

TO: School Committee

FROM: Emily Parks, Superintendent

DATE: June 2, 2022

RE: Report on 2021-2022 District Goals

Introduction

I am pleased to present this report on the 2021-2022 district goals. Though the 2021-2022 school year was challenging in unanticipated ways, including continued COVID impacts, the District made substantial progress on several priorities.

At the July, 2021 School Committee meeting, I presented for discussion the draft WPS *Strategy for District Improvement for 2021-2023* that was developed by the Administrative Council (the District's PreK-12 leadership team). The document was subsequently approved by the School Committee in the fall.

The strategy document (appendix A) begins by articulating 4 strategic objectives that are intended to guide the district's long-term work:

- Meaningful Learning Experiences
- Coherent, Connected Curriculum
- Healthy and Supported School Community
- Infrastructure for the Future

For each strategic objective, the District articulated three or four priorities for the 2021-2022 school year that move us toward the objective. In August, the Administrative Council examined these priorities and began to operationalize them. For each priority area, we identified several actions that we believed would be high leverage next steps to move us toward our intended outcomes.

The approach to this strategy work represents an important way of thinking about the district's work over time that identifies priorities that are intentionally:

- focused on the instructional core
- interconnected and complementary
- reflective of the need to be both visionary and problem-solving

Throughout the year, the Administrative Council has continually referred to the identified priorities and action steps. The articulated priorities have steered the district's professional development work, been reflected in programming for parents, are embedded in individual school improvement plans, informed discussions with teachers and administrators during the

evaluation goal-setting process, and guided the district's budget discussions and allocation of resources.

Throughout the year members of the team reported on the progress on many of these priorities at School Committee meetings either through the Superintendent's Update or as discussion items. Some of these reports and presentations include:

- [ESY. Intervention Programming. and Pandemic Recovery](#) (September)
- Revised [Senior Independent Project Program](#) (September)
- [2021 MCAS Results Analysis](#) (October)
- Hanlon-Deerfield Project ([community forums](#) leading to town meeting and ballot)
- [METCO Program Expansion](#) (December)
- [Bullying Prevention](#) (December and April)
- Updates re: [Sheehan SOI status and capital planning](#) (March and May)
- Report on the [Social Studies Curriculum Review](#) findings and recommendations (May)
- Ongoing updates re: Start Times Subcommittee work
- Ongoing updates re: Policy Subcommittee work
- Ongoing updates related to COVID management (vaccination, face coverings, etc.)

These reports and presentations are available on the [district website](#) for public access.

Additional Accomplishment and Challenges

This week, the Administrative Council spent a day together reflecting on our progress this year, discussing the status of each goal, and beginning to plan how to carry the work forward next year. We were pleased that our incoming TMS Dean of Students was able to join us for this work.

The 2021-2022 school year had some important accomplishments, unexpected opportunities, and unanticipated challenges. For example:

Important Accomplishment:

In October, after 3 years of community engagement, residents voted to support the Hanlon-Deerfield building project at the Fall Town Meeting and at the Special Ballot. The fact that the District was able to continue to meet all of the milestones for this project and also engage residents in a robust community process while managing a pandemic is notable. The vote to move forward with the construction of Hanlon-Deerfield, in collaboration with the MSBA and our municipal partners, will realize a generational project for the community and is a significant step to ensure the long-term success of the District.

Unexpected opportunity:

After years of discussion and advocacy at the state level, in December, the District was provided a viable pathway for expanding our METCO program to the elementary level. Though this opportunity was unexpected in FY'22, when it became available, the District was able to move

quickly to capitalize on a significant increase in our METCO grant and has spent the spring preparing for expansion, including restructuring the METCO Director position to the Director of Equity, Integration, and Inclusion (Lateefah Frank) and hiring an elementary METCO Liaison for Hanlon (Candace Bass). With Lateefah, Candace, and Matt Kuklantz's leadership, the District has conducted the intake process for identifying, registering, and assessing new students; provided training for staff; provided community programming and presentations about the purpose and history of the program; met with new Boston families to support their transition, and facilitated making connections between Boston families and Westwood families. For example, a team of District administrators hosted an evening with new Boston families at METCO HQ in Roxbury and the Hanlon Welcoming Schools group hosted a family "CommUnity" evening.

