

Jason P. McCandless

Professional Profile

A professional educator since 1993, I bring a tremendous deal of educational and leadership experience from diverse settings to the Mt. Greylock Regional School District and its member communities. With a dedication to learning and continuous improvement, I will serve your community and school district with energy and humility. Through educational and organizational expertise, honest communication and a belief in the power of modeling, I will lead the district with integrity and make every decision through the lens of doing what is in the best interest of your children. I am committed to the centrality of the classroom to all school and district functions, and see a community's school district as being a lead agent in terms of making positive change in the realms of cultural competence, economic opportunity, and fairness for all.

Core Beliefs

- Schools must have tremendous positive impact on the life of every student.
- Teaching and learning in the classroom are the central functions of the school and the district.
- Students learn best when great teaching occurs—there is no programmatic or technological substitute for excellent people doing excellent work in relationship with one another and wit their students.
- Every member of the school community and the community-at-large deserves to be respected, be heard and be honored as a member of that community.
- Powerful community partnerships are vital to the well-being of students, and of the greater community.

Education

B.A. in Literature, B.A. in Communications

Grove City College

Grove City, PA 1993

M.Ed. in Educational Leadership

University of Virginia

Charlottesville, VA 2000

Ed.D. in Educational Leadership

Boston College

Chestnut Hill, MA 2012

Professional Certifications

MA Principal/Assistant Principal 5-8 (initial) #395005

MA Principal/Assistant Principal 9-12 (professional) #395005

MA Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent all levels (professional) #395005

Vocational Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent 9-14 (initial) #395005

Personal Data

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Married for 26 years to Tamara McCandless, with three children, Ethan (22 a recent graduate of St. Michael's College), Eamon (20 junior at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) and Meredith (17 a senior at Pittsfield High School).

Employment

Superintendent, Pittsfield Public Schools, Pittsfield MA 7/2013-Present

- Leader of a small-urban district serving nearly 5,300 diverse students in twelve schools, and three external programs with over 1,200 staff members, reporting to a seven member elected school committee, one of whom is the Mayor of the City of Pittsfield.
- Responsible for all areas of district operations including budgets, finance, professional development, negotiations, safety planning and protocols, facilities, strategic planning and personnel management with a team of district and school level administrators.
- Oversaw the complete overhaul of the Pittsfield CTE program including the refining of 16 programs in two school to 12 programs centered at one comprehensive school, including the applying for new programs, Early Childhood Education and Care and Electrical. Aided in successfully navigating the move of three existing programs from Pittsfield High to Taconic High over the course of four years, and the revitalization of 12 advisory committees and the general advisory committee, and increased CTE enrollments from 120 students when I came to Pittsfield to 409 students in the 19-20 school year, or more than 25% of our total 9-12 population, with a dramatic increase in student-of color engaging and thriving in our CTE program.
- Facilitated start up and CTE-wide membership in Skills USA—a first for the City of Pittsfield and its students.
- Assumed co-leadership of a School Building Needs Committee in 2013 that had labored nine years to move forward a 120.8 million dollar comprehensive high school project (including 12 chapter 74 programs) with an 80% reimbursement from the Massachusetts School Building Authority. The Taconic High School opened in August of 2018.
- Co-facilitated with George Haddad, an area Toyota dealer, a first in the Nation partnership with Toyota USA to provide our Automotive Technology students with the first level of formal Toyota Technician Certification (see [youtube.com/watch?v=34GS3hDdzxc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=34GS3hDdzxc) for a video on this).
- Facilitated a wide range of cultural-competence activities in the district to better examine our own beliefs as a school system, to be aware of our own cultural blind spots, and to become a more inclusive community, including the hiring of a “Cultural Competence Coach” to help envision and guide our city-wide work in becoming more culturally proficient.
- Related to above facilitated a wide ranging series of conversations and activities about the impacts of institutional racism in general and in our community in coordination with local groups and resources such as the Berkshire County NAACP, the Barrington Stage Company, and many other community based organizations, including instituting affirmative action practices related to the hiring of staff to create a workforce that better reflects the make up of our student body.
- Since starting in Pittsfield we have increased Black/African American Advanced Placement participation by three times (from 10 to 30 students), Latinx/Hispanic participation from 8 students to 21 students, Economically Disadvantaged students from 55 to 77 students, Students with Disabilities from 4 students to 14 students (the 9th greatest rate in the Commonwealth) and increased overall AP participation from 245 to 359 students—all while increasing the average pass rate of a 3,4, or 5 to 46.5%. SAT participation has seen similar growth, with scores for Black/African American students jumping by 189 points over the time period, and Latinx participation more than doubling (there were not enough scores to calculate an average when I arrived). The same is true for Students with Disabilities, 27 of whom took the SAT last year, while the number of Economically Disadvantaged students taking the SAT has grown from 65 to 82, with scores moving up by 89 points.

