for integration of culture with language development. Current hiring practices of Spanish teachers mainly from Spain also limits cultural inclusion as most FPS native-Spanish speaking students and families are from Central and South America, not Spain.

Data in the *FPS by Numbers* section and in the *Findings for Priority Area 1* indicate ELs are not performing at the level of their peers. It is worth noting, however, that former ELs - ELs who have met ELD criteria and no longer receive specialized language support - are performing competitively with grade-level peers of other subgroups in some grade levels. For example, 3rd grade ELA and math MCAS performance of former ELs has higher meets/exceeds expectations than the district average, as do former ELs on the 5th grade ELA and math MCAS. Performance through middle and high school does drop for former ELs in both ELA and math, and as was previously mentioned, ELs are less than 1% of students enrolled in advanced academic courses in high school. Data is not publicly available to determine whether former ELs graduate at higher 4- or 5-year graduation rates when compared to grade-level peers; yet the 4- and 5-year graduation rates for graduating ELs is the lowest of all student subgroups.

About FPS Students with Disabilities and Special Education

> Survey responses indicate 29.2% of central office, school leaders, and school staff agree and 44.5% somewhat agree that "The district provides equitable, high-quality education for students with exceptional needs (students with disabilities and advanced/gifted learners).
>
> Student survey responses indicate that 45.0% of students who self-identified as a SWD agree that "As a student with disabilities (I have an IEP or 504 plan), I feel fully supported to be successful at school;" 33.3% somewhat agree, 12.6% somewhat disagree, and 9.0% disagree.

While survey data indicates there is room for improving the education and supports that SWDs receive in FPS, data provided in the FPS by the Numbers sections highlights the need for better instructional programming and supports to ensure SWDs are fully supported to progress and able to graduate. While SWD 5-year graduation rates are higher than 4-year graduation rates, they still remain lower than other student subgroups in FPS. Discipline rates, chronic absenteeism, and dropout rates are also higher for SWDs than other subgroups.

Unlike ELD programs, the state has strict guidelines for SPED programs, particularly around requirements for teacher to student ratios. Many district staff members and family members expressed concern about staffing, however the Special Education Department is in compliance with state staffing requirements, and is actually over staffed by state requirements. Part of this concern about sufficient staffing stems from an ongoing issue that several staff named:

> 💬 "SPED educators and support staff are the first pulled when we are short on subs." "(We are) way way understaffed in SPED." "[We have] way too many kids for each special ed teacher to address individual needs." - FPS school staff
> 💬 "I think that all of the teachers I work with do an exceptional job, but we are frequently understaffed and do not have substitutes. This leads to special education teachers and aides and ESL teachers being pulled from some of our most at-risk students." - FPS school staff

Participants share that this is a common practice at schools, to pull paraprofessionals from their positions when substitutes are unavailable; however, it does temporarily remove essential support from one of the most vulnerable student populations who require their support to fully engage in the learning process, as defined in their Individualized Education PLans (IEPs).

Another aspect of the staffing concern stems from an emphasis placed on SWD behavior and discipline, which as mentioned in Priority Area 6, is impacting the community's perception of student behavior.

> 💬 *"The academic bar is low for that group of students [students with IEPs] because all the focus is on compliance/behavior." - FPS family member*

If SPED staff are pulled to fill in for substitutes and they spend substantial time addressing student behavior rather than supporting students academically, that might account for other staff's impression that SPED needs additional staffing.

School-based staff and district leadership acknowledge a need for increased opportunities for SPED and non-SPED staff collaboration, which might also develop a better understanding of how to support SWD behavior in ways that increase student engagement and classroom participation.

Many families shared positive experiences, while many others (and teachers also) expressed frustration with the IEP process, communication, IEP support implementation with fidelity, all of which run across school levels. The most common issue mentioned by families was feeling unsupported through the IEP process; many mentioned the need for an advocate to ensure their child's specific needs are met. Comments about navigating the IEP process include:

💬 *"There needs to be a greater effort on the part of the SPED department to better help parents understand the IEP process. Many things are put into place or left out of IEPs because parents don't fully understand the process."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"I found the IEP process to be an expensive nightmare, and some of my child's needs were not met."* FPS family member

💬 *"Getting an IEP was very difficult, especially if you didn't have guidance"* - FPS family member

Comments about ensuring SWDs get the support as written in IEPs include:

💬 *"If a child is on an IEP and needs services, a lot of times parents have to fight to get the services their child needs. This is wrong. The goal should always be what is best for the child no matter what. Unfortunately, that is not the case."* - FPS family member

💬 *"For months in the fall, some of my child's special education services were not implemented as agreed due to a lack of staff or staff rescheduling. We were not informed, which is unacceptable."* - FPS family member

💬 *"It is a constant battle to get our student the required services. We've always found the teachers to be willing to go above and beyond, but the administration almost always drags its feet… Parents have to fight and battle over every little thing."* - FPS family member

💬 *"Parents need to be very proactive to get desired service level."* - FPS family member

Comments about the need for families to have advocates to support them and their child(ren) who receive SPED services include:

💬 *"Students whose parents are unable to advocate for them are continually at a disadvantage. Teachers can only advocate so much but are not taken seriously when concerns about a child are brought up… Too many children are falling through the cracks because of the hoops teachers must jump through in order to get a child evaluated."* - FPS school staff

💬 *"SPED services are not equitably distributed. Parents who hire advocates get more and better services. Many families can't afford advocates. SPED families shouldn't have to hire legal help to get kids what they need."* - FPS family member

💬 *"Certain schools do this well others need work. If I didn't know my child's rights under ADA and DOE, I don't think the school or anyone would have filled me in or communicated these rights."* - FPS family member

About Dual-Identified Students and Their Support

School-level staff express concern about a growing number of ELs who are not yet tested to receive SPED support services. Numerous staff shared in focus groups and in survey comments that the wait time for testing and district-level push back against testing ELs is resulting in those students not demonstrating growth in learning and not receiving the specialized support they feel that students need to achieve.

💬 *"So many students are misplaced in their ESL level because of their SPED needs. Our program doesn't address that or have a solution to support these students."* - FPS school staff

The Special Education Department and Multilingual Department caution staff and families about jumping to the conclusion that newcomers who seem far behind their peers educationally - most notably, linguistically - need immediate testing for special education support. Newcomers frequently experience interrupted education

prior to moving to Framingham, and in addition to needing time to adjust to new school situations, also need time to determine if there is a potential disability or if additional time is needed for language acquisition.

There are currently 463 students that are dual identified as SWDs and ELs. One of the complicating factors for adequately supporting students' learning needs and language needs is prioritizing one over the other when creating the schedule. Also, as mentioned earlier, SPED has tighter requirements about meeting students' support needs, whereas ELD is not as regulated; which often results in SPED supports taking priority over ELD supports. This is also complicated, however, as bilingual SPED teachers and ELD teachers also licenced in SPED are rare and in high demand. As the following comments allude to, this is not a simple matter to address:

> 💬 *"[We are] lacking adequate cross-competency support - [it's] either ELD or SPED."* - FPS school staff
> 💬 *"I think that often students are over referred for special education because it feels easier to do that than to really do RTI. We also don't have the appropriate number of staff to do RTI properly or support our EL students."* - FPS school staff
> 💬 *"Equity is great when it's an idea but to make it a reality, the district has to fund ESL and SpEd much better and train teachers about how to address learning and SEL needs inside the classrooms."* - FPS school staff
> 💬 *"We don't have ESL teachers who are licensed in special ed and we don't have bilingual special educators."* - FPS school staff

Priority Area 8: Family Engagement & Investment

Foundational Strengths to Build Upon

As a district, Framingham has invested in methods of communication to connect with families such as email, voice calls, text messages, website posting, and social media. To ensure its linguistically diverse community receives the intended messaging, all central office based communications are translated to Spanish and Portuguese by the district translation services. Translation support is also available at some school events, such as parent nights, IEP meetings, new student orientation, and school committee meetings. Families shared that communication efforts have greatly improved in the last few years and named school newsletters, by the Department of Family and Community Engagement, and family social media groups as additional sources of information. Newcomer and EL families describe the bilingual teachers and the Multilingual Department as primary sources of communication with the district. During COVID-19, families of newcomers and bilingual program enrollees discussed the positive impact of being able to connect with the department to understand engagement opportunities and resources to support their child's learning.

Findings

Communication with Non-English Speaking Families
While some families share they have the ability to advocate for their children, others share concerns about non-English speaking families and the district's engagement efforts. Many shared concerns over their low participation and pointed to distrust in the management of student information as a potential barrier. There is a

difference noted by stakeholders at various levels on the district's approach to engaging, gathering, and utilizing family voice in the decision-making process. Many of the elementary schools have active parent-teacher organizations (PTOs), which facilitate communication and collaboration. Schools on the north side of the city have active PTOs that greatly expand student access to resources and opportunities, such as multiple field trips.

Families shared:

💬 *"For every applicable form in the district, including paperwork sent home from teachers and coaches etc, it should ask for your pronouns that you use. In general, I hope this continues to become more normalized. Also, every form in the district, including from individual teachers and coaches, should ask about information from parent/guardian 1 and 2 (asking for father and mother info is insulting)."*

💬 *"It's important to remember that moving to electronic school newsletters leaves a good portion of our population out of the loop."*

💬 *"Communications have improved dramatically over the last few years, but are still inconsistent between schools in terms of depth of information."*

💬 *"Communication is not regular or systematic enough. It often feels as though we find out about things after they happen/are launched. Weekly updates from district office and our school would be helpful. There are also so many platforms for communication that it muddies the communication. This has been heightened during remote learning. Teachers use different tools to communicate and as a parent, it is hard to keep track of it all."*

💬 *"I feel the district as a whole, is timely and informative. However, schools individually need improvement. Also the schools individually should be held accountable for their lack of communication with families of their students."*

To accommodate the diverse student population, the district utilizes translation services to share electronic, written, and verbal communication with families. Services are included in some school offerings, such as parent nights, IEP meetings, orientation for new students, and school committee meetings. Families welcome these resources and share that although helpful, they are inconsistent from school to school. Families with multiple students described the process to gather and understand communication as difficult and hard to navigate.

Staff shared:

💬 *"Flyer News is only offered in English to students and families. Locations to engage diverse families could be varied and more accessible."*

💬 *"COVID-19 has shown us that many families do not have access to technology, so providing multiple ways for families to contact offices and complete paperwork is still necessary."*

💬 *"Privileged families in the district have the most agency and seem to drive much of the decision making in the district. Although there are efforts to translate and invite families that may be more disenfranchised, overall on a day to day and systemic basis our district works for the most privileged"*

💬 *"Don't speak English, don't get help"*

District- and School-based Communication

Many families point to school newsletters and parent Facebook groups to stay informed. Newcomer and EL families referred to in-school bilingual educators or the Multilingual Office to stay updated. Educators, staff, and families share that there are discrepancies in the format in which communications are disseminated. Access

to culturally appropriate material in languages beyond Spanish and Portuguese is limited and oftentimes not accessible.

> According to survey results, 58% of central office staff agree that; "The district engages families in many ways and ensures adequate resources, such as translation services, are available to include family voice" while 33% somewhat agree and 10% somewhat disagree.

Beyond written communication, surveyed and interviewed stakeholders share that in-person communication and protocols do not create a welcoming environment for all families and learners. The language the schools and district uses do not yet reflect the community's varied family structure, family makeup, and non-binary gender identification. Inclusivity was highlighted in some schools as a strength and regarded as a result of effective leadership, bilingual staff, awareness of student/family gender identification, and engagement practices.

Families shared:
- 💬 *"Proactive, more frequent communication with parents/guardians by schools and students' teachers about whether their kids are doing the assignments and any issues/concerns."*
- 💬 *"My experience is that if I am persistent, I get a response, but I have to know who to talk to and I often have to stick with it for a while. I recognize that everyone is busy, but I am concerned that people who are not adept at navigating bureaucracies will either give up before getting help, or not try after the first failure."*
- 💬 *"Giving more opportunities to bilingual parents, for example in the PTO"*
- 💬 *"The new system requiring parents to present an ID upon entering the school has deterred some families from visiting due to immigration status."*
- 💬 *"My child is receiving services, but it had been a battle to get him what he needs, we are currently at a stand still in terms of getting him what he needs as the SPED tech refuses to add services even though the data shows it is needed. "*
- 💬 *"[Special ed] parents must fight in unreasonable ways to get the most basic of services at times."*
- 💬 *"There could be improvement in letting parents of 504/IEP students know the process with a focus on informing them of their rights and options."*

RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT EQUITY

The following eight recommendations emerged from the findings described in the previous section and in alignment with the Mass Insight Equity Audit Framework's descriptors of high performing districts. The recommendations build upon foundations already in place and tease out key components of the district's next steps to create a more equitable and inclusive learning and work environment that fully supports equity and access for FPS's diverse student, staff, and community. Recommendations are not quick fixes to address issues of equity, but rather part of a series of actions among stakeholders that together ensure equity and inclusivity in FPS for all stakeholders. Planning, implementation, and consistent reflection and review of policies and practices are essential throughout this process. Each recommendation section concludes with questions and considerations for FPS stakeholders for continuing along the equity journey.