Unanticipated Challenge:

While we knew at the end of last school year that COVID might continue to present some challenges, we greatly underestimated its continuing impact on the 2021-2022 school year. By late summer, it was clear that the District would once again need to have a COVID Team in place to monitor cases, provide consultation to families, and implement the weekly pool testing and Test and Stay programs. We also had a small number of families who required a remote school program due to medical accommodations. For several months, we contended with decision-making around masking, lunch protocols, desk arrangements, band protocols, tent rentals, etc. Midway through the fall, when 5-12 year olds became eligible for vaccination, the District provided several vaccination clinics. In January, we pivoted to a weekly at-home rapid antigen testing program, while also retaining weekly pool testing. Most notably, all year the District has managed the staffing challenges that schools face when staff are sick or in quarantine. These challenges have been particularly acute during surges, such as in January and again in the spring, and have been exacerbated by the widespread shortage of candidates to fill support staff positions, rising costs, and difficulties in the supply chain. Those challenges have impacted teachers, support staff, administrators, and students.

Finally, stabilization and recovery from the pandemic was a key context when developing the 2021-2022 District goals. In the late summer/early fall, the District conducted an analysis of the 2021 MCAS scores. While undoubtedly the disruption of the pandemic has impacted students academically, our analysis of this important summative assessment measure revealed that the District's efforts in 2020-2021, and the work of our students, classroom teachers, special educators, and curriculum specialists, produced largely positive results. Some highlights include:

- Overall there was little difference in the percentages of students meeting or exceeding expectations ("M+E") in ELA between 2019 and 2021. (*MCAS was not administered in 2020.*) In fact, some grades saw improved scores. Grade 4 improved by 1% over 2019. Grade 10 improved by 5%. Grade 7 improved by 10%.
- Westwood's grade 3 - 8 aggregate scores were very strong: 7th in the state for ELA and 15th in the state for math.

- In grades 3, 4 & 5, Westwood's M + E scores in ELA were the highest out of all comparison districts.
- Westwood's math M + E scores were also very strong among comp districts in grades 3, 4, 5 and 7.
- Grade 5 STE (science, technology and engineering) scores were 3rd among the comp districts and 6th in the state.

Though these results were encouraging, the District goals for this year focused on structures for assessing students' skill acquisition and providing targeted academic intervention, particularly in foundational skills at the elementary level and in identified areas of need at the middle school.

These efforts are discussed in more detail in the highlighted priorities below.

While key structures and staff were in place at the start of the year to address academic intervention, the needs of students this year, especially in terms of interpersonal relationships and behavior, manifested themselves in some unexpected ways. This trend has been apparent not only in Westwood, but throughout the state and country. In Westwood, our student services personnel, teachers, and administrators have had to respond to and prioritize those needs, sometimes over other previously articulated priorities. In particular, our principals and assistant principals have spent a disproportionate amount of their time managing difficult issues among students and among community members, which has detracted from their ability to prioritize important instructional leadership functions.

Status of 2021-2022 Priorities and Action Steps

While responding flexibly to the landscape, the District made significant progress on its goals. In addition, I have highlighted below the progress made on two of the 13 priorities from the WPS Strategy for District Improvement that have not been discussed at length this year during School Committee meetings.

Highlighted Priority: 1.2 Expand the use of ongoing assessment data and looking at student work to target instruction to what each student needs.

Emerging from the pandemic, the district invested in expanding assessment tools at the elementary level in order to help educators gain insight into student needs. The Renaissance STAR assessments for early literacy, reading and math were launched this year for grades K - 5. These assessments are quick and feedback is available immediately, which allows teachers to plan for instruction and to identify students for further assessment and possible intervention. The reading and math assessment have been used for several years at the middle school, and we have seen that the data corresponds closely with student performance on MCAS. The early literacy assessment also meets requirements under the new state dyslexia law and the corresponding early literacy initiative through DESE.

In order to ensure a strong rollout, elementary principals, math and literacy specialists, and instructional technology coaches (ITCs) attended three full days of "train the trainer"

professional development (PD) so they could support K - 5 teachers with the new assessment tools. Wednesday PD sessions were devoted to orienting teachers toward the assessment in the fall and to looking at progress data midyear.