- Built student and teacher-centered programming partnerships with the Jacob's Pillow Dance, IS 183 Art School of the Berkshires, the Colonial Theatre Group, Barrington Stage Company, and the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. These partnerships resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of programming being offered to our students (and staff in the case of Kripalu) at no cost to the students.
- Established among the first in the Commonwealth pilot program to award Seal of Biliteracy—a nationwide effort to recognize students who have mastered the English language as a second language in addition to fluency in their native tongue, and students whose first language is English who document fluency in another language.
- Established the third district in Berkshire County (I established the first in Lee as Superintendent) to work with MassInsight for Education's AP program. Increased percentage of students receiving qualifying scores, increased number of tests taken in a year by over 30%, ramped up PD oriented at AP teaching, and established several new courses including a pilot of the new AP Seminar course at Pittsfield High School that leads to the AP Seal on students' diplomas.
- During tenure in Pittsfield, hired multiple principals, Special Education Director, Deputy Superintendent, Human Resources Director, Curriculum Director, Assistant Superintendent for College and Career Readiness, and Cultural Competence Coach.
- Facilitated complete and successful re-envisioning and re-constitution of entire District and School Improvement Plans and planning process that lead to a new professional development plan, and much greater inclusion of school-based administrator and teacher voices in the process
- Facilitated complete overhaul of district and school websites, including a move to greater use of Google Docs as free platform for two-way communications both internally and with our surrounding community.
- For the first time in its history, established a formal school business partner for each of our 12 schools in Pittsfield, highlighting the vital partnership between public schools and the business/economic development community.
- Facilitated taking the district from no data collection system to a comprehensive set of academic and social-emotional data sources including the Fastbridge System for Academic Benchmarking, and Panorama Surveys for students, teachers and guardians to gather data related to SEL and general feedback to the school and district.
- Co-author of book chapter "A Group Perspective on the Issues and Impact of Collaborating on the Dissertation in Practice" in 2017 book *Exploring the Impact of the Dissertation in Practice*, Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- 2019 recipient of Berkshire Magazine's 25 for 2019, honoring the most creative individuals with the greatest impact on life in the Berkshires (<https://townvibe.com/berkshire-25-for-2019/>).

Superintendent, Lee Public Schools and Union #29 Lee-Tyringham, Lee, MA 7/2005-6/2013

- Leader of two-town 800-student district.
- Responsible for all areas of district operations including budgets, finance, professional development, negotiations, safety planning and protocols, facilities, strategic planning and personnel management.
- Facilitated successful Strategic Planning Process involving students, parents, alumni, business community, local decision makers, teacher and school committee.
- Knowledgeable in curriculum and instruction, school and municipal finance, school improvement, education law, supervision, special education and public relations.
- Implemented protocols and practices related to the granting of Professional Teacher Status (and using non-renewals) as a means of respecting the profession of teaching and ensuring that we established accountability and high standards of excellence before transitioning a teacher in to more permanent employment.
- Established new teacher induction and mentoring program.

- Empowered and facilitated elementary school faculty to work collaboratively with middle and high school faculty to dramatically realign science and mathematics curriculum to better meet needs identified through MCAS testing and other measures of student success.
- Facilitated the established revised department head structure at Lee Middle and High School and instituted subject based department heads at Lee Elementary School.
- Partnered in establishment of \$100,000+ student enrichment fund—The Lee Fund for Educational Excellence—endowment through the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.
- Facilitated successful efforts to raise student achievement, positive learning outcomes and a full compliment of out of school learning opportunities in a district which has nearly doubled its free and reduced lunch population since 2000 and has operated within or near a level funded Town-request for three years.