Recommendations 1 and 2 are critical and necessary for the success of all other recommendations to be implemented and impact the district and its stakeholders in an equitable manner. An equity lens through which all decisions are made and a robust data system to support decisions are essential to not only understanding where practices and policies are disproportionately impacting some stakeholders, but also to understanding the impact - intended or unintended - of adjustments to policies and practices.

> ## Recommendation 1:
> ## Explicitly embed an equity lens in all policies, practices, and collaborative decision making

"Applying an equity lens to education requires that we continuously identify the impact of decisions on underrepresented, vulnerable, and at-risk communities."
CCSSO Chief Equity Officer Annie Holmes

Organizations that are further along and successful in their equity journey all began the work by ensuring equity permeated the entire organization -- beginning with and modeled by leadership. Some of the next steps FPS should consider taking to embed an equity lens through the district are described below.

Clearly Establish Equity Matters and Equity is the Work of Everyone

It was heard from many stakeholders that the Office of Equity handles equity issues in FPS, but for equitable practices, policies, and behaviors to be experienced by all students, staff, and family members, equity has to become the work of everyone in FPS and be held accountable for doing so. We heard from many central office staff members that central office departments currently operate in silos, with the OEDCD being where equity issues are sent and handled. All stakeholders, including central office staff, voice the need for matters of equity and inclusion to be addressed. This provides an opportunity for district leadership to examine and revise

structures and practices reflective of its equity commitment and organizational values.

As next steps, equity must be acknowledged as the work of everyone, not just the OEDCD or central office; and it must be embedded in everyone's work, not something separate or extra. This intentional focus will require reallocations of time for intentional and focused learning opportunities (described further in Recommendation 3), as well as potentially restructuring central office to reflect a more collaborative and streamlined school-support approach to ensure that decisions are not only supported by data, but also focus on the students and schools with the greatest needs.

Time and space must also be invested to examine current policies and practices to understand how the standardization of practices are implemented with good intentions (equally providing resources and supports), yet create and exacerbate inequities. For example, the curricular and resource needs of teachers and students at a school with a dual language program are very different than those at a school implementing a STEM theme. While they can both utilize the district's scope and sequence, the dual language program needs resources and PD that support rigorous cultural and linguistic development, whereas the STEM school needs resources and PD around integrating technology and engineering concepts. Another example is discipline policies for schools with special programs for SWDs and disproportionately high discipline rates for those students. While still operating within the district's discipline policies, how might teachers and leaders at certain schools create policies that are more understanding of students' behaviors instead of punishing them for their social/emotional reactions that are part of their specific disability? Regardless of the exact issue, a close examination of policies and practices, as well as involving multiple stakeholders in the process (such as students, family members, and central office leaders with expertise in the relevant areas), will set a new standard of practices for ensuring equity is the work of everyone and everyone is involved in the work of furthering equity in FPS.

To demonstrate that equity matters and equity is the work of everyone, FPS central office departments should set annual goals about the ways in which they are working to ensure equity and inclusivity through their work, which they should then be held accountable for sharing progress on through presentations and discussions at leadership team meetings. It is important that FPS stakeholders see and experience the ways in which central office is modeling their commitment to equity through goals with specific steps that result in more equitable service support to schools and stakeholders. This practice can be implemented district wide, including with the school committee, at the school level, and with all staff individually. The school committee can also set equity goals that they periodically share progress on to the FPS community. Schools can demonstrate that equity is the work of everyone by ensuring school improvement plans demonstrate prioritization for students who are not achieving at the levels of their peers and are disproportionately impacted by current policies and practices. All FPS staff members can additionally set a professional learning goal around an equity or inclusion-based practice they intend to learn more about, implement in their professional practice, and how it impacts equity or inclusivity in FPS.

Create Protocols and Establish Routines for Collective Decision Making that Focuses on Students and Schools with the Greatest Needs

In equity work, it is imperative for a system to understand and explicitly name places where equity is not yet lived. Though there is a general acknowledgment that equity matters in FPS, there are opportunities for all staff

to engage in ongoing discussions and learning opportunities - including this report - to understand the lived educational experiences of various stakeholders in FPS. To start this work, FPS needs to begin prioritizing identified subgroups that are underperforming and/or underserved, as indicated by student achievement and outcome data and stakeholder perspectives. As pointed out in the *FPS by the Numbers* section, students with the greatest needs - namely ELs and SWDs, as indicated by both experiential and quantitative data - need to be prioritized in decision making.

To intentionally ensure that students who need the most receive the most, central office leadership must operate with and model an equity lens through which all policies, practices, and decisions are collaboratively made. A starting point for the leadership team would be to create a protocol or routine to check discussions and decisions against as team members develop their equity lens. Over time, this protocol could be adapted and used at all levels of decision making throughout the district, from schools and classrooms to the school committee. By using a consistent protocol, it not only creates and maintains a focus on students and schools with the greatest needs, but it also creates a common language upon which the district can build and expand its ability to engage in challenging and initially uncomfortable discussions about diversity, equity, and inclusion. An example of one district's equity-focused protocol is linked here.

Re-evaluate the Capacity of the OEDCD and Reintroduce the OEDCD to the FPS Community

As with other central office departments, the OEDCD is instrumental in leading the work to create a more equitable and inclusive FPS system. However, as stated above, the OEDCD should no longer be viewed as the go-to or sole leader of FPS's equity journey. As the recommendations from this audit are designed, developed, and implemented, more leadership and support will be needed from the OEDCD to ensure equity-based policies, practices, and behaviors are emerging from the district-wide efforts, as well as the ongoing work already taking place within the office. As such, given the desire to prioritize equity within FPS, the capacity of the OEDCD should be re-evaluated in order to ensure it can meet the current roles and responsibilities entrusted to it, and also the more visible equity-related support needs of various stakeholder groups over the coming years. Equity, as named early in the report, is an ongoing journey without a set destination or checklist of things to do to claim equity is established within FPS. It requires time, lots of discussions, and ongoing individual and collective introspection into policies and practices, which cannot be realistically supported by a team of two talented individuals. If the district is publicly and actively engaging in and prioritizing equity, that should be reflected in the OEDCD's staffing capacity.

The findings clearly indicate that the work and support of the OEDCD are not widely known, particularly for school-level staff. To accurately determine the needed capacity of the OEDCD going forward, the district needs to clearly articulate the purpose and roles and responsibilities of the OEDCD - which should greatly expand in leadership, training, and support capacities given the findings in the equity audit - including the potential overlap of equity work with other central office departments (e.g. conflict resolution support from HR and OEDCD or equity-focused professional learning with the OTL); then align staffing needs and/or reallocate staffing to support these roles and responsibilities. There is also an opportunity to reintroduce the OEDCD to the FPS community and clearly delineate what the office does, how it shares the work of equity with other central office departments and the schools (particularly when it comes to who and how bias and equity complaints are handled for students, staff, and families), and how it supports families, students, and staff

members with issues of bias, discrimination, and misconduct. Additionally, the OECD should be involved in actively seeking and including stakeholder perspectives through various feedback and input forums to help support inclusive practices and provide feedback and support to those leading the forums to build their capacity for equity work.

Continue Engaging Stakeholders to Understand How They Experience Equity and Inclusivity in FPS

In order for equity to become the work of everyone within FPS, stakeholders such as students, families, and staff members need to be continuously engaged in conversations to understand how policies and practices are contributing to their lived experiences in FPS. Without this critical component, the effects of policies and practices - particularly those under development and those made in the coming months as equity is prioritized district wide - will only be partially understood through quantitative data or numbers that tell how many or to what extent changes impacted the student, family, and staff experiences, without understanding qualitatively how the changes are experienced or felt for students, families, and staff, and if changes in policies have actually resulted in changed practices.

This step is especially critical for students and schools where data indicates that there are disproportionate outcomes that the district is focused to directly support. By engaging those stakeholders more impacted, they become part of the problem-solving process and not the problem to solve. Students, in particular, can be incredibly insightful and descriptive about the ways in which they could be more successful; and being treated as partners in creating more equitable and inclusive learning environments would create buy-in to their learning experience in FPS. The same is true for family members and staff; by engaging them as part of the process (not the problem) in creating greater equity and inclusivity in FPS, the district and schools would make them partners in the process and thus develop and model the inclusivity that the district seeks to implement. When considering the capacity of the OEDCD, creating coordinated learning and listening opportunities for students and the greater FPS community must be accounted for as the district establishes and supports that equity is the work of everyone.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ Consider how the district conveys high expectations for student achievement to students and high expectations for staff performance to staff. How is this referenced throughout the year and expanded upon in detail so students and staff understand what those expectations entail for them? How do expectations reflect the district's core values? How do expectations reflect a respect for diversity, a dedication to inclusion, and a focus on equity? For example:
  ○ What changes in practice are visible to students to ensure greater access to honors and AP classes in the high school?
  ○ How are successful dual language programs expanded to support all students and families interested in participating?
  ○ How are community partners leveraged to support students who need additional non-academic/SEL supports to fully engage academically?

➢ Consider the ways in which central office and the school committee are focused on meeting the needs of all students and schools, recognizing that schools are where learning happens.

- Do central office departments have systems, policies, and practices in place to address inequities in schools and prioritize school and student needs?
- Does the school committee regularly re-examine policies and practices to identify and address inequities and biases?
- In what ways does central office gather the voice of school-level stakeholders, students, and families?
- In what ways does the school committee gather the voice of their constituents - FPS families and community members - and how does that inform their decision making?
- What additional data and information does central office and the school committee need to make informed and equitable decisions?
- What new protocols or processes are needed to bring an equity lens to life in central office and for the school committee?

➢ Consider how mindsets impact the support, practices, and policies in place in FPS. How does an equity-focused mindset differ from one that does not fully grasp the extent to which their position and role responsibilities impact all students' access to a high-quality and equitable education in FPS?
- How would focusing on students with the greatest demonstrated learning needs change the focus of support and the support process? Why is this not current/consistent practice?
- What are the implications if staff do not believe that all students can succeed?
- What does an equity-focused mindset look like in a central office leader? In a school committee member? In a school leader? In a teacher? In a family or community member? How can the district support the development of equity-focused mindsets in all FPS stakeholders?

➢ To continuously address disparities in the school system, district policies and practice must recognize historically marginalized students and take intentional steps to address disparities. To do so requires a bold stance and focused equity mindset from district leadership (central office leaders and most importantly the superintendent), as well as the school committee, to provide specialized support to the students who most need it, which may be difficult for some to accept. Without unwavering support for pursuing equity in FPS from these key leaders, the equity journey will not progress. Forward moving equity journeys require a dedication and solid commitment from district and school leadership and the school committee to see the work through and educate the community along the way as to why an equitable solution matters. This commitment will also be reflected in changes to the way things are usually done, such as:
- How resources are allocated to schools and departments - equally or equitably?
- How staff are trained - professional learning opportunities and practicing DEI-related concepts must be prioritized for all staff, yet recognize that staff are at different places in their individual equity journeys?
- How students are engaged in creating a more inclusive and equitable environment - ensure their voices are heard, allow them to also learn about ways to be inclusive and equitable with their peers?
- How staff are supported - feedback opportunities include ways to demonstrate inclusive and equitable practices?
- How staff are hired - hiring practices that reflect equity and determine the extent to which potential hires already have an equity mindset?

- How budgets are developed - if underperforming schools and students are the priority, how does the budget reflect that? How do budget priorities directly link to address student needs?
- How do district performance measures - including the strategic plan - include the ways in which inequities and disparities are monitored, identified, and addressed over time? How is progress shared and discussed transparently and in a way that builds community capacity to understand equitable practice?
- How do school performance measures - including school improvement plans - include the ways in which inequities and disparities are monitored, identified, and addressed over time? How is progress shared and discussed transparently and in a way that builds school community capacity to understand equitable practice?

➢ How can district diversity be measured and referenced beyond race/ethnicity? What other/additional aspects of stakeholders' identities should the district be considering? How can the district ensure that immigrants and non-native English speakers understand and correctly identify the correct race/ethnicity descriptors?

Recommendation 2:
Invest in and utilize a robust and unified data system that allows the district to routinely identify, address, and monitor inequities

In order to increase data functionality and pursue equity throughout FPS, the district will need access to a robust and unified data system. Data is not currently available for all departments or schools in sortable disaggregated format, nor are there consistent disaggregation classifications that fully encompass the different aspects of diversity (beyond race and ethnicity). Data dashboards are currently under development to provide district and school staff much-needed access to organized and compiled data in one location, and will require ongoing modifications to reflect the district's developing equity lens.