The assessments were administered three times this year: in November, January and June. For next year, the fall assessments will move back to September/October.

This assessment data, along with other assessments already in use, was used throughout the year to identify students for additional support both in and outside of classrooms. The literacy team in particular was able to respond to early literacy results in order to identify students for further assessment and to provide intervention--an important step to help our students develop foundational reading skills.

While Renaissance STAR assessments were in use at the middle school prior to this year, the new 10-day rotation schedule at TMS provides the necessary structures to leverage the capacity of the tool more effectively to support student learning. The schedule includes daily common planning time for all staff. Core content teachers, special educators, and math and literacy specialists meet on a regular basis to review student academic performance, consider Star Math and Reading data, and plan interventions for students. Math and literacy specialists provide “push-in” support in core classes, and also regularly meet with students in small-group and one-one interventions during WIN. These interventions have largely been in response to observations made by teachers and specialists about “in the moment” student needs, closely tied to what is happening in the curriculum at the moment. The “push-in” model provides several benefits: it ensures that a second licensed educator is in the room to provide student support, and it enables teachers and specialists to make use of various co-teaching models (stations, parallel teaching, workshops, etc). Specialists have also been able to use WIN blocks to preview content with identified students, which then leads to increased confidence and engagement during the lesson in the core class.

A continuing goal as we refine the role of specialists is to formalize the process for planning 6-8 week intervention rotations using Star data, as well as methods for monitoring progress.

In the fall, the TMS leadership team developed a draft of a Building Curriculum Accommodation Plan (BCAP), modeled closely after the one developed by WHS. The purpose of a Building Curriculum Accommodation Plan (BCAP) is to identify school explicit strategies and resources that are available to all students and staff within a given school to address the individual needs of students in order to ensure that all efforts have been made to meet students' needs in the general education classroom. The Humanities, STEM, and Special Education Department Chairs met with their staff to introduce the document and its purpose, solicit feedback, and address questions. Many teachers expressed that they are already widely utilizing many of these strategies as part of their regular classroom practice. Once finalized, the BCAP will be integrated into the CST referral process, serving as a set of “first steps” to provide intervention to students who are struggling academically, behaviorally, or emotionally. Work to formalize the

BCAP will continue in the 2022-2023 school year, as we continue to expand and revise our approach to the BCAP and CST process.

Highlighted Priority: 4.3 Develop processes and resources to hire, recruit, and retain a talented and diverse workforce.

This fall, we established a Teacher Diversification PLC (“professional learning community”), composed of the Superintendent; the Assistant Superintendent; the Director of Equity, Integration, and Community Partnerships; 5 principals/assistant principals; the HS Director of Guidance; and the MS Humanities Department Head. The group participated in a year-long program sponsored by DESE and The New Teacher Project, focusing on the self-assessment and action steps in DESE’s Guidebook for Inclusive Practices. In addition, the PLC provided structured opportunities for sharing with and learning from other Districts engaged in similar work. Through this PLC, we determined that the WPS priorities for this year would focus primarily on examining and revising our hiring process as the initial lever to change. As a result, the District has:

- Engaged all hiring leads in a multi-session training with Lawrence Alexander from Carney Sandoe to examine and improve our hiring practices.
- Revised the language in our job postings and aligned them across the District in an effort to attract candidates with diverse backgrounds.
- Revised our process for screening candidates, including creating a common set of screening questions for use with every hiring committee.
- Drafted a rubric for hiring committees to use in assessing candidate responses to the screening questions.

While the emphasis this year has intentionally been on hiring practices, we have continued to make progress in pipeline development, recruitment and retention initiatives. For example, the District has:

- Secured a \$67K *Teaching Diversification Pilot Grant* from DESE. Most notably, we have used this funding to develop our internal pipeline by doing outreach to staff and providing course reimbursement opportunities to staff who want to pursue educator licensure. This summer, we will launch paid internship opportunities in our summer programs for high school students who are considering pursuing a career in education.
- Continued to participate in the Greater Boston Human Resources Network (a group of similar districts looking to recruit and retain staff of color) and the Massachusetts Partnership for Diversity in Education, including recruiting at hiring fairs.
- Engaged a consultant to re-do our employment website and recruitment materials.
- Continued to support and facilitate staff affinity groups.
- Piloted an exit interview process in order to better understand themes and drivers in employees’ decisions to leave to the District (and began considering changes that might address emerging needs, such as, including support staff in faculty meetings).