Principal, Lee Middle and High School, Lee, MA 7/2002-6/2005

- Leader of 380 student 7-12 middle and high school.
- Active in planning and oversight of total building renovation and overseeing the midyear move from one school into the newly renovated and re-opened Lee Middle and High School.
- Led effort at opening of the newly configured middle and high school.
- Policy development and practice based on new configuration of middle and high schools.
- Successfully led preparations for NEASC accreditation and transition into high stakes testing and accountability.
- Worked actively to educate and lessen the impact of alcohol and drug abuse among high school aged students, including running parent forums and brining in professional drug educators (Freedom from Chemical Dependency).
- Active in successful community effort to reverse outgoing versus incoming school choice trends.

Assistant Principal, Louisa County High School, Mineral, VA 7/1999-6/2002

- Assisted in all aspects of running a 1,400 student comprehensive high school/vo-tech school, including program evaluation, budget development, public relations, student discipline and ensuring academic excellence.
- Lead-administrator in research, design, construction and opening of a separate Ninth Grade House to address performance and behavior in ninth grade students.
- Selected recruited and faculty and worked through all phases of building design, program design, policies and practice; and in charge of public relations for the project and family and community outreach.
- Administrator in charge of academics and discipline for 475 student ninth-grade house program
- Supervised and evaluated all ninth grade staff.
- Trained in the Institute for Educational Activities School Improvement Process.
- Trained in Effective Schools whole-school improvement model.
- Trained in the Ruby Payne Working with Students in Poverty learning models.
- Trained in William Glasser's Control Theory methods of student management and school operation.

English Teacher/Department Head, Louisa County High School, Mineral, VA 7/1995-6/1999

- Taught 10th Accelerated English, and English to at-risk 9th graders.
- Well versed in facilitating student led writing and reading workshop model of instruction.
- Graduate of the University of Virginia Writing Project, and led several follow up professional development workshops in Louisa County and in two other districts.
- Trained in Paideia method of student inquiry.
- Helped facilitate, via a formal and ongoing school improvement process, a move to a daily study-catch up-and-enrichment period, as well as the transition from an alternating day 100 minute block schedule to a 4 x 4 block schedule.
- Leader of the 16 member English department serving over 1,400 students.
- Recruited for the district at colleges and recruiting fairs in Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio.
- Assistant varsity football coach/Assistant varsity wrestling coach.

Professional and Personal Affiliations and Organizations

- Member of Berkshire Skills Cabinet (1berkshire.com/relocate/blueprint/)
- Awarded a 2016 New England Association of Schools and Colleges Jacob Ludes III Leadership Award
- Board of Directors United Cerebral Palsy of Western Massachusetts
- Member of Steering Committee and Presenter at Barrington Stage Company Symposium on Race: Addressing Institutional Racism
- Member of Community Advisory Board for The Barrington Stage Company
- Member of the Community Advisory and Education Board for the Berkshire Theatre Festival and the Berkshire Theatre Group
- Member Berkshire Museum Visioning Committee
- Current President, Berkshire County Superintendents' Roundtable
- Member Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education
- Former Member Tri-Town Rotary (Lee-Lenox-Stockbridge, MA)
- Member Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
- Member American Association of School Administrators
- Member Board of Directors for the Berkshire Readiness Center
- Member Berkshire County Compact for Higher Education—College Aspirations Committee
- Former Member Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association
- Board of Trustees Berkshire Financial Services (a holding company for two New England Community Banks, Lee Bank in Lee, Massachusetts and Freedom National Bank in Providence, Rhode Island)
- Member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Stockbridge, MA
- Keynote Speaker: Berkshire United Way, United at the Table Event, "Love Your Neighbor," 2017; Berkshire Children and Families Annual Meeting, "The Necessity of Community," 2017; Massachusetts Chief Probation Officer's Association Annual Conference, "Kids, Cultural Competence, and Subverting the School-to-Prison Pipeline," 2016; Keynote Speaker Jewish Federation of the Berkshires Annual Major Donors Dinner (see [youtube.com/watch?v=PYmnuOEvdso](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYmnuOEvdso) for this video); Speaker at Pittsfield Unitarian Universalist Congregation "George, Fred, Kurt, and Me" 2020 (www.uupittsfield.org/listen-to-services/).