Utilize Data to Understand Equitable Access and Outcomes

As alluded to in Recommendation 1, utilizing an equity lens for decision making requires data - both recent and past data to understand trends and the current reality, both quantitative and qualitative data to understand comparisons against a standard and comparisons of lived experiences, and both aggregated and disaggregated data to understand discrepancies and disparities among population subgroups. Data dashboards support stakeholders to access a variety of data in one central location; yet are not the solution or process, but the tool to utilizing data in a manner that prioritizes equity. As the dashboards go live and as the district begins to

implement practices focused on equity-based decision making, the dashboards will evolve to support this, particularly as staff become more comfortable with dashboard use and capacity, as well as ways to disaggregate data beyond race/ethnicity and consider the differential impacts and outcomes of measures of student, school, and district success.

Revise Protocols and Data Practices to Reflect an Equity Lens and Create Time for Critical Data-Driven Discussions

In order to support the process of analyzing data with an equity lens, it is critical that protocols and analyses are grounded in solid data practices and correct data interpretations. Districts and schools have access to large quantities of data and it is oftentimes overwhelming to know where to begin, much less how to ensure perceived trends or analyses are correct interpretations and use of available data. As the dashboards go live, it will be critical for staff to not only understand how to use it and access the data that is relevant to their role and responsibilities, but also understand what the data is and is not saying and how to draw appropriate conclusions from it to inform equity-focused decision making.

There is an opportunity, therefore, to train staff to access and use the dashboard, as well as how to interpret, analyze, synthesize, and base decisions on the data it contains. As this is a new tool and new process, data experts (including the Director of Technology) should be consulted to support district leaders with the development of protocols and practices that support different levels of the FPS system (e.g. district, school, classroom) and the different purposes for which stakeholders will use data. For example, classroom teachers will at times use data to determine which students need to participate in a reteaching lesson, and at other times will use data to compare the effectiveness of their instruction of a lesson to that of their content-area peer; or principals will at times use attendance data to ensure families are contacted when students are absent, and at other times will use attendance data with their fellow principals to consider effective interventions for students who are chronically absent. Correct interpretations and use of data is equally important as having access to information, especially when prioritizing equitable and inclusive practices and resulting systems of support from data-informed decisions.

Re-evaluate the Capacity of the Office of Technology and Its Role in Supporting Equity-focused Data Analysis District Wide

Once the data dashboards are complete, they will need to be constantly maintained and updated as new data becomes available and is monitored by district and school staff. Keeping in mind the necessity of data to ensure decision making is focused on ensuring equitable outcomes for all students and FPS stakeholders, and the development and implementation of equity-focused data practices throughout the district, it is worth considering capacity required of staff from the Office of Technology to provide the additional guidance, training, and ongoing support that will be needed.

There is an opportunity to consider ways to integrate data experts within other district departments to support explicit data needs. Data needs are particularly high in the OTL, Special Education, and Multilingual Departments, as data is not currently disaggregated and/or data routines and protocols are not yet reflective of an equity lens or informed by data experts. For example, assessment data for ELs and SWDs looks quite

different from other K-12 assessments; how might a current or new multilingual or special education and assessment expert better support these departments and staff to develop protocols and data practices that specifically support these programs? Or how might recruitment efforts be tracked and analyzed differently to understand the effectiveness of recruitment avenues for particular positions that result in new hires, especially processes that increase staff diversity?

As district-wide data practices develop over time, demonstration of equity-focused data practices could become part of the hiring description to not only emphasize its importance in FPS but also make applicants aware of the data skills that are an integral part of all jobs in FPS.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ FPS already uses data to drive decision making. In-development data dashboards will further support this best practice by providing access and accuracy for all district staff to utilize. Yet to support FPS' focus on increasing equity within the district, data-driven decision making must be done with an equity lens (and supportive protocols) and examine data differently to ensure decisions are accurately informed and reflect an intentionality to identify and address disparities.

   ○ For example, when considering initiatives to decrease chronic absenteeism, what data will be most useful? What information about students do decision makers need to have to examine absenteeism with an equity lens? Data needs to be disaggregated in sortable ways: for example, by race/ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, by grade level, by academic performance. What could also prove useful to decision makers is understanding the contact that staff members have already had with students and their families, what home life conditions are affecting students' regular attendance and engagement at school, and what efforts were made prior to students 10th absence to increase attendance.

   ○ As another example, when schools examine their student behavior data, policies, and practices, data will need to be disaggregated and sortable too, especially by race/ethnicity, grade level, teachers who file the discipline referral, SPED or ESL designation and program, and prior disciplinary actions.

   Data-driven decision making with an equity lens is more detailed while also being more holistic about students, contexts, and compounding and influencing factors.

➢ Beyond data-driven decision making, data should also inform strategic plan and school improvement plan management and monitoring. Plan management includes a process through which periodic checks of plan implementation and impact are reviewed, which should be data informed. Data should be disaggregated and examined for disparities among subgroups. If timeline goals are created, progress evidence (i.e. data) should be checked against the goal. Evidence of goal completion and desired impact move on to the next goal; and incomplete implementation or impact should be analyzed to determine why and what steps need to be taken to either adjust the timeline or a goal more representative and/or realistic given implementation and impact data. This PDSA cycle approach is aligned with improvement science research, which is further explained in Anthony Bryk's book, *Learning to Improve.*

   ○ How would this approach impact the way in which the school committee monitors strategic plan implementation and impact progress?

- How would this approach impact the way in which school leaders and central office leaders conduct monthly data meetings about school improvement plan implementation and impact?

➢ Another component of data use involves data engagement and reporting to the broader FPS community. While operating within FERPA regulations, how might community members be better informed about district progress on its goals and its commitment to equity? For example:
  - The district annually asks family members to take the Panorama survey. To engage the community with survey responses, the district could consider sharing select responses, particularly those that reflect desired areas of growth and strategic plan initiatives. And beyond sharing the responses, how might central office leadership and the school committee dig into survey responses to uncover the root causes and address them?
  - When reviewing current district policies for disproportionate and adverse impact, how might policy proposals and accompanying data about impact be shared with the broader community for review and feedback?

➢ More internal equity-focused data use examples at the district level involve reliable projections or revenue and expenses, tracking grant funds allocations for students and schools with the greatest needs, and the ways in which Title funds are strategically used to address student needs and their impact. Internal equity-focused data use examples at the school level involve annual ELA and math growth projections across grade levels, the impact of academic after-school partner support on students not yet meeting expectations on iReady and the MCAS, the extent to which all student subgroups are referred for gifted/talented/advanced academic programs, and the correlation between increased family communication and student engagement and academic success.

➢ As data practices develop throughout the district over the next few years, data will naturally evolve into a way in which stakeholders are held accountable for their roles and responsibilities. For example, as equity-focused professional learning opportunities are provided to staff (Recommendation 3), they will be accountable for implementing those practices that reflect equity and inclusivity, which will be monitored and measured through the evaluation and feedback process. As another example, as intentional efforts are made to recruit and retain a more diverse workforce (Recommendations 4 & 5), the human resources department will be accountable for demonstrating the ways in which recruitment efforts are yielding more diverse candidates, the ways hiring practices demonstrate cultural competency, and how inclusive staff culture practices have impacted retention of diverse staff.

➢ Equity-focused data should also inform the district's use of key performance indicators (KPIs). KPIs not only measure and monitor the "health" of the district, but also its effectiveness and functionality when interacting with key stakeholders. Some examples of equity-focused KPIs (all of which should be disaggregated and sortable) are listed in this linked resource, which are sorted by school level.

Recommendation 3:
Invest in explicit, ongoing, coordinated, equity-focused cultural competency professional learning for all district staff

"Rapidly changing demographics demand that we engage in a vigorous, ongoing, and systemic process of professional development to prepare all educators in the school to function effectively in a highly diverse environment"
(Howard, 2007).

Develop Staff's Cultural Competency and Ownership of Equity

An emphasis on the cultural proficiency of FPS staff is necessary to build their investment and knowledge of DEI related practices. The district can support all staff and help them build a deeper understanding of their identities while evaluating their ability to communicate and interact with students, families, fellow staff, and partners from different cultures. As referenced in the report definitions:

> *Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.*
> - *Have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.*
> - *Have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to diversity and the cultural contexts of communities they serve.*
> - *Incorporate the above in all aspects of policy-making, administration, practice and service delivery, systematically involve consumers, families and communities.*

There will be a significant difference in the way that cultural competency training and sessions will impact the district. At the school level, this foundation will support educators and leaders with the adoption of culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and curricular resources, examination of staff development, family engagement and assessment of culture. At the central office level, these conversations and emphasis on communication will define the overall direction of the district, the process in which staff are recruited and hired, policies and programs created to support both student and teacher learning, and engagement of partners and district stance on issues directly affecting their community. Numerous staff shared an interest in expanding their cultural competency skills, which will set the groundwork for further equity-focused professional learning.

As it stands, the current PD is not yet organized to support all educators, school leaders, administrators, and non-instructional staff to explicitly focus on their cultural competency and ability to remove bias from everyday practices. Although time allocation for effective and defined professional learning opportunities was brought

up as a concern, there remain some opportunities for staff to convene and discuss equity at all levels and create a system of accountability rooted in the success of all. By embedding equity discussions and training into all existing opportunities, the district will ensure that educators, leaders, and staff alike, are prepared to build a more inclusive community of learners. As mentioned in Recommendation 1, equity must be the work of all and considered part of everyone's daily practice.

By strengthening the structure and frequency of professional learning opportunities, the district will benefit from a more prepared equity-focused workforce. These learning, training, and development opportunities will ensure that practices in and out of the classroom are reflective of the commitment FPS has made to its students, staff, families, and community. It is vital that all staff - beyond those in classrooms - also understand the impact of their role in the academic, social, and emotional well-being of students. As a working ecosystem, all district staff should see themselves directly connected to the work furthering equity and inclusivity in FPS. Revisions to the current district-wide and in-school calendar can be a starting point for the leadership team to identify already scheduled sessions that can be enhanced to target equity as part of professional learning. To ensure that there is a set structure and collaboration among professional learning contributors, there needs to be an appointed or identified individual to bring together this vision. This will be a journey that will require shifts in mindset and intentional conversations that support the continous growth. Staff can preview this approach at the beginning of the school year and it can be part of quarterly conversations and district-wide onboarding plans. Once defined, the new approach should be communicated to all staff and be reflective of the needs, capacity, and overall investment of the district to create a culturally competent workforce and inclusive culture for the FPS community.

Connect Professional Learning, Performance, and Equitable Support of Students and Families to Accountability Structures

One way to bring equity to the forefront and highlight it as the work of all in the district is to revise the evaluation process for all staff and embed equity indicators as part of the process. Defining clear cultural competency expectations and including those in the district evaluation system can inform professional learning opportunities and retention efforts. The described competencies in the previous section can guide these indicators and create alignment between all staff responsibilities. In connection with Recommendation 5, the Office of Human Resources can lead the district to standardize staff competencies and embed them into the recruitment, selection, and hiring process. When staff are on-boarded and supported to meet these standards, they are more likely to see equity as part of their work. Furthermore, these indicators can assist evaluators in identifying areas of strength and needs for additional professional learning or coaching, as well as assist in setting expectations that equity is everyone's responsibility.

An evaluator, at both the school and central office level, can use the revised evaluation process to gather data that informs DESE's established staff evaluation model. A big component of the evaluations will be observation data which can inform the cultural competency of staff, their performance in accordance to district metrics and defined competencies, and understanding of the cultural climate within schools and offices. Observations can also support evaluators in providing instructional staff with real-time feedback on the management of interpersonal issues and address biased behaviors towards students and families. To ensure that the process is followed with faith and implemented according to the newly defined equity goals and competencies, all evaluators must be trained on the process and be given access to additional resources that develop their

management skills. To accommodate limited schedules and meeting space, the district can consider alternative training methods, such as virtual and self-paced learning. These varied approaches will support the majority of learning styles within the management team. Evaluated staff should also receive some support and guidance on how to best interpret and implement feedback, as well as advocate for supports not identified by their direct evaluator. A culture of reciprocal feedback will create accountability at all levels and support the trust building process.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ When creating the professional learning calendar, ensure that all departments have an opportunity to provide content and input on the topics related to cultural competency and services for students and families. Reflect on the capacity of school leaders and staff to deliver content, should the opportunity for whole district professional learning not be available.

    ○ For the first year, consider creating general guidance for all schools to follow and one for central office departments. This guidance will ensure that all schools have a similar experience and support school leadership in embedding professional learning into daily practices. The central office guidance should be different and be reflective of the support they provide to both schools and families. In the following years, the professional learning structure can evolve to include more differentiated standards that support all staff. For example, the guidance can include a suggested structure for staff meetings, process to gauge engagement and attendance, formats to gather staff feedback and satisfaction, and leadership development guide for staff looking to create and present content which highlights equity.

➢ Similar to content-based professional learning, consider utilizing a backward planning approach and define the expected results of embedding equity-focused cultural competency training into the continuous learning model. While ODECD can support coordination of the professional learning, this effort needs to be done in collaboration with all departments. Each school leader and department must come together to determine content and alignment to job-specific functions.