Within this context, the District successfully completed the hiring process for several key positions, including:

- Director of Facilities (retirement)
- Assistant Director of Facilities (retirement)
- Director of Equity, Integration, and Community Partnerships (restructuring)
- Director of Safety and Security (new position)
- TMS Dean of Students (new position)

These processes allowed us to pilot the strategies developed during the PLC, reflect on their impact, make revisions, and share among hiring leads.

Finally, we are confident that between last summer and this spring, the District has made progress in diversifying our staff overall, and in particular in teaching and leadership positions. Over the summer, we will be looking at hiring data.

Finally, the appendix to this memo includes a chart that lists the 2021-2022 action steps associated with each of the district priorities and indicates the status of each step (i.e. complete, substantial progress, some progress, limited or no progress). I look forward to discussing the district's work and answering your questions at the June School Committee meeting.

APPENDIX A

	Priority and Action Steps			
Meaningful Learning Experiences	1.1 Provide students frequent opportunities for input, choice, leadership and engagement with real-world challenges			
	Increase student access to a greater variety of challenging elective courses. (High School)	By February 2022	Principal, Dir. of Guidance, Academic Council	Complete
	Develop and pilot department-based enrichment offerings during S-block. (High School)	Ongoing	Principal, Academic Council	Substantial progress
	Evaluate and redefine opportunities in the Program of Studies for student-led projects and civic engagement (SIPP, Civic Action and Public Speaking, J-Term).	By June 2022	Principal, Academic Council, J-Term Coordinator	Substantial progress (SIPP and J-Term complete)
	Increase student involvement and engagement during parent conferences to enhance student voice in learning. (Middle School)	Fall 2021	Principal, Assistant Principal, Team Leaders	Substantial progress (piloted)
	Review structure and variety of offerings for elementary specials. (Elementary)	Spring 2022	Elementary Principals and K-12 Directors	Limited or no progress (Discussed during budget process. Tabled pending further curriculum reviews.)

1.2 Expand the use of ongoing assessment data and looking at student work to target instruction to what each student needs.			
Implement STAR assessment at elementary level and use data for dyslexia screening and instructional planning. (Elementary)	3x during school year	Supt., Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services	Complete
Develop common guiding principles and protocols in each department for assessing student work and analyzing student achievement data. (High School)	By June 2022	Principal, Academic Council	Some progress; ongoing
Use common planning time and new specialist staffing to implement "WIN" blocks by analyzing STAR data and formative assessments to flexibly group students. (Middle School)	Ongoing	Principal, Asst. Principal, Department Heads	Substantial progress; ongoing
Revise the Child Study Team (CST) to more effectively support students. (Middle School)	By June 2022	Principal, Asst. Principal	Substantial progress; ongoing
Implement Middle School Building Curriculum Accommodation Plan (BCAP) to inform instructional planning and targeted support for students. (Middle School)	Ongoing	Principal, Asst. Principal	Substantial progress; ongoing
1.3 Provide opportunities to develop social emotional skills throughout instruction in content with a greater focus on cultural competency and perspective-taking.			
Continue training and implementation of Responsive Classroom. (Elementary)	Spring 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services	Substantial progress; more training this summer