    ○ To begin the process, first, assess the knowledge and skills of the staff around DEI. This step is intended to unearth gaps and misunderstanding around staff knowledge of their DEI competency. It's important to be clear as to why and what staff will gain from professional learning and how it's directly connected to their practice and student success. When discussing the skills staff need, be sure to differentiate to be inclusive of roles and responsibilities.

    ○ Second, consider the desired staff competency outcomes and be mindful of short and long term progress. Addressing equity is a journey that requires multiple stakeholders to be present, active, and continuously engaged in the revision of systems and structures. This first step requires a review of staff data and survey results around their cultural competency and equity knowledge. Classroom observations and individual discussions or focus groups can also serve as a resource in the identification of persistent equity issues.

    ○ Third, think about the policies, actions, and practices that need to be implemented to support the professional growth and development of staff. Consider what level of specific policies and research-based practices can support the goal of creating more equitable spaces for all members of the FPS community.

    ○ Fourth, identify which school/district-level supports will be needed to effectively address the

goals around equity-focused professional learning. As mentioned earlier, equity is a journey that requires the investment of all stakeholders. Increasing the cultural and equity competency of district staff will require some additional investment from members of the leadership team. Given that equity is a part of everyone's job, other departments must increase their support of school level and non-instructional staff resource allocation and internal training. Staff at all levels need to feel that these efforts are in support of everyone's work and are intended to create more inclusive spaces.

- ○ Lastly, embed additional learning opportunities for sustainable growth. Consider how affinity spaces, networking opportunities, and in-school activities can be an extension of the designed professional learning. When staff recognize the importance of equity and acknowledge it as part of their daily work, FPS will begin to see a shift in the overall district culture.

➢ Now that a plan, approach, and communication strategy has been identified to address possible staff questions and concerns, the district should consider allocating resources to have professional learning centralized. Bringing together school leaders, teacher representatives, department heads, non-instructional staff representatives, and central office staff requires extensive coordination. Having one or multiple individuals coordinate professional learning for the district would support school leaders and central office administrators better manage and access the needs of staff regarding equity and cultural competency. This individual and/or team can support in the creation of look-fors and walkthrough guidance for school evaluators and central office visitors. This guidance can be based on observables and support central office staff see the impact of their work on school grounds. Examples of look-fors include:
- ○ Does the school have welcoming material at the entrance for parents, students, and partners?
- ○ Are students and staff engaging in conversation in common spaces?
- ○ Is there visual representation of student diversity in school flyers, posters and signs?
- ○ Are there observables of school pride among students and staff?
- ○ Are families in the building? What interactions are visible in the office and/or hallway?

➢ To tailor professional learning to meet the needs of each individual school, department, and office, we suggest following some of the tips by KickUp. They have researched and created helpful tips in creating an effective professional learning plan. Access to resources can be found here. KickUp focuses on analyzing the environment where professional learning needs to take place and accessing the capacity and resources of said location. Some of the considerations include understanding the characteristics and history of the school, staff, and students; changing demographics of the school; and development goals related to student outcomes and interventions.

➢ Consider the capacity of evaluators to support their staff in developing equity-based practices and conversations. For example, can staff clearly discuss the structural discrimination and the effects of social exclusion, either to internal staff or district-wide? Are all schools/departments engaged in group discussions about how they are collectively and individually advancing equity work? Do all staff understand the ways in which advancing equity is part of their job? Can staff identify support areas for which they need further development to advance equity within their role? To what extent are staff comfortable having conversations with students regarding issues of race and social justice?

Recommendation 4:
Strengthen trust and ensure stakeholder voice informs decision making to increase the sense of belonging and community for all staff, particularly for diverse staff

Evaluate Staff Engagement and Its Connection Issues of Trust and Low Morale

Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of differences that exist in groups. At FPS, stakeholders shared a sense of disconnect and confusion over the district's vision for creating more inclusive spaces that welcome the voices of its community members. The comments regarding the lack of inclusivity came from all levels and highlighted how distrust leads to disengagement. Many mentioned fear or retaliation if they engaged in activities or conversations that were intended to create systematic change, including this equity audit. While this may not be true for all, it is evident that deep-rooted practices and undefined hierarchical structures continue to impact the sense of belonging of FPS community members.

There is an opportunity for the district to examine and to understand what has led to trust issues and what has been done to address the lack of faith in the district. A step that the district can take to create inclusive spaces for all to feel valued, heard, and acknowledged is to utilize data to capture trends in activity attendance, survey participation, engagement in leadership conversations, diversity of voices at the table, retention, and shifts in staff satisfaction. By analyzing engagement at the school and central office levels, the district can better understand what practices have resulted in mistrust. School leaders and evaluators can support this effort by compiling information on staff engagement. It is important to note that when looking to obtain information and feedback from staff, the district can routinely share back what was heard and how concerns will be addressed. Recommendation 2 highlights the importance and use of the district data dashboards, which can serve as a way to disseminate information and allow for staff to see how their concerns will be addressed. Examining this data and evaluating the current norms around daily practices can serve as a vehicle for change. In particular, central offices can analyze the findings and redefine their interactions with staff to allow for equity considerations to be a part of the conversations.

Given the comments from staff at the school and central office level, the loss of confidence in departments has been due to a lack of clear and consistent communication and support in addressing individual staff and school needs. This recommendation and number five directly point to the importance of communication in the trust building process. This academic school year brings opportunities for central office staff to better connect with school staff and work to mend broken relationships. The placement of central office staff in school buildings is ideal because it enables administrators and non-instructional staff to experience the daily happenings in the schools, have consistent interactions with students and directly see the impact of their work. Central office staff can see the daily successes and struggles of both teachers and students, support staff and school leaders, interact to build camaraderie, and address their needs in a more timely and informed manner.

Increase Staff Knowledge of and Investment in District Values and Goals

Understanding the gaps in staff knowledge of both the district values and vision can support the district in unearthing missed opportunities in the staff engagement and trust building process. The focus on professional learning and cultural competency will support this recommendation and provide all leaders and staff with the tools necessary to engage in culturally responsive interactions. For staff, particularly those of color, these trainings will not only provide professional learning and growth, but also be a step in trust-building and district investment retention retention efforts. Greater clarity around district values can be accomplished once FPS staff see the connection between professional learning, increased cultural competence, and the inclusiveness of district policies/practices for all stakeholders. These efforts can further increase morale and a sense of belonging.

Create a Communication Structure and Strategy that Reaches All FPS Staff Members and Ensures Messaging Consistency

Based on our research and equity framework, high-performing districts ensure all interactions and communication with stakeholders demonstrate cultural competence and respect for the identities, cultures, and community norms of the district, school staff, and families. There is an opportunity for the district to address miscommunication and enhance communication practices across all departments and functions. Many staff shared that they would welcome more communication from both the central office and school leadership teams around transitions and structural changes. Staff believe investment and engagement in district initiatives can be strengthened by more consistent communication and follow through on initiatives.

One way that central office can authentically engage staff and create a functional two-way communication structure is by outlining quarterly priorities and defining ways to update staff on structural changes, progress towards strategic initiatives, and opportunities to be included in decision making conversations. It is important to consider the benefits of traditional communication outlets, their effectiveness, and how staff, both at the central office and school level, best receive information. This is where consistency in messaging is crucial. The information shared among departments and offices must resemble that which school leaders share with their staff.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ Before change can be implemented around equity work, senior leadership needs to focus on outreach strategies and ask if members of the FPS community understand the values of the district in regards to diversity, equity, and inclusion? If staff do not have a coherent interpretation of the values, it signals for needed shifts in communication. Consider adding the value statement to all communications (e.g. staff signatures, flyers, website, social media posts, etc.) and investing in visual representation to distribute to offices and schools.

➢ Has leadership engaged the FPS community in the identification of initiatives and goals? How will staff be invited to participate in the implementation process? Who is organizing the efforts?
  ○ Start by checking for their understanding and provide access to leadership roles as professional learning opportunities.

➢ In what ways are administrators gauging staff interest, needs, and satisfaction? How will the findings be communicated to staff? What interventions will be put in place to provide development support for the administration and address the needs of staff?
  ○ Already scheduled staff meetings, performance check-ins, and professional learning sessions serve as great places to connect with staff and inquire about their experience.

➢ When considering a new action or process ask: Is the approach considered taking into account the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and sexual orientation identification of all staff? What data, qualitative, and quantitative, is there to support the change and/or action?
  ○ This is where the data dashboard can serve an additional purpose, but it must be coupled with consistent data collection and tracking by all departments.

➢ Does the embedding of equity-focused professional learning assess and support culturally responsive, inclusive, and welcoming communication practices? How is effectiveness analyzed? How will the change be enacted? By whom and in what timeframe?
  ○ It is important to have continuous cycles of revision of proposed practices to ensure they support the changing social environments.

➢ How are departments communicating priorities and changes to each other? How will staff and members of the FPS community be informed of such changes?
  ○ Before communicating changes to staff, ensure that there is an internal department understanding of the changes and their effect of individual responsibilities.

➢ What support system will be used to ensure that school-based staff has equitable and reliable access to timely central office supports and services? How will this be managed?

➢ How will staff orientation and onboarding be used to communicate district structures and build rapport with incoming staff? What is essential for incoming staff to know? Is the district's commitment to input, collaboration, and equity focus clearly outlined in communication? What is the frequency in which new staff members' satisfaction and overall experience in the district is gaugged?

➢ Are the responsibilities stated in the job description clearly, concise, and directly connected to the intended job functions? With what frequency will these be revised? How will cross-department changes be identified and communicated to staff? How will current staff be reoriented to their job responsibilities?

➢ Consider the ways in which findings from this report will be shared with all FPS staff to support their understanding of the district's equity focus and their integral role in the equity journey.

Recommendation 5:
Redesign recruitment and hiring practices to obtain a more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse candidate pool

"As long as white-middle class teachers are recruited to schools occupied by urban youth of color, without an consideration of how they affirm and reestablish power dynamics that silence students, issues that plague urban education (like achievement gaps, suspension rates, and high teacher turnover) will persist" (Emdin, 2016).

Research indicates that students who have access to diverse educators are more equipped to problem solve, manage interpersonal issues, and perform at higher rates than those who do not. To break the barriers to access, the district must generate a recruitment and hiring plan that considers the experience, background, and diversity of its prospective staff.

Evaluate the Current Recruitment Process and Restructure the Approach to Meet the District's Diversity Targets

To revise the effectiveness of recruitment, selection, and hiring practices, the district can start by implementing a feedback gathering process with recent candidates to obtain information regarding their interest, recruitment interactions with FPS, why they accepted or declined the offer, and in what ways FPS could improve their process. Another benefit of gathering feedback from recent candidates is to better understand what recruitment communication and interaction practices yielded a positive experience. Given the first recommendation in this document, it is imperative that all efforts to increase the number of qualified and diverse candidates and hires also include an equity lens.

Before candidates can get in the door, they must first be drawn to job postings that meet their professional aspirations and suit their needs. HR needs to collaboratively work with the OTL, school leaders, and OEDCD to revise the desired cultural competencies and ensure hiring protocols align with them. The recruitment strategies used to attract candidates should be reflective of the adopted cultural competencies and focus on equitable recruitment, cultivation, and hiring practices. By assessing current partnerships and agreements, the district can determine if they are achieving the desired impact to have a more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse workforce.

Engage and Cultivate the Candidate Pool Early, Hire Intentionally, and Retain Quality Candidates

FPS has the opportunity to engage candidates during the application and hiring phase to set the tone for the district's investment in prospective staff and increase the pool of possible hires. Given the limitations to hire staff in earlier months, the district has an opportunity to work around this issue and consider an early hiring pool. This initiative can provide HR with a chance to see prospective candidates without needing to hire. The pool can open in the late fall or early winter and be broad-based on job function. For example, there could be one general pool and sub-applications based on candidate interest. Once a format and a protocol have been set to post positions which include unbiased, detailed, and equity-focused language, then it is time to design a review process. Many of the school leaders and staff interviewed mentioned their desire to participate in the hiring process of fellow staff. Since the desire to participate is there, HR in collaboration with the OEDCD and OTL can identify individuals who can be trained and lead the review of applicants. The pool will also enable and push school leaders to plan early and prepare for spring openings.

The next step is to cultivate the individuals who have submitted their application. The training that application reviewers receive needs to be inclusive of candidate potential to support student needs, experience, coachability, and licensure. Since it is hard to quantify the first two points, cultivating candidates by communicating with them via phone interview, open houses, or virtual networking sessions will enable staff to gather candidacy notes. Prospective candidates need to know that FPS is a place that emphasizes the building of community and where investment in the individual starts early on.

Because the benefit of an early hiring pool is to start reviewing candidates prior to the spring job posting, the district can gauge the licensure status and potential barriers to entry. There are some barriers to entering the teaching profession, such as testing or training on specialized subjects, that can be assessed by data and help inform the creation of internal supports and development infrastructure. The Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTEL) play a big role in the candidacy of potential hires, particularly for those in high-needs subjects like Special Education (moderate & severe disabilities) and English as a Second Language. To alleviate this, the district can consider testing partnerships with regional institutions and testing programs to offer waivers, reduced cost testing, and/or test preparation support. For many candidates, the MTELs are the only barrier to supporting students and becoming classroom teachers.

Candidates that have been cultivated during the early hiring phase can move towards the hiring process with the advantage of being vetted and receiving the support to help them to meet the requirements of the job-specific application. The collaboration and engagement of multiple departments and school staff creates an authentic experience for the candidate and displays the district's commitment to candidates as prospective members of their community. Actions taken at the beginning stages of an employee's hiring experience often impact their perception and retention. Although retention is not solely based on how the recruitment and hiring process was structured, it does impact what incoming candidates experience and their perception of the district. The tools and approaches used to support candidates in the early hiring process can be mimicked at the school setting and in collaboration with an assigned mentor.

Leverage School Leaders as Partners in the Hiring Process

To leverage existing school hiring systems, there is an opportunity for the district to equip school leaders and hiring managers to conduct more equitable hiring processes and practices to ensure potential new hiresmeet the defined district selection criteria. There is an opportunity to evaluate the current school hiring process and

ensure that it supports the district's vision and direction to create a more equitable and unbiased hiring process. HR can learn from schools that have been successful in hiring a diverse teaching staff and create a relationship that can later inform the district's approach to workforce diversity. An examination of the practices and approach to recruitment and selection from highly diverse schools will engage school leaders and provide them with a sense of ownership over the district's global educators initiative and support HR in implementing some of schools' effective techniques district wide. In connection with Recommendation 3, staff's professional learning around equity can be applied to the selection process and support HR's ability to recruit and hire a more diverse staff HR's ability to recruit and hire a more diverse staff . Training instructional staff and supporting their cultural competency will equip them to take on hiring duties that support the selection of diverse team members. In addition, collaborating with school leaders can help HR and OTL organize a recruitment calendar that prioritizes high-needs areas (e.g. SPED, ESL, Spanish, Portuguese, and STEAM) and activities that have been found to yield the most candidates.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ In what way is HR prioritizing hiring and recruitment for the schools with the greatest needs? Survey data indicates that Accordingly, 29% of central office staff agree; 25% somewhat agree; 0% of principals agree; 29% somewhat agree with the statement "Recruitment and placement decisions prioritize the lowest-performing schools."

➢ In addition to capturing data for HR and compliance purposes, consider also using data dashboards to evaluate vacancies and staffing allocations by subject area, school, specialty area to support school leaders in identifying fiscal year needs.

➢ Once district competencies have been defined and agreed upon, all postings should be revised to reflect equity language that promotes support and inclusivity. The sections in the position description can target specific areas such as qualifications, sought after competencies, description of responsibilities, preferred educational and work experience, and lastly overview of benefits and compensation scale. Keeping these descriptors short and concise ensures consistency in all postings and eliminates miscommunication regarding expectations and responsibilities.
  ○ Consider bringing together different department heads and gathering information on the skills they seek to inform the creation and implementation of district hiring competencies. While planning, consider the following questions: Do the competencies match our needs and the pool of candidates we want to attract? Are the competencies reflective of the academic, social, and equity needs of all students and schools? Are these competencies inclusive of the defined district values and goals? Are we as a district going to support candidates in all competencies? How will we evaluate performance and connect feedback and support to these competencies?

➢ Organize a recruitment calendar that prioritizes high-needs areas (e.g. SPED, ESL, Spanish, Portuguese, and STEAM) and activities that have been found to yield the most candidates. Most of these subjects require an extensive number of MTEL and training certifications. Marketing the need for these subjects and including district-sponsored supports will enable unlicensed candidates to apply, while they prepare to be hired and gain their licensure.
  ○ Utilize the MTEL testing and result schedule to guide marketing communication and include

resources for prospective candidates. Recent graduates and career changers are a tremendous population that require extensive training and cultivation.

○ An established system that monitors the decision of schools and departments will ensure that there is a streamlined approach to the selection and hiring of candidates.

➢ Gather candidate feedback on the recruitment and selection process to support continuous improvements. Questions to ask candidates:

○ What drew you to consider FPS as a district? What is your knowledge of Framingham as a city and the community?

○ How did you first hear about FPS? How would you describe your interaction with the recruitment team?

○ What is something that you would have liked to receive from the district during candidacy?

○ How would you describe the interactions with district staff during your interview?

○ Did you feel welcomed and informed about the role?

○ Is there something that FPS should consider asking candidates to further understand their capabilities?

○ Why did you decline the offer from FPS? Is there something that the district could have done differently to secure your hire?

○ What expectations do you have of the district as a new hire? How would you like to be communicated with and supported by HR and other district offices?

○ Are you interested in supporting the recruitment process for future hires?

➢ By assessing current partnerships and agreements, the district can determine if they are achieving the desired impact to have a more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse workforce.

➢ A better understanding of the challenges that diverse candidates face entering the teaching and FPS system can help the district create internal support for highly-qualified and diverse staff who are in the hiring process.

Recommendation 6:
Ensure all students have access to culturally and linguistically sustaining instructional practices and curricular materials, and appropriate SEL supports

Invest in Incorporating Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP) and Curricular Components and Materials to Existing Curricula and in the Instructional Capacity of Teachers to Implement It

This opportunity for advancing equity is interconnected with Recommendation 3, which provides cultural competency professional learning to FPS staff. Instructional staff not only need access to curricula and materials that reflect CLSP, but they also need to be trained in how to develop and provide CLSP-aligned instruction.

By integrating the curriculum review process with a process that intentionally develops a scope and sequence that utilizes materials more reflective of all the cultures, backgrounds, and languages of the FPS student body, this process can be part of ongoing internal curricular development and reviews. As referenced in the *Introduction*, CLSP "draw upon, infuse, and evoke students' existing schema, experiences, funds of knowledge, and perspectives to optimally facilitate learning; and intentionally seek racial and cultural equity and pluralism in order to deliberately tailor district-wide norms, policies and practices to affirm the identities of and expand opportunities for historically marginalized students." Curricula reviews can integrate culturally and linguistically sustaining objectives, materials, and resources for all K-12 course scopes and sequences district wide. There is an opportunity for the OTL to vet current and potential curricular materials that are culturally responsive and reflect CLSP. This would allow schools some curricular flexibility to meet their specific programmatic needs, as well as best support and be inclusive of their student population.

For dual language programs to be fully actualized and include both culturally and linguistically sustaining learning opportunities for students, the OTL and Multilingual Departments need to collaboratively consider ways to increase cultural instruction into the learning opportunities that K-12 students in dual language programs receive. Dual language programs currently follow the district scope and sequences and district resources, all of which are translated into Spanish or Portuguese. Dual language programs and instructional staff do not yet consistently interweave cultural aspects of Spanish or Portuguese cultures into the dual language program K-12. Resources and materials are needed to support this and will need to be imported from Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries for authenticity.

Continue SEL Programming and Provide Additional Support for Students Who Need It Most

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and unknown SY20-21 structure, students' SEL needs must continue to be prioritized. FPS needs to continue learning about and supporting students and families' non-academic needs so students can engage in school when it restarts and so families can best support their child(ren) in any mode of learning during the upcoming months. This support is especially critical for SWDs and their families, as their more individualized support and classroom routines and structures may likely be disrupted again; and ELs and their families, as they struggle to understand unfamiliar education systems and online platforms, and changing schedules and routines.

Aside from special pandemic-related needs, students, families, and school staff call for increased SEL support for students. Without opportunities to process feelings, current realities, and academic and non-academic related life events, students will not be able to fully engage academically and demonstrate learning success. Without opportunities for staff to dive into SEL resources and collaboratively plan SEL-related support to students, their efforts will not be as effective or impactful on students. And without actively and consistently seeking and listening to families' concerns and lived experiences, the extent to which students are struggling in non-academic ways will not be fully realized and supported by the district.

Examine Current Discipline Policies for Disproportionate and Adverse Impact and Adjust Where Needed

There is not only an opportunity to reexamine current discipline policies and practices in FPS, but also an opportunity to do so with an equity lens for those student populations which are most disproportionately impacted, which trend data indicates are SWDs and ELs. Considering that these two student subgroup populations are not all fully able to engage and interact with others either linguistically, socially, emotionally, behaviorally, or a combination of these, it is critical to not only identify why these students are disproportionately recipients of disciplinary action, but also evaluate the extent to which these students should be held to the same expectations and policies as others are who do not have identified barriers that impact their abilities to potentially understand and respond to policies and practices in the same way as ELs and SWDs.

There is also an opportunity to reexamine disciplinary practices with an equity lens to determine if SWDs and ELs in particular are recognized and treated in a way that equitably reflects their backgrounds, cultures, and actualization of discipline and behavior structures within schools. Leaders and staff will need training to understand and fully implement the differentiated and more equitable approach for supporting student engagement and behavior and be held responsible thereafter for doing so.

Once policies and practices better reflect a more inclusive and adaptive approach, the new policies, practices, and mindsets of leaders and staff should be shared with the FPS community to create collective understanding of why this approach is more equitable and inclusive of all students and what differences to expect.

Increase Monitoring and Support of Students to Decrease Absenteeism and Dropouts

Data indicates a growing need for the early identification and ongoing support of students who are at risk for chronic absenteeism and dropping out of school. The number of high needs student dropouts has quadrupled over the past three years, and the number of Hispanic/Latino students, White students, males, and females have been steady between 20 and 50 students per subgroup. The decision to dropout is typically a lagging indicator of earlier struggles that were not adequately addressed or supported in such a way that students feel the need or desire to stay in school. As such, it is critical for middle and high school staff to actively and closely monitor early dropout indicators - such as attendance, chronic absenteeism, dropping or failing academic success, and lack of engagement/participation - either through SSTs or another dedicated team to anticipate and support those students on track to dropout. Staff should carefully track support and outreach efforts made to each identified student, and over time, develop support plans that have proven successful for students. District and school staff should additionally make efforts to understand the reasons why students dropout, hearing from students who have dropped out, their family members, and community partners and school staff who worked closely with those students to understand the ways in which students were not fully supported and invested in school. School-level efforts and impacts should be shared with district staff to monitor progress toward decreasing absenteeism and dropouts over time.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ Survey responses indicated that most district, school leaders, and school staff believe the district sets high expectations for the achievement of all students and school and district staff performance. How is this conveyed to students and their families? What ongoing messaging do students receive that conveys their school leaders and teachers are supporting them to achieve the district's high expectations? What ongoing messaging and evidence to families receive that demonstrates the extent to which their child(ren) are meeting the district's high expectations? How is the district sharing progress toward its high student expectations? How is the district reporting the ways in which school and district staff performance is supporting students?

   ○ Data dashboards, once complete, provide an opportunity to offer an annual school report card (in addition to a district report card) through which the district could provide school-level progress about the extent to which students are meeting district expectations, among other KPI, and the school's successes and areas for growth and improvement.

➢ There is an opportunity in the strategic plan currently under development to prioritize all students having access to high-quality, standards-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining curricula and materials for all subjects that are inclusive of students' cultures, experiences, needs, and interests. The district's curricula is high quality and standards based but is not yet culturally responsive to the FPS student body, so this is the next step. The process is not something that can be completed in a year, and as is already the practice in FPS, will require ongoing reviews to update and revise based on new resources, materials, and perspectives.

   ○ The pace of integrating culturally and linguistically sustaining curricula, materials, and practices must be aligned with the ongoing cultural competency professional learning of staff. Without a solid foundation of what equitable education looks like, how to truly embrace the diversity of FPS, and how CLSP and instruction looks, staff cannot fully address the work that needs to be done. The mindset of staff - particularly instructional staff and school leaders - must embrace and desire this work because of what it provides to students while accepting that it most likely changes the way they interact with students, teach, and evaluate effective instruction.

   ○ As CLSP and materials are developed, assessments will need to be reviewed as well, to not only align with the inclusive curricula, but to ensure they are also culturally and linguistically sustaining. Assessment data should inform instruction, so alignment is critical to ensure data is used and used appropriately to understand student standard mastery and instructional effectiveness.

   ○ FPS could consider partnering with higher education institutions for professional learning opportunities that support instructional staff equity mindset development, design and delivery of culturally and linguistically sustaining curricula and instructional practices, and design of assessments aligned to inclusive curricula. FPS already has some staff who are implementing culturally responsive instruction who could support like content area or grade-level peers in their practice. Consider how these staff could serve as school-level leaders to support their peers' developing practices.