	Provide professional development for teachers to learn effective practices for embedding social emotional learning throughout instruction in their content. (HS)	Fall 2021	CO Team, Principal, Professional Development Coordinator	Complete
	Implement daily Advisory Model to support social and emotional skills development (i.e., relationship building, problem-solving, communication, etc.)	Ongoing	Principal, Advisory Coordinators	Complete
	Conduct PANORAMA student survey to assess needs and inform planning.	2x during school year	Supt., Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services	Limited or no progress. (Planned for 2022-2023 with transition to new SEL Coordinator)
Coherent, Connected Curriculum	2.1 Map curriculum and provide professional development to support the alignment of social studies curriculum to state and national learning standards.			
	Share and implement the recommendations of the Social Studies curriculum review committee	Share and begin implementation in January 2022	Asst. Supt., HS Social Studies Dept. Head, MS Humanities Dept. Head, Principals	Substantial progress (Completed review; implementation in process)
	Map curriculum for PreK - 5 with unit topics, essential questions, learning outcomes and instructional resources that represent different viewpoints and experiences. (Elementary)	Spring 2022	Asst. Supt., Humanities Coordinator, Principals	Limited or no progress (Action step to be revised in alignment with results of review.)
	Fully implement the 8th-Grade Civic Action Project. (Middle	By June 2022	Asst. Supt.,	Complete

	School)		Principal, Humanities Dept. Head	
	Develop Civics curriculum for 2022-2023 school year implementation. (High School)	By August 2022	Asst. Supt., Principal, Social Studies Dept. Chair	Some progress. (Supported in with FTE FY '23 budget. Curriculum work to be completed this summer.)
	Revise American History curriculum to align with the current state curriculum standards. (High School)	By August 2022	Asst. Supt., Principal, Social Studies Dept. Chair	Some progress (Work to begin this summer in alignment with review recommendation)
	2.2 Initiate the math curriculum review process, with a focus on National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) guidance on secondary course sequence and opportunities for enrichment and acceleration.			
	Create a curriculum review committee for Math.	March 2022	Asst. Supt.	Complete
	Use PreK - 12 math curriculum review process to generate recommendations for improving curriculum and instruction, including recommendations for formative assessments and course sequencing.	March - December 2022	Math Curriculum Review Committee	Some progress; ongoing
	2.3 Complete the Wellness curriculum review by articulating recommendations that support the social and emotional development and physical well-being of students.			

	Publish and implement the recommendations of the Wellness review.	Share and begin implementation in June 2022	Asst. Supt., Dir. of Wellness, Social Emotional Learning Coordinator, Dir. of Student Services	Substantial progress. (Report expected this summer.)
Healthy and Supported School Community	3.1 Utilize research-based time and schedule structures to support student learning and wellness (e.g. longer blocks, advisory time, later secondary start times).			
	Implement new middle and high school block schedules. (Middle School and High School)	Ongoing	Principals	Complete
	Support educators with professional development as they modify instructional practices to optimize the use of a longer instructional block. (Middle School and High School)	Ongoing	Asst. Supt., Professional Development Coordinator, Principals	Complete
	Form School Committee subcommittee to research and implement a later secondary start time.	November 2021 - June 2022	School Committee, Supt.	Substantial progress
	3.2 Create a school environment where all students feel academically challenged, supported, and experience a sense of belonging.			

	Conduct facilitated focus groups and surveys with students and parents around the degree to which community members experience a sense of belonging and support in the WPS.	December 2021-February 2022	Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services	Moved into equity audit process
	Communicate results and action steps to the Westwood Schools Community.	March 2022	Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services	Moved into equity audit process
	Monitor guidance and regulations related to Title IX, Title VI, ADA, MGL 71: 37 (bullying prevention) and other relevant legislation, and revise training for administrators and staff on anti-harassment and discrimination policies and protocols as needed.	Ongoing	Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services	Substantial progress; ongoing
	Pilot changes to K - 5 <i>Same and Different Like Me</i> units	Spring 2022	Wellness Dir., Dir. of Student Services	Limited or no progress (Program implemented ,Tabled for 2021-2022.
	Use the equity audit (see 4.4) and other self-study processes to analyze the effectiveness of current programs and practices (e.g., peer leadership programs, unified sports, courageous conversations series, staff professional development, GSAs, affinity groups, LTARCE) designed to support a diverse student population.	January 2022 - June 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt., Dir. of Student Services, Principals	Substantial progress; Contract awarded
	Implement School Committee community office hours.	November 2021	School Committee Chair	Complete
3.3 Provide resources, programming, and structures to restore and support the well-being of students and staff as				