   ○ Professional development to develop CLSP and aligned curricular materials, as well as professional learning about cultural competency, can start on a district-wide level, but will require a more differentiated approach as schools, content area teams, and grade level teams dig into the work of implementation. The impact of all professional learning will at some point

need to become part of the evaluation process, as both the curriculum and equitable instructional practices should be the expectation district wide. Informal classroom observations and feedback (including district walk throughs) should incorporate look fors indicating the extent to which instructional staff is providing CLSP and curricula, which can begin this school year. Expectations should be clearly defined, and then growth progress should be monitored on an individual and school basis to understand gaps in curricular implementation, cultural competency, and student inclusivity and representation in what they are learning.

➢ When re-examining behavior and discipline policies and practices with an equity lens, it is critical to understand the student perspective - particularly those in subgroups with the highest incidence rates - and get their feedback on changes in policies and practices.
   ○ It is also important to dive into data trends to understand recurrent behavior issues and their root causes. Talk to students, families, teachers, and school leaders to learn how recurrent behavior issues are dealt with in the classroom and the office. Look for ways in which practices reflect an equitable approach to behavior, as well as ways practices are not yet equitable.
   ○ Relating to students and relying on teacher-student relationships to de-escalate behavior issues is a key component of SEL, trauma-informed practice, and instruction. Consider the extent to which instructional staff and leaders are adequately trained to fully embrace these approaches, are effective in developing relationships with all of their students, and the ways in which capacity can be further developed. How aware are students of these practices, and how is their capacity being developed to take more responsibility for their choices and ways of interacting with staff?

➢ Beyond students and staff physical safety is the extent to which students and staff feel safe, valued, cared for, challenged, and supported throughout the district. How is this prioritized currently? What are the gaps?
   ○ How can cultural competency professional learning develop feelings of value, care, and support for staff? What can leadership do to create a more inclusive staff culture so all staff can focus on their work knowing they are supported and valued? How can this be monitored at the school and district level on an ongoing basis?
   ○ How can CLSP grow students' feelings of value, care, and support from staff? What can school leaders and teachers do to create a more inclusive school and classroom culture so all students can focus on academics knowing that they are supported and valued? How can this be monitored in classrooms and at the school level on an ongoing basis?

➢ Effective RTI processes are critical to ensuring students attend, actively engage and participate in classes, and stay in school. RTI processes should also include ongoing analysis of students' socio-emotional development, behavior needs, and academic engagement and performance to fully address the academic and non-academic needs of students. Teacher voice and input about student experiences should accompany data around attendance, tardiness, academic performance, and behavior in order to understand all aspects of a students' ability and current capacity to engage in school.

Recommendation 7:
Identify success patterns of special student populations, prioritize development opportunities for staff to support all students, and engage families of special student populations as partners in their child's education

"Inclusion is not solely the job of any one educator or classroom - the successful creation of inclusive settings begins at the school and district levels, with superintendents and principals bearing as much responsibility as educators and related service providers" (DESE, 2020).

Analyze Disaggregated EL and SWD Data and Replicate Successful Practices District Wide

There is an opportunity to reexamine the structure, policies, and support within the SPED and Multilingual Departments, as well as other collaborating district departments and at the school level, to ensure students with both learning and language deficits are fully supported. As the *FPS by the Numbers* section indicated, SWDs and ELs perform significantly lower academically than their peers throughout the K-12 system. Data also indicates that ELs have lower graduation rates and higher dropout rates and discipline rates than their peers. At the district, school, and classroom levels, staff need to explicitly and regularly monitor the growth/progress data of all ELs and SWDs to decrease the performance discrepancies that exist between these students and their grade-level peers, gaps that exist as early as 3rd grade. Through the use of disaggregated data and ongoing student evaluation data, staff could better understand what supports are helping special student populations advance more rapidly than others and emulate those practices throughout the district.

Both the Multilingual and Special Education Department do not currently utilize disaggregated data on an ongoing basis to inform decision making. Data requests for this audit such as ACCESS data by student subgroup and disaggregated dual-identified enrollment data were not available. While disaggregated data by race/ethnicity is a starting point, for these two special student populations, additional ways of disaggregating data might prove useful to informing both student growth and successful instructional practices that result in student growth. For example, sorting EL data by WIDA level or other standards of language acquisition and by years of ESL support or grade level could provide a basis for understanding when the highest levels of progress are made; or sorting SWD discipline data at the school level by students' disability classification could build understanding of how behavior policies could be adjusted to be more individualized and inclusive of learning profile differences.

There is an additional opportunity to incorporate qualitative data into analyses of student and subgroup progress. Anecdotal notes and records of developmental milestones could be especially informative for special student populations, as special education support in particular, is individualized. This could happen at the school level among teachers and leaders, and at the district level, compiling school findings. Once patterns of student

success are identified by data, there is an opportunity to examine, refine, and spread successful instructional practices throughout like programs in schools and the district.

Increase Professional Learning Opportunities to Better Support ELs and SWDs Academically and Non-Academically, as well as Advanced Learners

Research indicates that instructional strategies that support ELs are also supportive for all students. Though most staff in FPS are Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) certified, there was an outstanding call from instructional staff to increase their capacity to effectively and fully support both ELs and SWDs in their classrooms. Though district-wide PD days are limited, consider ways to prioritize learning opportunities among SPED, ELD, and general education staff at the school level, which would be easier to schedule and more beneficial as discussions could speak to specific students, grade levels, and local programs of support for special populations. Schools could flexibly determine when and how collaborative learning opportunities best work in their schedule: PLCs, after-school school-wide PD time, or during team meetings. Graduate level courses at local universities or through education organizations provide an additional option for expanding professional learning opportunities increasing capacity to support special populations. The content of professional learning could be outlined and supported by the Multilingual and Special Education Departments, yet should be flexible to accommodate school-level student populations and areas staff identifies as the greatest areas for improving support to ELs and SWDs.

A lot of attention is given to under-performing students, sometimes at the expense of high-performing students. There is an opportunity to build teacher capacity to effectively differentiate instruction for advanced learners, especially in classrooms with a variety of learner levels. This is also particularly important as students progress to late elementary, middle, and then high school because engagement with rigorous content increases student attendance and decreases absenteeism and dropout rates. Effective instructional differentiation is a skill that takes time and is strengthened by opportunities to create, collaborate, and test the implementation of varied approaches. This could also be supported by the OTL, Special Education, and Multilingual Departments for schools to implement in PLCs or appropriate PD time, as well as graduate level courses at local universities.

Re-examine Policies and Practices for ELs, SWDs, and Advanced Learners with an Equity Lens, and Reintroduce Policies and Practices to All Staff

Considering the changes to practices necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an opportunity to re-examine policies and practices regarding the identification/testing process, support plan development, plan implementation, and inclusion of family members with an equity lens. Given the large number of staff and family concerns about the extent to which ELs, SWDs, and advanced learners are receiving equitable and high-quality education in FPS, as well as data that indicates student are not achieving at the levels of their peers and the findings presented in the audit, now would be an appropriate time to reflect on the ways in which current policies and practices reflect an equity-based structure for special student populations. Following discussions and adjustments to policies and practices, staff need to be informed of any changes and the rationale behind adjustments. This process will theoretically yield not only more equitable policies and practices for staff in

support of special student populations, but also yield a more informed staff to support students appropriately with a full understanding of processes and practices.

School staff and families express concern about behavior issues of mis- or undiagnosed special population students. This is an example of a developing community perception that is rooted in biases toward immigrant populations, and it provides the district and schools with an opportunity to reexamine discipline policies and practices of all staff to ensure equitable and individualized discipline approaches are recognizing and accounting for the complicated social-emotional needs of immigrant students beyond their language or learning needs.

Intentionally Build Sustaining Partnerships with Families

There is an opportunity to reconceptualize how staff engages families as informed partners, particularly those new to special education and ELD and those who do not speak English, so they feel more supported and informed about the decisions being made for their children. It was evident from the number of comments from family members of SWDs that there is an opportunity to improve the relationship between SPED staff and families. The IEP process is not easy to navigate, especially for families who are new to the process, non-native English speakers, or have no prior experience with special education.

A trend (beyond Framingham) in recent years has been for families to hire advocates to ensure that IEPs are developed to fully meet students' needs and to support families' understanding of the process and plan. While this is beneficial to families, it is also an advantage available only to those families who can afford an advocate. District and school staff should invest extra time and advocacy support to those families who do not have access to an advocate to ensure all students and their families understand the process and their child's IEP, regardless of the family's socioeconomic status.

As students are supported in special programs, it is equally important for school staff to regularly communicate with families about student struggles and successes. Regular communication provides the ongoing opportunity for both families and school staff to share information and problem solve together about next steps to ensure growth and progress in student learning. Relationship building also decreases the tension in end-of-year re-evaluation meetings because all parties are already aware of next steps and continued areas of growth.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ Beyond complying with state laws and regulations for ELs and SWDs, how is the district defining and working toward a model of high quality education for all ELs? For all SWDs? For all advanced learners? For all dual-identified students?

➢ What initiatives in the strategic plan reflect the needs of ELs and SWDs? What forward moving yet achievable goals should be set for increasing the graduation rates for special student populations? How do those goals impact the support services students receive K-12 to ensure all students graduate?

➢ How can the Multilingual and SPED Departments collaboratively work to locate and hire dual-certified staff or develop a pathway program for current to become dual-certified to support dual-identified students?

➢ Several elementary schools have built their schedules to accommodate dual-identified students to ensure that they can take the needed ELD courses and SPED courses to meet their learning and language needs. How can their reflections and adaptations be shared with other schools as they prioritize special student populations when designing school schedules?

➢ New students move to the district throughout the year, and SWDs in particular, are often placed based on the school programs that best meet their needs. How can building-level staffing and budget allocations flexibly support newly diagnosed SWDs and ELs and incoming students who move to FPS throughout the school year?

➢ During the COVID pandemic, IEP meetings were conducted remotely, which was more accommodating for some working family members. How can successful remote engagement practices be continued to support families and be more considerate of their schedule constraints?

➢ How can family and student voice be involved in the review of policies and practices that negatively impact SWDs and ELs in the district?

➢ How will revised policies be continually reviewed through both stakeholder feedback and data to ensure policies and practices are more inclusive and equitable?

➢ When considering student preparation for and enrollment in honors and AP courses, what steps are taken, who is involved, and how is a fair and unbiased process ensured? What leading indicators are considered? What is the balance between prior achievement, potential, and teacher recommendation?

➢ How are students developed in elementary and middle school so they are ready for honors and AP courses? What characteristics, qualities, or qualifications must students demonstrate to show adequate preparation for honors and AP courses? What biases or discriminatory practices exist in the current district process? How can the process be more equitable?

Recommendation 8:
Increase opportunities for families to share feedback to inform district decisions and expand access to resources

In order to create a collaborative culture that recognizes family and student input, the district must understand the impact of current practices and existing procedures that act as barriers to building meaningful relationships. By enlisting and engaging families as partners, the district will be able to effectively analyze the distribution of resources and supports, understand their impact, and then determine their effectiveness in addressing family needs and students' ability to fully engage in learning.

Assess District-Family Communication Access Barriers to Increase Engagement

In recent years, FPS has expanded the district-to-family outreach by creating a communications office designed to disseminate information and increase family engagement. District departments are making intentional efforts to communicate with families; however, these efforts are not fully replicated at the school level, leaving families less connected, engaged, and informed about their child(ren)'s progress. District translation services and supports are also not yet available for daily school-family communication interactions, further limiting access and information to non-English speakers.

Many families rely on the communication from schools to stay informed and in a number of cases, the chil(dren) are the main source of information. For newcomers and their families this poses an additional challenge and burden on the student. To provide students with support to deliver communication to their families, the schools can collaborate to compile a list of phrases and sentences that include frequently used information by educators at different grade levels. Simple, easy to understand, and translated communication is necessary to engage families and create a reliable system of communication. Given the growing number of Haitian-Creole speakers, consideration should be given to expand district-wide translation services to this population. To better distribute information and engage families in their chil(dren)'s academic success, schools and educators need to assess family access to technology and their preferred method of communication. Gathering this information will enable educators and central services to utilize the most effective approach to engaging families, while simplifying the process to update families on their child's progress and learning needs.

Gather and Use Family Feedback to Inform District Decisions

While efforts to engage families help increase collaboration and communication, it is important to focus on the impact of involving families in decision making for long term planning. Similar to students, families require individualized support and consideration. The district needs to consider multiple factors including, but not limited to, the learning and language needs of families and their migratory status. Many school level staff mentioned that families are often unresponsive to sharing information and feedback because of their inability to communicate in English, and many fear legal repercussions. In connection to the district's efforts to increase the dissemination and accessibility of information in multiple languages, there needs to be a focus in obtaining and incorporating diverse voices in district conversations. Currently used outreach tactics should be revised to

incorporate local business and organizations that have frequent communication and interactions with FPS families. Local salons, grocery stores, corner stores, restaurants, and employment offices serve as an avenue to engage families and hear voices not usually included in district conversations. Additionally, the district can utilize feedback gathered at listening tours, neighborhood visits, and data from surveys (such as Panorama) to speak on current issues and address how feedback will inform. Families need to see themselves as valued participants and decision makers in their child(ren)'s education.

Leverage Partners to Support Family Engagement and Communication Efforts

To better support all families, the district must utilize its partners to leverage access to family input and balance the participation and voices of all families in district decisions. Schools and the district should also use every opportunity available to gather family feedback and input, as not all families can attend conferences or back-to-school nights. Methods of communication must address the lack of access that some families have to technology and language interpretation services.

For families with alternative living arrangements and in compromising positions (e.g. homeless, shelters, foster care), community partnerships can serve as a great asset. They are in constant contact with families and often the first line of communication; they not only support parents/guardians, but also children. Many focus group partners discussed the benefits of the district being intentional in creating and publishing a list of community partners and their services. Since partner services range from tackling food insecurity, unemployment, and immigration, they have a good grasp on the needs of families and students. A community partners' night on a quarterly basis can ensure that families are aware of available resources, and help educators understand where to refer students and schools can continue to serve as a reliable source of information.

Questions & Considerations for Moving Forward

➢ Creating spaces for families to engage in conversation can be easier for lower grades and harder at the secondary level. When thinking about the best approach to engage parents, consider measuring the effectiveness of current school based and district level communication strategies. For various grades, schools and departments should analyze which family engagement practices have been most successful, and how can similar approaches be replicated.

■ Who are the educators with the most effective family engagement/involvement? What tools are those educators using to engage families? What is the frequency in which messaging and opportunities are shared? How can the ESL staff support students and families to self-advocate and receive information to increase engagement and awareness?

■ What strategies have school leaders utilized to engage families at the beginning of the school year? How is communication managed at the school level, and how much input do students and educators have regarding the content?

■ How are families identified to be ambassadors within their schools?

➢ It is critical to understand which family voices we are not yet effective at gathering, and what could be done differently to engage them or gather their input. Consider:

- In what ways do inequitable policies and practices create barriers for families to fully engage as partners in their child's schools?
- How effective is the district at engaging students and families who live in non-traditional settings? How can this be improved?
- How is district- and school-based communication inclusive of a student's living arrangement and family/home structure? What students and families are excluded based on current practices?

➢ For both the district and the school level, in what ways can community partners and community-serving agencies be leveraged to better understand family/student needs and inform and support decisions? How are departments/schools and individuals tracking referrals to understand family/student needs?
- For example, families should feel like their needs, in addition to that of their students, are being met by the school. In partnership with local organizations, the school(s) and/or district can host job training certification or fairs that invite families to further their skills and engage in educational conversations. For many, ESL classes and unemployment support may be what is needed to create stability and build trust. How can their engagement in the school support them professionally? How can professional learning be systematically designed to improve the financial and professional needs of FPS families?

➢ To build sustainable and effective partnerships, the district should consider integrating their partners into the equity work. Partners should be invested in the district defined goals and their support of students and their families. Once these partners are engaged, is it important to consider the following questions:
- How will FPS ensure key partners are aware of and invested in the district's equity vision, competencies, etc.?
- How will partners be evaluated for their services and their support of students and families?
- With what frequency will partners be engaged in equity conversations? What agency will they have to inform systemic change?
- What can FPS learn from its most effective partners about family engagement and communication?

➢ What has been learned during the COVID-19 pandemic about community access to resources? How does that inform communication methods with families and ensure their basic needs are being met? How does that inform ongoing and new collaborative efforts with partner organizations to support families better moving forward?

➢ While strategizing on ways to engage families and obtain their input, consider how the district leadership and school committee can support these efforts and use their positions and platforms to reach a wider audience. School committee members should understand their individual district's diverse perspectives and the extent to which the voices of their constituents are represented during decision making. Additionally, how can central office leadership and the school committee be more transparent about decisions and how they were informed?

➢ Consider the ways in which findings from this report will be shared with the FPS community to support their understanding of the district's equity focus and their integral role in the equity journey.

We want to acknowledge that one significant area for further equity understanding and development is the school feeder/choice/enrollment system. Survey and focus group participants vocally expressed a desire to address this visible inequity in the district, and it is noticeably absent from the equity audit recommendations. Through our analysis process, it became clear that the district, both internal staff and external family members, do not currently have an equity lens and mindset through which this large undertaking can equitably be addressed. We envision that with dedicated professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders over the next few years that the school feeder system could be addressed equitably.

Additional Note

One area not addressed in our recommendations (because it did not surface as one of the top priorities) that should be further investigated is the school feeder/choice/enrollment systems. Survey and focus group participants expressed a desire to further understand and address inequities in these systems. Our analysis indicates that internal staff and external family members need to examine mindsets and strengthen their equity lens in order to address these systems. We believe the dedicated professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders described in recommendation 3 will equip stakeholders with the beliefs and knowledge to further interrogate and address inequities in the school feeder system.

Gantt Chart to Support Operationalizing the Recommendations

The chart below illustrates the 8 recommendations, including a summary of the more discrete steps for each recommendation. The chart also depicts the recommended starting points and sequences. We encourage FPS to examine district capacity, resources, and existing timelines to determine more specific timelines for recommended actions.

Summary of Recommendations Gantt Chart		Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
Recommendation 1: Explicitly embed an equity lens in all policies, practices, and collaborative decision making							
Clearly establish equity matters and that equity is the work of everyone in FPS							
Utilize new strategic plan and ongoing district communications (internal and external) to reinforce FPS's commitment to equity and the success of all students		X	X	X	X	X	X
Examine and revise district organizational structures (organizational chart, decision-making processes) to increase cross-departmental collaboration and decision-making to limit siloed efforts and maintain focus on all students, in particular prioritizing underserved students			X	X	X	X	X

Ensure job descriptions embed equity and cultural competency as key expectations of all FPS employees			X	X	X	X
Establish annual equity goal setting expectations for central office departments to adopt goals about the ways in which they are working to ensure equity and inclusivity through their work			X	X	X	X
Create regular opportunities (e.g. quarterly) for departments to celebrate and share progress and lessons learned on goals with FPS district and school leadership			X	X	X	X
Create Protocols and Establish Routines for Collective Decision Making that Focuses on Students and Schools with the Greatest Needs						
Ensure system-wide stakeholder (internal and external) awareness of the experiences of stakeholders in FPS and in particular, an understanding of the need to prioritize specific subgroups that are in most need of support in FPS: Els and SWDs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify and adopt equity-focused protocols for the district and school leadership teams to check decisions through an equity lens and ensure decisions are informed by multiple perspectives.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Re-evaluate the Capacity of the OEDCD and Reintroduce the OEDCD to the FPS Community						
Clarify and articulate the OEDCD's purpose, roles and responsibilities (see full report recommendation 1 for suggested areas to consider)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Review OEDCD's core functions, assess, and increase the office's capacity to ensure that it can meet the roles and responsibilities entrusted to it	X	X	X	X	X	X
Reintroduce the OEDCD to the FPS community and clearly delineate what the office does, how it communicates and collaborates with other departments and schools, and how it supports families, students, and staff		X	X	X	X	X
Continue Engaging Stakeholders to Understand How They Experience Equity and Inclusivity in FPS						
Establish recurring structures and processes to engage stakeholders as part of district decision making and problem solving		X	X	X	X	X
Recommendation 2: Invest in and utilize a robust and unified data system that allows the district to routinely identify, address, and monitor inequities						
Utilize data to understand equitable access and outcomes						
As data dashboards go live, ensure dashboards enable users to easily access sortable quantitative, qualitative, aggregated, and disaggregated data to	X	X	X	X	X	X

understand and identify disparities and support increased equity-centered decision making						
Revise protocols and data practices to reflect and equity lens and create time for critical data-driven discussions						
As dashboards go live, invest in training staff on how to access and use dashboards, as well as how to interpret, analyze, and synthesize data to make data-driven decisions		X	X	X	X	X
In consultation with the Director of Technology and data users, develop protocols and practices that will support all levels of the FPS system with ongoing data use		X	X	X	X	X
Re-evaluate the capacity of the Office of Technology and its role in supporting equity-focused data analysis district wide						
Assess the capacity required of the Office of Technology to provide the additional guidance, training, and ongoing support and system maintenance			X	X	X	X

Recommendation 3: Invest in explicit, ongoing, coordinated, equity-focused cultural competency professional learning for all district staff

Develop staff's cultural competency and ownership of equity						
Define a core set of cultural competencies (see recommendation 3 for greater detail) for FPS that will shape PD and ensure all staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to work effectively cross-culturally	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify opportunities to embed equity discussions and cultural competency training in existing PD opportunities	X	X	X	X	X	X
Strengthen the structure and frequency of professional learning to increase opportunities for staff at every level (educators, school leaders, non-instructional staff, etc.) to receive explicit development focused on their cultural competency			X	X	X	X
Connect professional learning, performance, and equitable support of students and families to accountability structures						
Review evaluation processes and identify opportunities to embed equity and cultural competency indicators where possible to improve improve the feedback process			X	X	X	X
Train and support evaluators in utilizing the revised evaluation processes to identify staff strengths and needs for additional professional learning or coaching			X	X	X	X

Recommendation 4: Strengthen trust and ensure stakeholder voice informs decision making to increase the sense of belonging and community for all staff, particularly for diverse staff

Evaluate staff engagement and its connection issues of trust and low morale						

In connection with recommendation 2, utilize staff engagement data such as stakeholder event attendance, survey participation, engagement in leadership conversations, diversity of voices informing decision making, and retention rates, to inform the evaluation of staff morale and satisfaction.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish structures to gather staff feedback and share back what was heard and how concerns and feedback will be addressed	X	X	X	X	X	X
Communicate Equity Audit findings and define how the district will be incorporating recommendations to best support central office and school-based staff, and include them in decision making.		X	X	X	X	X

Increase staff knowledge of and investment in district values and goals

Identify opportunities to invest staff in the creation and dissemination of district values and embed discussions in professional learning and School committee sessions			X	X	X	X

Create a communication structure and strategy that reaches all FPS staff members and ensures messaging consistency

Define and implement a consistent two-way communication structure for central office to provide staff with regular, timely, and clear updates including any structural changes, progress towards strategic initiatives and opportunities to inform decision making	X	X	X	X	X	X

Recommendation 5: Redesign recruitment and hiring practices to obtain a more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse candidate pool

Evaluate the current recruitment process and restructure the approach to meet diversity targets

Gather and analyze feedback from recent candidates to obtain information regarding their interest, recruitment interactions with FPS and why they accepted or declined the offer and identify opportunities to improve the candidate experience		X	X	X	X	X
Strengthen job postings to more compellingly attract candidates and reflect FPS desired cultural competencies (see recommendation 3)		X	X	X	X	X
Revise recruitment and candidate communication strategies to align with adopted cultural competencies and more directly target diversity goals		X	X	X	X	X
Assess current talent pipeline and recruitment partnerships to determine if they are achieving the desired impact and contributing to a more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse workforce. Continue investing in successful partnerships and discontinue ineffective partnerships			X	X	X	X

Engage and Cultivate the Candidate Pool Early, Hire Intentionally, and Retain Quality Candidates

Consider opportunities to cultivate early hiring candidate pools as a way to engage with candidates earlier and set the tone for the district's investment in their candidacy by offering multiple touchpoints including phone conversations, open houses, virtual networking, etc.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Design an applicant review process that aligns with the adopted FPS cultural competencies, and minimizes opportunities for bias	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify a group of school and central office based staff that can be trained to support the application review process and serve as recruitment ambassadors in selection and onboarding of incoming staff		X	X	X	X	X
Gather information on prospective candidates throughout the early hiring process as a way to identify potential barriers to employment such as testing requirements, etc.		X	X	X	X	X
Based on identified barriers, revise the offered in-district supports for prospective candidates and consider partnerships with local/regional partnerships with higher education institutions, DESE, testing centers, and test preparation organizations/programs to offer waivers, reduced cost testing, virtual and in-person test preparation, licensure orientation, career counseling, etc. for qualified and diverse candidates.		X	X	X	X	X
Leverage school leaders as partners in the hiring process						
Evaluate and revise school-based hiring processes to ensure alignment with the district's vision, cultural competencies, and to remove biases from the process		X	X	X	X	X
Train school leaders, hiring managers and recruitment ambassadors in conducting more equitable and unbiased hiring processes and practices		X	X	X	X	X

Recommendation 6: Ensure all students have access to culturally and linguistically sustaining instructional practices and curricular materials, and appropriate SEL supports

Invest in incorporating culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP) and curricular components and materials to existing curricula and in the instructional capacity of teachers to implement it						
In connection with recommendation 3, invest in instructional staff training on how to develop and provide CLSP-aligned instruction			X	X	X	X
Integrate CLSP as part of the curriculum development and review process			X	X	X	X
Increase collaboration between the OTL and the Multilingual Department to strengthen culturally sustaining practices in dual language program instruction		X	X	X	X	X
Continue SEL programming and provide additional support for students who need it most						
Continue learning about and supporting student and family non-academic needs so students can fully engage in learning and families can best support their child(ren)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide opportunities for students to process feelings, current realities, academic and non-academic related life events	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide opportunities for staff to access and utilize SEL resources and collaboratively plan SEL-related supports for students	X	X	X	X	X	X
Establish a system to gather student and family data information on student and family academic and non-academic needs	X	X	X	X	X	X