	the community recovers from the pandemic.			
	Evaluate the effectiveness of elementary general education assistants. (Elementary)	By May 2022	Asst. Supt., Principals	Limited or no progress (Evaluation postponed given impact of staffing and coverage challenges)
	Train support staff and faculty on trauma-informed interventions to address school avoidance, student anxiety, and other mental health issues. (High School)	Ongoing	Principal, Student Services Dept. Head, Dir. of Guidance	Complete
	Provide individual and group instruction during S-block and WIN block to support specific populations/needs. (Middle School and High School)	Ongoing	Student Services Dept. Heads, METCO Director, Dir. of Guidance	Complete
	Complete Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBRT) assessment and Signs of Suicide (SOS) screening at secondary level, with a focus on reviewing the data for trends (Middle School and High School)	January 2022 - February 2022	Dir. of Student Services, Principals, Dir. of Guidance, Student Services Dept. Heads	Complete

	• Manage and maintain COVID response services.	Ongoing, examining opportunities to phase out as warranted	Dir. of Student Services, COVID-19 Monitoring and Response Team	Complete
	• Complete District transition to new Medicaid Vendor, train staff to commence claiming under new regulations, develop/monitor compliance.	Ongoing	Dir. of Student Services, Dir. of Business and Finance	Complete
Infrastructure for the Future	4.1 Continue to engage the community in long-term capital planning for other school buildings, including the Hanlon-Deerfield project milestones.			
	• Collaborate with the design team to develop bid documents, identify contractors, and begin construction phase.	November 2021 - July 2022	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance	Complete
	• Continue to collaborate with the Town on Green Building initiatives districtwide.	Ongoing	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance	Substantial progress; ongoing
	• Develop strategic capital for Sheehan School after learning outcome of the MSBA Statement of Interest process.	Spring 2022	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance	Substantial progress; ongoing
	• Continue to collaborate with Town officials to develop long-term capital priorities.	Ongoing	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance	Some progress; ongoing

4.2 In collaboration with municipal police and fire, continue to improve school security infrastructure, training, and protocols.			
Hire a part-time Director of Safety and Security	February 2022	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance, Dir. of Student Services	Complete
Support the Director of Safety and Security through an entry process and initial assignments (e.g., review communication apps and select a tool, provide District professional development, and monitor implementation).	March 2022 - June 2022	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance, Dir. of Student Services	Complete
Continue to implement the next layer of priorities identified in the security audit report.	March 2022 - August 2022	Supt., Dir. of Business and Finance, Dir. of Student Services, Dir. of Facilities	Substantial progress; ongoing
4.3 Develop processes and resources to hire, recruit, and retain a talented and diverse workforce.			
Update recruiting materials and employment website.	February 2022 - April 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt.	Some progress
Train hiring heads and develop training modules for hiring teams.	February 2022 - April 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt.	Substantial progress

	Cultivate partner relationships at a small number of graduate institutions to increase candidate pipeline.	October 2021 - June 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt.	Limited or no progress (Planned for future)
	Develop internship opportunities in our summer programs to boost candidate pipeline.	By Summer 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt.	Some progress; ongoing
	Cultivate our alumni base to increase our candidate pipeline.	November 2021 - June 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt.	Limited or no progress (Planned for future)
	Continue to implement employee affinity groups.	Ongoing	Asst. Supt., Principals	Complete
	Create a data system to measure the impact of our talent development.	Summer 2022	Supt., Asst. Supt.	Limited or no progress (Planned for this summer.)
	4.4 Engage in multi-year NEASC accreditation and required DESE civil rights and special education program audits in order to ensure that district policies and practices align with state and federal laws and promote equitable outcomes for all students.			
	Identify an external organization or consultant and conduct a districtwide equity audit. (District)	January 2022 - August 2022	District leaders, School Committee rep.	Complete
	Complete School Committee policy manual review in	December 2021 -	School	Substantial

	collaboration with MASC.	August 2022	Committee Subcommittee	progress; ongoing
	Begin the NEASC re-accreditation process with the goal of reaching community consensus about the Portrait of the WPS Graduate.	January 2022 - December 2022	Supt., HS Principal	Some progress; ongoing
	Engage in required Tiered Focus Monitoring review process with DESE, examining adherence to Civil Rights and Special Education standards.	Preparation in Spring and Summer 2022 for Fall site visit	Dir. of Student Services	Substantial progress; ongoing