Examine current discipline policies for disproportionate and adverse impact and adjust where needed						
Examine current disciple policies and practices with a lens for student populations that are most disproportionately impacted (e.g. SWDs and ELs) and evaluate the extent to which policies and expectations should apply in the same way to these subgroups			X	X	X	X
Re-examine disciplinary practices to understand if practices are culturally responsive and affirming of the backgrounds and cultures of the diverse student population			X	X	X	X
Provide training for school leaders and staff to understand and fully implement more culturally responsive student engagement and behavior practices			X	X	X	X
Regularly communicate updated policies and practices with the broader FPS community to create collective understanding			X	X	X	X
Increase monitoring and support of students to decrease absenteeism and dropouts						
Consistently implement an early dropout indicator monitoring system at the middle and high school levels	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support staff with identifying and reaching out to at-risk students including developing support plans	X	X	X	X	X	X

Recommendation 7: Identify success patterns of special student populations, prioritize development opportunities for staff to support all students, and engage families of special student populations as partners in their child's education

Analyze disaggregated EL and SWD data and replicate successful practices district wide						
Re-examine the structure, policies, and support within the SPED and Multilingual Departments, as well as other collaborating district departments and at the school level, to ensure students with both learning and language deficits are fully supported	X	X	X	X	X	X
Increase use of disaggregated data - quantitative *and* qualitative- by the Multilingual and SPED Departments to inform decision making.		X	X	X	X	X
Increase professional learning opportunities to better support ELs and SWDs academically and non-academically, as well as advanced learners						
Consider ways to prioritize collaborative learning opportunities among SPED, ELD, and general education staff at the school level.			X	X	X	X
Identify opportunities to provide teacher PD on instructional differentiation for advanced learners			X	X	X	X
Re-examine policies and practices for ELs, SWDs, and advanced learners with an equity lens, and reintroduce policies and practices to all staff						
Re-examine policies and practices regarding the identification/testing process, support plan development, plan implementation, and inclusion of family members for ELs and SWDs	X	X	X	X	X	X

Inform staff and families of any changes and the rationale behind adjustments	X	X	X	X	X	X

Intentionally build sustaining partnerships with families

Reconceptualize how staff engages families as informed partners, particularly those new to special education and ELD, and those who do not speak English, so they feel more supported and informed about their children.			X	X	X	X
Provide advocacy support for families who do not have access to an advocate to ensure all families understand the process and their child's IEP regardless of their socioeconomic status			X	X	X	X

Recommendation 8: Increase opportunities for families to share feedback to inform district decisions and expand access to resources

Assess District-Family Communication Access Barriers to Increase Engagement

Analyze the language needs of students and their families to address gaps in translation supports.			X	X	X	X
Assess family access to technology and understand families' preferred methods of communication	X	X	X	X	X	X

Gather and use family feedback to inform district decisions

Understand unique family needs (e.g. employment, abilities, language, migratory status, residential, etc.) to define the way that the district and schools seek and utilize family input and feedback	X	X	X	X	X	X
Increase dissemination and accessibility of information to multiple languages and leverage local organizations that have existing methods of communication and interaction with families.	X	X	X	X	X	X

Leverage partners to support family engagement and communication efforts

Identify and engage in partnership with community organizations that can support family and student needs and communication			X	X	X	X

APPENDIX

FPS Equity Terms & Definitions

Bias: Thoughts and feelings we have, and may not be aware of; implicit biases are preferences or aversions that permeate our world view without our conscious knowledge and become explicit when openly expressed (blonds have more fun). **Implicit Bias** are thoughts and feelings we are unaware of mistaken about their nature, preferences or aversions to without our conscious knowledge.

Character: (1) Someone's nature, natural attributes as formed by habit or (2) The expression of unique individuality.

People of color/ Children of color: include those identifying as African American/Black, Latinx, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, and biracial. These identities constitute 30% of the US population and are among the fastest-growing populations in the country. Any child in this category, born in the US, immigrant, refugee, or temporary resident is included in this category for this purpose.

Class: Relative social status based on income, wealth, race, power, position, occupation and education.

Culture: The way of life of a group of people to assure its adaptation and survival. These groups are distinguished by a set of unspoken rules that shape values, beliefs, habits, patterns of thinking, behaviors and styles of communication.

Cultural Responsiveness: A set of congruent behaviors, knowledge, will, and skills that enable just and effective work in multicultural settings. Cultural responsiveness is never fully achieved but is an ongoing process. Cultural responsiveness can be developed by individuals, organizations, communities and beyond. Individuals develop their cultural responsiveness by building knowledge, values, skills, and will that help them to:
   - develop self-awareness and an understanding of one's own culture(s);
   - understand and appreciate other cultures;
   - facilitate understanding among people of different cultures;
   - confront inconsistencies, biases and unconscious assumptions of cultures; and,
   - act to ensure fairness and access and correct for the results of historic inequities.

Organizations develop their cultural responsiveness by building the knowledge, values, skills, and will of individuals, and building equitable, accessible and inclusive organizational culture, expectations, policies, structures, systems, and processes.

Discrimination: The act of unequal treatment towards members of social groups. A form of inequality where either non-legal or legal systems may perpetuate the exclusion of certain groups and is manifest in different ways. Discrimination is the behavioral component, or differential actions taken toward members of specific social groups.

Discriminatory practice: May be perpetuated toward a person, group (people living with a (dis)ability, students of color, ELL students, LGBTQ students) and/or ingrained in institutional practices; no child who is not a US

citizen may enroll in a public school is an example of a potential systemic discriminatory policy.

Diversity: Groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, cognitive styles, and much more. Valuing diversity means embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of difference that exist in groups.

Equity: Equity means promoting just and fair inclusion throughout FPS and creating the conditions in which everyone can participate, prosper and reach his or her full potential.

Inclusion: A value and practice of ensuring that people feel they belong and that their input is valued by the whole (group, organization, society, system, etc.), particularly regarding decisions that affect their lives.

Prejudice: A pre-judgment or unjustifiable, and usually negative, attitude of one type of individual or groups toward another group and its members. (distaste, fear, repulsion, anger, frustration, pity, etc.)

Race: A socially constructed way of grouping people based on skin color and other apparent physical differences, which has no genetic or scientific basis. The concept of race was created and used to justify social and economic oppression of Blacks and other people of color by Whites. Highly dependent on phenotype, skin color, hair texture, and facial features. (From *Race: The Power of an Illusion*)

Racial equity: A situation where opportunities include accommodations so that one cannot predict an individual or group's access to resources or likelihood of well-being and social status based on their race.

Racial justice: The creation and proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes, and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment and outcomes for all people, regardless of race. (Applied Research Center).

Racism: = Prejudice + Power, A form of oppression based on the socially constructed concept of race exercised by the dominant racial group over non-dominant racial groups. Racism operates on four levels:
1. Internalized Racism is the set of private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of Whites and the inferiority of people of color. Among people of color, it manifests as internalized oppression. Among Whites, it manifests as internalized racial superiority.
2. Interpersonal Racism is the expression of racism between individuals.
3. Institutional Racism is discriminatory treatment, unfair policies, and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race.
4. Structural Racism is a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality.

Social inequality: A social condition wherein certain populations have unequal status due to gender, religion, ethnicity, race, or other defining characteristics.

Stereotypes: The cognitive components of attitudes toward a social group consisting of beliefs about what specific groups are like (Steele, 2011).

Systemic discrimination: Creates primary and suppressed groups who differ in levels of power (prestige, visibility, attention, social, and personal) and access to attention, resources, and services (e.g. tutoring, opportunities, promotion, time in a system).

Mass Insight's Highest Performing District Descriptors

Vision, Strategy & Culture: District leadership sets high expectations for both achievement of *all* students and school and district staff performance. An inclusive organizational culture embodies district values at every level. The district has a strategic plan with a limited number of priorities that are aligned to the district mission and vision, address documented district challenges, recognize and address local conditions and explicitly address gaps and disparities in student performance. School, district and community stakeholders understand plan priorities and believe that implementing the plan will improve district performance. Each strategy has a clear theory of action that describes the change and expected impact. The district has a process for managing and monitoring plan implementation and tracking and reporting on impact.

Focus on Equity: The district is committed to the success of all students, and staff believe that all students can succeed. In addition to complying with laws and regulations, the district ensures that services for students with special needs are of the highest quality. District policy and practice also recognize that historically marginalized students have had less access to equitable education opportunities and therefore intentional steps are routinely taken and monitored to address disparities. This includes equitable resource allocation, dismantling inequitable systems, providing necessary training for staff, and fostering inclusion at every level to ensure high quality education and outcomes for all students. District leadership models this focus on equity, identifies and implements priorities and initiatives to address equity, and establishes accountability structures to sustain a focus on equity.

Organizational Clarity & Collaboration: The district, including the school committee, recognizes that schools are where student learning takes place and organizes itself to meet the needs of all students and schools. Central office departments recognize their role in ensuring equity across the system, have clear structures, systems, processes, policies for addressing school and student needs and inequities, and coordinate services to schools across offices. The school committee and central office regularly examine systems, structures, policies, and practices to identify and address inequities and biases.

Focus on Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Teaching & Learning: The district has a vision and plan for ensuring high-quality instruction for *all* students in *all* schools. It ensures that students have access to high-quality, standards-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining curricula and materials for all subjects that are inclusive of and responsive to students' cultures, experiences, needs, and interests. The district ensures schools have assessments that are aligned to culturally and linguistically sustaining curricula and ensures teachers have the time, support and protocols needed to use assessment data to inform their instruction. The district also ensures equitable access and opportunity for students to receive the necessary academic interventions, enrichment and remediation programming, and other supports to ensure success of all students.

Student Readiness to Learn: The district ensures implementation of culturally responsive and equitable student behavior and support policies, procedures, and practices to create positive and inclusive learning environments. As a result, students and teachers feel safe, valued, cared for, challenged and supported at school. There are systems to identify and address student needs and challenges including attendance, socio-emotional development, and behavior needs. The district also develops partnerships to connect families with resources

and services to ensure all students can engage in learning.

Talent: District systems ensure students have access to diverse, highly effective teachers and leaders. The district accurately forecasts talent needs and has plans in place for recruiting so that principals can select from several strong, diverse candidates for each opening. The district supports new teachers with induction and extra support during their first two years in the classroom. District-sponsored professional development is practice-based and differentiated to meet teacher needs. Staff have access and participate in professional development related to diversity, equity and inclusion. Evaluation of all staff focuses on building on strengths and addressing development areas to improve performance. The district used evaluation data to identify, develop and retain the highest performers. There are intentional efforts to retain diverse staff (staff of color, immigrant staff, LGBTQ+, staff with disabilities, bilingual, etc.). The district also has systems for identifying and developing potential school leaders—principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches and department chairs. The district's talent office collects and uses data to manage its work.

Stakeholder Engagement & Communication: The district has multiple strategies for communicating and engaging with stakeholders including teachers, families, students, community leaders and other staff, and stakeholder perspectives inform district decisions. District interactions and communication with stakeholders demonstrate cultural competence and respect for the identities, cultures, and community norms of district and school staff and families. The district surveys stakeholders families and teachers annually and publishes and uses the information to get better.

Finance: The district budget directs financial resources equitably toward school and student needs and priorities. The school and district budgeting processes are clear and transparent and engage relevant internal and external stakeholders. Projections of revenues and expenses are reliable, and the great majority of funds follow students. Flexible Title funds are used strategically to address student needs. Principals have sufficient understanding and control over their budgets so they can allocate resources to meet school needs.

Data: The district uses data to drive decisions. District information systems are accessible and accurate and used by school and district staff to inform decisions. Student performance and progress of all students is regularly monitored. The district regularly disaggregates and examines student data by subgroups at district and school levels to identify and address disparities. District-wide performance measures are used to monitor, identify, and address inequities and disparities in the system.

School Management: The district ensures principals have support for developing coherent school improvement plans that address the root causes of low performance. Principal supervisors have a positive relationship with principals that is focused on results. They understand the strengths and challenges of the schools they supervise and help their principals develop and implement their improvement plans. District policies and procedures encourage principal supervisors and district offices to differentiate both district supports and conditions to meet school needs. Principals are held accountable for both the implementation of their plans and the achievement of their students

Central Services & Operations: There is a shared belief that the primary function of the district office is to serve the schools. Both school and district office staff are clear about who makes what decisions and who is responsible for what. The district uses key performance indicators, including input from school staff, to measure the effectiveness of district office functions. Both internal and external service providers are accountable for the quality of their services, and budget and contract decisions are informed by the performance data. School-based staff can access appropriate central office staff with questions and concerns, and service requests are addressed quickly.

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